

Recruiting Innovators

DSM's Segment-Generated EVPs

DSM's traditional employment branding, which focused on organization-level messaging, was not differentiated from that of other organizations. As a result, critical talent ignored DSM's messages, and its time-to-fill metric increased. In response, Anneke Luijkenaar and the core members of her leadership team, including Elizabeth MacKay, worked with the procurement business to create a segment-specific employee value proposition (EVP) to attract talent. They did this by:

- **Mobilizing the Right Messengers** — DSM mobilizes employees who are most similar to the critical talent it targets to create a more relevant message.
- **Facilitating Employee-Generated EVPs** — DSM facilitates employee-created EVPs to give target talent the unfiltered message they want.
- **Getting the Most From Segment-Specific EVPs** — DSM hypertargets its outreach to maximize its segment-specific EVP's impact.



Anneke Luijkenaar

VP of Global Talent Acquisition, DSM

Anneke is passionate about talent acquisition and ensuring the best candidate experience. She has over 20 years' experience as an international executive in corporate recruitment and talent management.



Elizabeth MacKay

Global Talent Acquisition Leader, DSM

Elizabeth specializes in diversity and emerging market talent development. Prior to DSM, Liz worked as a recruiting leader across a wide range of multi-industry corporations in healthcare, technology and digital markets.

Mobilize the Right Messengers

Mobilize the employees most similar in skill set and experience to the target talent to provide a more relevant message.

Recruiting leadership's goal to create a more targeted EVP and messaging started with the messenger. DSM wanted to use employees with similar skills and experiences to the external talent they target. This ensures the company differentiates its messages based on these similarities.

DSM's recruiting leadership team recognized the importance of working with the business to mobilize these messengers. For the initial pilot, DSM first sought out a business leadership team that would want to participate in a new and innovative approach.

At DSM, the procurement function was the perfect fit for two reasons. The procurement leadership team — in particular the function's head — was very open to trying new approaches, and upgrading the quality of talent in the function was one of its top priorities.

To win support, the recruiting leadership team collected labor market insights that highlighted the size and drivers of DSM's talent attraction challenge. The team members used a labor market intelligence vendor to source the data, but noted that they could have gathered the data themselves if they had needed to. Once the procurement leadership team was on board, recruiting leveraged its influence to mobilize the messengers it sought. The recruitment process was led by procurement leaders rather than by the recruiting function, who consequently could get volunteers from all levels of the function — a crucial factor since messengers who share the same experience level as the target talent were important.

Facilitate Employee-Generated EVPs

Create value for target talent by facilitating employee-created EVPs and messaging that give talent the unfiltered messages they want.

Most organizations recruit employee advocates to act as brand ambassadors and mobilize them to communicate using precreated employment

branding materials. Recognizing that target talent valued unfiltered messages from people like them, the recruiting team at DSM empowered the procurement staff to define and create content directed at target talent in the external procurement talent community.

DSM also recognized it was difficult for employees to balance work like this with their day jobs, so it created a one-day off-site "EVP hackathon." The goal for the day was to create DSM procurement's EVP and the marketing content for it. Before doing that, the recruiting team needed to set the scene with two things:

- **Refreshing employees on EVPs** — Average employees don't spend much time thinking about EVPs, so the recruiting team explained what an EVP is and what DSM's overall EVP is. To bring the concept to life, the team compared and contrasted DSM's EVP with its consumer value proposition, which employees were very familiar with.
- **Defining the target talent** — The team spent time defining the ideal target talent with employees by tasking them to answer what drives strong performance in procurement at DSM, which companies would and wouldn't foster talent with those attributes and what a persona of the target talent would look like.

How DSM's Procurement Employees Spent the Day

Once the recruiting team had effectively set the scene, the procurement employees were challenged to define their procurement EVP and the related marketing content they would use to target talent. The recruiting team highlighted that what the employees created would be published — to be as authentic as possible — and helped them with their task by posing five questions:

- Why would the target talent join DSM and not the competition?
- What does DSM have to offer the target talent?
- Why will target talent click on the links we send them?
- What attracts the top procurement talent in our persona?
- What makes DSM procurement unique in the market?

During the day, the employees created the segment-specific EVP and a series of videos, an EVP tagline (“Interested to leave your footprint at DSM Purchasing?”) and ads.

This agile approach meant the content wouldn’t be as polished as traditional recruitment marketing content, but when it went to market DSM found this only added to the authenticity and value of the messages for target talent.

Get the Most From Segment-Specific EVPs

Make the most of segment-specific EVPs by distributing them in a hypertargeted, not blanket, manner.

To maximize the return on investment from the segment-specific EVP its procurement employees had created, the recruiting team also needed to ensure the messages got to the right people. The EVP and marketing content were created to speak to a specific target talent persona, so recruiting needed to direct them toward those people. It took three key steps to achieve this:

- **Identifying the Most Relevant Targets —** The recruiting team identified the names and profiles of the 2,000 professionals around the globe who best met procurement’s needs by cross-referencing how close the prospective talent was to DSM’s key strategic locations with how well they matched the key target persona attributes. To ensure evaluation accuracy, recruiting enlisted a second employee task force to moderate and review the identified profiles.
- **Personalized Targeting —** Rather than adopting a blanket approach to marketing its segment-specific EVP, DSM took advantage of new marketing technology to direct its adverts, videos and taglines only to its 2,000 targets (via sponsored posts).
- **Offering a Valuable Take Action —** Rather than highlighting a job that target talent should apply for, recruiting at DSM offered a “take action step” designed with value for the candidate in mind. Those curious about opportunities are offered the chance to connect with peers (within and outside of DSM) in a talent community.

“This was a creative and business-centered way of filtering in our top talent segments. I was impressed with the specific brand messages, the quality of dialogue between talent acquisition and business leaders as well as the significant cost and KPI improvements.”

Elizabeth MacKay
Global Head of Talent Acquisition, DSM

To ensure the prospective candidate’s experience was valuable, DSM recruited a third procurement employee task force to the community. This task force created and shared content within the community on a monthly basis. The insight the task force provides gives talent access to information they wouldn’t normally get until late in an interview process or at the start of a job. DSM also assigned a recruiter to each prospective candidate who joined the community. The prospects are marked as “ready to hire now” or “hire in the future” and given a personalized welcome by the recruiter. Where there are already relevant jobs, these are highlighted by recruiters to the ready-to-hire talent.

“At DSM, we want to make talent acquisition a proactive function. This approach is more personal, targeted and cost-effective.”

Anneke Luijkenaar
VP Global Talent Acquisition, DSM

Results

DSM's segment-generated EVP pilot has been highly successful in terms of social media engagement and recruiting outcomes. Between July and December 2017, DSM recorded 3,214 clicks on its targeted outreach, with 208 target talent candidates taking action and clicking to join its talent community.

DSM also experienced an unexpected surge in exposure. Although it limited its targeting to 2,000 professionals, between those people, internal employees sharing the content and the content's availability on the internet, DSM had 415,243 impressions on its videos and ads.

From a recruiting perspective, DSM also made six hires from its segment-specific talent community during the six-month period, which helped bring procurement's time to hire down from over 100 days to 62 days for the period. It also delivered significant cost savings by reducing recruitment agency usage from 20% of hires in 1H17 to just 3% of hires in 2H17.

Finally — perhaps the most significant marker of the practice's success — many other parts of the DSM business queued up to create their own segment-specific EVPs.