



The Employer Reputation Playbook

An HR Leader's Guide to Building Trust
and Credibility from the Inside Out

Why Employer Reputation Matters

WHETHER YOU MANAGE IT OR NOT

Every organization already has an employer reputation. Like it or not, yours does too.

It's shaped every day by what your employees experience at work — and by how credibly that shows up in the market.

95% **of consumers** prefer to buy from reputable companies.



84% **of job seekers** consider employer reputation when deciding where to apply.



69% **of candidates reject offers** from companies with poor reputations.



UP TO

76% **of market value** can be attributed to reputation.



When your employer reputation is weak:

- ✗ Hiring takes longer and costs more.
- ✗ Employee retention suffers.
- ✗ Trust erodes, internally and externally.

But when it's strong:

- ✓ Employees show up more engaged.
- ✓ The best talent wants to work for your company.
- ✓ Recognition reinforces pride and momentum.

And a strong employer reputation can:



Cut Cost Per Hire by

50%



**Increase Qualified
Candidate Volume** by

50%



THE BOTTOM LINE

A poor employer reputation costs you great hires and loyal customers. A strong one helps you win both.



Top Workplaces Don't Leave Their Reputation to Chance

**The nation's top employers build winning reputations
by following our simple, proven blueprint:**



Part I: Measure

Top Workplaces know where they are in their culture, employee experience, and talent journey.



Part II: Shape

They rely on employee survey insights to make data-driven decisions, build on strengths, and improve focus areas.



Part III: Showcase

Top Workplaces differentiate their culture through employer brand and credible employer recognition.

Our blueprint helps organizations earn reputations they can stand behind — and empowers HR leaders to turn that credibility into a real competitive advantage. This playbook shows you how.



Part I: Measure

Your Reputation Begins With the Employee Experience

Employer reputation starts with measuring the employee experience — in other words, what it's really like to work at your organization day in and day out. It gives you a clear, honest benchmark while signaling that employee voices matter and leadership is listening, building the trust that underpins a credible reputation.

01 How to Measure the Employee Experience

02 How to Spot a Survey Worth Trusting

When employees feel heard, trust grows. And trust is the foundation of any credible reputation.

How to Measure the Employee Experience

The most credible way to understand the employee experience is simple: ask them for their feedback.

Here's how to do it the right way.

Confidential, third-party surveys create space for employees to be honest and gives leaders insight they can trust. When feedback is safe and unbiased, it reflects what work truly feels like day to day.

Confidential, third-party employee surveys:

- **Neutral administration improves participation rate and credibility.**
 - **Protect employee responses with built-in safeguards.**
 - **Build employee trust, leading to honest, candid feedback.**
 - **Get leaders a clear baseline, highlighting strengths and focus areas.**
- 

✓ YOUR CREDIBILITY CHECKLIST

How to Spot a Survey Worth Trusting

Not all employee surveys are created equal. If you're starting from square one, here's what to look for:

- ☐ **A trusted third party runs it**, so employees know it's unbiased.
- ☐ **Confidential from start to finish** — getting honest feedback depends on it.
- ☐ **Quick and easy to complete**, because time is everyone's tightest resource.
- ☐ **Built on proven research**, with questions that are regularly tested and refined.
- ☐ **Open-ended questions**, so employees can explain the why behind the numbers.
- ☐ **Looks at the full employee experience**, not just engagement and benefits.
- ☐ **Benchmark data** that shows how you stack up against similar organizations.
- ☐ **Clear, visual results** that are easy to interpret, share, and communicate.
- ☐ **Insights you can act on**, not just static, good-looking charts.
- ☐ **Room to customize**, so you can include items tailored to your company's needs.

EXTRA CREDIT (AND STRONGLY RECOMMENDED):

- ☐ **The survey also qualifies your organization for employer recognition awards.** This way, the work you're doing now can later be validated externally.



This is where the Energage Workplace Survey stands apart — measuring the employee experience and workplace culture while also creating the opportunity to earn trusted, employer recognition.

The image displays three overlapping screenshots of the Energage Workplace Survey interface. The top screenshot shows a title page with the question 'What do you think about your workplace?' and a 'Start Survey' button. The middle screenshot shows a 'Comment Questions' section with a text input field and a 'Add your comment' button. The bottom screenshot shows an 'Agreement Scale Questions' section with a table of statements and a Likert scale from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel genuinely appreciated at Energage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Energage operates by strong values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel included at Energage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This job has failed to meet the expectations I had when I started	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My pay is fair for the work I do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel well-informed about important decisions at Energage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is good interdepartmental cooperation at Energage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
New ideas are encouraged at Energage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At Energage, we do things efficiently and well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



WHERE TO START

Measuring the Employee Experience

A strong employer reputation doesn't start with messaging. It starts by understanding what matters to your employees — and how your culture truly compares.

- ☐ **1 Choose a credible, third-party survey partner.**
Honest feedback starts with trust and objectivity.
- ☐ **2 Communicate the “why” clearly, not just the ask.**
Explain the purpose of the survey, what to expect, and how it will be used.
- ☐ **3 Plan to share what you learn.**
Commit to sharing high-level results and next steps to build employee trust.

Part II: Shape



Build Your Employer Reputation by Shaping Culture

What you do with the employee survey data matters more than the data itself. When employees see visible change — especially when driven by their feedback — trust grows and your employer reputation strengthens from the inside out.

01

The Focus Rule

02

Turning Survey Insights Into Action

The Focus Rule

Top Workplaces don't try to fix everything at once. They focus deliberately to build momentum.

- **Prioritize a small number of culture improvements.**
- **Be intentional about where you spend time and energy.**
- **Make progress driven by the survey visible to employees.**



WHERE TO START

Turning Survey Insights Into Action

- ☐ **1 Look for patterns.**
Focus on what's showing up consistently, not one-off outliers.
- ☐ **2 Choose 2–3 priorities.**
Trying to fix everything at once is a fast way to fix nothing.
- ☐ **3 Connect those priorities to business outcomes.**
Tie them to retention, engagement, or performance so the work sticks.
- ☐ **4 Bring leaders and managers into the solution.**
Culture shifts happen through managers, not around them.
- ☐ **5 Show employees you're listening.**
Share progress early and often — visibility builds trust.

Part III: Showcase



Showcase Your Culture Story the Credible Way

Your employer reputation is already being shaped — by employee voices, shared every day. The question isn't whether there's a story out there. It's whether it's accurate, genuine, and credible.

01

Use Employee Insights to Tell a Culture Story People Trust

02

Validate Your Culture With Proof, Not Promises

Use Employee Insights to Tell a Culture Story People Trust

Employee survey data isn't just for internal improvement — it's the backbone of a genuine culture story. Use these insights to bring authenticity to your employer brand. It can also help drown out the negative online reviews that don't tell the full story and enable you to take control of the narrative.

More importantly, **they answer the questions job seekers care about most:**

- **What's it really like to work here?**
- **What does day-to-day feel like?**
- **Do people like me thrive here?**
- **Do I align with the company's values?**

Start with what shows up consistently. Look for shared strengths, meaningful moments in the employee experience, and where your culture stands out compared to peers. These patterns reveal what employees genuinely value — not what sounds good on a careers page.

Use those insights to bring your culture to life in a way no tagline can:

- **Anchor your story in real experiences, not aspirations.**
- **Build trust before the first interview.**
- **Differentiate your culture in a crowded hiring market.**
- **Attract talent aligned with your company values.**
- **Highlight culture strengths employees recognize, not what marketers promote.**

When your culture story is grounded in employee voice and supported by data, it doesn't just sound authentic — *it is* authentic. And that's what gives your employer reputation staying power.



Validate Your Culture With Proof, Not Promises

**Employee voices build authenticity.
Employer recognition adds proof.**

Credible employer recognition gives your culture story third-party validation — confirming that what employees say internally aligns with what candidates see externally. **Employer awards strengthen your reputation, reinforces trust, and helps your story stand up to scrutiny.**



THE BOTTOM LINE

The key to building a credible reputation is choosing recognition that's earned, not bought.

✓ YOUR CREDIBILITY CHECKLIST

A Simple Credibility Check for Employer Recognition

Use this pass/fail checklist to separate meaningful recognition from marketing fluff:

- ✓ **✗ Employees decide the outcome.**
Recognition is based entirely on confidential employee feedback — not nominations, essays, or judges.
- ✓ **✗ The methodology is research-backed.**
Built on real data, large benchmarks, and proven workplace research.
- ✓ **✗ It measures the culture themes that matter to employees.**
Leadership trust, alignment, appreciation, and the day-to-day employee experience — not just perks.
- ✓ **✗ Participation is safe and risk-free.**
Surveys are confidential, and only winning organizations are made public.
- ✓ **✗ There's no pay-to-play.**
You don't pay to participate or win awards.
- ✓ **✗ Recognition has real reach.**
Awards are amplified through media and channels where job seekers are watching.

When recognition is grounded in employee feedback and backed by credible methodology, it **doesn't just boost visibility — it reinforces trust**. And trust is what turns culture into a reputation people believe.



WHERE TO START

Showcase Your Culture the Credible Way

Use this checklist to share your culture story with credibility:

- ☐ **1** **Lead with employee voice, not marketing slogans.**
Let real experiences do the talking.
- ☐ **2** **Equip recruiters with proof points, not promises.**
Ground conversations in what employees say about the daily experience.
- ☐ **3** **Show up consistently across channels.**
Tell the same culture story everywhere candidates encounter your brand.
- ☐ **4** **Promote employer recognition awards.**
Feature Top Workplaces badges on your careers site, job postings, social media, and more.



THE BOTTOM LINE

When recognition reflects reality, showcasing your culture feels authentic, not forced.



**TOP
WORK
PLACES**

Part IV: Top Workplaces

Validation With Visibility

Top Workplaces is built to answer one simple question: Is this a great place to work — according to the people who actually work there? That's why it works. And why it holds up.

- ✓ **Powered by confidential employee feedback.**
- ✓ **Grounded in 20+ years of workplace culture research.**
- ✓ **Benchmarked against thousands of organizations.**
- ✓ **Confidential and risk-free for participating employers.**
- ✓ **Free to participate, survey, and win awards.**
- ✓ **Visibility amplified through national and regional media partners.**



Top Workplaces awards are published by prestigious media partners, including USA TODAY, The Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, The Princeton Review, and more.

IT'S SIMPLER THAN YOU THINK

How Top Workplaces Works



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Reputation is Built From the Inside

Employer reputation isn't a side effect of good marketing. It's the story employees tell — whether you shape it or not. When that story is unclear or negative, the impact is real: harder hiring, longer recruiting cycles, and skepticism before the first conversation even begins.

The good news? You can influence that story.

- ✓ **Measure: Start by listening.**
- ✓ **Shape: Turn survey insights into action.**
- ✓ **Showcase: Tell a culture story people trust.**

That's how organizations build employer reputations that work for you — not against you.

Your Reputation as a **Top Employer** Starts Here

Free to participate, survey employees, and win awards.
Start by nominating your company today.

Let employees' voices prove your workplace is one of the best.

Start Here Free