



# Employer Of Choice



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## What is an Employer Of Choice?

In the truest sense, an employer of choice or E.O.C. is a company that candidates seek out for employment opportunities. The defining characteristics of an Employer Of Choice are strong leadership, competitive pay, engaged workers, and a company culture that employees not only believe in but are excited to be part of.

It's important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for becoming an Employer Of Choice. One company's approach may look very different from another's, and yet they can both meet the criteria for the distinction. The overarching theme of becoming an Employer Of Choice is being the best employer you can be for the types of employees you want to attract and retain.



According to a recent Glassdoor survey, **76% of hiring decision-makers have trouble connecting with and hiring passive job seekers, who are known for being some of the most attractive candidates.**

When you're an Employer Of Choice, you don't have to spend as much time or money-making inroads with great candidates. People already know your company as a great place to get hired, so your reputation does much of the recruiting work for you.

Moreover, when candidates choose you because you meet E.O.C standards, existing employees choose not to leave you. So being an Employer Of Choice not only helps you attract candidates, it helps you retain your team as well. **Remember, your greatest asset leaves the building after every shift. Your greatest responsibility as an owner or manager is to give them a reason to show up for the next day's work.**

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## Talent Attraction + Retention

With nearly 500,000 open positions in manufacturing here in the US, the need for cohesive talent attraction and retention strategies has never been more important. From the way you post open positions to how you conduct exit interviews, you have an opportunity to effectively cultivate and promote an Employer Brand that attracts and retains employees.

Today, we're in a candidate-driven market, with manufacturer's feeling pressure when it comes to recruiting talent, and for the first time on record, the number of job openings in the US has surpassed the number of unemployed workers. Think about that!

How your brand is perceived by candidates and employees is now more important than ever. Remember, candidates have an army of tools at their disposal to gain insights into your company and your culture. Social media has also become a powerful medium where employees can share their work experiences and feedback...both positive and negative. The good news is, this means your current employees can become authentic brand ambassadors when given the right tools and motivation and most importantly a true belief that your company is a great place to work.





### Here are (5) Tips for developing a winning strategy around Talent Attraction and Retention

- 1. Know your employer brand promise!** The first step in understanding your brand is to start with an employee survey. In doing so, you will find out both your strengths and your weaknesses. From there, work to address any shortcomings while accentuating what makes your company a great place to work. But don't forget to communicate the survey results and your intentions to the team. The only thing worse than not asking for employee feedback is asking for it and then doing nothing with it!
- 2. Sell your company!** In order to attract passive jobseekers you have to sell them on why you are a great place to work. In other words, don't simply list the position requirements on a job posting...sell the culture of your company and why a potential job seeker will find meaningful employment with you while becoming part of an engaged and mission driven team.
- 3. Make your employees Brand Ambassadors.** You're not a great place to work because you say so...you're a great place to work because your employees say so. Empower them to tell your story and make it worth their effort. A structured referral program with incentives is a great way to leverage your greatest recruiting asset...your people!
- 4. Structure your on-boarding.** The first 90 days are the most vulnerable period of the employer/employee relationship. Effective onboarding of new employees helps to create an engaged workforce from day one. Give your program a structure that provides useful milestones, mentoring and maybe even a wage progression. Once you have them, it's important to work hard at keeping them!
- 5. Know your numbers.** Turnover rate is one of the most meaningful KPIs in determining how effective your company's retention strategy is working. Once you understand this statistic, set a goal for reducing that turnover and work toward closing the gap. Use this link to understand how to calculate your turnover rate and more importantly to understand how turnover impacts your bottom line.



## Organizational Culture:

It goes without saying, but building a strong corporate culture is the core of any company's success. However, creating and maintaining one that recognizes shared values, standards, beliefs, and goals takes a lot of work. It doesn't happen by simply posting the c-suite's version of a vision statement or core value mandates in the breakroom.

If you want to establish a culture that everyone truly believes in and identifies with, then everyone should be taking part in helping to define it. Remember that survey we talked about in the previous section? Its relevant here too. The survey results help you to better understand your current state and identify the gaps and obstacles that would prevent you reaching your future state or your "True North." But be careful, your future state has got to be more than aspirational...it has to be achievable and grounded in reality. Rome wasn't built in a day...and neither were Apple or Google. If you're looking for a shortcut, here's a hint; focus on your people first, your customers second, and profits third. You'll find that when you treat your people right, they take care of the customers and the customers in turn, take care of your profits.

## Here are 5 tips to help you build a winning corporate culture

- 1. Identify and articulate your core values.** One great way to do this is for the management team to present a longer list of core values to the employees and let them vote on the ones they can get behind. By being part of the process, they will own it. Once you've centered on the top five, list them and then, live by them. You should also make them part of your performance review process or address during accountability sessions with individual employees.
- 2. Employee recognition.** Regularly acknowledge employees whose actions or behaviors reflect one of your core values. Make it part of your monthly company-wide or daily shift meetings. And don't worry if you think that it feels hokey at first. It only seems that way because you're not accustomed to doing it. Stay the course and celebrate these victories. Your team will appreciate you for doing it.
- 3. Lead by example.** "Hypocrites are those who apply to others the standards they refuse to accept themselves." –Noam Chomsky. Hypocrites are also the great underminers of corporate culture. As a leader, it is important that you live by the ideals you promote and when you fail to live up to those standards, acknowledge it, pledge to do better, and ask your team to hold you accountable to that promise.

- 4. Identify your cultural ambassadors.** You can't do this alone. We all have team members that we call "amplifiers". That doesn't mean they're loud...it means they're listened to. Engage your amplifiers and make them your cultural ambassadors. They are usually pretty adept at winning the hearts and minds of their fellow employees.
- 5. Treat your people right.** It sounds simple right? However, all too often we find ourselves so busy putting out fires and rushing through our day to stop and listen to our employees. When was the last time you walked the floor and talked to your team members or told someone to cut out early to go to their kid's game? Sometimes just a simple gesture or a thank you for their hard work can go a long way.



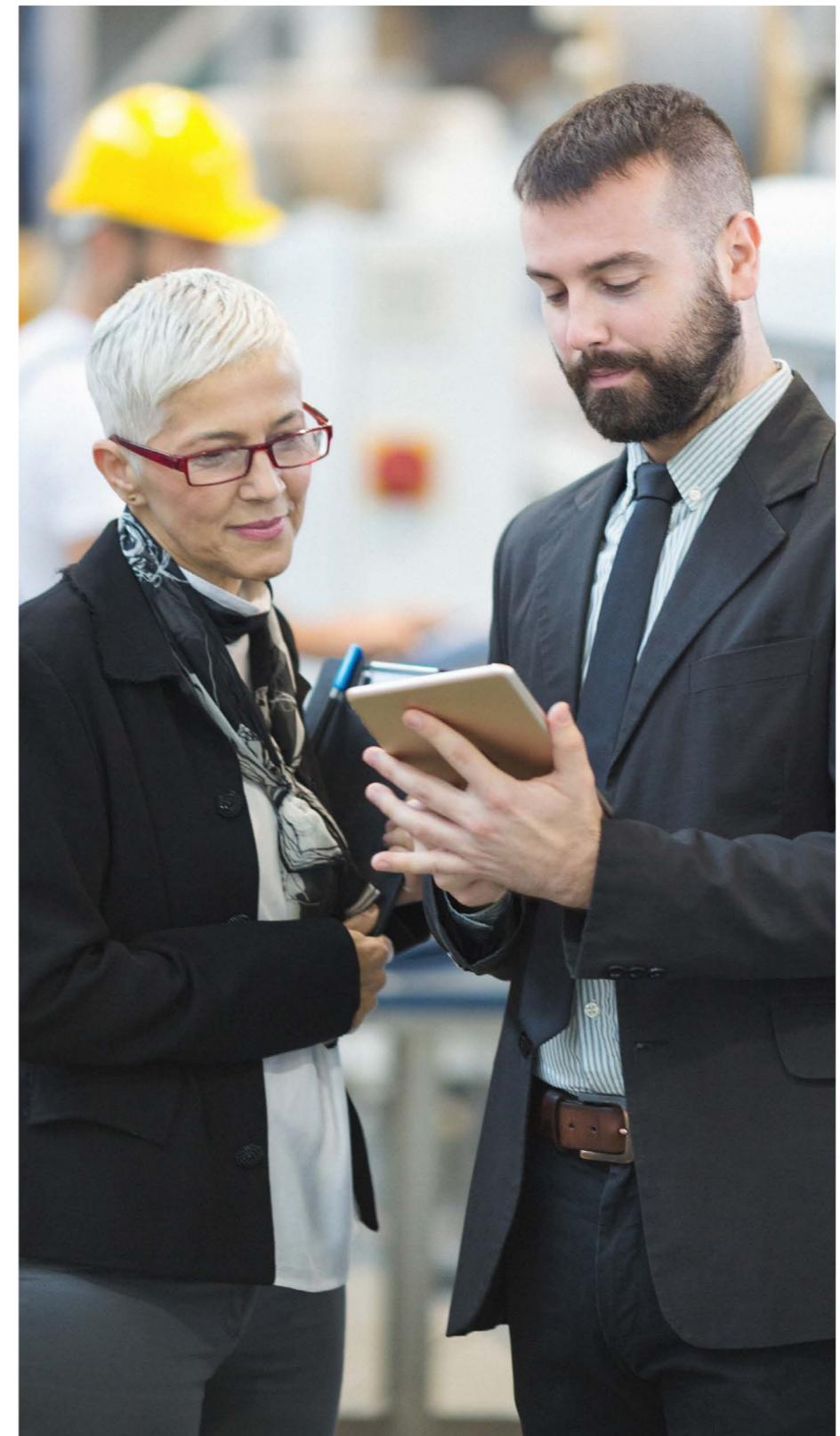
## Diversity Equity And Inclusion:

It is the responsibility of business leaders everywhere to advance racial and ethnic equity throughout every aspect of their organization. This initiative takes a true commitment from not only leadership, but every individual across the organization. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) is no longer a matter of “if and when,” but a priority and a commitment that businesses of all sizes and industries need to make moving forward. Workplaces committed to DE&I are better able to attract top talent, engage their employees, and perform competitively in new markets. McKinsey & Company reports that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.



**Here are tips to create a diverse and equitable workplace:**

- 1. Create a strategy team.** Your racial and ethnic equity strategy team will take the lead on implementing the equity actions included in the [Sustainable Pittsburgh + Catalyst Connection Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Toolkit!](#) This team should be composed of the internal stakeholders whose participation and buy-in will be crucial to assessing and advancing racial and ethnic equity in your organization.
- 2. Assess your current state.** The first step of an assessment process is to break down the concept of racial and ethnic equity into more concrete, measurable dimensions. There are many ways to break down a concept like equity, and organizations may do this differently depending on their context, goals, and experiences.
- 3. Identify meaningful Metrics.** Once you identify intended outcomes, attach a metric to it. Surveying or interviewing based on metrics provides a benchmark. From there, you can set a target improvement for each metric. After surveying, tweak and add as necessary. Since the DEI process evolves over time, the company may need new outcomes in the future as things change.
- 4. Create a plan.** Your DE&I action plan should build upon the previous steps you have taken to build up your company's capacity and partnerships for addressing DE&I goals; assess your baseline performance regarding employee outcomes, corporate commitments, and vendor engagement; and investigate your options for improving your performance in these areas. Build upon this progress by identifying and implementing plans for each of the three impact buckets highlighted throughout this tool as indicated below.
- 5. Perform and Disclose.** Once you have created a strategic plan for advancing racial and ethnic equity in your business, implement your plan and share your progress! The Phase 3 guide will provide you with frameworks and additional resources to utilize as you begin taking action toward your DE&I goals.





## Employee Development:

Employee development is the process during which employees, with the support of their employer, go through professional training to improve their skills and grow their knowledge.

Employee development does not refer solely to optimizing an individual's skill set for a particular role. Rather, it refers to continued learning that nurtures professionals and helps them progress on their individual career path. While it's ultimately the individual's responsibility to own their professional development, it's to the employer's benefit to encourage continuing education by providing or facilitating both internal and external learning opportunities. Prioritizing employee development ensures that team members' skills continue to evolve in accordance with industry trends and best practices. Think of medical professionals, who are required to retake board certification exams every few years to make sure their skills are still up to snuff.

### Here are 5 tips for creating an employee development program

- 1. Define career paths and learning journeys.** Begin with the end in mind. Listen to the individual and get to know where they want to be in the next 5 years. It's their development plan, you are there to facilitate and support that journey.
- 2. Offer training and development through a variety of platforms.** Training is only effective if it is utilized. By providing access to on-demand training, virtual instructor led programs, on the job training, and classroom instruction, you are creating an important aspect of training...ACCESS!
- 3. Sustain skill and competency gains within a learning/coaching culture.** Don't just offer training to check a box. Make sure the offerings relate to the individual's learning journey and engage them with ongoing coaching that results in the practical application of the skills they develop.
- 4. Consider launching an apprenticeship program.** Apprenticeships can help to create new streams of talent while creating much needed bench strength. It will also serve as a foundational cornerstone for creating a "Learning Organization."
- 5. Track employee progress.** A great way to do this is through a Learning Management System or LMS. These platforms allow individual learners to manager their own learning journey while allowing you to monitor and manage their progress.

## **Performance Management:** What gets Measured, gets Done!

In the classic 90's movie, *Groundhog Day*, the main character, (Bill Murray) is forced to live the same day over and over again with little ability to affect change or end the ever-repeating loop. Sadly, many companies and their employees see Performance Management in much the same way. In essence, Performance Management becomes that once-a-year meeting that amounts to a scripted accountability session that rarely ever changes form and moreover, rarely impacts organizational strategy.

An effective Performance Management program ensures that a set of activities and outputs are directly tied to organizational strategy. In other words, strategy may start at the top, but in order for those metrics to be achievable, they must cascade down throughout your organization from the c-suite to the departments and from the departments to the individuals. If done effectively, each team member understands their role and how the work they do each day moves the company forward.

### **Here are 5 tips for creating a Performance Management Plan that actually works**

- 1. Engage employees to develop goals.** If you want employee buy-in and ownership of performance metrics, make them part of the goal setting process. Their feedback will prove to be useful in setting meaningful metrics. You might also find that they will set a higher performance standard than you had originally planned.
- 2. Create clarity around roles and responsibilities.** Team members should not have to maneuver through their day-to-day tasks with confusion or ambiguity because responsibilities are a secret. It's up to you as a leader to ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- 3. Establish organizational goal alignment.** Alignment creates unity between the company's ultimate vision of success and the way leaders and individual contributors drive business results. In other words, CASCADE, CASCADE, CASCADE! An individual contributor's goals should be aligned with both departmental metrics and company strategy. Remember, the company succeeds when every individual knows their role and how they impact the bottom line.
- 4. Ensure employees receive ongoing feedback.** Birthdays are once a year, performance management shouldn't be. It's okay to set the annual metrics or KPIs, but focus on regular meetings to make sure your team is on track. Utilize short-term OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) that point toward those departmental KPIs.
- 5. Celebrate successes.** Performance management shouldn't be a dreaded conversation. Recognize and celebrate the wins. This will go a long way in creating a more engaged workforce.

## Succession Planning:

When the next tough business challenge arises, is your bench ready to step up? The success of any organization depends on the continued quality of its people at all levels, which is why successful manufacturing firms consider succession planning a top priority. Even when a company has strong talent in its leadership and a skilled workforce stream, it may not have the right people to fill important roles or keen insights into the best candidates for key positions.

In this decade, nearly 34 million US workers are expected to retire. That trend, combined with the existing skilled worker gap, means that it soon will be increasingly difficult to find an adequate number of qualified job candidates. Now is the time to implement a strategy for replacing these valuable, experienced employees. Employee Succession Planning involves understanding your organization's long-term goals, identifying the developmental needs of your workforce, and making predictions based on workforce trends.

- 1. Identify key positions.** Start with your current organizational chart and identify the individual(s) that will be retiring in the next (5) years or other positions that you feel are "at risk". This visual exercise will allow you to map successors to those positions while identifying gaps where there is no clear replacement. You may be surprised to find that the loss of one key position causes a ripple effect across the organization.
- 2. Capture tribal knowledge.** The greatest loss manufacturers will see during the retirement tsunami is the loss of tribal knowledge. It's important that you begin the process of updating process documentation, SOPs and standard work instructions. Even if you have them, chances are, they are out of date and don't reflect how work is really done. Complete this task and you will have a training library that will help to ensure a seamless transition of skilled workers.
- 3. Select high potential employees.** Remember the Performance Management portion in the last section? It's useful here too. By identifying key contributors that consistently outperform their counterparts, you can begin to identify them as your high potential candidates and part of your succession pipeline.
- 4. Create development plans.** Once you've identified your high potential employees, it's important to assess any skills gaps that would prevent them from ascending to the higher positions within your organization. Use competency modeling for positions and create a learning plan that addresses any skills gaps that your "high potential" employee may have.
- 5. Do not overlook ownership succession planning.** If you are a privately held company, you should also be focusing on an ownership succession plan. Whether you're planning to transfer the business to your children, consider an Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP), or sell your company outright, ownership transition begins with establishing a plan. Planning early is crucial. Once you have a plan, you must communicate that plan and then execute it. An ownership succession plan can take 3-5 years to complete, so the development of individual objectives and milestones is essential to ensuring a smooth transition.

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Catalyst Connection is a southwestern Pennsylvania economic development organization dedicated to serving manufacturers. For more than 30 years, Catalyst has operated with a focus on powering potential through delivering technical assistance and management consulting services and developing long-standing partnerships across the region. Catalyst maintains a deeply held commitment to modernizing manufacturing and enabling opportunity across business enterprises, individuals, and throughout communities.

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