

Mission Matters: The Effect of Authentic Social Purpose in Job Postings on Recruiting Outcomes

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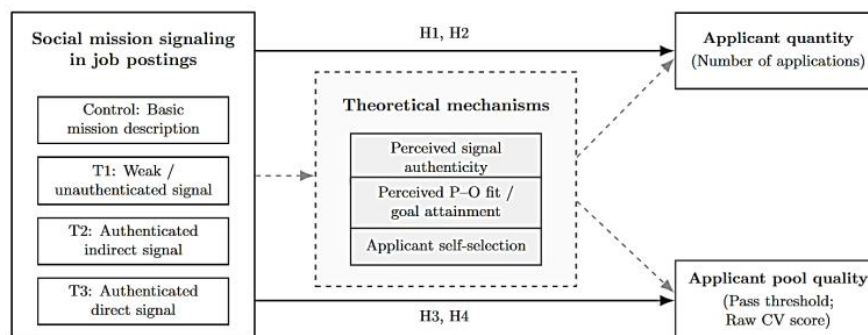
M.Sc Business Administration

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Purpose/Motivation: Recruitment is inherently characterized by uncertainty, as organizations must make hiring decisions before they can fully assess applicants' future performance. Because the process is resource-intensive and costly for both employers and job seekers, understanding how recruitment communication, in this case social mission signals in job postings, influences applicant behavior and recruitment outcomes is both theoretically and practically important.

Theories/Hypotheses: Drawing on signaling theory, person-organization fit theory, and authenticity research, this thesis argues that social mission signals in job postings reduce information asymmetry by communicating organizational values, thereby influencing recruitment outcomes. It hypothesizes that stronger, more authentic, and salient mission signals increase both applicant quantity and applicant pool quality by enhancing perceived organizational credibility and encouraging value-based self-selection among applicants.



H1: Job postings containing an enhanced social mission signal (T1, T2, T3) attract more applicants than postings with only a basic mission description (Control).

H2: Job postings containing a stronger social mission signal attract more applicants than postings with a weaker social mission signal, such that:

a) An authenticated, direct quote-based social mission signal (T3) attracts more applicants than both an authenticated, indirect social mission signal (T2) and a weak, unauthenticated social mission signal (T1).

b) An authenticated, indirect social mission signal (T2) attracts more applicants than a weak,

unauthenticated social mission signal (T1)

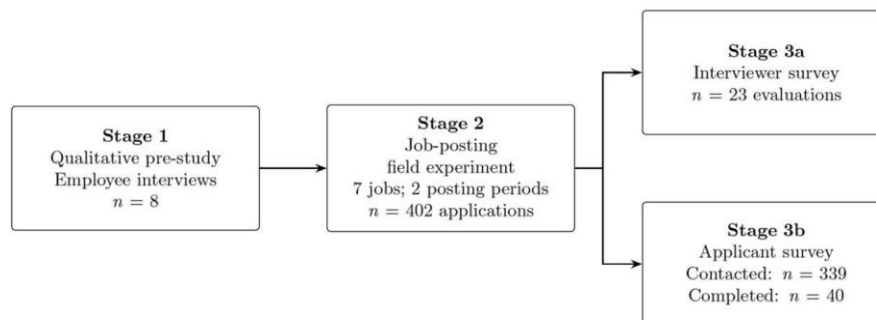
H3: Job postings containing an enhanced social mission signal (T1, T2, T3) attract a higher-quality applicant pool than postings with only a basic mission description (Control).

H4: Job postings containing a stronger social mission signal attract a higher-quality applicant pool than postings with a weaker social mission signal, such that:

a) An authenticated, direct quote-based social mission signal (T3) attracts a higher-quality applicant pool than both an authenticated, indirect social mission signal (T2) and a weak, unauthenticated social mission signal (T1).

b) An authenticated, indirect social mission signal (T2) attracts a higher-quality applicant pool than a weak, unauthenticated social mission signal (T1).

Approach/Methodology: The thesis used a multi-stage, practice-based research design within a startup. Qualitative employee interviews informed the social mission signals, which were experimentally manipulated in job advertisements to examine their effects on applicant quantity and quality, while surveys of both applicants and hiring managers assessed perceived person-organization fit, expected performance, and organizational authenticity; given the exploratory nature and small sample sizes, findings were evaluated using a 10% significance threshold.



Findings: The findings provide limited evidence that social mission signals increase applicant quantity or overall applicant quality, and stronger or more authentic signals did not consistently outperform weaker ones. Instead, the results suggest that clear, salient, and credible mission signals may primarily influence applicant self-selection and perceived person-organization fit, rather than serving as a general attraction mechanism.

Research Limitations: The findings should be interpreted cautiously due to small sample sizes and limited statistical power. Additionally, the authenticity manipulation was only weakly perceived, and applicant perceptions and quality were measured indirectly. This highlights the

need for larger, multi-organizational studies that more directly examine how applicants perceive and respond to social mission signals.

Research Implications: This thesis extends theory by showing that social mission communication influences applicant perceptions of organizational fit during recruitment, broadening research on value-based practices, signaling theory, authenticity, and person-organization fit. The research further suggests that effective mission signals depend not only on credibility but also on applicants noticing and interpreting them, making social mission communication more relevant for applicant self-selection than for increasing overall applicant attraction.

Practical Implications: Organizations should communicate their social mission authentically, clearly, and consistently across the recruitment process, focusing on concrete, credible messages rather than stronger or more elaborate mission claims. Recruitment success should be evaluated not only by the number of applicants but also by how effectively mission communication attracts qualified candidates whose values align with the organization.

Contribution: This paper contributes to hiring theory and practice by showing that social mission signals are most effective when they are perceived as clear, credible, and authentic. Rather than attracting more applicants, they primarily appear to promote value-based applicant self-selection.

Paper type: Empirical.

Further readings:

Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Reutzel, C. R., DesJardine, M. R., & Zhou, Y. S. (2025). Signaling Theory: State of the Theory and Its Future. *Journal of Management*, 51(1), 24–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063241268459>

Guest, D. E., Sanders, K., Rodrigues, R., & Oliveira, T. (2021). Signalling theory as a framework for analysing human resource management processes and integrating human resource attribution theories: A conceptual analysis and empirical exploration. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 31(3), 796–818. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12326>

Merriman, K. K., Kostanski, S. A., Ebrahimi, N., & Montag-Smit, T. A. (2025). The Signaling Effect of Biophilic Job Posts: Do Applicants Trade Green for Green? *Human Resource Management*, 64(3), 825–839. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22285>