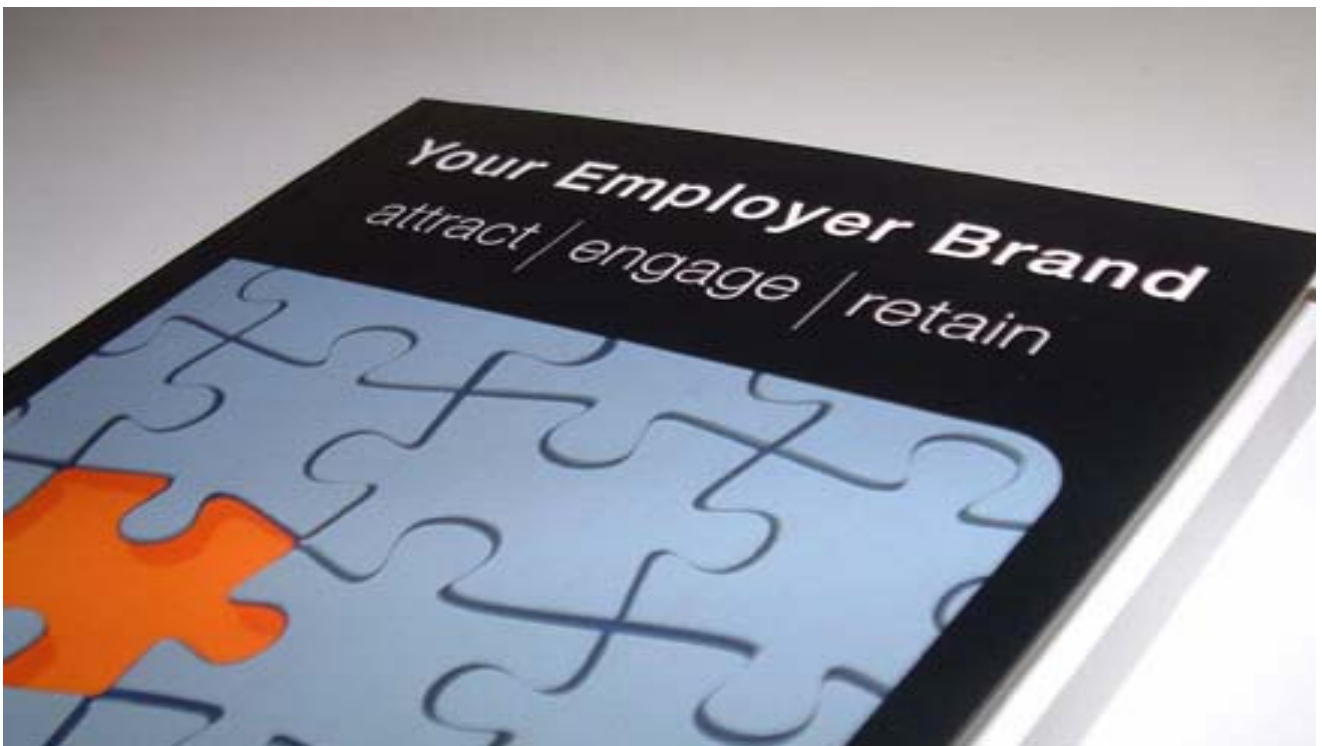


Your Employer Brand

attract | engage | retain

By Brett Minchington MBA



Executive Brief

Introduction

Most would agree that having a good reputation as an employer and a highly committed workforce can deliver significant competitive advantage. It makes it easier for you to recruit and retain talent. It improves productivity. It helps you to deliver higher levels of service performance. It helps you to deliver on your brand promises to customers.

There are a multitude of individual initiatives that you could consider employing to realise these goals: a new recruitment campaign, a new performance management system, a “living the brand” campaign. These approaches have all demonstrated a degree of effectiveness, but in isolation they often fail to deliver the sustainable advantages that help companies to win in the marketplace.

Most of the major companies that lead the top employers' polls are already applying some form of employer brand management, including Tesco, Microsoft, Shell and Unilever.

Employer Branding Defined

The moniker 'employer brand', was first coined by Ambler and Barrow (1996), who defined it as, 'the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company.

Employer Branding is a whole of business, long-term strategy to the attraction, engagement and retention of talent (Minchington, 2005)

An organisation with a superior Employer Brand is one whose people brand matches their corporate brand. This means that the value proposition that the business articulates is reflected by the actions of all people, at all levels of the business, at all times.

The process of employer branding is by nature holistic. It is not about tinkering with terms and conditions or corporate colours in the workplace, but about the total employment experience (Tim Ambler, London Business School, 2005).

Employer branding is therefore concerned with building an image in the minds of the current employees and the external market (candidates, customers, other stakeholders) that the company, above all others, is a 'great place to work' (Minchington 2005).

The employer branding process is about building and sustaining employment propositions that are compelling and different.

Successful employer branding, it goes without saying, is built not only on the aspirations of a company, but also on its ability to deliver on the promise.

The Employer Brand Experience

The marketing concept of the brand “mix” (incorporating all of the controllable elements that contribute towards people’s experience of a brand) is just as useful to apply internally as externally. From this perspective your internal communication represents up only one aspect of the employer brand mix that you may need to address.

Brett Minchington developed the Employer Brand Excellence Framework™ and survey tools to assist firms to audit, design, integrate and evaluate their employer brand programs. The Framework defines the critical employer brand touch points that need to be managed at the employee and strategic level. It also considers the impact of external market forces and the image of the company as an employer in the minds of customers, prospective employees and key stakeholders

The Benefits of Adopting an Employer Brand Approach

The major benefits of employer branding include

- Increased productivity & profitability
- Increased employee retention
- Highly ranked for Employer Attractiveness
- Increased level of staff engagement
- Lower recruitment costs
- Minimized loss of talented employees
- Employees recommending organisation as a “preferred” place to work
- Maintenance of core competencies
- Employees committed to organisational goals
- Shorter recruitment time
- Ensured long-term competitiveness
- Improved employee relations
- Decreased time from hire to productivity

Employer brand management doesn't replace anything you're doing well already. It just brings it all together to greater effect. Brand management has been successfully applied to building brand reputation and winning the commitment and loyalty of customers for over 70 years. As many companies are beginning to realise, the “joined-up” discipline of brand management can equally be applied to attracting, engaging and retaining your most valued employees (from your top “strategic” talent to your frontline “brand ambassadors”).

Why the Rise in Focus on Employer Branding by Senior Management?

Despite advances in technology and major shifts in the economy in the last century, people remain an organisation's most valuable resource. Having the right employees with the appropriate skill sets is a critical factor in any business today. However, the nature of employment continues to change and with it, the nature of the organisation-employee relationship. Engaging employees with the organisation's mission and values has become another important factor in business success. With the emerging trends in the employment market, engaging employees becomes critical.

Organisations increasingly recognise that they cannot take the commitment and loyalty of their employees for granted. Despite the desire to ensure that employees are broadly satisfied with their working conditions, it has largely been taken for granted that if you give people a decent job they will gratefully do your bidding. This is not so. Leading companies are fast realising that valued employees, like profitable customers, are free to make choices, to join, to engage, to commit, and to stay. They are also beginning to realise that to attract the right kind of people, to encourage them to remain loyal and to perform to the best of their abilities requires a far more focused, coherent and benefit-led approach than companies have been used to providing. Given the long term trend for organisations to treat their valued employees more like valued customers, I believe that the logical conclusion for most will be to sharpen up the way in which they manage the brand that these people work for – **THE EMPLOYER BRAND.**

Steps to building your employer brand

The **Concept Phase** involves a 360C employer brand audit to determine the strength of an organisation's current employer brand and to determine the objectives of the firm's Employer

Brand program. Survey tools will be used to gauge the level of Employer Attractiveness, Employee commitment and engagement amongst current employees, candidates, customers and other stakeholders. Existing employee measurement research data and HR data will be also be compiled during this stage. The **Design Phase** involves developing the strategy and tactics to build a leading Employer Brand including defining the Employer Value Proposition and Employer Brand Identity. The **Integration Phase** involves communicating and cascading the Employer Value Proposition internally and externally. The **Evaluation Phase** involves measuring the impact of the Employer Brand program against the company's financial and operational indicators using robust evaluation techniques. With the increasing global awareness of the benefits of developing your employer brand to attract, engage and retain talent it is critical that firms have clearly defined metrics to measure the ROI of their employer brand programs. In simple terms what doesn't get measured doesn't get managed!

Conclusion

Failure to meet employees' increasingly individualistic expectations in terms of receiving fair recognition, feeling a sense of belonging, doing challenging work and being given opportunities for growth will ultimately undermine both the attractiveness and competitiveness of the employer.

In the increasingly difficult labour market, organisations need to apply marketing thinking and techniques to this issue of creating meaning and relevance to current and future employees. Employer branding is one such strategy that ensures the organisation is able to attract and retain the building blocks of what is rapidly becoming a firm's source of greatest competitive advantage – its human capital.



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