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VIEW

From Invisible to Irresistible: The Employer Brand Revolution

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The Employer Brand Revolution

Gen Z isn't just changing the workforce — they're changing how they find it.

Nearly half use social platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram as search engines[1] to explore careers, evaluate employers, and validate brand trust. They spend over 18 hours per week on social media[2] — researching you long before they see your job ad. And that behavior doesn't pause during off-seasons like summer — if anything, it intensifies.[3]

In this environment, Talent Acquisition teams are under pressure to deliver faster, better hires while navigating tighter budgets[4], increased scrutiny, and higher candidate expectations. Volume alone doesn't cut it anymore — quality is the only metric that counts.

Here's the disconnect: while candidates are researching you everywhere, most recruitment strategies still kick in only at the job posting stage. Recruitment marketing bridges that gap — it's the practice of promoting your employer brand and job opportunities to attract and engage the right candidates — before they even apply. Done right, it blends content, employer branding, targeted media, and candidate experience into one continuous strategy.

The future of recruitment marketing requires a shift in mindset: from quick fixes to strategic consistency. From funnels to flywheels. From visibility to value — at every step of the journey.

At VONQ, we believe recruitment marketing isn't just about getting candidates through the door — it's about attracting the right people, keeping them engaged, and converting them into committed, high-quality hires. And it all starts with a bulletproof, candidate-first strategy that connects your brand, your content, your channels, and your data.

Agenda

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What's happening to search?

For years, recruitment marketing was treated like a numbers game: post a job, wait for clicks, screen the CVs. The assumption was that if you just filled the top of the funnel with enough applicants, the right hire would eventually come out the bottom.

That approach no longer holds up. Today's candidates don't move in a straight line from job ad to application — and they won't stick around if the process slows them down or leaves them guessing.

In many organisations, high-quality candidates are lost not because of competition, but because of friction. Application forms take too long. Messaging feels generic. Career pages aren't mobile-friendly. Follow-ups drag on.

At VONQ, we see this first-hand in our work with customers. Even the most creative and well-targeted campaigns can't make up for downstream issues like slow time to hire, lack of clear communication, overly complex application flows, or a disconnect between brand promise and real experience. Candidates notice — and they move on.

41,2%
of candidates drop off before completing the application form[5]

Long response times and poor user experience are top drivers of candidate drop-off [6]

Gen Z in particular expects speed, clarity, and personalization — or they'll disengage fast[7]

The solution isn't a better funnel — it's a different approach entirely. One that guides candidates through a flexible, responsive, and trust-building experience that adapts to their journey, rather than forcing them through yours.

A New Model:
The Continuous Candidate Journey

If the traditional funnel pushes candidates through a linear process, the continuous candidate journey draws them in, nurtures them, and keeps them engaged — long before they apply and well after they're hired. It's a model built on sustained connection, not one-off campaigns.

Rather than thinking in static phases (awareness > consideration > application), the continuous candidate journey recognises that modern candidates move fluidly — they research before applying, re-engage after interviews, and influence others post-hire. They follow companies for weeks or months, revisit content, check peer reviews, and compare culture statements before taking action.

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It's not a theory. It's real behaviour we see every day:

According to Universum, 79% of talent wants to see a company's mission and culture clearly before applying — and most interact with multiple brand touchpoints before making a decision.[8] LinkedIn similarly notes that high-quality candidates engage with at least 3–5 pieces of content before applying.[9]

That's why recruitment marketing needs to be always-on and multi-touch — using paid media throughout the entire journey, complemented by tailored content, targeted channels, and employer brand storytelling that builds trust over time.
Here's how the continuous journey works:

Stage	Goal	Example tactics
Attract	Spark interest across the right audience segments	Targeted social ads (Meta, TikTok, LinkedIn, etc.), paid Google ads, SEO & GEO, employer brand video and blog content amplified via paid channels
Engage	Build trust & relevance	Paid promotion of EVP storytelling, employee-generated content, testimonials, industry thought leadership articles, short-form videos, segmented retargeting campaigns
Convert	Make it easy to take the next step	Always-on programmatic job ads, quick-apply experiences, site analytics and conversion tracking, landing page optimization, AI-powered scoring
Retain & Advocate	Turn new hires into brand ambassadors	External promotion of employee success stories, onboarding and culture videos, employer award announcements, alumni engagement initiatives

REAL-WORLD PROOF

Avoord

Zorgen doen we samen!

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Avoord, a Dutch care organisation, replaced their sporadic hiring campaigns with an always-on strategy that combined targeted paid media, consistent employer brand content, and ongoing optimisation.

Result:
44 quality hires in 5 months and measurably stronger brand recognition.[10] The secret wasn't spending more — it was staying consistently present throughout the candidate journey.

Why it works:
The continuous candidate journey creates a sustainable recruitment engine, ensuring your brand stays present across the moments that matter — before, during, and after the application.

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What Candidates Expect Today

Modern candidates are more informed, more selective, and more empowered than ever before. And they're no longer evaluating just the job — they're evaluating the entire experience of engaging with your company.

A strong salary alone won't convince top talent. Today's candidates — particularly Millennials and Gen Z — place high value on a company's **culture, career development**

opportunities, work-life balance, and ethical stance.[11] They're looking for workplaces that reflect their values, offer flexibility, and present meaningful career paths. They also want to see the real story — not the polished version. That's why **employee-generated content** is more effective than corporate messaging. According to LinkedIn, candidates trust content from employees **3x more** than from the company itself.[12]

Speed and clarity are essential

Speed and simplicity aren't requests anymore — they're requirements. If the application form is too long, the timeline is unclear, or communication is slow, they'll quickly lose interest — especially when they're juggling multiple opportunities. Simplicity, transparency, and responsiveness are now must-haves, not nice-to-haves.

Trust is fragile, especially when AI is involved

While AI tools can greatly enhance efficiency and fairness in hiring, how they're used matters. According to ServiceNow, 65% of candidates feel uncomfortable with AI-driven decisions — especially if it's unclear what data is being used, or how decisions are made.[13]

Be transparent about when and where AI is involved in the process. Clearly communicate the purpose, benefits, and limits of the technology. When candidates understand how AI is used — and that it's designed to reduce bias, not replace human judgment — trust improves significantly.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are non-negotiable

Research shows that 17% of job seekers say seeing diversity and inclusion in the hiring process is a key factor in feeling a positive connection with a company.[14] This underscores that inclusion is no longer a mere "nice-to-have" but an essential component of a compelling, future-proof employer brand. By authentically demonstrating your values around inclusion, you not only elevate your appeal to top talent — but also cultivate trust and foster long-term relationships that extend well beyond recruitment.

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Employer brand plays a decisive role

A positive reputation can be a deal-maker, and a weak or unclear brand presence can stop applications before they start. Universum found that 84% of job seekers consider an employer's brand before applying[15] — and many won't engage with a company if they can't clearly understand its values or mission.

What it looks like in practice:

Working with a leading Dutch supermarket chain, VONQ helped launch localized, employer-brand-led content and amplified it through targeted paid media campaigns. We also streamlined the recruitment flow by enabling faster applicant screening and better-aligned follow-up work-flows to match candidate expectations. The result? Talent quality perception improved, time-to-hire decreased, and the company was able to reach the right candidates more efficiently across multiple regions.[16]

The Role of AI & Measurement in Smarter Hiring

For recruitment marketing to deliver consistent results, intuition needs to be backed by data. Without clear measurement, even the most creative campaigns risk becoming guesswork. And without smart automation, teams often waste valuable time and budget just to keep up.

This is where AI and analytics can make a meaningful difference — not by replacing recruiters, but by enabling them to act faster, more fairly, and more strategically.

From matching to scoring: a smarter approach

Traditional AI tools often focus on "matching" candidates to a predefined profile — which can reinforce bias and lead to missed potential. At VONQ, we believe in scoring over matching: evaluating candidates based on skills, transferable experience, and aptitude, not just job title or keywords.

"Clicks are nice. But qualified applications are where ROI lives. It's the clearest link between media spend and recruitment marketing performance."

Alexander Boes,
Online Advertising Specialist at VONQ

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Our approach to AI reflects this philosophy: instead of black-box matching algorithms, we've developed AI Agents that work transparently alongside recruiters. They can analyze CVs for transferable skills, score candidates against specific criteria, and even conduct initial structured interviews — but always with clear explanations of their reasoning. The result? Recruiters spend less time on administrative screening and more time building relationships with qualified candidates.

The metrics that actually matter

Clicks and impressions might look good on a dashboard, but they don't tell you if you're reaching the right people. The most important metric for recruitment marketing today is qualified applications — the clearest signal that your efforts are connecting with the right talent.
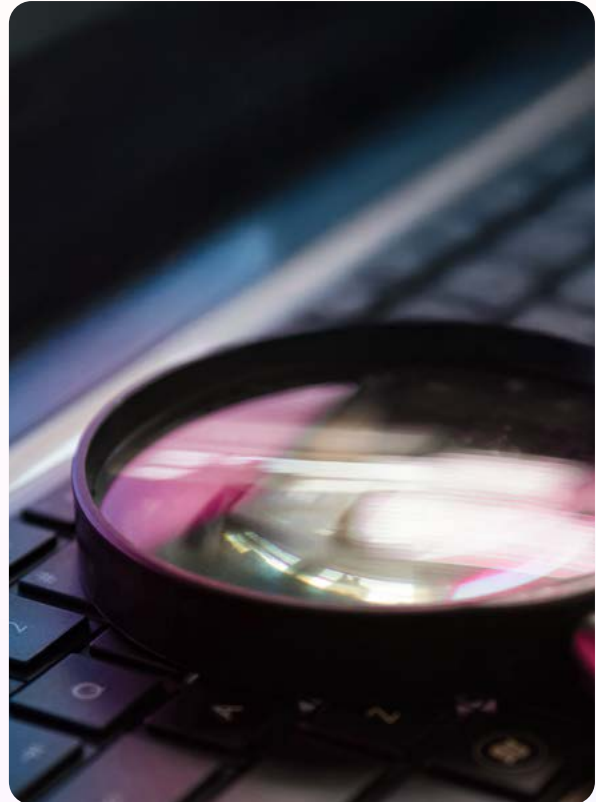
Real-time analytics and channel-level tracking also let you see:

Which
campaigns drive the most high-quality applicants

Where
drop-offs are happening in the funnel

What
content resonates with specific segments

A smarter use of your budget

When you combine AI-driven targeting with performance insights, you create a more cost-efficient strategy. It allows you to continuously improve by investing in what works — and pausing what doesn't.

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Non-Negotiables for a Bulletproof Recruitment Marketing Strategy

To go from scattered efforts to consistent results, your recruitment marketing needs more than creativity or intuition. It needs structure. It needs evidence. And above all, it needs to be built around the experience of the candidate — not just the objectives of the recruiter.

Whether you're hiring high volumes or filling niche roles, these are the six pillars of a bulletproof strategy that delivers both quality candidates and measurable ROI:

Turn your EVP into a talent magnet
01

Having an Employer Value Proposition isn't enough — it needs to be specific, authentic, and tailored to your audience. The right EVP helps candidates self-select, builds early trust, and differentiates you from competitors. Use it as the creative foundation for all your campaigns, content, and career pages.

Banking

For a leading **European bank**, a sharper EVP around digital transformation attracted candidates who matched both the skills and the culture, leading to stronger pipelines in hard-to-fill tech roles.

A consistent inflow of quality hires
02

The goal of recruitment marketing isn't just to drive traffic — it's to build a sustainable pipeline of well-matched candidates. This means thinking beyond isolated job ads and running always-on campaigns that speak to both active and passive talent.

Supermarket

For a leading Dutch **supermarket** chain, moving from sporadic campaigns to always-on media ensured a steady flow of qualified applicants, even in a tight labor market.

Seamless landing page UX & apply flow
03

Every click you've earned is an opportunity — don't waste it with a poor application experience. Your job pages should load fast, look good on mobile, be easy to scan, and let candidates apply in minutes — not after creating an account or uploading a five-page PDF.

Retail

For a major European **retailer,** simplifying the application process and optimizing job pages led to a surge of applicants — 375 in just two months — without increasing budget.

Paid, organic, and employee-driven content working in sync

04

Relying on one channel is no longer viable. Combine targeted advertising with organic social reach, search visibility, and the trusted voice of your employees. Content variety ensures your message lands at the right time, in the right format, for the right candidate.

Healthcare

For a Dutch **care organization**, combining employer-brand story-telling with targeted paid and organic campaigns led to 44 quality hires in just 5 months.

Transparent and skill-focused use of AI

05

AI should never be a black box. It should be explainable, inclusive, and focused on highlighting skills and potential, not filtering people out. Done right, AI improves fairness and efficiency — and when candidates understand how it works, it builds trust rather than eroding it.

Staffing

Through **VONQ's CPA+** performance-based hiring model, a leading staffing agency trans-formed recruitment by delivering pre-screened, scored candidate dossiers. Recruiters no longer "throw money into a wishing well" but instead receive clear, struc-tured profiles that help them hire faster and smarter.

Track what matters

06

Not just impressions and website traffic — but applications, candidate quality, and where possible, hires and retention potential. These are the indicators that reflect the true impact of your efforts. Performance insights should guide everything from media buying to creative direction. And if something's not working, you should know — and be able to fix it fast.

Fashion

For a European **fashion retailer,** real-time performance dashboards guided smarter media investments — helping generate 2,500 applica-tions in just one year.

PRO TIP

"Think like a marketer, act like a recruiter, measure like a strategist. That's how you build a recruitment engine that scales."

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From Campaigns to Consistency: Winning the New Talent Game

The way candidates discover and choose employers has changed forever. A single job ad won't win them over — they want to know who you are, what you stand for, and if your culture feels like home, long before they hit apply.

In this environment, quality hires don't come from luck or volume. They come from a structured, well-communicated, always-on strategy — one that aligns employer brand, content, targeting, and technology across the entire candidate journey.
It's not about doing more. It's about doing it smarter, with purpose.

With a bulletproof strategy in place, you don't just fill roles — you attract the right people, at the right time, with less waste and more impact.

The teams that win in recruitment today are those who:

- ⊘ Build trust before the first click

- ⊘ Create experiences that convert, not just impress

- ⊘ Leverage AI transparently to boost efficiency, and fairness without losing the human touch

- ⊘ And use data to fine-tune every step of the journey

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Key Takeaways

Better recruitment marketing means better-fit candidates — not just more reach

Adopt a **flywheel mindset** to engage candidates continuously, not just when hiring

A **strong, well-communicated EVP** is the foundation of your message

Focus on a **consistent inflow of quality hires**, not campaign spikes

Align paid, organic, and employee-driven efforts to stay relevant across channels

Use AI transparently and strategically — and always **measure what matters**

Ready to Build a Bulletproof Strategy?

Whether you're scaling up, shifting focus, or looking to improve ROI — we're here to help. From EVP alignment to campaign strategy, from AI-powered hiring to performance optimization, our team helps you turn first impressions into committed hires.