

Full Interview

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In your own words, what are the driving factors behind the changes that have happened to the labour market over the last two years?

What we see now is a profound transformation in the way we work, and I believe this is only the beginning. Of course, much of this transformation was brought by the pandemic. Since then, we're able to work from home and have set us up to do so. Because of this, it's now easier for employers to recruit employees from places all around the world, even where they don't have offices. All kinds of new possibilities arise. Now that we can work from anywhere on the planet, we're no longer bound to the same nine-to-five shift nor in the same time zone. Work offers a lot more flexibility – and employees are now expecting this to be part of their working conditions.

Employers and companies benefit from a huge growth potential in the current economic context. However, this growth potential may be limited by the labour shortage. Currently, business development opportunities exist in many industries. However, companies might not be able to recruit the workers they need to achieve their goals. In the end, everyone gets affected by these changes that are raising salaries and improving working conditions

across all industries, even though challenges differ from one industry to another.

Indeed, with the high demand for workers, the power now lies in the hands of employees who are part of the potential labor supply. Jobseekers can expect more from potential employers and they can ask for the things they want like schedule flexibility, a higher wage, more vacations, being able to work from home, and/or a balanced work-life.

Many people also want to contribute to a greater mission, one that fits their values, by working for ethical companies. In Canada, according to Edelman's 2022 Trust Barometer , 55% of workers choose a working place based on their beliefs and values. They also want to be part of something that will help them grow and learn, however not at the expense of their work-life balance. Employees of all generations are expecting more!

From your experience, what are some of the most important ways a company can both find new talent, and retain current talent?

There's no easy answer to this. I know everybody is looking for the magic recipe, and I can understand that because there are lots of challenges and pain points to face.

While there is no one-answer solution, a broader strategy can help. I believe successful attraction and retention start with a great Employee Value Proposition (EVP) – one that is unique, aligned with what employees value the most, and well marketed.

Why should talents choose you as their employer among others? What unique combination of compensation, development, purpose, and life experience do you offer?

Your EVP strategy needs to be defined by HR and the leaders of the organization. HR specialists can lead that process while making sure that strategies are tied to the organization's needs and your business objectives.

However, the secret lies in getting the employees involved and asking for their ideas. From one organization to another, workers may not want the same things. Company cultures and the reality of their employees differ significantly. With today's challenges, it is crucial that organizations invest their time and money in areas that have the most impact.

By asking employees how their organization could improve as an employer, what they expect from it and what works for them, we usually get a clear portrait of HR priorities, and even great new ideas!

Of course, you have to make sure that, whatever changes you implement, those are coherent with what your organization is aiming at. That being said, ideas and feedback coming from employee give leaders a great base to start from. Not only is it then easier for them to alleviate their brainstorming load

and get right to what matters the most, but it also helps employees feel involved and part of something. This way, they aren't simply doing their work to collect a paycheck, they are getting involved in defining the work conditions and environment.

Do you think there are any specific areas of employee engagement that companies aren't doing enough to address?

I think that, sometimes, companies are not so good at listening to their employees. As employers, they feel they aren't in charge of their personal lives, so they may not want to get into that. However, people are looking for a good work-life balance, for more ways to take care of their health and feel fulfilled, and indeed there are solutions to ensure that your company offers that.

Employers can use multiple strategies to collect information and encourage employees to express themselves, like asking for feedback through a confidential platform or a suggestion box or a survey. Focus groups, brainstorming sessions and individual interviews can also be great, depending on the organizational culture and the level of trust.

Asking employees what they really need, both in their personal and professional lives, and collecting that information, is key to designing them a value proposition. And it can really make a difference in their lives. To protect confidentiality and ensure employees feel at ease sharing such personal information, good practice is to ask the help of a third-party provider who can collect data and provide consolidated results.

Keep in mind that there are employees out there who are struggling to affirm their gender, while some have children with special needs, or aging parents, and others are stressed out, burnt out, or lacking sleep. Eventually, these situations will affect their work.

As an employer, you can design a total compensation package that will help take care of those issues while making sure it's well tied to what most of your employees need. Although this may not represent the only component of a great employee value proposition (EVP), it is a key one.

How is the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) key to a company's HR strategy?

The employee value proposition strategy is key to the HR strategy in the sense that it presents what you are willing to offer your employees in exchange for the work they do for you. The talent market is exactly that: a market. In the business market, companies create great products in hope of attracting customers. In the talent market, employers create great EVPs in hope of attracting talents.

Still, the best EVPs need a bit of polishing and a great marketing strategy to “sell” well. Perceived value matters as much or sometimes even more than actual value. And it can be increased with a solid internal and external communication strategy supported by the employer-branding.

You can always ask people to take a leap of faith by coming to work for you based on the fact that you have the right clients or a great reputation. But if you are not clear about your package deal (your EVP), many applicants will flee. People want to know what kind of experience they will live in your organization, and what their compensation will be like - not just in terms of salary but also regarding growth opportunities and other benefits. If you fail

to explain your full package, how can you compete with other players who are being transparent?

In short: How is the deal going to represent a mutually beneficial relationship? It's important to be clear on the value you are creating for employees.

Which advice would you give HR leaders trying to learn about and implement these ideas in their companies?

Don't wait until you are short of choices before you start thinking about your Employee Value Proposition. Be proactive, as much as you can.

Even if you are unsure what strategy will work best for you in the long run, it's better for you to do something and adjust as you go. You can always tell your employees, "Listen, we know the market is changing, and that the way of work is changing, and there have been major transformations over the past years. We may not have all the answers right now, but we do want to be proactive, so we are reaching out to you. We probably won't be able to address all your needs. We may be limited by our capacity to pay or by other

logistical considerations. But we really do want to ensure the best outcome for you and get you involved in the evolution of our HR practices.”

You can always present your employees with a gradual plan, one that suggests small steps and remains agile. You can even implement changes in pilot project mode and test them out before implementing them for good.

In any case, the first step should always be communication. Of course, communication may expose expectations... but in today’s market, expectations are there anyway. It is thus best to know them beforehand to deal with them in a strategic manner!

Other than the suggestions you’ve already given us, can you recommend any general tech solutions (not specific products) that can be helpful to companies struggling to fill positions?

For recruitment, applicant tracking systems can save a lot of time if you have a great deal of resumes to handle. Some of these systems even allow you to audit the diversity of candidates (age, sex, ethnicity), analyze your potential biases and make personalized recommendations to limit their impact.

That being said, I think we need to be careful with the applicant tracking systems. While these may be essential to some bigger companies, they can also be very rigid. Companies can miss out on a lot of talent that do not necessarily tick the box. Such tools can of course be helpful, but make sure that someone in the HR team scans through rejected resumes to spot talent or employees with potential among those that do not tick all the boxes.

Solutions that take the company's pulse about engagement, such as annual surveys, are very relevant to retention. Compared to the Employee Value Proposition surveys that I mentioned earlier, these aim at a different objective: they propose a quick survey with easy questions to measure the consistency of employee engagement. With these solutions, employers can collect their own data and build an engagement dashboard that ties data to the turnover rate and provides metrics on what's going on from an HR perspective.