



## Construction Companies – How Strong is Your Talent Brand?

BY Katie McConnell, CPA, PHR

### First, introductions.

Me: I am a hiring professional. My job is to help construction companies (like yours) evaluate their talent needs and identify the right candidates to help the company execute on its mission. I am also tasked with helping identify weaknesses in the talent cycle and bring solutions.

You: You are a business leader. You are busy making strategic decisions that help drive company initiatives forward. You have entrusted a team of individuals to execute on the company's day-to-day activities to make that happen. (If you are currently running the company payroll while you are reading this, you need to put the article down and hire someone to do that before you read on.) You are also not a professional recruiter, and shouldn't expect yourself to be.

### Now, a few definitions.

**The Market:** Today's market is extremely competitive. The construction industry has been more affected than many others as we saw a giant exodus of experienced professionals from the industry throughout the 2008-2010 bust. Fast-forward 8 years later, and here we are in a relative boom again, with a bunch of eager 2-year experienced folks that are too green to do the job, and a heap of 25 year experienced folks who are ready to retire. The market is tight for that 5-9 year experienced professional! You need that candidate. And so does your competition.

Add to that, salaries are sky-high as competing companies are "buying" talent. This is a driving factor in turnover. A healthy employee turnover rate for the construction and real estate industry is around 21% (according to a recent

ADP payroll survey). This is across all positions, including field roles. Corporate office roles in the industry are more like 10-12%.

**Talent Brand:** A talent brand is essentially the reputation you have as an employer, as told by the people that work for you (and formerly worked for you). This is told via online and electronic channel, and word of mouth. In the age of social media and constant information flow, "brand" is more than just your company logo.

### Next, the brass tacks:

When working with a company on talent initiatives, the first item on our agenda is to talk about talent brand and selling points. We need to establish why someone would want to come to work for your company before we go try to find that person. We also need to determine the candidate pool we want to attract, in order to adjust our selling points. (You would not purchase a piece of new equipment without first determining what you need and running your ROI analysis, right?) Your recruitment sales strategy and talent brand are the foundation for effective recruitment.

### Ask yourself:

1. Are you trying to attract younger talent? More experienced candidates?
2. What is important to the demographic you are trying to recruit?
3. What is the company offering? (Beyond just dollars and benefits, think growth opportunities.)

Start by simply listing all the benefits, perks and reasons why someone may want to join your company. An easy starting point is to ask your current employees why they work at the company. Build from there. In the course of this exercise, you may find that you are not offering competitive benefits compared to the rest of the industry. (Consult with your talent advisor if you aren't sure if you are being competitive.)

Unless you started the company yesterday, chances are that you already have an existing talent brand in the marketplace. You are wise to investigate your existing brand. (Having a Q&A with existing employees and performing exit interviews with ongoing employees are a great way to take a quick pulse here.)

Here are several key areas to look at when assessing your talent brand:

1. *Online reviews by current and former employees. Websites like Glassdoor.com can be a good resource to investigate what employees are saying about your company and leadership. (Ignore the salary data, it is always over-inflated.) Potential new hires often visit public forums like this when researching potential employers.*
2. *Difficulty hiring. Not getting a good response from your ad? Is your reputation in the market place to blame? Is your application process a hassle? Start investigating and asking questions! Look at review sites like Yelp and Google for star ratings. Manage your brand actively by commenting.*
3. *Lack of online presence. Do you have a website with an "About Us" page? Potential candidates want to know about your mission, vision, and values as an employer. Many employers also have a social media account such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter to stay connected and push out relevant content.*

A Practical Example: You bump into a former coworker from a prior company who mentions that he recently started a new job. You ask why he left his old company. He starts expelling a laundry list of issues he and other employees experienced; lack of communication from upper management, no follow through, limited time off, bad benefits, no growth...on and on. You start to cringe and ask, what was the name of that company again? I need to remember to NEVER apply there. (And maybe stop using them as a subcontractor, too. That place sounds like a mess.)

And just like that – a company's talent brand has been affected and it had absolutely nothing to do with the product or service. Word of mouth reputation plays a critical role in your ability to attract new talent. And don't you want top talent working for you, NOT your competitor?

Managing your talent brand is a 24-7 operation. Paying attention *after an employee is hired is too late. Regardless of your business size, be cognizant of your talent brand. Taking an active approach to managing and improving your brand will add tremendous value in your ability to attract and retain talent.*

### About the Author

Katie is a licensed CPA and PHR with a background in both accounting and talent acquisition. Additionally, Katie has been involved in several start-up ventures.

Katie currently serves as a talent thought leader with a national CPA firm. Her practice focuses on strategic recruitment initiatives for construction and development companies throughout the United States including organizational assessments, hiring initiatives and full service search consulting.

Katie is a frequent speaker with organizations throughout the United States on topics including talent acquisition strategy. You can also find her publications on LinkedIn Pulse. Her passions include helping businesses grow, yoga and wine. She has been quoted in a variety of industry publications on topics including hiring and developing talent.

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### For more info contact:

**Matthew Karver,**  
Western Region Business Development Leader  
Construction and Real Estate, Private Equity Group.  
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP  
Direct 909-694-0646,  
Mobile 760-421-1634  
matthew.karver@CLAconnect.com  
Web: CLAconnect.com  
Investment advisory services are offered through CliftonLarsonAllen  
Wealth Advisors, LLC, an SEC-registered investment advisor.

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Contact Vivy Dang, Attorney at Law  
vdang@wfsdlaw.com  
10620 Treena St., Ste. 230  
Scripps Ranch, California 92131

Telephone: (858) 935-6148  
Facsimile: (858) 935-6001