

What Is An Employer Brand And Why Should You Care?

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There is an increasing body of evidence that makes the case for solid employer brand management. From an organisation's point of view, an employer brand encapsulates the key qualities current and prospective employees associate with you as an employer.

These qualities can be economic (remuneration), functional (training and skills) or psychological (such as a sense of identity or status).

As an organisation, whether you've taken the time to define it or not, you have an employer brand. What are the benefits of building a good employer brand? Three benefits that have been identified in studies that make a case for employer brand management are enhanced attraction, increased retention and greater engagement with staff

In essence, this means attracting better quality candidates at a lower cost, more effective and proactive employees and, ultimately, increased revenues.

How does one reach the heart of employer brand management? The answer to this question is that the key principles for employer brand management are much the same as for regular brand management. Whoever is tasked with developing the employer brand needs to spend quality time and effort defining the key components of the brand.

This definition is characteristically encapsulated by a model that defines how you'd like the brand to be received by the target audience (which in the case of an employer brand is prospective and current employees). This model will provide the starting point for your brand strategy.

There is an implicit danger in this approach however as one needs to be cognisant of the fact that just defining the vision of the brand is not the brand itself. This is merely the way you'd like people to perceive the brand. The real brand lives in people's everyday experiences of the brand and the perceptions and associations they have in their heads about your organisation.

People have a tendency to become cynical of brands which promise a great deal, but under deliver. To bridge the gap between the perception of a brand and the brand reality, many top brand-led companies create two definitions of the brand: one that enshrines the brand as it is currently perceived and experienced, and the other describing how the company would like the brand to be perceived.

There is a delicate balance between these two definitions. On the one hand, organisations should be striving for the latter, but change too much about the former and the brand may lose focus, change too little and the brand may lose relevance.

Within the employer brand context, you need to understand the explicit needs to your employees as a point of departure. But, to ensure an effective internal brand strategy, you also need to develop an understanding of employees implicit needs as well as the broader organisational and cultural context in which it will operate.

The benefits of having a strong employer brand are numerous. Enhanced attraction, increased retention and greater engagement with staff have already been mentioned. This presents a number of opportunities for human resources, as well as enhanced marketing functions. Richard Mosley goes into greater detail about this in an eArticle entitled "Employer Brand – The performance driver no business can ignore".

Richard Mosley also makes a compelling argument about why employer brand thinking is here to stay. Broadly, there are three reasons for this.

First, organisations are realising more and more that they cannot take the commitment and loyalty of their staff for granted. The old notion that if you give someone a decent job, they will gratefully do your bidding is ill-conceived and somewhat irrelevant in modern organisations. Valuable employees, just like profitable customers, are free to make their own choices and engage as they wish. The way to attract and retain skilled and able employees who perform to the best of their ability is through a coherent benefit-led approach that many companies are not accustomed to providing.

Second, employer branding provides an effective bridge between HR, internal communications and marketing. Recruiting, retaining and developing the right people is

becoming all the more important in business as most organisations now recognise their staff as their most important asset.

Third, employer branding draws on a discipline that has proven lasting value in the marketplace. Employer branding draws on established principles of branding and brand management. This is the most effective way to sustain people's commitment and loyalty.

In today's world, overlooking your organisation's brand strategy and how your brand is perceived by employees is short-sighted. One of the most effective ways to ensure commitment and buy-in from your employees is by building a strong employer brand with which they can identify.

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About the Author:

Shoulders of Giants is an online business resource for directors, corporates, students and employees featuring various giants and business experts in their respective fields sharing their expertise, knowledge and experience through a series of publications and products, such as Richard Mosley, an internal communications and employer brands guru.