



The Value of a Defined EVP

An EVP captures a company's unique offerings to employees beyond salary and benefits. EVPs codify cultural values, professional development pathways, work-life policies, and other core tenets of the employee experience. Yet many professional services firms struggle with unclear or overly broad EVPs, missing opportunities to both attract and retain quality talent through a clear understanding of a workplace's benefits and value.

A well-defined EVP can help organizations:

- ▶ Differentiate themselves in a competitive talent market
- ▶ Enhance employee engagement and satisfaction
- ► Reduce turnover and associated costs
- Strengthen employer brand and reputation
- ▶ Align talent strategy with business goals

In professional services, where <u>disproportionately high turnover rates</u> strain financial resources and disrupt client relationships, a strong EVP is not just a recruitment tool, it's also a strategic imperative.



The Building Blocks of a Strong EVP



Defined Culture and Values



Establishing Psychological Safety



Manager Buy-In and Development



Talent Lifecycle Alignment



Authenticity and Strategic Fit



Measuring Your EVP



Winnning the Talent Battle



Defined Culture and Values

Culture is often overlooked in EVP development. Firms may rely on platitudes or unwritten "norms" to serve as cultural pillars, or tout values without backing them up with policy and action.

To stand out to both current and prospective employees, an organization's culture must be:

Explicit and clearly articulated

▶ Specific to the firm's mission and goals

Supported by proof points such as programs, policies, and leadership behaviors

For example, claiming "innovation" as a value should also be backed by action such as requiring employees to set innovation goals in performance reviews. Defined values backed by tangible commitments attract talent and give current employees a framework for success and recognition.



Establishing Psychological Safety

One steadfast pillar for companies to consider in their EVP is a **commitment to psychological safety**. Psychological safety is cultivated by clearly defined approaches to support flexibility, transparency, and trust, allowing employees to feel comfortable speaking up, taking risks, and making mistakes without fear of negative consequences.

BDO research shows that 91% of knowledge workers feel that <u>trust and</u> <u>psychological safety are essential</u> for an effective culture. In professional services, where client-facing work and performance pressure can lead to <u>workplace stress and burnout</u>, establishing psychological safety can significantly enhance employee well-being and retention.





Manager Buy-In and Development

Managers play a pivotal role in EVP success. <u>Forty-two percent of employees</u> who voluntarily left their organization report that their manager or organization could have done something to prevent them from leaving.

Upskilling leaders to display not only technical competence (IQ) but also emotional intelligence (EQ) is essential to this effort.

Managers with high EQ can:

- Spot signs of disengagement early
- ► Intervene with timely support
- Model and champion company culture

When there is a disconnect between a company's stated values and observed behaviors of leadership, trust can erode, employees can disengage, and retention can suffer.

A strong relationship between employees and leadership relies on deep trust and high expectations, where leaders demonstrate that they trust employees, while also holding them to consistently high standards. 77% of employees say they have left, or would leave, a job if they did not feel trusted.





Talent Lifecycle Alignment

A strong EVP addresses every stage of the <u>talent lifecycle</u> from recruitment to onboarding, development, and advancement. Misalignment at any stage can erode trust and drive turnover.

For example, lack of transparency during hiring can lead to early exits and the absence of growth opportunities can push talent to look elsewhere.

Firms must be transparent and demonstrate clear investment in employee growth. Offering mentorship opportunities, training programs, and upskilling in AI and other innovative areas can align individual career goals with the firm's strategic needs.

An EVP not only meets talent's expectations but also helps prepare the business for evolving professional services industry demands.





9

Authenticity and Strategic Fit

EVPs that attempt to be "everything to everyone" often fail. Instead, they must reflect the firm's true culture and operating model. This requires honest assessment of client service expectations, workload demands, and firm trajectory.

Organizations should ask themselves, "What kind of employee experience will truly support and sustain our business goals?"

Authenticity resonates. When employers are honest about the hurdles facing its industry, they build trust and attract talent aligned with their mission.







Measuring Your EVP

Creating a winning EVP isn't a one-and-done exercise, but rather an ongoing iterative process. Firms must continuously measure and refine their EVPs to identify and address areas of misalignment with their current and prospective employees. Without this level of scrutiny, there is no way for professional service firms to definitively determine whether their EVP is improving their talent pipeline or jeopardizing it.

Warning indicators of a weak EVP include:

▶ Mis-aligned talent pipeline

Low retention rates — especially within the first 90 days

Poor employee engagement scores

Negative feedback from exit interviews

Measurement should go beyond an annual survey. Continuous listening and visible actions are essential to building trust and improving retention.





Winning the Talent Battle

Firms that build strong EVPs and healthy work cultures turn talent into a competitive advantage. They attract quality hires, strengthening employee loyalty, and future-proof their workforce.

BDO's talent management and people services help professional services firms:

► Conduct competitive EVP analysis

Design EVPs aligned with business strategy

▶ Train managers to deliver on EVP commitments

▶ Build development programs for future-ready skills



