

# Employer Brand vs. EVP: What's the Difference?

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Kurt Vonnegut once said, in response to the question of why one should write books when senators and generals and other important people won't read them, "you catch people before they become generals and presidents." As it is with the lessons of literature, so too is it with employer branding. More than 70% of candidates will take a business' [employer brand](#) into consideration before they even send out an application—meaning that if you haven't made a good impression on most candidates by the time they're contemplating an application, it's already too late. Perhaps for this reason, studies have shown that a great employer brand can reduce cost per hire by as much as 50% while leading to an up to 50% increase in qualified applicants.

But wait, what about [EVP](#)? Just as frequently as we hear about the importance of branding, we seem to find EVP, or employee value proposition, being discussed in reference to smart, effective recruitment. These terms get bandied about in conjunction so frequently that it can be tough to draw a clean distinction between them, begging the question: what's the difference between EVP and employer brand, and how are the two concepts related?

## Employer Brand

Okay, let's start with the one that might be a little more obvious. Your employer brand is, essentially, the image that you project both to employees within your company and potential employees outside your organization. Crucially, it is the image you project **as a place to work**, meaning that it should say something about your company's mission and values, but also about what makes it a unique employment destination worth applying to or even changing jobs for. Think of this as a story that you tell to prospective and current employees alike—a story in which your target demographics see themselves reflected and from which they can draw inspiration.

One of the most important things to remember about your **employer brand** is that while it may complement your customer-facing brand, it is a distinct entity. For example, if you were a large, prestigious tech company, your outward facing brand might be focused on innovative products and solutions, but your *employer brand* would specifically focus on highlighting your business as a place for serious engineers to work on important challenges with the support of considerable institutional resources and internal tools. In this way, you begin to give prospective candidates a narrative that they can latch onto. If that narrative appeals to them, they may one day find themselves submitting a job application.

Crucially, employer branding isn't a nebulous concept, but rather a discrete set of actions that you take on an ongoing basis. If you have an employer brand, but no one ever sees it, does it really exist? Not so much. Rather, it's something that only becomes actualized as you craft and disseminate content on social media, your website, and elsewhere that conveys your message. If your employer brand is especially powerful, you may find that some of your employees will help spread it

through word of mouth and via their own social media presence. Not only does your employer brand come to life through this type of content, but it also becomes the first touch on a recruitment funnel that will hopefully encourage qualified applicants to apply for positions with your company.

## **EVP**

If your employer brand is, in some sense, a promise that you make to your current and future employees, **EVP** is how you keep that promise. Why? Because your EVP is all of the ways that you provide value to your current and future employees. This can be everything from free lunches and a cool office space to educational opportunities, the chance to make impactful decisions on a meaningful project, or opportunities to gain recognition within one's chosen field. Not every EVP will appeal to every possible candidate, so the trick is to work towards providing value in ways that will appeal to your target hiring demographics (to say nothing of your current team).

Let's think back to our large tech company's employer brand sketched out above. The story being told is that a candidate can apply, get a job, and work with cutting edge technology to solve difficult, meaningful engineering problems, leveraging the all of the resources of a large institution, from internal tools to experienced mentors. Taken together, this comprises an employer brand, but if we break down the constitutive elements, we begin to see an EVP emerge. The use of sophisticated internal tools is a discrete value-added proposition for your employees. So are other institutional resources like mentorship programs, a sophisticated codebase, or large caches of useful data. So is the opportunity to gain recognition for one's

work. If your employer brand is a story, your EVP is the setting and characters of that story—i.e. the elements that make the story possible, rather than the story itself.

## **A Match Made in Heaven**

No doubt it's become obvious as you've read that these two concepts, while distinct, are very closely related. Both should speak to your business as a place of employment, and as a result you'll often find that company's EVP and employer brand contain many of the same elements. Not only is this to be expected, it's to be desired. Because your employer brand is, above all, meant to be persuasive, it can be easy to let the image you project drift away from reality. This is where EVP comes in. Since EVP is actually a set of concrete things that your company offers to its employees, it can act as a more objective accounting of your workplace's strengths and the opportunities it offers. An employer brand focused on continuing education can be nebulous and tough to verify, but things like continuing education opportunities and mentorship programs are concrete parts of an EVP. If your company doesn't offer those, it's possible that you shouldn't try to build an employer brand around education.

By contrast, a thorough accounting of your real EVP can actually help to inspire stronger employer branding by giving you insight into your business' previously unconsidered strengths as a place of employment. It's probably worth surveying your existing employees about the ways that they derive value from working at your company to gain a more accurate picture of your EVP—and you might be surprised by the results! After taking stock of your value inventory, you can make

sure that your EVP is forming the foundation of your employer brand in a direct way. Now, your brand story is sure to be not just persuasive, but *accurate*. By avoiding disconnect between what you're promising and the reality of your workplace, you can reduce employee turnover, improve retention rates, and keep qualified candidates from dropping out of your [application funnel](#). These are all important recruitment goals—and they begin with knowing where your employer brand and your EVP converge.