Getting Buy-In for Your Employee Storytelling Project

The Ultimate Guide to Employer Branding ROI

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Introduction

The Challenge for Employer Brand Professionals

As an employer brand professional, you're responsible for building awareness, engaging top talent, and ensuring that your company's culture is communicated authentically across all channels. However, you face the added pressure of proving the value of these efforts in terms that leadership understands: return on investment (ROI).

While consumer marketers are accustomed to healthy budgets and clear-cut metrics, employer branding often competes for resources with other critical business functions like sales, marketing, and operations.

Your leadership needs to understand how your work impacts profitability, productivity, and contributes to culture.

Making the Case for Investment

Securing leadership buy-in for employer branding projects—especially those involving employee storytelling—requires a solid business case. You must be able to demonstrate how these efforts directly impact the company's bottom line, whether by reducing turnover, improving time-to-hire, or increasing employee engagement. The key is framing your initiatives as not just "nice-to-haves," but essential for long-term business success.

This Guide Provides Actionable Insights on How To:

- Present a compelling business case to secure leadership buy-in for your employer brand and storytelling initiatives.
- Leverage employee stories to maximize impact, not just for recruitment, but for internal culture, retention, and long-term brand strength.
- Calculate and communicate the ROI of these projects in ways that resonate with leadership.

This guide will arm you with the data, case studies, and practical tips you need to prove that investing in employer branding—especially employee storytelling—delivers measurable business results.

Framing the Problem

What Do Your Challenges Really Cost?

To get leadership buy-in for employer branding and employee storytelling projects, you need to translate the challenges you face into business terms. Leadership isn't motivated by abstract ideas; they care about the financial impact on the company. So, the first step in building a strong business case is to connect your employer branding challenges—whether it's high turnover, poor candidate engagement, or a talent shortage—to concrete business outcomes.

For example, turnover can cost anywhere from 50% to 200% of an employee's annual salary. Unfilled positions in key departments delay projects, reduce productivity, and strain your team. These are the real, quantifiable costs of not investing in employer branding and employee stories.

Potential turnover cost for a mid-level employee

Salary: $60,000

$30K — 50% turnover cost
$45K — 75% turnover cost
$60K — 100% turnover cost
$90K — 150% turnover cost
$120K — 200% turnover cost

Connecting Employer Brand Challenges to Business Outcomes

Your goal is to frame these problems as business risks that need immediate solutions. When leadership sees that these issues are costing the company real dollars, they'll be more likely to support your initiatives.

Here are four employer branding challenges and their associated business risks, potential storytelling solutions, and metrics that may help win your business case.

EB challenge	Business risk	Storytelling solution	Metrics that matter
Poor brand awareness	Difficulty attracting top talent; longer time-to-hire, higher recruitment costs	Employee stories build trust and increase visibility across digital channels.	50% of candidates say they wouldn't work for a company with a bad reputation – even for a pay increase. (Source: TalentNow)
Misaligned employer branding	Higher turnover; negative employer reputation	Authentic stories align expectations with reality, leading to better candidate matches and lower turnover.	Companies that effectively deliver their EVP can reduce turnover by 69%. (Source: Gartner)
Difficulty advancing DEI goals	Challenges attracting diverse talent; reputation risk	Stories that showcase diverse employee experiences improve DEI efforts and attract diverse talent.	Negative reputation costs companies at least 10% more per hire.(Source: Harvard Business Review)
Low employee engagement	Lower productivity; higher absenteeism	Stories that highlight purpose and growth improve engagement and productivity.	Companies with a highly engaged workforce are 21% more profitable than those with a disengaged staff. (Source: Gallup)

When presenting your business case, it's best to use internal data if available. But if not, use industry benchmarks. For example, showing leadership that a 69% reduction in turnover or 21% more profitability are achievable results from strong employer branding makes your business case more compelling.

Actionable Tips for Securing Leadership Buy-In

➢ **Speak their language:** Leadership cares about results that impact revenue and profitability. Use terms like "cost reduction," "efficiency gains," and "competitive advantage" when presenting your case.

➢ **Show the financial impact:** Translate the effects of weak employer branding (high turnover, low engagement) into lost dollars. Use a basic ROI calculation to show what the company stands to gain from a storytelling project.

➢ **Highlight competitive pressure:** Share examples of what competitors or industry leaders are doing in terms of employer branding. Show how your company could be lagging behind without these investments.

Case study: Ochsner Health System

How the Ochsner Health System's recruitment marketing team got buy-in for their employee storytelling project

The Challenge: Addressing Critical Talent Shortages in a Competitive Market

Ochsner Health Systems, Louisiana's largest non-profit academic healthcare system, faced a pressing challenge in recruiting top nursing and physician talent. With increased competition for qualified healthcare professionals, the recruitment team was struggling to fill critical roles quickly. This talent shortage threatened to impact patient care and organizational growth.

The existing employer branding efforts lacked the authentic content needed to truly connect with potential candidates and differentiate Ochsner from other healthcare systems. To tackle this challenge, Ochsner knew they needed more than just traditional recruitment tactics—they needed to showcase their unique employee experience through storytelling.

Framing the Project as a Business Solution

Before embarking on the employee storytelling project, Ochsner's recruitment marketing team recognized that they needed strong support from executive leadership. To secure buy-in, they framed the initiative as a strategic solution to several key business risks:

Framing the problem: They made it clear to leadership that the talent shortage wasn't just a recruiting problem; it was a business problem. Unfilled nursing and physician roles had a direct impact on patient care and the organization's ability to meet growth targets.

Presenting the business case: The team shared how effective employer branding could reduce turnover, speed up time-to-hire, and improve employee engagement. By focusing on tangible outcomes they made it clear the project would provide measurable value to the organization.

Using competitive pressure: The team shared examples of similar organizations that had successfully implemented storytelling initiatives. This helped create a sense of urgency for Ochsner to invest in similar efforts to remain competitive.

Highlighting the long-term benefits: The team also emphasized that this was not a one-off project but an ongoing initiative that could be repurposed across multiple channels.

By positioning the employee storytelling project as a cost-effective, long-term solution to critical business challenges, Ochsner's recruitment team was able to secure full leadership buy-in and the necessary budget to proceed.

The Solution: Leveraging Employee Stories to Build Trust and Engagement

With leadership support secured, Ochsner partnered with Stories Inc. to capture authentic employee stories that reflected the organization's values and culture. These stories focused on three key themes: career development, impactful work, and showing its commitment to an inclusive workplace.

These stories were transformed into a robust content library, including high-quality videos and a refreshed employee photo collection, which were deployed across Ochsner's digital platforms.

Ongoing Value and Repurposing

The content from the employee storytelling project continued to be repurposed across multiple campaigns, social media, sourcing emails, and internal communications. This extended the value of the project far beyond its initial launch, making it a long-term asset for Ochsner's employer branding and recruitment marketing efforts.

Ochsner physicians sharing their care for their patients

Employer Branding Return on Investment

Now that you've captured leadership's attention by framing the problem in business terms, it's time to build the business case for your proposed solution: an employee storytelling campaign.

But a good business case can't only present the problem and solution, it also needs to communicate the return on investment.

Calculating ROI in Employer Branding

ROI (Return on Investment) is a critical measure that leadership will look for when deciding whether to support your employer branding initiatives. For employer brand professionals, ROI isn't just about showing that your initiatives work—it's about proving that they positively impact the business's bottom line, both in tangible cost savings and long-term benefits like engagement and retention.

The ROI calculation helps quantify the financial return on your efforts. In simple terms:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{(Value Gained} - \text{Project Cost)}}{\text{Project Cost}} \times 100\%$$

For employer branding projects, your costs will include things like production (e.g., videos, content creation), distribution (e.g., social media, career site updates), and time. The value gained will come from measurable outcomes such as reduced turnover, faster time-to-hire, and increased employee engagement.

Examples of ROI Calculations

To calculate ROI effectively, focus on key metrics that can be tracked and quantified. Here are four examples of calculating ROI:

Turnover Reduction

Turnover is one of the most significant costs companies face. When employee stories align expectations with reality, they can help attract candidates who are a better fit, leading to reduced turnover.

Metric: Cost of replacing an employee (typically 50-200% of their salary).
Example: A company spends $50,000 on a storytelling project that reduces turnover by 15%, saving $300,000 in turnover costs.
ROI: ($300,000 saved turnover costs − $50,000 project cost) / $50,000 project cost × 100 = 500% ROI.

Time-to-Hire Improvement

Strong employer branding can reduce the time it takes to fill critical roles by making your company more attractive to high-quality candidates.

Metric: The cost of a vacant position (e.g., the daily revenue or productivity lost while a role remains open).
Example: If your storytelling efforts reduce time-to-hire by 20%, and each day costs the company $1,000 in lost productivity, you could save $60,000 over a year by filling roles faster.
ROI: ($60,000 in time saved − $30,000 project cost) / $30,000 project cost × 100 = 100% ROI.

Ready to dig in?
Run the numbers with our ROI calculators!

Examples of ROI Calculations (cont'd)

Cost-per-Hire Reduction

By improving employer brand awareness, you can attract more qualified candidates organically, reducing reliance on costly recruiting methods.

Metric: Traditional cost-per-hire vs. cost-per-hire with strong employer branding.

Example: Let's say your company hires 100 people a year. Previously, you relied heavily on agencies, costing $5,000 per hire. A storytelling project reduces your cost-per-hire by 40%, saving $200,000 in agency fees annually.

ROI: ($200,000 agency savings − $60,000 project cost) / $60,000 project cost × 100 = 233% ROI.

Employee Engagement and Productivity

Higher employee engagement, driven by sharing employee stories that resonate with the workforce, leads to higher productivity and lower absenteeism.

Metric: Productivity gains and absenteeism reduction due to engagement.

Example: After launching an internal storytelling campaign, your company sees a 10% increase in productivity. For a department that generates $1M in revenue, this leads to an additional $100,000 in output.

ROI: ($100,000 in productivity gains − $20,000 project cost) / $20,000 project cost × 100 = 400% ROI.

Ready to dig in?
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How to Project ROI for Leadership

Projecting ROI for employer branding projects is about demonstrating future value, not just current results. Here's how to position your ROI estimates to leadership:

➤ **Use conservative estimates**
While it's tempting to highlight the highest possible returns, presenting conservative, realistic numbers builds trust with leadership. Use industry benchmarks or historical data from your company when possible.

➤ **Show both short-term and long-term value**
Highlight both the immediate, quantifiable returns (e.g., faster time-to-hire or reduced turnover) and the long-term benefits that are harder to quantify (e.g., stronger company culture or brand equity).

➤ **Present real examples**
Whenever possible, use case studies or examples from similar companies to demonstrate how storytelling initiatives have driven ROI for other businesses. This adds credibility to your projections.
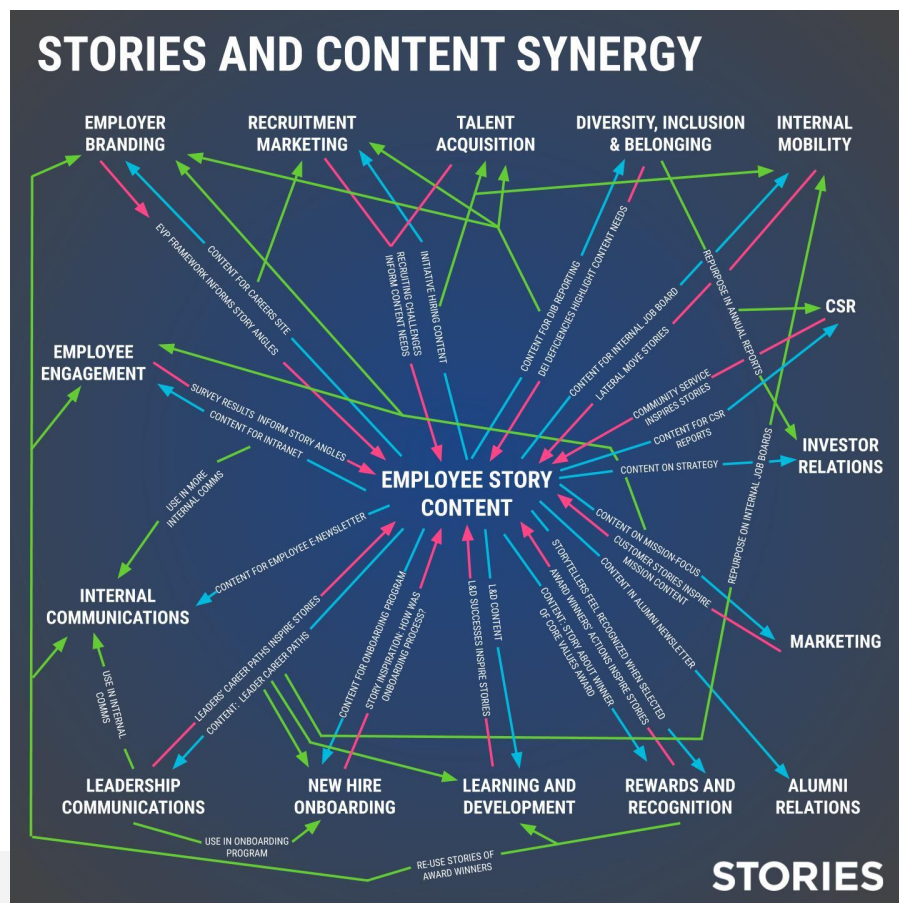
Maximizing ROI By Repurposing Content

Another key to maximizing ROI is to think beyond the initial project. Employee stories are versatile and can be repurposed across multiple platforms and channels. The more you reuse and adapt the content, the higher the ROI will be.

Examples of Repurposing:

➢ Use employee stories in recruitment marketing ads, social media campaigns, career site videos, and onboarding materials.

➢ Create spin-off content, such as blog posts, social graphics, and email campaigns from one core employee story.

➢ Feature employee stories in DEI campaigns, internal engagement initiatives, and even investor communications to further expand their reach and value.

Conclusion

Employer brand professionals are uniquely positioned to drive significant value for their organizations, but proving that value in clear, measurable terms is essential for securing leadership support. Throughout this guide, we've shown how employee stories can help address key business risks—such as high turnover, low engagement, or a talent shortage—while delivering a measurable return on investment.

The key takeaway is that employee stories are a long-term investment. They offer a scalable, authentic way to showcase your company's culture and values while addressing critical recruitment and retention challenges. By aligning storytelling initiatives with your company's business goals and tracking the right metrics, you can demonstrate that your employer branding efforts have a direct impact on the bottom line.

Final Thoughts: Measuring the Impact of Your Storytelling Initiatives

Employee storytelling is more than just a tool for recruitment—it's a strategic asset that drives long-term value across the entire organization. From attracting high-quality candidates to improving retention and engagement, the impact of employee stories can be felt across multiple business functions. The key to maximizing your ROI is to continually measure, adapt, and repurpose your storytelling content to ensure it addresses ongoing business challenges.

You're now equipped with the tools to secure leadership buy-in and prove the value of your employer branding efforts. Remember, a well-executed storytelling initiative can transform your employer brand—and the business impact is real and measurable.

Resources

Materials for Calculating and Presenting ROI

Business Case Deck Template (PowerPoint)
These slides are a template you can use to present a business case for an employer branding storytelling project to leadership.

ROI calculator (Excel)
Use this calculator to identify the value gained from employer branding projects and to calculate the ROI from any project investments you make that realize those gains.

ROI Worksheet (PDF)
A simple worksheet that you can use to show the ROI from any employer branding project. (Tip: use the calculator above to easily gather your data.)

About Stories Inc.

Stories Inc. is an employer branding and recruitment marketing agency and content studio. Since 2012, Stories Inc. has been uncovering powerful stories of employee experiences, and bringing those stories to life through engaging content.

Stories Inc.' s expert team members capture employee stories that show what is unique about an organization's culture, and connect those stories to brand messaging, corporate values and purpose. Using a variety of digital media, Stories Inc. delivers content libraries full of engaging pieces, optimized for all candidate and employee-facing channels.