

# EVP REALITY CHECK & TESTING GUIDE

Frameworks from  
***The Talent Brand***  
by Jody Ordioni

**Ready to strengthen your talent brand?**

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# Why This Guide Exists

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**Most organizations have an EVP. Very few have one that actually works.**

The gap between what companies promise and what employees actually experience is where employer brands go to die. Not from bad intentions - but from the distance between aspiration and delivery.

- 1 An EVP isn't a tagline or a careers page. It's the lived promise your organization makes to the people who work there - and to the talent you're trying to attract.
- 2 Authenticity is everything. Employees know within days whether the promise is real. The cost of an EVP gap shows up in turnover, disengagement, and Glassdoor reviews.
- 3 This guide gives you the frameworks to pressure-test what you have. Validate it against reality. Find the gaps. Then close them.

*If you'd like help pressure-testing your EVP before you go further -*

**Brandemix offers a 30-minute EVP Diagnostic Session.**

No obligation. Just a real conversation about where your employer brand stands.

# Signs Your EVP Might Be Broken

*You don't need a formal audit to know something's off. These patterns are the signal.*

**Candidates accept offers - then leave within a year**

The EVP attracted them. The lived experience lost them. That's a gap problem, not a hiring problem.

**Glassdoor reviews mention a culture disconnect**

When employees describe your company publicly in ways your brand doesn't, your EVP isn't landing.

**Different leaders describe the culture differently**

An EVP that isn't internalized at the top will never cascade. If leadership can't articulate it, no one can.

**Your recruitment messaging keeps changing**

Constant iteration is a symptom of an EVP that doesn't have a real, stable foundation.

**Managers struggle to explain the EVP to their teams**

The EVP lives or dies with managers. If they can't describe it, employees never experience it.

*If you checked two or more - this guide is exactly where you need to start.*

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# Inside This Guide

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# The Monday Test

## Most EVPs look great on paper.

The real test is Monday morning - when the offer is signed, the onboarding deck is closed, and the actual job begins. Does your EVP hold up then?

- 1 Candidates experience your brand promise. Your EVP shapes expectations before day one. If reality doesn't match, you've already started losing them.
- 2 Employees live it - or they don't. Ask ten employees if your EVP reflects their actual experience. The gap in their answers is your gap.
- 3 Managers are the medium. Your EVP lives or dies in how managers talk about work, recognize effort, and explain decisions. It's never just an HR asset.

*If people can't see it, hear it, or feel it - it's not an EVP. It's a slogan.*

# The Monday Test: Exercise

Show five people your EVP — right now, without context. Then ask:  
*"Does this sound like us? What would make it untrue?"*

## WHO

## WHAT THEY SAID / NOTES

### Executive

*Do they see aspiration  
— or reality?*

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### Senior Manager

*Can they name  
evidence for each  
pillar?*

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### Peer / Colleague

*Does it match their  
day-to-day?*

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### New Hire (< 90 days)

*Was the promise kept  
since joining?*

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### Long-Tenured Employee

*Has it held up — or  
quietly eroded?*

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If 3 or more people hesitate or say "not really" — **your EVP needs work before activation.**

# The EVP Framework

Five stages — from research to architecture. Check each off as you work through them.

| STAGE                                                                                                                                                                    | NOTES          | STATUS                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>01 Research what's actually true</b><br>Ground the EVP in employee evidence — interviews, focus groups, data. Not aspiration.                | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Not started<br><input type="checkbox"/> In progress<br><input type="checkbox"/> Complete |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>02 Analyze what differentiates you</b><br>What genuinely sets your employer brand apart from the 10 companies competing for the same talent? | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Not started<br><input type="checkbox"/> In progress<br><input type="checkbox"/> Complete |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>03 Define your pillars</b><br>Specific. Defensible. Provable — each one backed by a real story, real policy, or real experience.             | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Not started<br><input type="checkbox"/> In progress<br><input type="checkbox"/> Complete |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>04 Test with employees</b><br>If the people who live it don't recognize it, candidates won't believe it.                                     | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Not started<br><input type="checkbox"/> In progress<br><input type="checkbox"/> Complete |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>05 Build the architecture</b><br>So it shows up everywhere: job posts, onboarding, manager conversations, performance reviews.               | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Not started<br><input type="checkbox"/> In progress<br><input type="checkbox"/> Complete |

**The deliverable isn't a deck.** It's an operating system for how your company shows up as an employer.

# The EVP Framework

Five connected stages. Each one builds on the last.



- 01 Research** Ground every claim in employee evidence — interviews, focus groups, data. Not aspiration, not leadership instinct.
- 02 Differentiation** Identify what genuinely sets you apart from the 10 companies competing for the same talent. Generic doesn't differentiate.
- 03 Pillars** Define 3–5 specific, defensible commitments — each one provable with a real story, a real policy, or a real experience.
- 04 Testing** Validate with employees before you finalize. If they don't recognize it, candidates won't believe it.
- 05 Activation** Build the architecture so it shows up everywhere — job posts, onboarding, manager conversations, performance reviews, exits.

**The deliverable isn't a deck.** It's an operating system for how your company shows up as an employer.

# The 5 Reality Tests

Every EVP must pass all five. Check each, add notes, and mark your honest result.

| TEST · THE QUESTION                                                                                                                                                                                  | NOTES          | RESULT                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TRUTH</b><br><b>Is this based on employee evidence, not aspiration?</b><br>Employees detect inauthenticity instantly. If they don't recognize it, they won't believe it. | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail<br><input type="checkbox"/> Partial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>DISTINCT</b><br><b>Could this only be said about your organization?</b><br>Generic EVPs create no competitive advantage. 'Innovation' and 'Teamwork' are table stakes.   | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail<br><input type="checkbox"/> Partial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>MEANINGFUL</b><br><b>Does this matter to the people you need most?</b><br>Your EVP should attract the right talent, not all talent. Specificity is strength.             | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail<br><input type="checkbox"/> Partial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>SUSTAINABLE</b><br><b>Can you deliver this promise consistently?</b><br>The gap between promise and reality is exactly where talent brands die.                          | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail<br><input type="checkbox"/> Partial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>ACTIVATABLE</b><br><b>Can it be operationalized across all touchpoints?</b><br>It should show up in job posts, onboarding, internal comms, and exit interviews.          | <hr/><br><hr/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Pass<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fail<br><input type="checkbox"/> Partial |
| <p>Any Fail or more than two Partials = <b>return to the framework before moving to activation.</b></p>                                                                                              |                |                                                                                                    |

# Want an outside perspective?

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**Brandemix runs EVP Reality Checks for leadership teams.**

A focused 90-minute session to pressure-test your current EVP against the five reality tests — with your team, not at them.

**Book an EVP Reality Check →**

[branding@brandemix.com](mailto:branding@brandemix.com) · [brandemix.com](https://brandemix.com)

*Or continue to the Diagnostic Questions →*

# Diagnostic Questions

Work through each test. Check items as you go and capture what you find.

## The Specificity Test

- Remove your company name. Could this EVP apply to 3+ competitors?
- Read it aloud - does it sound human, or like a corporate template?
- Count buzzwords (innovation, dynamic, fast-paced). More than 2 = red flag.

NOTES

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## The Employee Recognition Test

- Show it to 10 employees without context. Do they recognize their experience?
- Ask: 'What evidence proves this is true here?' Can they name examples?
- Ask: 'What would make this untrue?' Listen for where they pause.

NOTES

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## The First-Week Test

- Map the new hire journey - where does your EVP appear in week one?
- Interview 90-day employees. Do they feel the promise has been kept?

NOTES

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## The TouchPoint Audit

- Audit 10 touchpoints: career site, job posts, offer letters, onboarding, reviews.
- Do they all reinforce the same promise, or do they contradict each other?
- Your brand is only as strong as its weakest touchpoint.

NOTES

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# Common EVP Failures

Check any that apply to your current EVP - then use the fix as your starting point.

FAILURE · WHY IT HAPPENS · THE FIX

PRIORITY

Applies to us

**FAILURE**

## Generic language that could describe anyone

*Everyone says 'innovation' and 'teamwork.' It signals nothing and attracts no one specific.*

**FIX**

Name the behaviours, not the ideals. Be specific about what kind of innovation - and who it's for.

High

Medium

Watch

Applies to us

**FAILURE**

## Paragraphs of corporate jargon

*If your people can't remember it, they can't activate it. Length signals uncertainty.*

**FIX**

Distill to a single-minded expression. One clear idea, simply told.

High

Medium

Watch

Applies to us

**FAILURE**

## Written by leadership, not validated by staff

*The C-suite doesn't live your culture day-to-day. Employees do - and they notice the gap.*

**FIX**

Build from employee research. Validate with focus groups before a word is finalized.

High

Medium

Watch

Applies to us

**FAILURE**

## Aspiration disguised as current truth

*New hires realize within 90 days when a promise isn't real. Trust - once lost - is hard to rebuild.*

**FIX**

Ground every claim in today's truth. Save aspiration for your internal activation roadmap.

High

Medium

Watch

# Testing Your EVP

Three phases - all required before launch. Check steps as you complete them.

| PHASE · STEPS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | NOTES                   | STATUS                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>01 Internal Validation</b><br/><i>Start with the people who live your culture.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups across levels, tenures, and functions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ask: 'Does this sound like us?' - note hesitation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Refine until there's genuine recognition</p>                     | <hr/><br><hr/><br><hr/> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not started</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complete</p> |
| <p><b>02 External Validation</b><br/><i>Test with the talent you're trying to attract.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Panels or intercepts with target talent profiles</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ask: 'Would this make you want to learn more?'</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Benchmark against competitor positioning</p>                        | <hr/><br><hr/><br><hr/> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not started</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complete</p> |
| <p><b>03 Operational Validation</b><br/><i>Confirm you can deliver what you're promising.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Map every employee touchpoint - assess EVP alignment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Identify gaps between promise and current delivery</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Build activation roadmap to close gaps before launch</p> | <hr/><br><hr/><br><hr/> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not started</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complete</p> |

**All three phases must be completed before launch.** Skipping any one creates a gap your employees will find.

# Your EVP Scorecard

Rate each dimension honestly - 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). Total out of 25.

| DIMENSION                                                            | SCORE     | BIGGEST GAP / NOTE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| <b>Truth</b><br>Built from employee evidence, not aspiration         | 1 2 3 4 5 | _____              |
| <b>Distinct</b><br>Could only be said about your organization        | 1 2 3 4 5 | _____              |
| <b>Meaningful</b><br>Resonates with the talent you most need         | 1 2 3 4 5 | _____              |
| <b>Sustainable</b><br>Deliverable consistently across time and roles | 1 2 3 4 5 | _____              |
| <b>Activatable</b><br>Shows up across all employee touchpoints       | 1 2 3 4 5 | _____              |

**Total Score / 25**

|                                               |                                            |                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>20–25</b><br>Ready for activation planning | <b>15–19</b><br>Address gaps before launch | <b>&lt; 15</b><br>Deeper research recommended |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|

**BIGGEST GAP** · What does your score tell you needs attention first?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**RECOMMENDED NEXT STEP**

\_\_\_\_\_

< 18

**If your EVP scored below 18, there's a high probability your employer brand is creating expectation gaps - and those gaps are costing you retention.**

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Expectation gaps don't show up on day one. They show up at month four, in a resignation letter, on Glassdoor. The EVP created the expectation. The lived experience broke it.

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## **Not sure your EVP holds up?**

We run EVP Reality Checks for leadership teams.

[branding@brandemix.com](mailto:branding@brandemix.com) · [brandemix.com](https://brandemix.com)

Get in Touch

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# Here's how we help.

We've spent 20+ years helping organizations build employer brands that actually hold up - through hiring surges, culture shifts, and leadership changes. Here's what that looks like in practice.

## **EVP Development**

We research what's genuinely true about your organization - through employee interviews, focus groups, and competitive analysis - and build an EVP that's specific, defensible, and real.

*Delivered 200+ EVPs across industries*

## **Employer Brand Strategy**

Once your EVP is validated, we build the brand architecture and messaging system that lets it show up everywhere - from job posts to onboarding to all-hands meetings.

*From strategy through activation*

## **Talent Marketing Activation**

We turn your EVP into campaigns, content, and touchpoints that attract the right talent. Recruitment advertising, career site, social, video - all grounded in the same promise.

*Award-winning creative & media*

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## **Ready to talk about your EVP?**

Book a 30-minute conversation with our team - no pitch, just a real discussion about where your employer brand is today and where it needs to go.

### **Get in Touch**

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**An EVP that doesn't hold up  
in the lived experience  
isn't a brand promise -  
*it's a brand problem.***

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## **Need help building your talent brand?**

We've spent 20+ years helping organizations build employer brands that hold up - in the job posting, in the interview, on day one, and in year five. Let's talk about yours.

**Book a call →**

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(212) 947-1001

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