

Key trends for 2017



By [Louise Marsland](#)

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With the disruption of many industries by entrepreneurial tech-driven startups, and the rise of robots and artificial intelligence, many jobs will disappear in the next 20 years. The impact of this is that organisations need to think more creatively about transforming their businesses, becoming more innovative and focussing on developing so-called 'soft skills' like empathy and persuasion.



Roisin McCarthy

Employer branding is becoming a key organisational science in attracting talent, talent acquisition and growing talent within an organisation. Much of this has been driven by the millennial generation, our first truly digital generation, who have a different way of working. Organisational culture has never been more important.

As [GetSmarter](#), a sponsor of this Employee Branding Focus report for Bizcommunity.com, states, a major trend is “managing the employer brand in relation to the various generational groups that could work alongside each other in your company. From Gen X to Millennials to Gen Z, what attracts and retains one group will be different to what attracts and retains another”.

It is key that employer branding needs to be viewed as a strategic, integrated approach, as opposed to being solely the domain of the human resources (HR) department and/or marketing, emphasises employer branding specialist, [Celeste Sirin](#), of Employer Branding SA. “It is driven from the top by the CEO and the management team; and dedicated buy-in and participation is required from every stakeholder within every functional/operational division of the business.”



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Recruitment specialist Roisin McCarthy, the founder and managing director of The Sparkplugs Group, says there is definitely more of a trend to selling a company to prospective employees. Companies needed to ask themselves “how do I make people feel?” This included getting back to candidates even if they are not the right fit for the organisation, not ignoring CVs, and treating each candidate as a potential employee.

“I’ve had top candidates refuse to deal with companies even years after, because of a bad experience. Any brand should make you feel good,” she says.

These are of some of the top employer branding trends we've identified for 2017/18:

- 1. Information overload:** In our digital-driven society, candidates have more knowledge about employers than ever before and can access a diversity of potential employers. This also provides opportunity for employers to engage with potential talent across a multitude of platforms.
- 2. Brand fulfilment:** Promoting the unique aspects of an employer brand and an organisation's culture to set it apart from others in an industry, is key. Listen to your employees - your current workforce is your secret weapon in developing an effective employee brand, says [Christian Jost](#), head of people management at Hays.
- 3. The freelance "gig" economy:** With the gig economy, remote working and flexible hours is gaining momentum, as is a workforce of contractors, and the challenge for employers is to ensure a "sense of belonging" is still nurtured and all workers, including freelancers, feel they are part of the common culture of an organisation.
- 4. Social media influencers:** Social media is becoming more important in recruiting brand ambassadors to champion an organisation and build engagement where future employees hang out online. We've seen how LinkedIn has become an important recruitment tool in recent years, as well as a channel for organisations to build on and promote their employer brand. Authenticity is key – use current employee talent to tell your story.
- 5. Agile organisations will rule the future:** Agility is key in meeting disruption head on and assessing employees needs in upskilling to meet new challenges in the industry. Instead of only recruiting new talent, talent inside organisations needs to be nurtured. The employee experience is important and can be used to amplify social media efforts. [Red Panda Software](#) in Cape Town, believes that businesses must realise that providing employees with an avenue to be creative and viewing them as complete individuals will filter through to their professional lives.
- 6. Creating communities:** This is a trend identified by the international [HR Trend Institute](#) for organisations to maintain communities for potential employees, thereby creating a potential pool of future talent to tap into. LinkedIn, and Facebook to some extent, is a good way to nurture common interest and expertise within an industry.
- 7. Virtual reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) can revolutionise recruitment:** This is according to [Hays](#), which highlights how international companies like Deutsche Bahn are using VR to give new recruits the chance to experience a day in the life of a train driver, to see if it is a future career they are interested in. Companies are also giving virtual reality office tours or using AR holograms to interact with candidates.
- 8. Employer branding and consumer branding are merging,** says the [HR Trend Institute](#), which has identified that the disciplines are coming together, especially in organisations where consumer marketing is important. Brand specialist and trend forecaster, [Dave Nemeth](#) agrees, pointing out that a strong employer brand creates a healthy culture that can sustain brands during recessionary and uncertain times.

"Companies think it is about salaries, but it is work-life balance that means more. Companies are experimenting more and more with flexitime, work from home schemes and remote commuting," added McCarthy.

In fact, a "healthy employer brand is critical in engaging with your staff and attracting quality prospective employees," reiterates Employer Branding Focus sponsor, [Top Employers Institute](#).

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