

Building Your Employer Brand to Attract, Engage and Retain Talent

WHY EMPLOYER BRANDING

In an increasingly competitive economic and business climate companies must focus their collective efforts on developing their employer brand if they are to attract, engage and retain talent better than their competitors. No longer should the firm's employer brand strategy be the sole responsibility of the HR department. A successful employer brand program must be sponsored by the CEO or Managing Director and should demand **a high level of visibility in the company's strategic plan**. Employer branding should be viewed from the top as a **'whole of business strategy'** for the management of people and managers at all levels must be engaged in the process.

The following four-phase Employer Brand Management process (*see figure 1*) will assist HR Directors and heads of other strategic business units to develop an employer brand that builds competitive advantage. Executed correctly your employer brand will position your company at the forefront in today's 'talent competitive' market.

STEP 1 - CONCEPT PHASE

The Concept Phase involves a 360 employer brand audit to determine the strength of your current employer brand and to determine its level of synergy with your corporate brand and business objectives. Results from employee surveys (e.g. engagement, commitment or satisfaction surveys) and candidate/stakeholder surveys can also be used to gauge the perception of the company's employer brand amongst internal and external audiences. Existing employee measurement research data and HR data should also be compiled and analysed during this phase. Research conducted during the concept phase can result in significant savings further along the process continuum.

STEP 2 - DESIGN PHASE

The Design Phase is the process to formulate your employer brand strategy. The following Employer Brand Excellence Framework™ provides a strategic tool to guide your firm's employer brand program and acts as a platform from which all employer brand actions flow. The components of the framework include:

(i) Defining your Employer Value Propositions (EVP's)

Your EVP consists of a set of associations and offerings that characterise an employer and differentiates it from competitors.

Focus groups, online surveys and/or collaboration with your recruitment and advertising partners can be helpful in defining your EVP – their independent views and knowledge of your organisation will be useful.

(ii) Defining your EBI

The EBI is made up of two components – the Employer Brand Employee Platform and The Employer Brand Strategic Platform

In collaboration with managers across all strategic business units, the custodians of the employer brand program must determine the objectives, strategies, targets, measures, timeframes and responsible persons for managing the employer brand touch points across these platforms. Adequate resources should be allocated to ensure the plan is achievable.

- **Employer Brand Employee Platform**

The Employer Brand Employee Platform™ consists of the employer brand elements that are closest to your employees and impact on the ability of your company to attract, engage and retain employees with the 'right talent/culture' for your organisation. These include

- Recruitment & induction
- Compensation and benefits
- Career development
- Employee research
- Reward and recognition
- Communication systems
- Work environment

- **Employer Brand Strategic Platform**

On completion of the assessment on the Employer Brand Employee Platform elements, the next step is to consider the performance of the firm against the Employer Brand Strategic Platform. These elements include:

- Your firm's mission, vision & values
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Leadership
- Corporate reputation and culture
- People management policies and practices
- Performance management
- Innovation

(iii) The Corporate brand

All the elements of your brand - the name, logo, tagline, and design - combine to form a message about what it is like to work at your company. The messages become synonymous with your company in the mind of existing and prospective employees. The message articulated by your corporate brand should closely align with those communicated by your employer brand.

(iv) Market forces

An analysis of the external environment using a PESTEL analysis should be completed. The PESTEL analysis will scan the political, economical, social, technological, environmental and legal environments to identify the key issues that impact on the firm's employer brand e.g.

recent legislative changes in Australia has made it more attractive for workers eligible for retirement to stay in the workforce longer to maximise their superannuation benefits, thus retaining much needed knowledge and experience.

(v) Customers

The most successful brands are built on an intimate knowledge of their customers. In much the same way, successful employer brands are built on an intimate knowledge of employees. The attitudes and actions of employees impact on the promise delivered to customers. Research shows that engaged and satisfied employees deliver higher levels of service to customers, and the expression of customer satisfaction has a motivational effect on employees, inspiring them to voluntarily give even more of themselves for the purpose of increasing customer satisfaction.

(vii) Prospective employees

The attitudes that individuals hold about employers are informed by their 'affective responses' to situations, people or things. Attitudes are affected by their own employment experiences or those of their family, friends, and colleagues. If the employment experience with an employer in a particular industry is a negative one (e.g. call centre), then that may impact on the attractiveness of the industry as a future employment prospect for the candidate.

(viii) Stakeholders

As part of employer brand research efforts it is recommended that a survey of includes a sample of company stakeholders be undertaken to determine how they perceive your employer brand. Consider how stakeholders perceive your company's work practices. How do they rate the service delivered by your employees? Chances are that if the service level is poor, the employee is likely to be disengaged in their work.

STEP 3 - INTEGRATION PHASE

The Integration Phase involves communicating and cascading the firms EVP(s) to you internal and external audiences. The communication must be relevant, consistent and measurable across all communication touch points using a variety of communication media and integrated IT recruitment and talent management systems.

These may include:

- Career website
- Company intranet
- Careers fair brochures
- Company newsletters
- Policy and procedures templates
- Recruitment advertising
- Sponsorship

The recruitment and induction periods are critical times for a new employee. It is a time when they are forming views of the organisation's values, leadership, and culture. Careful consideration should be made during this period to ensure the actions of the organisations and its partners (e.g. recruitment agencies) during recruitment and induction activities are aligned with the EVP's that the organisation is trying to communicate about "what it is like to

work here.” Failure to do so will result in a disconnect between the candidates expectations and what they actually experience.

Organisations who do not deliver on the employer brand promise and EVP’s will experience higher turnover of talent and a negative impact on corporate culture.

Activities which need to be monitored for EVP alignment include:

- the application and screening process, including the functionality and usability of the careers website and the online application process;
- interview (phone and in person) and initial contact with the company;
- hiring manager interview and attitude;
- quality and content of corporate communications material detailing the employment experience
- reference checking process;
- offer/negotiation/rejection process; and
- induction activities including understanding of strategic direction, business objectives, corporate culture, etc (beyond OHS & transactional activities)

STEP 4 - EVALUATION PHASE

The Evaluation Phase involves measuring the impact of the Employer Brand program against the company’s financial and operational indicators using robust evaluation techniques.

There is no set standard of measurements (or dashboard) that fits every organisation, nor should there be – all organisations are different. Cost per hire, turn over rates, absenteeism, head count, engagement levels, time to fill, retention rates, time to productivity, total costs of labour to revenue, and candidate satisfaction rates are all examples of metrics that will assist managers to measure their ROI on employer brand programs. Other less traditional measures include promotion readiness rating, external vs internal hire ratio, quality-hire ratio, performance ratings of newly promoted managers, manager/executive failure rate, cost-per-hire by channel and offer-to-acceptance ratio among candidates by channel.