


employer branding in engineering report

Randstad Employer Brand Research 2017



Employer Brand
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You don't have to be an engineer to recognize the Airbus name. As one of the largest aeronautics and space manufacturers in the world, the company's products carry millions of passengers each year, it operates 150 field offices globally and its brand is known for some of the most innovative advances in the industry. Despite its outstanding reputation and status as a Fortune global 100 organization, the company still struggles with winning the engineering talent needed to power its high-flying business. As a result, the company has transformed its strategy.

"There are a lot of things we are doing to attract top talent. We're working hard to change the image of who we are as an employer and want to be seen as an employer of choice for talent across the many skill areas where we're recruiting. This means we're competing with companies like Google and SpaceX," explains Rachel Schroeder, who heads up employment marketing for Airbus. She said this was the case for specialized IT and digital roles, including cyber security — skills for which the company isn't well known.

Like many employers seeking engineering skills today, Airbus knows competition for desirable talent is increasing from entrepreneurial businesses such as SpaceX. Even well-established corporate behemoths such as Apple and Alphabet (Google's parent) command more attention from prospective employees than

Airbus because of their technological appeal. And so the challenge facing Airbus, which Schroeder describes as a "legacy" business, is to replicate the same brand excitement created by many of the technology and IT industry's better-known brands.

Big businesses with a long heritage often find it more difficult to attract talent these days as workers are less inclined to work for them, according to the 2017 Randstad Employer Brand Research, a global survey of more than 160,000 working-age people in 26 countries. Only 26% say they want to work for a big company, and those figures are even lower in North America (18%) and Europe (20%). A disparity also exists among different generations, with 27% of those 18 to 34 years old preferring to work for a large organization and only 20% among workers who are 45 to 65.

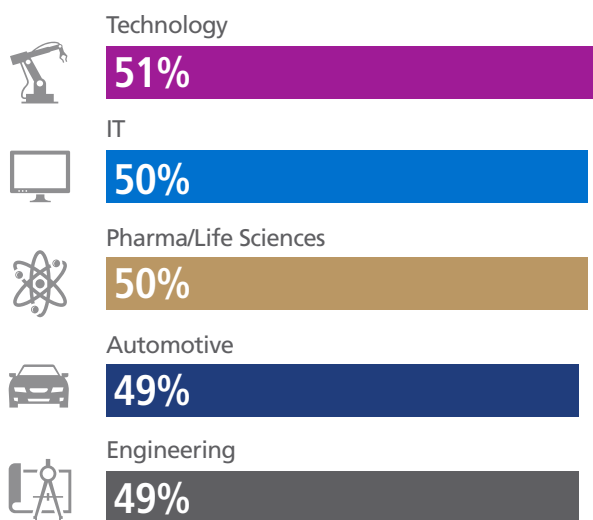
Indeed, one of Airbus' smaller competitors, Dassault Aviation, has leveraged its agility and personal touch to attract and engage workers.

"We hire graduates who we train in our methods. We teach them our skills, we give them the means to innovate, and then we give them responsibilities and a framework so that they, in turn, can pass on their knowledge to younger generations," says Eric Trappier, chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation. "The clear aim of this cycle is that employees should ideally spend their full career with us. It's the only way to capitalize on such high-level expertise. Very few employees leave the company before they retire."

trailing other sectors

Engineering skills span many fields — from electrical to mechanical to environmental to computer to civil — so workers are employed in an array of businesses. Although any one of these employers can have a highly attractive employer brand, the engineering profession collectively trails others in appeal, according to Randstad's research.

Percentage who say they want to work in these sectors



Employers of engineers such as Airbus face a more difficult time attracting talent because the research shows that among the top five sectors, engineering is ranked last, although just slightly lower than others such as technology, IT, pharmaceutical/life sciences and automotive. Nevertheless, in a field already plagued by talent shortage (*Fast Company* recently reported that [aerospace engineers are among the hardest skills to find](#)), this lack of appeal only further exacerbates the scarcity challenge.



scarcity is a global problem

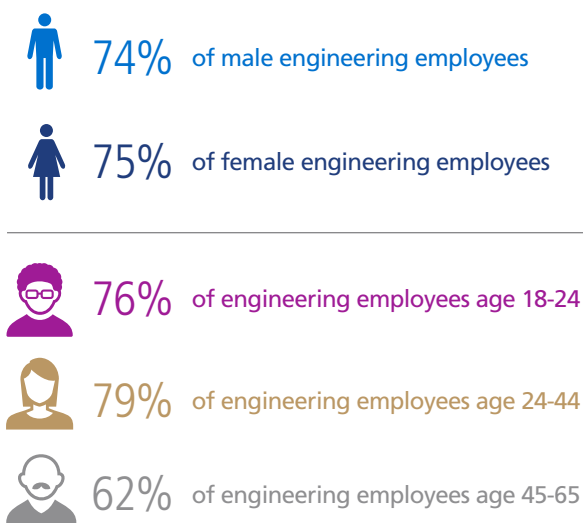
The talent scarcity problem is affecting employers across the globe. Last year, a survey conducted by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) in the U.K. found that 62% of technology and engineering employers feel British graduates do not meet their expectations, and 68% don't believe the country's education system is able to keep up with the demands of the market.

Earlier this year, in the U.S., Glassdoor reported that based on unfilled positions and salaries, [the second- and third-best jobs were DevOps and data engineers](#), respectively. Electrical and software engineers were ranked nos. 14 and 16, respectively. And in Germany, market growth there is being slowed by a shortage of engineers, according to the Wall Street Journal.

Across Asia, the need for engineering skills is unabated. The New York Times reported last year that Indonesia is urgently behind in graduating students with engineering degrees, leading to challenges for the country as it strives to meet its infrastructure needs. And Bloomberg BNA reported that there is a shortage of network engineers across Asia where these specialized skills are needed to support the region's rapid adoption of internet technology.

Adding to the supply-demand imbalance are the potential for engineering professionals to switch sectors and the aging workforce. With the average worker age among some engineering specialists being over 55 years old, some employers could begin to lose experienced employees over the next decade due to retirements. Even more concerning is that about three-quarters of engineering workers surveyed by the Randstad Employer Brand Research are open to working in other sectors. Nearly 80% of those who are 25 to 44 years old say they would consider switching. These ratios are higher than those for all workers surveyed.

The willingness of engineering professionals to switch to another sector



According to Jacco Klerk, vice president of Global Client Solutions for Randstad and an engineering labor trends thought leader, one reason the sector doesn't compete for talent as well as others is insufficient investment in building a robust pipeline. He points out that some companies have already fallen woefully behind in meeting their talent needs. As they look to grow their business, the pressure is on to accelerate their recruitment efforts. Add in the fact that many workers will retire over the next decade and it's clear the talent gap is widening.

"All the big companies are saying 'We are going to have a shortage and need more and new skills.' They simply are not doing enough to attract, hire and retain workers," he adds. "If they continue to ignore the problem, they are at real risk of falling behind innovation."

Klerk says these numbers are alarming because there is a significant talent gap for engineers with 5 to 10 years of experience. Without these younger workers, companies in the sector could potentially lose out on candidates who will develop critical products and become the leaders their organizations need to remain competitive in the market. To remedy this, employers must create a more compelling employee value proposition (EVP) to attract and retain their most important talent.

what's important to workers

Doing so requires a deep understanding of what motivates engineering workers. The Randstad Employer Brand Research shows that engineering professionals, like all workers, prioritize salary, security and work-life balance when seeking employment, but what will distinguish one employer from another is addressing the softer values such as career progression opportunities, being financially healthy, a pleasant work environment and strong management/leadership. Notably, the requisite for stimulating and challenging work was last on the list of top 10 attributes.

However, what workers want and how they perceive the ability of large employers to deliver them are distinctly different. Of the top three qualities they seek in an employer, only two (job security and work-life balance) crack the top 10 attributes they perceive big companies possess. The top three qualities large employers are perceived to offer are financial health, tech savviness and a good reputation.

"This disconnect shows that large employers are not creating an employer value proposition that aligns

with what engineering workers want. They need to try harder to deliver a compelling and relevant message that demonstrates that they understand the needs of their workers," says Klerk.

For companies such as Airbus and other large multinational businesses, one challenge they face is assuring prospective workers that they can have a good work-life balance while working at the organization. When engineering workers were asked whether they can achieve such a balance at a large company, only 44% say yes. Also, just 53% believe large companies offer long-term job security.

A company perceived as offering a good work-life balance is particularly important to a broad range of younger workers — those in the ages of 25 to 44. They rank this attribute second only to a good salary and benefits, so employers should keep this in mind as part of their attraction and retention strategy. Comprised mostly of millennials, this group is critical to an organization's future growth since they are moving into both managerial and leadership positions.

Most important attributes in future employer for engineering employees (% Agree)

1. Attractive salary and benefits (58%)
2. Long-term job security (46%)
3. Good work-life balance (46%)
4. Career progression opportunities (42%)
5. Financially healthy (39%)
6. Pleasant work atmosphere (37%)
7. Strong management / leadership (28%)
8. Good training (28%)
9. Flexible working arrangements (25%)
10. Work is stimulating and challenging (24%)

Core values attributed to largest engineering companies (% Agree)

1. Financially Healthy (61%)
2. Uses latest technologies available (57%)
3. Good reputation (57%)
4. Long-term job security (53%)
5. Career progression opportunities (51%)
6. Work is stimulating & challenging (50%)
7. Pleasant work atmosphere (47%)
8. Good work-life balance (44%)
9. Cares for the environment / gives back to society (43%)
10. Will face challenges in the next decade (22%)

bridging the gender gap

A chronic problem affecting the engineering sector — as well as most STEM fields — is an imbalance in gender participation. Although women are making greater inroads into the field, they still account for a minority of students and working engineers. According to Women's Engineering Society, only 15% of U.K. engineering and technology graduates are female, but they account for 30% in India. Randstad's research shows that while the top five desired attributes for an employer are the same for male and female engineering workers on a global scale, there are some regional differences.

In North America, women prioritize a pleasant work environment only behind a good salary and work-life balance, but men are more concerned with long-term job security and career progression opportunities. Notably, women in Europe are more interested in employers who can offer career progression than men do, who prefer a financially healthy employer.

Engineering professionals in Asia regardless of gender want the same things: attractive salaries, career opportunities, job security, work-life balance and a financially healthy employer are the top five. In Latin America, a good work-life balance is more sought after by women, whereas men seek flexible work arrangements.

One recent engineering graduate says what made her new employer attractive was a combination of the above factors: potential for career advancement, interesting job content and a competitive salary and benefits.

Kate Branna, who graduated in May 2017 from Virginia Tech University in the U.S. with a degree in industrial and systems engineering, landed a job with aerospace manufacturer Boeing in Seattle. With a degree focused on improving manufacturing and process improvement, she decided to accept an offer from the company based in part on its employee value proposition

Although Gen Z workers are often stereotyped as only being interested in job opportunities that appeal to their sense of purpose, she disputes that this is the case. In fact, Branna points out, many of her peers are

practical, having witnessed the impact of the recent global recession on their parents' lives. As a result, she says, many of her peers prioritize good compensation and job security over other needs. However, she also believes employers need to make clear how their corporate culture aligns with the desires of younger workers. In other words, they need to create an EVP that is practical and aspirational.

"This is definitely important for companies because in order to attract my generation of workers, companies need to define and promote clear values and foster a work environment that is enjoyable and pleasant to be in," she says.



She adds that employers seeking to create a more gender-diverse workforce, especially for engineering and other STEM skills, need to help promote these fields to girls at a young age. For herself, it was the encouragement of a high school instructor that led her to study engineering. At the same time, the post-digital age has raised awareness among students about choosing an in-demand career.

It's not surprising, then, that Randstad's research revealed that 51% of recent graduates (ages 18-24) around the world say they would consider working in engineering, which is significantly higher than the 43% of older workers (ages 45-65). Among recent graduates, those in Asia Pacific expressed the highest level of enthusiasm for the field, with 56% saying they would consider an engineering career; the lowest response was in Europe and North America, where only 36% of older workers would work in engineering.



addressing the future of engineering

With demand for engineering skills expected to remain strong in the near future, two possible solutions could help alleviate some of the talent gap: retraining and redeployment. In businesses where there is retrenchment or greater adoption of automation and robotics, employers could turn layoffs and redundancies into an advantage simply by retraining engineers. Two-thirds (67%) of engineers surveyed by Randstad said they would undergo retraining if their jobs were under threat, compared with just 58% of all adults surveyed. In fact, those in Latin America and Asia Pacific are most receptive to retraining while those in Europe are least open to it; just 37% of Dutch engineers say they would be willing.

Retraining will be a critical consideration for companies turning to greater use of automation. While a minority of all survey respondents (40%) believe automation will make their job easier, the majority of engineers believe that will be the case.

Retraining and other measures will be necessary for companies to build the pipeline of engineering talent they need to keep business growth plans on track. As Airbus' Schroeder points out, larger employers especially need to consider nurturing talent on many fronts, including at the high school and college level, develop a more comprehensive strategy leverage to use social media for engagement and leverage their heritage as part of their employer branding effort. What it comes down to, as she explains, is educating workers about the importance and variety of the work being undertaken at companies such as Airbus.

"Engineering isn't well understood. People don't know what engineers do, so I think we have more work to do to help young people, their parents and educators understand it," she stresses.

Like to delve deeper and receive all our 2017 data on Employer Branding in Engineering? Go to our [Employer Branding center](#).



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