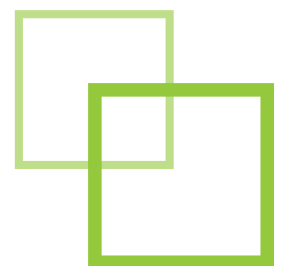




HRO TODAY RESEARCH FLASH REPORT

HR'S 2022 RESPONSE DEFINES EMPLOYER BRAND IN APAC



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HRO Today Flash Reports are a series of ongoing research initiatives that address today's topics of interest in the HR community. These reports are focused briefs that can be used to support business decisions and further discussion among industry practitioners and thought leaders. The markets served are North America, EMEA and APAC.

This report covers the APAC region and examines candidate experience measurement, employer brand practices and the impact of COVID-19 on employer branding. It also discusses how the importance of diversity and inclusion messaging in employer branding has changed over the last 12 months.

Where appropriate, findings from this year's study are compared with those from the 2021 report, which also addressed candidate experience and employer brand practices in the APAC region.

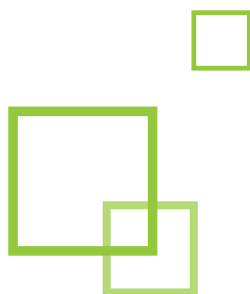
This report was sponsored by PeopleScout.

Methodology

The QuestionPro Audience panel was solicited to take part in a survey from January 3-7, 2022. There was a total of 50 study respondents, and all were at the manager level or above within their HR departments. Respondents were all employed within the APAC region.

The study respondents were screened to ensure that they were personally very familiar with their company's employer brand. The average size of respondents' organisations was 16,000 employees; there were no respondents from organisations with less than 500 employees. Because of the size and diversity of the region and small sample size, these results should be viewed as directional.

Those invited to take the survey were not aware of PeopleScout's sponsorship of this study.

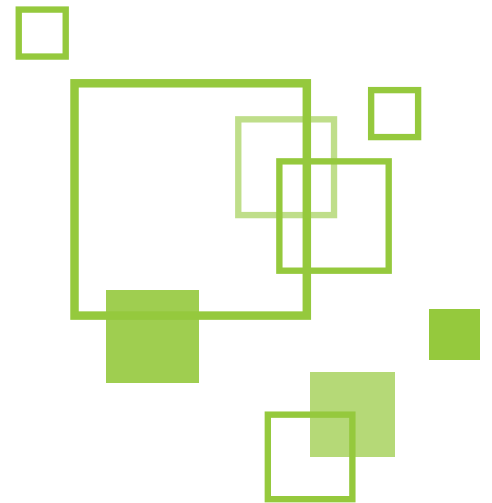


INTRODUCTION

Recruitment teams in APAC in early 2022 continue to face the same challenges they have for nearly two years. Accelerated by COVID-19 and the movement for racial justice, workplace changes that were expected to take years happened in months.

Today, virtually recruiting remote workers is the new norm for many. Internal mobility and upskilling programs are being built out, often for the first time. In many industries, recruiting came to a standstill as organisations scaled back hiring in early response to the pandemic, only to face unprecedented demand as companies began to restaff in anticipation of the pandemic subsiding. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are being treated with greater urgency and accountability in many industries¹, with challenges unique to the APAC region.

But how have all these changes impacted the candidate experience? How will organisations refocus their employer brands to reflect new priorities? This report explores those questions and discusses the implications of the findings.



CONCLUSIONS

While companies' overall assessment of their candidate experience acknowledges challenges, scores have improved since 2021. The number of respondents claiming their organisation has a good or excellent candidate experience has remained steady at 84% from 2021 to 2022. However, in 2022, nearly twice as many respondents feel their candidate experience is excellent compared to 2021 (36% vs. 20%, respectively). Given how tight the labour market is in many industries, recruiters cannot afford to have a substandard candidate experience. The best candidates will move on, leaving organisations with poor or even mediocre candidate experience practices behind.

The top three candidate experience challenges faced by employers are monitoring social media to reinforce or correct employer brand perceptions, ensuring timeliness of the interview process and formally capturing candidate feedback. A lack of dedicated resources to monitor social sites not only leaves organisations vulnerable to misinformation but may also signal a lack of concern about how the company is perceived as an employer. Additionally, in a tight labour market, a lengthy recruitment process and poor candidate experience can thwart recruiting efforts and lead to losing top candidates. Finally, not capturing candidate feedback denies recruiters valuable information that can be used to improve processes and eliminate missteps that can lead to poor recruiting performance and high employee attrition.

Employer value proposition (EVP) priorities cover a wide range of goals. Every organisation has a unique EVP that attracts employees and anchors its company culture. The most widely held goal of an EVP is to reinforce company values, as indicated by 58% of respondents. But the range of goals were broad enough that seven of the nine areas examined were selected by over a third of respondents.

Feedback about the recruiting experience remains sporadic, both to and from candidates. In 2022, less than one-half (47%) of recruiters make it a practice to ask for feedback from candidates. Similarly, 47% of recruiters consistently provide feedback to candidates who were not extended an offer after face-to-face interviews, up substantially from 38% the prior year. Lack of feedback has a negative impact on recruitment; without capturing data, employers cannot construct an informed roadmap to a superior candidate experience. Offering feedback can create goodwill between the candidate and company, add a candidate to the silver-medalist talent pool and help avoid negative social media chatter. Given the tremendous surge in recruiting activity between the second half of 2020 and 2021, it's possible that recruiters may be too overwhelmed to take this final step in the process. Legal considerations often dictate what can be given as feedback, further complicating the issue.

Many companies plan to revise their employer brand. Forty-seven percent of study participants plan to review and update their employer brand in 2022. This re-examination comes as no surprise, as the last two years have led to considerable change and refocusing of business priorities. Today, these priorities often include responding to the worldwide pandemic as well as meeting the increased demand for workers in the midst of a talent shortage.

Companies will continue to invest more in their employer brands. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of participants anticipate a greater investment in their employer brands, up from 69% in 2021. Responding to the pandemic has given companies an opportunity to distinguish themselves as a great place to work.

Companies continue to highlight their COVID-19 response in their employer brand. Recruiters remain adamant about the importance of their employer brand as they continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic. More than three-quarters (76%) of recruiters feel their employer brand is becoming more important in the long run. Companies' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic will have a long-term effect on their culture; reputation as a great place to work; and ability to attract, recruit and retain talent well into the future. Almost every study participant (96%) indicated that their company made an adjustment to their employer brand in response to the pandemic. The majority of employer brands showcased what the company did to protect its workforce.

DEI has played a more significant role in employer branding over the last 12 months. Over two-thirds (69%) of survey respondents plan to change their employer branding strategy to include DEI as a critical component of the message. Diversity and inclusion commitment is traditionally more limited in APAC due to cultural norms and geographic dispersion.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Rating of Company's Candidate Experience

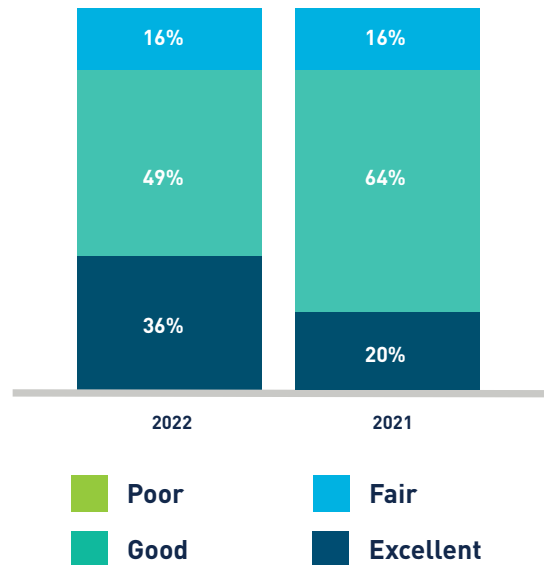
On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your company's candidate experience?

Study respondents were asked to rate their company's candidate experience on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent). In 2022, 84% of respondents feel they have a good or excellent candidate experience, the same as in 2021. Just over one-third (36%) feel their candidate experience is excellent—nearly double the 20% result in 2021. This may indicate a greater focus on providing an excellent candidate experience among a section of companies.

But there may be a disconnect between a company's self-reported candidate experience scores and actions taken as a result. Recent research from The Talent Board showcased the gap between what organisations know about candidate experience and what they practice. For instance, a whopping 91% of employers believe candidate experience impacts quality of hire, but 42% still do not evaluate candidate experience.²

Given the high worker demand in the region, measuring candidate experience is more paramount than ever. After the pandemic's initial blow to the job market in 2020, hiring increased dramatically in 2021. Four out of 10 employers in Asia-Pacific say they planned to increase headcount by 10% in 2021, with the average pay raise for the region being 4.6%. This means candidate experience will need to improve to address the increased demand for workers.³

RATING OF COMPANY'S CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE



Challenges with Candidate Experience

What are your greatest challenges with your candidate experience? Please select the top three.

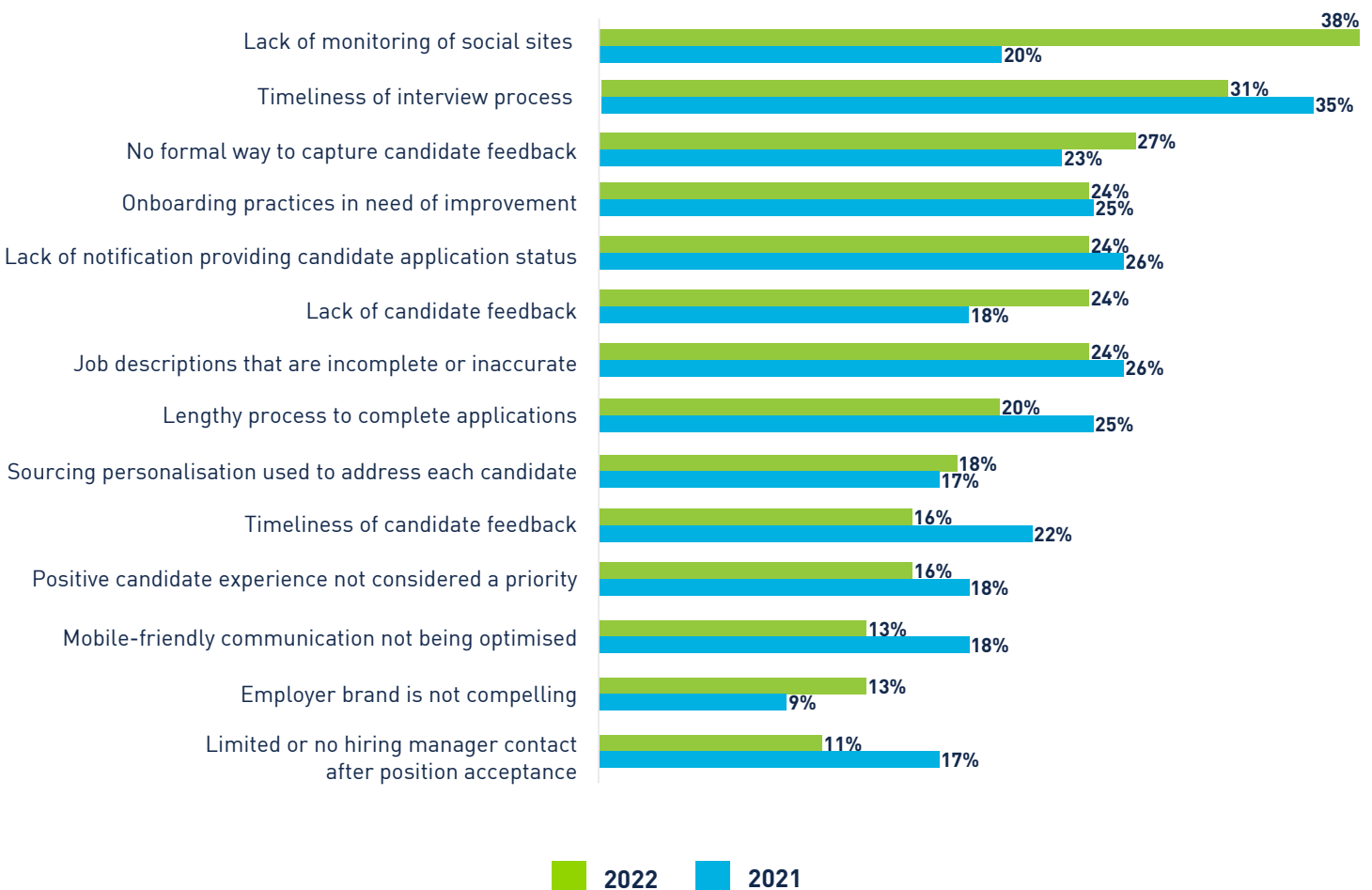
Study participants were asked to select the top three challenges they face with their candidate experience out of 14 options.

The most commonly selected challenge in 2022 is insufficient monitoring of social media sites to reinforce or correct employer brand perceptions (38%). Nearly twice as many respondents selected this area as in 2021. Social media is most effective when it's a two-way interaction. Misperceptions about a company can become fact when not addressed, and a lack of response can be perceived as a lack of concern about how candidates and employees perceive a company as a place to work.

The second greatest challenge is the timeliness of the interview process, as selected by 31%. This component of the candidate experience includes scheduling interviews, extending offers and negotiating contracts. In today's recruitment landscape, the most qualified candidates tend to receive offers quickly, so the more concise and focused the interview process, the better the chances recruiters have of candidates accepting their offers. Additionally, long delays and inefficiencies can negatively impact job seekers' perception of the company.

Areas related to candidate feedback were also a great challenge for many. Over a quarter (27%) cited no formal way to capture candidate feedback and 24% claimed a lack of candidate feedback. Given that there is nearly 24/7 access to candidates through smartphones, lack of candidate feedback is mostly an issue of recruiters' own creation. In the APAC region in 2020, the smartphone adoption rate reached 68% and is expected to increase to 83% by 2025.⁴

CHALLENGES WITH CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE



Priorities with the Employer Value Proposition

What are the priorities of your EVP? Please select all that all that apply.

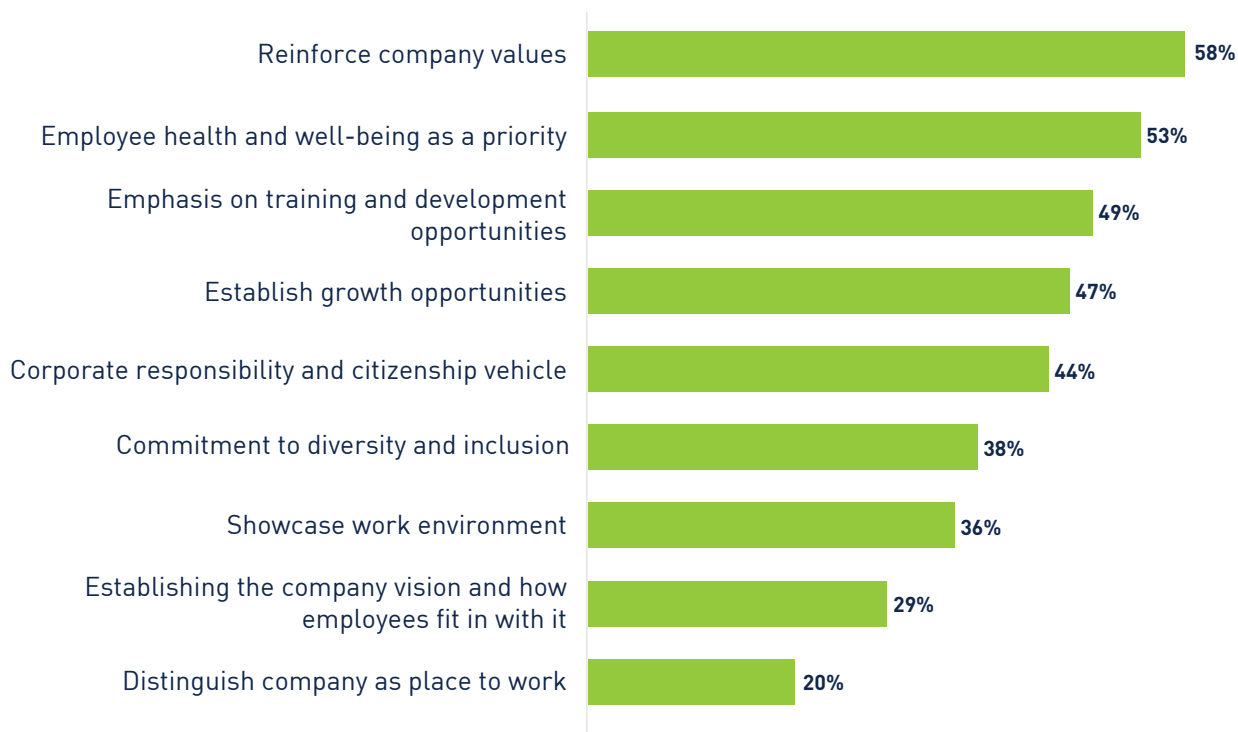
Respondents were asked to identify all the priorities of their employer value proposition. Overall, these priorities cover a wide range of goals, with seven of the nine examined in this analysis selected by at least one-third of respondents.

The most widely held priority of an EVP is to reinforce company values, as indicated by 58% of respondents. Company values can shape and unite an entire organisation by guiding the responses and actions that are expected of everyone representing the company. Values anchor company culture. More importantly, they represent what a company is willing to offer its employees in return for their best work. Part of that includes obvious things like pay, benefits and job security—but EVP is also so much more than that. Do employees find meaning in their work? Can they see how it connects to the bigger corporate strategy? Are they valued and appreciated?⁵

In Japan, examples of common company values reflect the Japanese society: empathy and positive behaviour towards others, punctuality, cooperation, and respect.⁶ Other examples of company values around the world include loyalty, honesty, and innovation.

Employee health and well-being was another top EVP priority selected by at least one-half (53%) of respondents. The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has now exceeded two years in much of the world, particularly the APAC region. Companies will be evaluated as a place to work by current and potential employees, customers and partners based on how they addressed worker needs during the pandemic. Those needs include personal safety, financial security and alternative work arrangements.

PRIORITIES OF YOUR EVP



MEASURING CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Candidate Feedback on Recruitment Experience

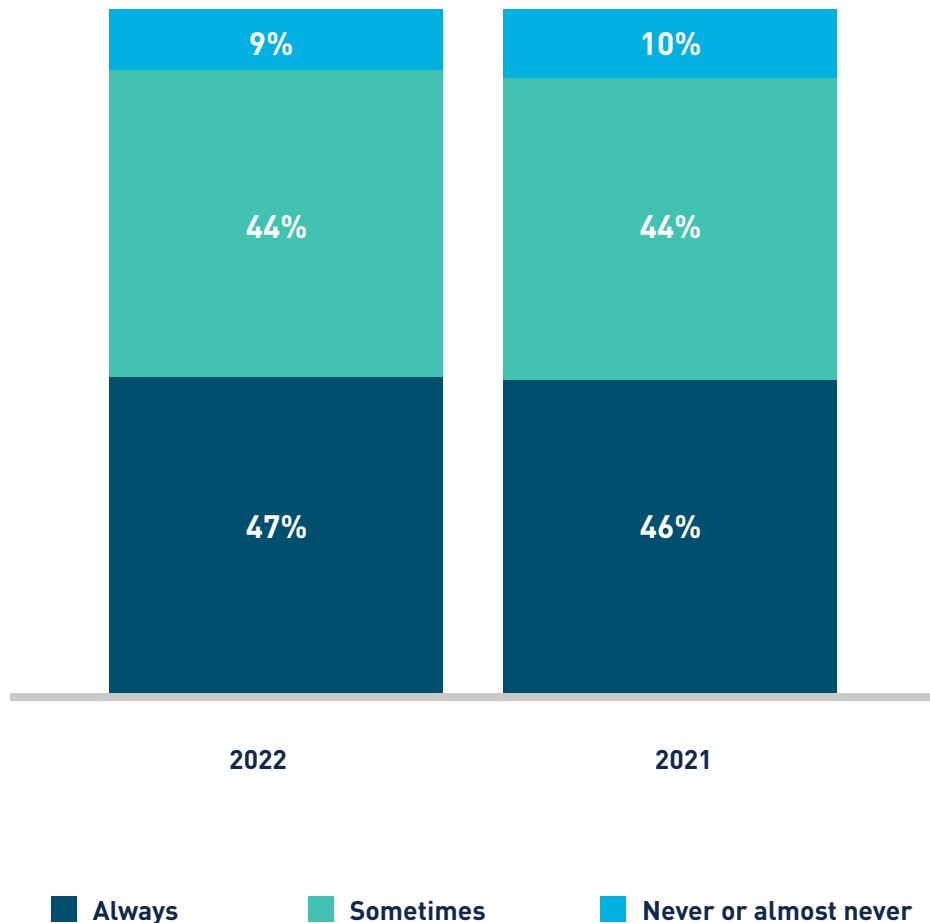
How often do you ask candidates to give feedback on their recruitment experience?

Respondents were asked how often they ask candidates to give feedback on their recruitment experience. In 2022, 47% of respondents consistently ask candidates to give feedback, about the same as in 2021. Conversely, less than one-in-ten (9%) do not ask candidates to give feedback, also about the same as in 2021.

Asking for a candidate's opinion on the recruitment process inevitably gives hiring teams insight into key areas that can be improved. Eliciting feedback from candidates at crucial stages of the hiring process can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of that process, which is the first step toward improving it.⁷ Providing the opportunity to give feedback may even improve a candidate's perception of the experience by giving them a voice.

HR leaders recommend two key stages in which to set up candidate touchpoints. After candidates have applied, send them a short survey about the application experience. This feedback solicitation should be conducted immediately after the application experience while it is still top of mind and before a candidate knows if they will progress to the interview process. Organisations should also solicit feedback to evaluate hiring manager performance at each stage of the process. The candidate feedback may show that the breakdown in communication lies with a certain hiring manager.

FREQUENCY OF MEASURING CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE



Candidate Feedback after Face-to-Face Interviews

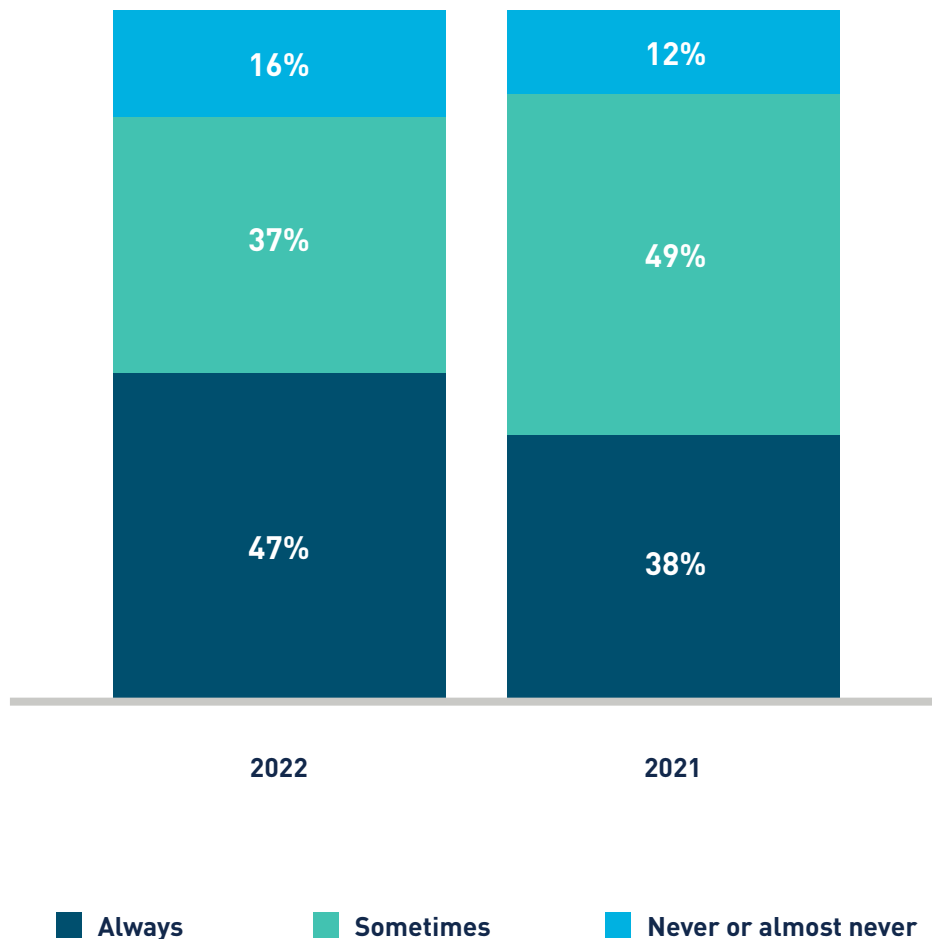
How often do you give feedback to candidates you reject after face-to-face interviews/assessments?

Study participants were asked if they give feedback to candidates they reject after face-to-face interviews. Giving feedback appears to be very situational. In 2022, just under one-half (47%) make it a practice to give feedback, up substantially from 38% in 2021.

There are several good reasons to answer inquiries from rejected interviewees. First and foremost, it can create goodwill between the candidate and the company. These days, social media serves as a megaphone where applicants can share their reactions to how they were treated. Leave them in the dark after they've worked hard to shine at an interview, and an employer may have to battle criticism about their company on social media. To avoid this scenario, organisations should provide constructive feedback and develop mutual respect between the candidate and the company.

Creating a positive link also populates your pipeline with future hires. Employers should consider giving feedback only to interviewees who finish in second, third or fourth place. Beyond that is mostly negative commentary, which may have legal implications. Further, not all interviewed applicants will ask for personalised insights, which would reduce the amount of feedback required.⁸

CANDIDATE FEEDBACK AFTER FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS



Plans for Employer Brand

Which of the following are part of your plans to improve your employer brand? Please select all that apply.

Study participants were asked to identify their focus areas to elevate their employer brand out of a list of 15 factors.

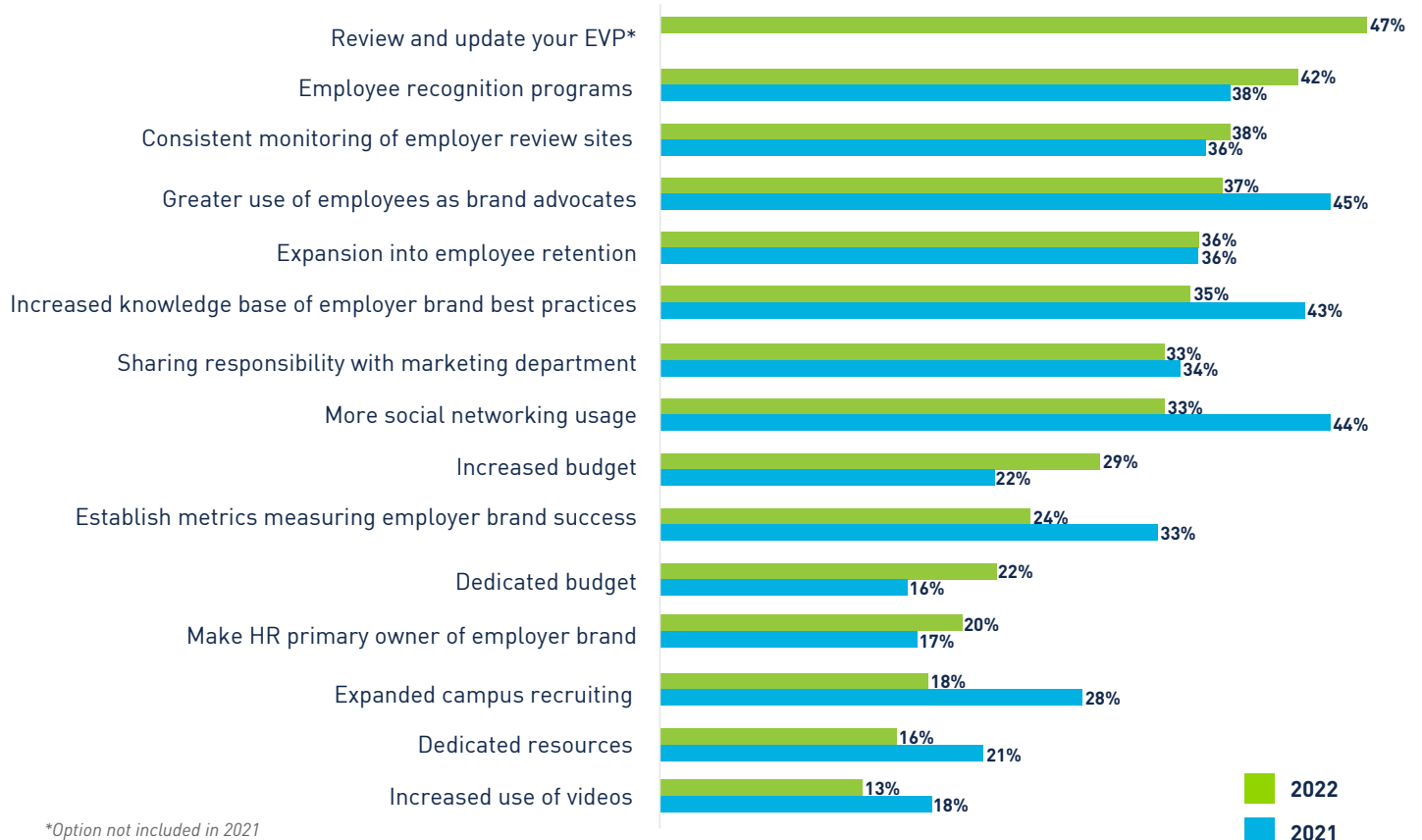
The most anticipated strategy to boost employer brand is to review and update the EVP, as selected by 47% of study participants. It is not surprising that this is a key part of organisations' plans this year. It is likely that many companies' EVPs created prior to COVID-19 no longer prove practical or accurate after the pandemic. Companies need to update their EVPs to highlight all of the benefits that emerged during the pandemic so they can develop the interest of job seekers.

"The Great Resignation" is impacting parts of APAC, as it is in other regions of the world. Employees now demand greater flexibility and more defined purpose, so new approaches are required to attract and retain talent. A strong EVP can help retain workers; people leaving jobs voluntarily might reconsider their decision when the company's EVP is compelling.⁹

Employee recognition programs were the second-most frequently selected focus area to improve employer brand. Many employees are still working remotely, and nearly two-thirds (64%) say employee recognition and appreciation is even more important while working from home. Working remotely can be isolating for many, as normal day-to-day interaction and pleasantries are often lacking. Many employees have also struggled with achieving work-life balance. As a result, showing appreciation and recognition for employees is perhaps more important than ever.

Lastly, in 2022, 38% of HR leaders intend to consistently monitor employer review sites as part of their plans to improve their employer brand, about the same percentage as in 2021 (36%). Examples of common review sites include Glassdoor, Indeed and SEEK. While there are many other platforms providing employer reviews in different regions or niches, companies should strive to monitor employer scores across all sites and develop a strategy and plan of action to address comments and reviews. Responding to both positive and negative reviews should be a tactic used to own the conversation.

PLANS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYER BRAND



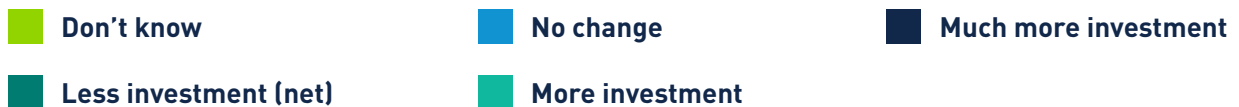
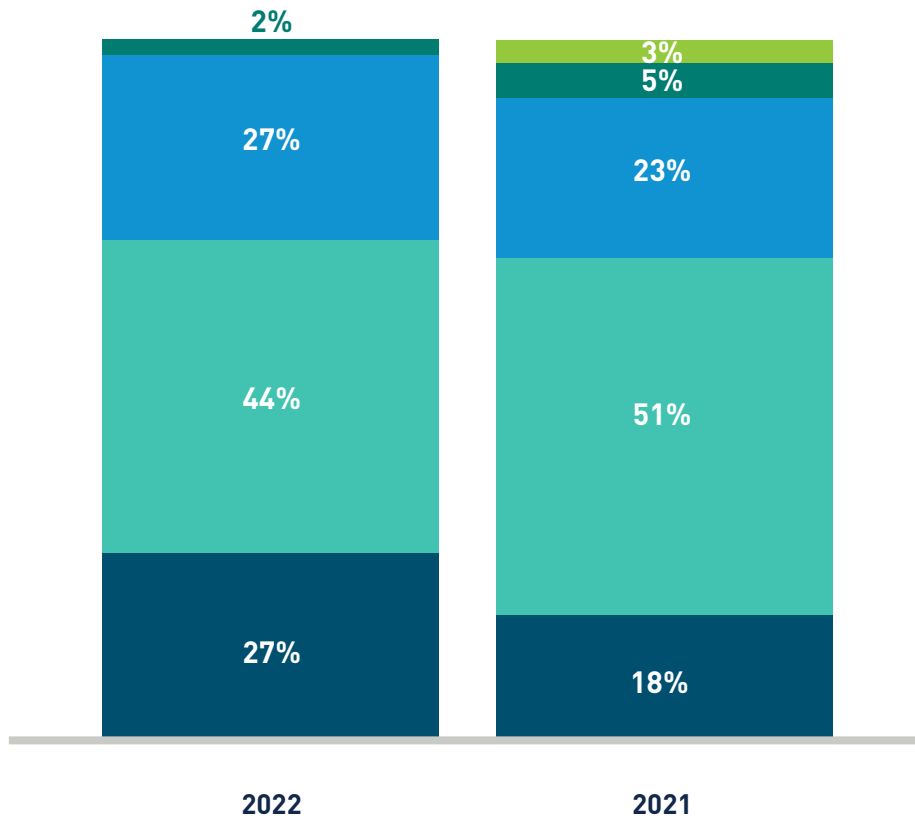
Anticipated Investment in Employer Brand

How do you anticipate the investment in your employer brand will change 24 months from now?

Companies will continue to invest in their employer brands. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of survey respondents anticipate a greater investment, similar to 69% in 2021. Furthermore, over one-quarter of HR leaders (27%) plan to invest significantly more in their employer brand this year, up nine percentage points over 2021 and suggesting a year-over-year increase in employer brand investment.

Finally, 27% plan no change in their anticipated investment, either holding steady from prior increases or reacting to budget constraints as their companies cope with the pandemic.

ANTICIPATED INVESTMENT IN EMPLOYER BRAND



EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EMPLOYER BRAND

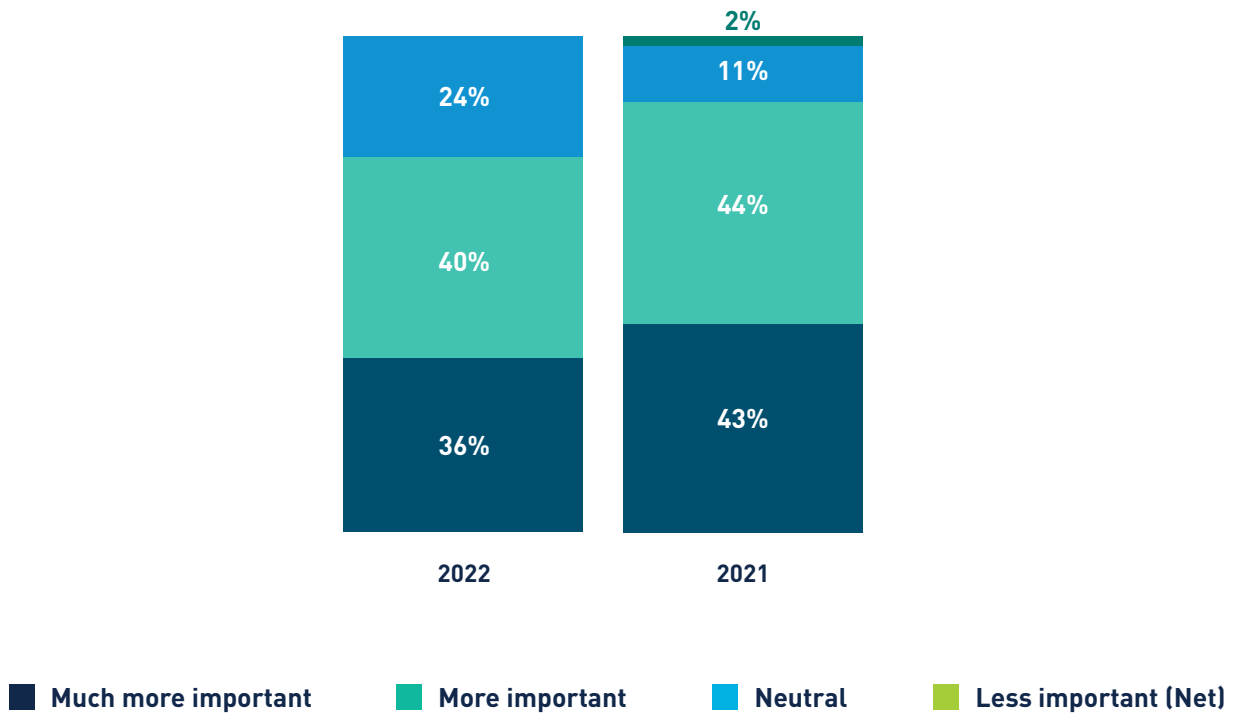
Long-Term Impact on Importance of Employer Brand

What will the long-term impact on the importance of the employer brand be given the COVID-19 pandemic?

Over three-quarters (76%) of study respondents felt their employer brand is going to become more important in the long term given the pandemic, continuing the trend reported in 2021. How companies have responded to the pandemic will have a lasting effect on their culture, reputation, and ability to attract, recruit, and retain talent today and in the future. Today's job seekers are looking at how organisations responded to the COVID-19 crisis and supported their employees through the turbulence of the past two years.

An employer's actions during the pandemic indicate to candidates not only what the employee experience might be like, but also provide a window into the organisation's values. Job seekers will examine a company's COVID-19 policies to assess the accuracy of its brand and EVP. These policies include decisions about who was furloughed or temporarily laid off, how employee financial well-being was balanced with that of the organisation, how companies ensured employees' health and safety, and how employers supported remote employees while keeping them engaged and productive.¹⁰

EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EMPLOYER BRAND



Ways Companies Have Adjusted Employer Brand

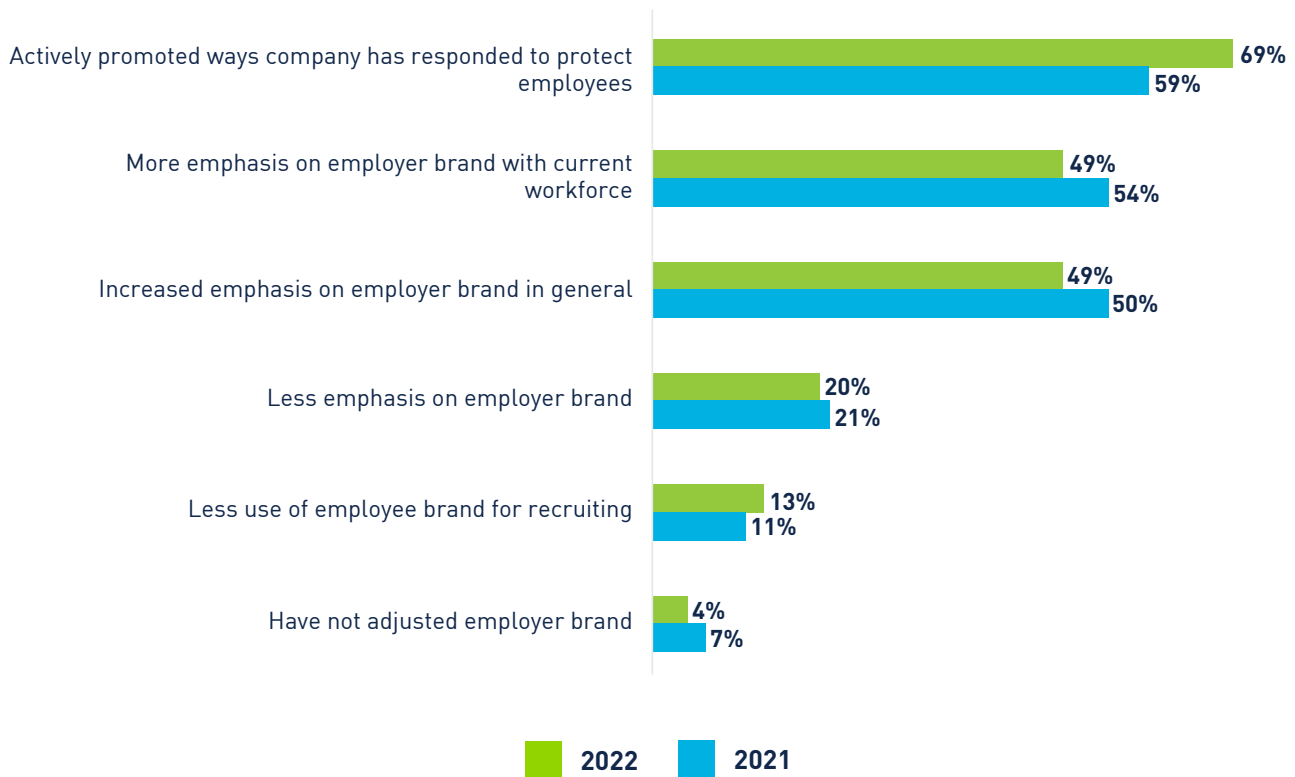
In what ways has your company adjusted its employer brand in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Respondents were asked to select all the ways their company has adjusted their employer brand in response to the pandemic. Just under one-half (49%) of respondents indicated that they have placed a greater emphasis on employer brand, while only 20% have decreased their focus on employer brand. Additionally, the pandemic drove changes to employer brand and shined a spotlight on it. Almost every respondent (96%) made an adjustment of some kind, with over two-thirds (69%) actively promoting the ways the company has protected employees during the pandemic.

Well into the fourth quarter of 2021, organisations continued measures designed to protect employees from potential infection, particularly with the spread of the Omicron variant. Working from home, rotating employees at the office, social distancing and numerous sanitation practices have been put into place to protect employees. Highlighting these practices is a key element of how companies convey that they care for their employees in their branding efforts.

Those who have adjusted employer brand most often focused internally, with more emphasis on strengthening the employer brand among the current workforce, according to 49% of respondents. Messages of reassurance and company priorities as they pertain to the welfare of employees have been more prevalently incorporated into the employer brand.

WAYS COMPANIES HAVE ADJUSTED EMPLOYER BRAND



How the Importance of Diversity and Inclusion Messaging has Changed

How has the importance of diversity and inclusion messaging changed as part of your employer brand over the last 12 months?

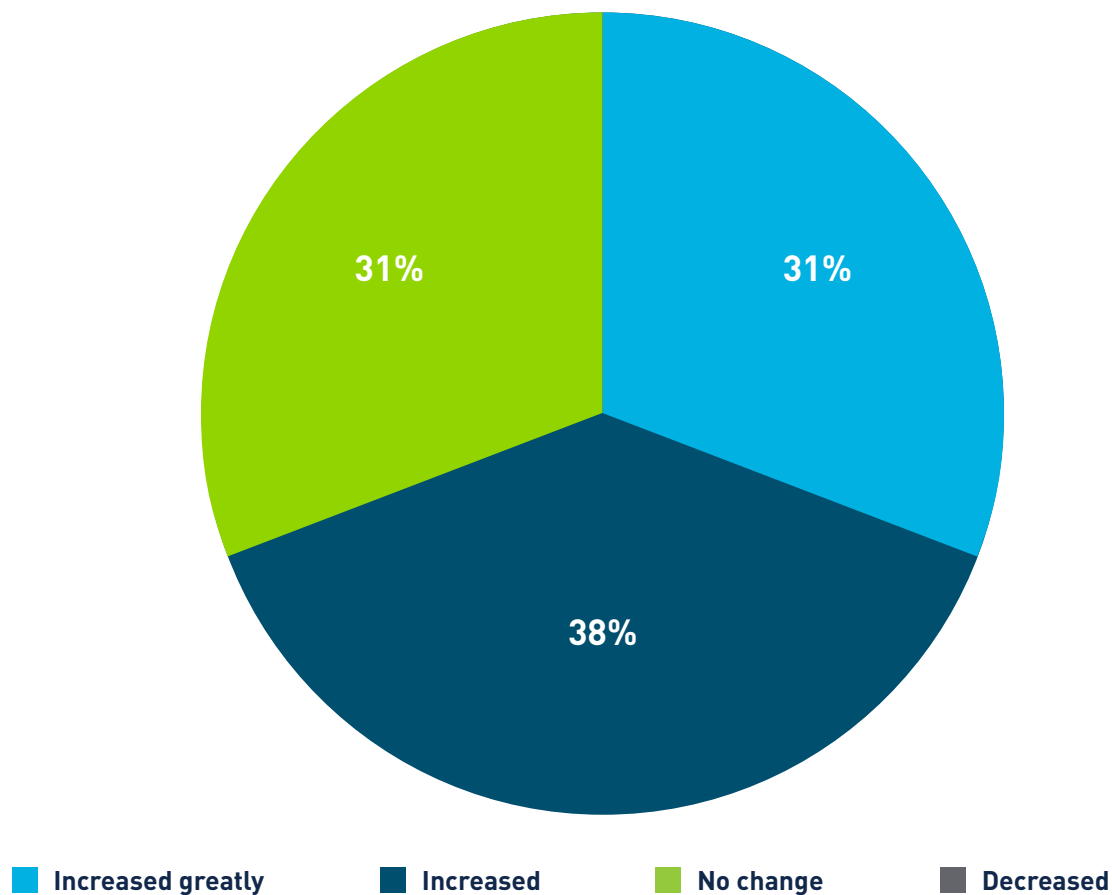
Most study respondents (69%) indicated that the importance of addressing DEI in employer brand messaging increased over the last 12 months, with the remainder stating no change. While the demand for greater emphasis around DEI was heard loudest in the United States in 2021, the call still resonated around the world, though the APAC region has been slower to adapt to it.

There are many reasons why progress in DEI in the APAC region has been limited. APAC is a complex region, but a deep dive into the data reveals progress in different countries and shows a willingness to be part of the solution.¹¹

Compared to other regions where racial mixes are more common, most APAC countries are dominated by a single race, providing fewer opportunities to practice inclusion. As a result, equality remains a less familiar topic and is perceived as less important in APAC, and there is a greater emphasis on maintaining traditional values.¹²

Further, there are unique challenges when it comes to recruiting gender diverse talent in APAC because of the sentiment around women in the workforce. While employers have made great strides in bringing more women into the workforce, in some cultures, women are still expected to have a more “relaxed” career (if they have a career at all) due to an expectation that they should be a family caretaker first and foremost. This can dissuade some women from beginning a career in finance or sales, for example, and instead seek out jobs that are perceived as less demanding, which can limit the diversity of the talent pool.¹³

HOW THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MESSAGING HAS CHANGED



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