How Staffing Agencies Can Future-Proof Their Employer-Branding Strategy

What Gen Z candidates want you to know
It’s not a huge revelation to say that today’s hiring landscape is competitive, but that’s just a warmup for what’s to come. Gen Z, younger millennials, new grads—whatever you want to call them, they’re waiting in the wings to join your talent force. They are confident, bright, have their choice of jobs, and know what they want. Do you?

You might think that right now Gen Z’s big brothers and sisters (older millennials) are the ones to focus on, but the future is right around the corner. According to a recent Randstad Technologies survey, Gen Z is forecast to comprise 37% of the global workforce by next year.

That means it’s crucial to begin attracting tomorrow’s new hires for your clients today. You’re going to have to recalibrate your recruitment-marketing plans—specifically, your company’s approach to its employer-branding strategy—if you want to remain competitive.

“It’s really important for any branding exercise to be authentic,”

- says Jonathan Beamer, Chief Marketing Officer at Monster. “And employer brand has to all tie together with what the company is overall. So it’s reimagining what that brand means to employees.”
For staffing agencies, the challenge is twice as hard, since employer branding has two meanings, says Danny Ashraf, director of sales at Monster.

“You not only have to brand your client in your job advertisements and your digital advertisements, but you also have to brand your own organization,” he says. So it’s not just, “This is why you should apply to this job,” it’s also, “This is why you should apply to this job using this agency as your headhunter.” And you won’t get more space to make your case. “It’s double the amount of work and twice as difficult to get it down,” says Ashraf.

For traditional corporate recruiters, the employer-branding strategy encompasses things like a career site, the social media footprint, a couple of corporate videos, and perhaps some collaboration with internal marketing and PR to amplify the corporate culture. But for staffing agencies, there’s a two-fold mission: learning how to differentiate your staffing firm from the competition, while also encouraging your clients to climb on the employer-branding bandwagon and make their opportunities seem more attractive to candidates.

When you add to the mix a young job seeker who might not understand how staffing agencies work, it’s no wonder that staffing agencies have their work cut out for them.

To speak to the next generation of job seekers, you’ll need to adopt new tools and tactics that resonate with their unique needs and serve to educate them on what staffing agencies actually do.

To help you do just that, this guide will:

- Take a look at the next generation of job seeker and try to understand what’s in their heads as they begin their job search
- Get to the bottom of what employer branding is (and isn’t) for staffing agencies, and the challenges therein
- Offer some expert solutions and tips for reaching the Gen Z job seekers of tomorrow by reimagining your employer brand
Next Generation Candidates and Challenges

According to the 2019 State of the Candidate Survey by Monster, 47% of new candidates say they start their job search by looking directly at the companies they want to work for. What does that mean for you? Your staffing company’s employer-brand message needs to be on point so young job seekers will want to explore your client’s open roles.

“That always starts with an understanding of the target employee,” says Beamer. You have to practice careful listening to fully understand the different life stages of your applicants and what motivates them to do their best work.

To figure that all out requires feedback loops and testing to see if your outreach is having the impact that you expect it to, adds Beamer. “Since people, technology, and work habits change, you’re never done. You should always be evolving.”

In other words, if you’ve been relying on the “beer Fridays and other perks” playbook that seemed to work well for some employers in recent years, you’re going to want to reevaluate that strategy. The Monster survey found—perhaps surprisingly—that the younger sibs of the millennials don’t care as much about endless happy hours and cappuccino bars as you might think. Young millennials and Gen Z care most about a job’s location and salary (each 32%) much more so than perks (14%). Sure, nap pods are cool and all, but that alone isn’t going to seal the deal.

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Think about it: with each new generation, financial uncertainty has increased. For the Baby Boomers, it was reasonable to expect to raise a family and own a home on one income. Gen Xers could do the same, but it would take two incomes. Millennials are more likely to rent than own their homes, and that's only after they are finally able to leave their parent's homes at a later-than-expected age. Then we have Generation Z. They've basically been told to go ahead and get yourself a full-time job, but you're going to need a side hustle or two as well if you want to pay off your student loans and make a decent living. The Monster State of the Candidate Survey supports this, with 65% of new grads saying they have a side gig right now, and 30% saying they plan to keep that gig even after getting hired full-time.

“The notion that if you work hard and do a good job, the world will take care of you, is long gone,” says James Ellis, Director for Employer Brand at Universum, who also hosts The Talent Cast podcast. And Gen Z knows it. They can’t rely on a pension, decent health care, or even social security to fuel their retirement. And that’s why the most important thing on their minds when evaluating companies is the potential for financial and personal growth—yoga breaks and PlayStation tournaments alone will not lure them.

Therefore, what tomorrow’s job seekers really want is insight into how coming to work for you will impact their lives. “Nobody cares that you’ve been around 50 years; they care about what can you do for them today,” says Ashraf.

What's required of you? Retooling the employer-branding strategy to include both the staffing agency's and the client's value proposition. You’ll have to also add more transparency during the job-search process itself, and figure out how to instill confidence that you’re actually trying to match candidates with the best-fit jobs and clients. Gen Z doesn’t have time for generic corporate-speak or application guessing games (they do have that side gig to get to, after all). What they want is to make connections with recruiters who speak their language, and to be given a candidate experience that allows them to envision themselves as part of the team. In short, it all comes down to branding strategy.

**Branding Bottom Line:**
**Three Facts About Gen Z**

- **They’re at the very beginning of their careers with high student debt**
- **They grew up during a global recession, so they’re cautiously optimistic**
- **They value stability more than their older peers**
The Truth about Employer Branding

Let’s cut to the chase as to what employer branding actually is (and isn’t) for staffing firms.
“It’s not a product or a website, a logo or a tagline. Your employer brand is your company’s promise of an overarching candidate experience, says Sean Broderick, Vice President of Employer Branding North America at Monster. “It’s anything you do to enhance their experience through the talent-acquisition process, getting them to buy your culture and opportunity—your story or narrative has to share all of those components. Just competitive compensation and benefits alone are not enough of a motivator for top talent. They need to know the complete story.”

What’s more, staffing agencies that are going to win the war for talent are those that can tell the best story around:

1. Your staffing agency’s brand narrative that illustrates the value that your agency can add to the candidate’s experience that a direct employer can’t
2. Your clients’ unique employer branding

Trying to lure candidates in with generic copy-and-pasted template job descriptions will only hurt you in the long run when new hires turn over quickly because they were never really a good fit.

Branding Bottom Line:
The Foundry by Monster’s Four-Step Employer-Branding Strategy

1. Define your story. What does your organization stand for, and how does it help candidates with their career path?
2. Share your story. Use creative and tech assets as brand channels, from your company site to job postings to any communication coming from your organization. Your overarching message to candidates should make it clear why it’s going to be more meaningful for them to explore opportunities with you versus someone else.
3. Turn up the volume. Activate and deploy brand messaging on social media and other channels. Figure out how to maximize ROI on your spend so your brand message reaches the right candidates and resonates with them.
4. Convince and convert. AI, text technology, candidate capture—use technology and analytics to study where candidates are dropping off so you can tweak and optimize your strategy and processes.

The Foundry by Monster, an employer branding agency, helps HR professionals, marketers and business owners create and promote their employer brand and become employers of choice. Services include helping clients create impactful employer value propositions, effective career websites, engaging social presence and far-reaching online campaigns, so they will be seen by the right people and applied to by the profiles you want to hire.
How to Power Up Your Employer Branding

Staffing agencies can’t rely on the tactics they’ve been using since the 1990s. It’s time to future-proof your employer-branding strategy for the next generation. Here are some key strategies that will help you captivate young candidates.

1. Educate
Most of Generation Z has probably never worked with a recruitment company before, so educating them is really important. “A lot of candidates don’t know how staffing agencies work. They think they have to pay a finder’s fee,” says Ashraf. Staffing agencies need to convey that they are always looking out for the candidate’s best interest and doing whatever they can to maximize their opportunities and get them ready to speak to the right clients. From getting job seekers prepped for interviews, helping clean up their resumes, and guiding them along the way, there is a lot of value that a staffing agency can add that a direct employer can’t—but Gen Z might not even know such resources exist.

2. Give It a Video Infusion
Online job ads were introduced about 25 years ago by Monster, says Shawne Robinson, senior director of product management and head of product for mobile at Monster. Since that time, job ads have been in the form of two-dimensional text and image job ads. “Video creates value by adding that third dimension and the ability to see and hear and experience the personalities and authenticity of the organization,” says Robinson. So why aren’t more staffing agencies and employers harnessing video as part of their employer branding?

Staffing Spotlight

Aerotek, the largest staffing agency in the country, knows how important it is to help candidates understand the value it offers. “For people who don’t understand how staffing firms work, we take the opportunity to share how we can provide them access to a wide range of employers, guide them through the application process, and ensure they’re well-prepared to interview,” says Blair Kennard, executive director, marketing and technology at Aerotek.

That kind of messaging is a crucial component of Aerotek’s brand, she says. “It’s communicated on our website, through our thought leadership, and shared across our social media channels. It’s not as easy as just recruiting job seekers; we know we have to convey our value to them in real terms so that they can make an educated decision to choose us.”
also be a good way to weed out candidates who aren’t a good fit. “Video can help introduce more efficiency into the hiring process,” says Robinson.

Video Can Improve Candidate Quality for Staffing Agencies

Video is really forcing the recruiting or staffing space to think of things differently, says Robinson. Traditionally, the metric that staffing agencies home in on is apply starts, but video may begin to turn that on its head and put the focus on completions. “If you look at video only through the lens of apply starts, you’re not looking at the full pipeline,” he says.

How video improves candidate quality: Using video job ads can attract the candidates you want and repel the ones that aren’t a good fit. “That process can end up having a net zero impact on your apply starts,” explains Robinson. However, if you’re getting higher-quality applicants for the role and increasing your conversions, it’s another way to define success in the staffing space. “Looking at conversions and hires comes a little bit further down the pipeline,” says Robinson, “and that can increase your ROI.”

Once you learn some of video’s best practices, you can see some pretty great results, says Broderick. His top tips include:

- Train and educate your HR professionals (or whomever is taking the videos) on branding.
- Make sure your videos highlight your company’s diversity.
- Featuring more people is always better than just one person.
- Identify the brand ambassadors who can best represent you in an authentic and passionate way.
- Set up shots that capture your culture and location.

The staffing industry needs to be thinking “video first” and become an early adopter, says Ashraf. “Staffing companies typically trail their direct employer counterparts in technology, but they need to push themselves to adopt tech at a quicker rate.”

Creative Circle, part of ASGN Incorporated, has 100+ videos on its YouTube channel (most of which feature employees). They capture everything from the fun culture in its offices to valuable candidate-focused content, including topics like detailed interview and presentation tips, says Bliebtreu. “Video is a critically important tool to showcase the brand and its culture,” he says.

Gen Z is the video generation, so it’s no surprise that 87% of them think video will play a role in finding jobs, as per the State of the Candidate survey by Monster. What’s more, 80% feel that a video job ad of a recruiter talking about an open role would be much more helpful than a text-only job ad. Some of the other ways candidates expect to see video used include:

- Video calls with recruiters during the interview process (36%)
- Video job descriptions (27%)
- Video application submission (25%)
- Video featuring a recruiter describing a job ad (22%)

It’s imperative that staffing agencies encourage clients to pick up those mobile devices—guerilla-style—and hit record to allow their personality and culture shine through, says Robinson. “If employer-branding videos are too over-produced, you’re getting a canned view of your organization, which is not what you want.”

What you do want is to allow folks to be drawn into the role and organization. On the flipside, it can

Monster Studios is a mobile app that gives recruiters the power to record, edit, and publish videos to Monster Job Ads in minutes. It’s free for customers who place job ads. Just download the app and record a video for your job ad, right from your mobile device.
4. Step Away from the Desktop

“Most job descriptions are cobbled together and not very fun to read,” says Beamer. “Imagine shopping for a house and all you got to look at is a block of text?”

Job postings are still crucial because they are often the first impression, but most of them are “atrocious train wrecks,” says Ellis. “Smart companies have decided that since this is the first point of contact, let’s do it right. They invest in talking to internal marketing teams, embedding videos, and getting granular and specific to that job,” he says.

The job description should be a compelling, well-written story, not a list of duties and required skills. In addition to bringing in a skilled copywriter, he suggests following this formula:

- Start with salary, front and center. That way, you’re not wasting anyone’s time.
- The next graph is the co-branded value proposition. “We have found a lot of success when we are able to co-brand,” says Aerotek’s Kennard. And for employers that aren’t as well-known, the Aerotek brand has helped attract candidates as well, he adds.
- Next, be clear and concise in the description of the job. That’s followed by how the role you’re seeking will help the team—and therefore the company—make an impact.
- Sprinkle in a bit about the culture and location. This is where you can post video content specific to that job, says Ashraf. The staffing person can shoot and record a video with the hiring manager so they can share with readers that this is the person with whom a candidate will be interviewing.
- Explain what the post-apply process is like. Say something like, “Somebody will be following up after 24 hours. If you don’t hear back, here is what you can do.” “It will alleviate the stress a candidate has,” says Ashraf. Staffing professionals should be doing everything they can to get candidates further through the funnel.

Do those things, and you’re already a step above most, says Ellis. Now, to take your job postings from good to great, you’ll have to go further. Link out to your values, to your team site, to video testimonials, and any other supporting evidence that will help candidates connect the dots.

“The key is to figure out how to serve this information and chop it up in a way that is the most consumable on the greatest number of platforms,” says Beamer. “The employer-branding piece is the quality of the pictures and the copy that’s written around that experience.” To go back to his real estate analogy, Beamer says try comparing a house that is professionally staged with a professional photo shoot and drones taking video—of course it will get more looks than a listing that describes the number of rooms in text form.

5. Collaborate with Your Clients

Busy staffing professionals might tell clients to give them whatever jobs they need filled, but taking the time to understand who that hiring manager is, the type of work environment, and the types of candidates that stick around for the long haul would be worth investigating, says Ashraf. Make a list of discovery questions to get you as much information as possible about the company and the role. You can’t talk about that with candidates unless you have those excellent discovery sessions and build strong relationships with hiring managers.

6. Offer a Flawless Candidate Experience from Beginning to End

Reiterating your company’s mission and values throughout the hiring process is an important way to keep reinforcing your employer brand, as is keeping candidates informed through communication and openness. Keeping your communication style consistent, whether it’s via text (which younger job seekers prefer), email, or direct message is important, too.

If your application process is too old-school, it might be time for an upgrade: According to the State of the Candidate survey, 54% of Gen Zers said they won’t complete an application if the recruiting methods are outdated, and 26% agree that a lack of technology throughout the hiring process would deter them from accepting a job.

Your goal is to provide a smooth candidate experience that offers a sense of certainty about the process as well as the job you’re presenting. “Candidate experience is how do we make you understand that not only do we say this is how the job is going to be, but we’re going to show you,” says Ellis.
Branding Bottom Line: 5 ways to Improve your Employer Branding to Attract and Hire Gen Z

Hone your co-branded value proposition, your story, and your messaging. The Foundry by Monster can help.

Focus on your mobile experiences. From text recruiting to mobile-designed applications, this isn’t something you can afford to neglect.

Show them the money. Employer branding is important, but competitive offers and good benefits that are highlighted must go along with it.

Enhance your job openings. Use professionally crafted copy, strong images, and video for a fully immersive behind-the-scenes experience.

Add video to your HR tech stack. Give candidates the 3-D experience they want, and find a partner like Monster Studios that can help you.
Check out **Monster’s Employer Branding Solutions** to learn more, or contact a Monster Sales Representative to find out how we can help you create a robust employer brand at: 1-800-866-7837

Sources: 2019 Monster State of the Candidate Survey; Randstad: how tech is impacting the workforce of tomorrow; Yello 2019 Recruiting Study: The New High-Tech and High-Touch Generation of Talent; VideoMyJob & SocialTalent "State of Video in Talent 2019 Report"