

Employer Branding: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract: In this era of globalisation, ever increasing competition and uncertain market environment, every business organisation is buckling down to keep itself in the rat race. Business environments are changing rapidly and markets are becoming sophisticated. Importance of humans over machines has been snowballing from past two decades. Hence, the concept of employer branding came into existence to attract the right talent at the right time and at the right place. Effective attraction, engagement and retention of workforce can be fruitful and provide a competitive edge over competitors. Employer brand is the lens through which the society and stakeholders see an organisation as an employer. Whether an organisation defines its employer brand or not, it exists, either positive or negative. Deliberate efforts of employer branding are like making a perfect match of employer and employees that can team up to climb the ladder of success and make themselves stand out from the lot. Employer branding is the process of creating a unique and desirable image of an organisation and its culture in the minds of current and potential employees. Employer branding has been a hot topic among HR professionals in recent years as they know customer brand is not enough to attract the right talent. A strong employer brand communicates the employment experience, employee value proposition, which describes various economic, social and psychological benefits that the employer is promising to deliver to its current and potential employees. This paper throws light on the concept of employer branding, its importance, the process of employer branding and the scope of further research.

Key words: Employer branding, brand, Recruitment, Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Trends affecting the society as a whole such as the demographic change, the digitalization and virtualization of work, and social media challenges force the Human Resource Department to constantly adjust to new conditions and to distinguish itself from competitors in the market (Beechler&Woodward, 2009). Since all the organisations are on the lookout for crème da la crème of employees, the importance and use of Employer Branding as a strategic tool has been increasing in the organisations. It is a comparatively new perspective of recruiting and retaining employees in a highly competitive market. Employees today, engage themselves in a lot of research before applying for job in an organisation. What you say about yourself on Google should match with what your stakeholders are saying about you. Employer brand is an organisation's personality, its voice, its identity, its persona.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the concept of Employer Branding

- 2.1 To study the concept of employer branding.
- 2.2 To study the advantages and importance of Employer Branding
- 2.3 To study the process of Employer Branding

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive paper based on secondary data. The data is collected from various research papers, articles, books and websites.

4 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Khanolkar(2014), conducted a research to study the role of employer brand in influencing satisfaction and commitment of generation y employees in India. Research was conducted in various organizations belonging to various industries in India. Significant positive relationship was found between employer brand and job satisfaction level as well as organisational commitment of generation y employees. She concluded that Gen Y employees like to be associated with organisations with modern adventurous outlook and want their employer to be supportive and trustworthy. She asserted that Gen Y employees attach high level of importance to their workplace to be perceived as stylish and prestigious.

Sokro (2012), investigated the impact of employer branding on employee attraction and retention in banking sector in Ghana. He found out that induction process is one of the means used by modern organisations to let employees know more

about the employer. Good service conditions, availability of career advancement opportunities, core values of organisation and reward system were found to be the major means of attracting employees whereas secured working environment, growth opportunities, availability of job security and the image of the company were found among top factors influencing retention of employees.

Parmar (2014), studied the role HR in employer branding at public and private sector and concluded that employees in both public and private sector are benefited from well-defined policies, attractive salary packages, work life balance, flexible work timings, international career opportunities, secured employment and recognition for good work. She also depicted that employees expect good reputation, ethical and moral values, strong leadership, focus on career growth, skill and competencies, training and development, well defined HR policies from the organisation. Parmar suggested that private sector organisations should focus on people's strategy so that it can be closely aligned with employer branding which will help to retain more employees whereas public sector organisations should recognize more and more employees for behaving consistently with brand values.

Hudson RPO (2014), in connection with HRO Today magazine, commissioned a unique interview based survey examining how top employers leverage their employment brands for recruiting and employee engagement purposes. They elucidated seven phases of creating a powerful employer brand which are getting leadership buy-in, determining stakeholders and their roles, defining the strategy and investment, developing the EVP, communicating the message through right channels, creating employee brand ambassadors and measuring return on investment respectively. They also stated that the importance of employer brand will increase in future because of business growth, increasing competition for talent, leadership changes to cite a few.

Chitramani and Deepa (2013), conducted a case study on employer branding in select IT companies in which they elicited information on the employer branding strategies of Indian IT giants like TCS, Wipro and Infosys. They depicted CSR activities, opportunities and HR practices being carried out in these giants. They concluded that these giants did not deliberately build their employer brands, rather, their brands are the result of productive workforce which produces happy employees. They said Infosys did it with its 'middle-class turning into millionaires'; Wipro, known as a 'take-off point for

entrepreneurs' and TCS as a 'training ground for fresher'.

Aldousri et al (2017), conducted a research to study the impact of employer brand on organisation's performance in selected Sri Lankan companies. They asserted on paying special attention to organisational communication and incorporation of values into external and internal employer brand. They concluded that quality employer branding strategy is highly beneficial for the companies as companies with developed strategies have better productivity outcomes than companies without a strategy and with only partially developed ones. They said such strategies also result in a satisfactory working environment for employees, which, in turn, results in their commitment and loyalty for the organisation. It also motivates employees to work better and offer higher services and product quality. They also asserted that top leadership of a firm must participate in the development of employer branding process. Their study identified various important factors impacting recruitment and retention of employees.

5 CONCEPT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

The concept of employer branding was first introduced in 1996 in the lexicon of human resources and marketing by Ambler and Barrow who pointed out the multi-dimensional features of the concept and defined the term as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company".

Employer branding is the process of building up a unique aroma of your business which highlights the character and reputation of your company as an employer and communicates organization's values, cultures and personality.

An employer brand is all about people: Attracting people, recruiting people, engaging people, shaping the careers of people, flaunting people, having people advantage and retaining people. Employer brand is what other people say about you in your absence.

Employer branding is the process of building up a set of attributes and benefits, both tangible and intangible, that makes an organisation stand out from the competitors; attracts, engages and retains those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture.

Employer brand is the public evaluation of an organisation in comparison to other firms.

A strong employer brand differentiates itself from competitors and gives a compelling reason to its employees to stay in the organisation.

What corporate brand is to customers, employer brand is to current and potential employees. Employer brand is the image of an organisation as an employer in the eyes of its various stakeholders, employees and public. It should be in line with the culture and values of the organisation.

6 FOUR PILLARS OF A POWERFUL EMPLOYER BRAND



Fig.1. Pillars of an Employer Brand

7 ADVANTAGES OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

7.1 Talent attraction

A strong employer brand helps an organisation compete for the best talent in the market. It helps in targeting the right profile of talent. If a strong employer brand is easily accessible, especially online, potential candidates can check if they fit in the organisational culture. A well-developed employer brand that is effectively and clearly communicated with the recruitment process enables potential employees to know what is exactly expected from them and whether they are capable of delivering it or not. Everyone wants to work with a reputed organisation. So, employer branding can be used as a strategic tool to communicate an organisation's work environment, culture and employment offer and the right talent can be attracted.

7.2 Reduction in cost per hire

A company having a well-known and reputed brand can avail the advantage of spending less on marketing and recruitment of employees. Talented

people will themselves find the best employers and will apply for their positions. People are even ready to accept lower pay if they are working in a reputed organisation, which results in reduction in cost per hire. On the other hand, if a company is not well reputed, it has to pay higher wages to its employees in order to retain them. A strong employer brand acts as an advertising tool in itself by increasing direct candidate applications and reducing the cost of advertising with third party agencies.

7.3 Increase in employee engagement

Employee engagement can be described as the extent to which an employee is inspired to go an extra mile for the company, intention of an employee to stay for long in the organisation. When an employee enjoys his job in an organisation, he is more likely to refer its organisation to others with a sense of pride. A powerful employer brand that represents great workplace environment, career development opportunities, personal growth, constant motivation that a company offers to its current employees, creates enthusiasm and helps in engaging employees. It creates a sense of security, a sense of future in the organisation in employee's mind. Employees working for strong brands are often more enthusiastic, more motivated and more productive.

7.4 Reduction in employee turnover

When employees love their place of work, are passionate about their job and are satisfied, they feel more committed and are more likely to stay for long with the company. A well prepared employer brand can help in targeting right employees whose expectations match with the job and company culture which will result in lower turnover rates. This, in turn, will result in reduced expenditure on advertising, recruitment and training of new staff.

8 WHY SHOULD COMPANIES INVEST IN EMPLOYER BRANDING?

8.1 Dearth of skilled people

There is no denying the fact that the number of graduates are increasing rapidly. But despite of such a large population of qualified people, it is hard to find the people having right skills to enter the world of work. Employer branding is needed to attract those few talented people who find themselves fit for the company as an employer brand clearly showcases the work culture of the company, its values, skills requirement etc.

8.2 To become an employer of choice

A strong employer brand helps an organisation to stand out from the competition and pull the right set of employees who are aware of its culture and values. In today's highly competitive market environment, it becomes imperative for an organisation to place the right talent at the right place, with right set of skills. A well-planned and developed employer brand creates excitement among both fresh and experienced candidates to come and work for the company.

8.3 Reputation carries more weight than money

Employees are willing to accept lower salaries if they get to work with a highly reputed company. An attractive employer brand can make up for lower remuneration. On the other hand, bad reputation forces higher remuneration. Studies show that a strong employer brand can reduce hiring costs up to fifty per cent.

8.4 Credibility

If a company communicates its work culture, values, mission, vision, required expertise, remuneration packages with full authenticity and honesty, with all positive as well as negative aspects, through its employer brand, it increases its credibility among current as well as potential employees. On the other hand, if a company shows its made-up image as an employer, communicates a culture and values that it does not practice, current as well as future employees lose confidence in the company.

8.5 Strong social media presence

Having a strong social media presence shows that the company is ultra-modern and keeps itself updated with latest technology and constantly tries to improve itself. Before applying for a job in a company, people look for the company's online presence and try to study its culture and mission. By turning to social media to boost up the employer brand and positioning itself correctly, a company can gain competitive advantage over other companies and make itself stand out from all those companies that are not active on social media.

8.6 Financial stability

Studies show that the companies having an attractive employer brand get a boost in revenue growth and profit margin as their marketing, hiring and training expenditures get reduced and they can invest that money in more productive opportunities and can get higher returns, which, in turn, increases their popularity even more.

8.7 Human side of the company

Employer brand helps in showcasing the experiences and emotions of employees of a company. A company with great employer brand shows that it cares for its people and treasures them. While looking for jobs, people don't want to see just the website of the company, they want to hear the voice of its people, their experiences, their journey. A successful employer brand becomes the face and voice of the company and helps potential employees in connecting well with it.

8.8 People gossip about great and poor brands

It is believed that the word of mouth spreads faster than the fire. An organisation having effective employer brand makes sure that it has a large number of people who speak positively about it, refers it to others and are ready to go an extra mile for it. And if a company has bad reputation, the word is likely to spread quickly and employees might refrain from applying for a job in that company.

9 HOW TO BUILD A POWERFUL EMPLOYER BRAND?

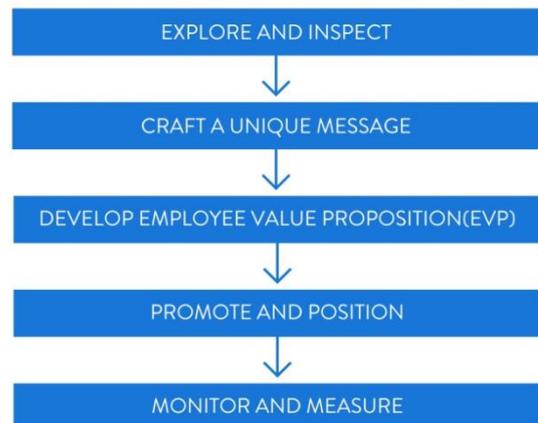


Fig.2. Process for building an employer brand

9.1 Explore and inspect

In order to create an appealing employer brand, an organisation needs answers to the following questions:

- What does your company stand for (the reason of being)?
- What is its vision and mission?
- What are the key challenges it is facing (difficulty in attracting and retaining talent, high turnover rate etc.)?
- What makes your company unique?

- Why should people work for you?
- What is your employer brand awareness and reputation in the market?
- What is your current image as an employer in the minds of your current and potential employees?
- What does your target audience look for in an employer?
- What tools your target audience is using to look out for jobs?
- What are your company's current attributes, behaviours and personality?
- What characteristics you want to display in future?
- What is the difference between what you are offering and what your employees want?
- What are your competitors offering and how they are positioning themselves?
- What is it that your current employees like the most about your organisation?
- Would your employees recommend your company as an employer?
- What are the behaviours and attributes of your current workforce and what are their future expectations?
- How can you improve things for your candidates and employees?
- What is your current recruitment process?
- What resources and budget are needed to deliver your vision?

Answers to these questions can be found out by following ways:

- ✓ Conducting surveys
 - Employee opinion surveys asking why they joined and the reasons for staying.
 - New hire surveys asking about their expectations and reasons of joining.
 - External perception surveys to know the reputation of the organisation outside its four walls.
 - Surveys to know the popularity and practices of competitors.
- ✓ Interviews
 - Formal interviews with employees
 - Exit interviews
- ✓ Audit your brand materials
 - Corporate website
 - Company pages on social media
 - Recruitment advertisements
 - Live events, seminars, workshops etc.
 - Training and development processes and programs
 - Performance management processes
 - Remuneration policies
- ✓ Listen to internal and external audience

- Senior leaders and top employees
- Former employees, candidates who declined your offer, customers, clients
- Ask for honest opinions from various stakeholders, employees and the society
- Online reviews and ratings about company and CEO

Precise understanding of these areas will help an organisation to define an outline of where it is standing right now, where it want to reach and what will get it there.

9.2 Craft a unique message

Most of the employers struggle to define a unique and compelling message for their employer brand because they don't know themselves, they don't know what they stand for, they are comfortable with the status-quo, they have got standard job descriptions and employment offers. Crafting the message on the basis of company culture, remuneration, flexible schedule, opportunities of growth, is too generic.

For an attractive employer brand, the employer needs to:

- Provide a captivating answer to "why choose us?"
- Differentiate itself from the competitors
- Find out what drives your current and potential employees and design your message accordingly.
- Answer employee's "what's next?"
- Bridge the gap between employees' current and desired position.
- Offer a real 'purpose'.
- Be real and transparent in the message.
- Ensure that the message is in alignment with the company's overall brand.
- Admit something negative about the company, it will make people believe you more.
- Define the goal.
- Solicit feedback from employees.
- Get support from top leadership.
- Take the opinions of your employees into consideration.

On the basis of above mentioned pointers, craft a unique, genuine and compelling message for your employer brand that will attract the right talent with the right skills and at the right time.

9.3 Develop employee value proposition

Employee value proposition (EVP) can be defined as the employment experience that an employer promises to its employees. EVP should be real,

authentic and should show the true reflection of a company's attributes, culture and personality. EVP aims at tailoring the jobs according to the needs and wants of target audience.

EVP is the employment offer, combination of remuneration and experience that the employer is willing to offer its employees in return for skills, capabilities, creativity, talent and experiences that employees bring in to an organisation.

An EVP survey can be conducted among current and potential employees to develop the right EVP. Questions to ask in an EVP survey:

- What perks matter the most to you?
- How do you describe our company to others?
- What motivates you to give your best performance?
- Do you feel emotionally connected with the company?
- What is it about the company that attracts you the most?

On the basis of survey, an efficient and unique EVP can be developed that highlights the key ingredients of company's employer brand, differentiates it from competitors, that resonates with the needs, and desires of target audience and that can be reinforced throughout the recruitment channels.

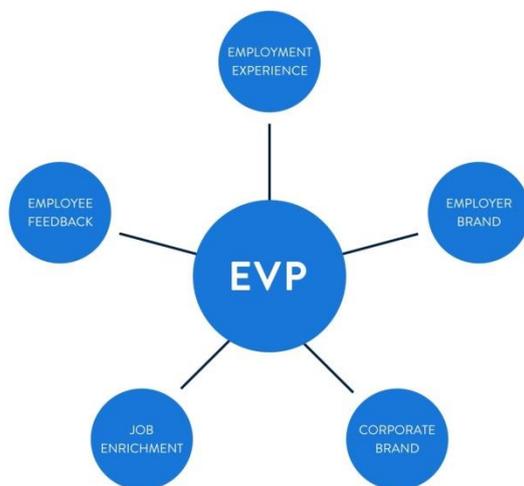


Fig.3. Components of EVP

For achieving the desired results and to make it a part of employer brand, EVP needs to be continuously monitored, developed and communicated.

9.4 Promote and position

The challenge does not end with a clear understanding of the things that attract, engage and retain the right talent. Real challenge lies in communicating your employer brand to the desired audience.

An employer brand can be communicated in two ways:

9.4.1 Internal communication

- ✓ Clearly communicate to your employees what is expected of them.
- ✓ Tell your workers what your company stands for.
- ✓ Create your brand guidelines so that your employees know the important elements of your employer brand and execute them at every step.

9.4.2 External communication

- ✓ Turn your employees into brand ambassadors

Your employees are the people who know your brand the best.

- Make sure your employees answer the question “where do you work?” with pride.
- Ask your employees to ‘live’ the brand.
- Your employer brand should be powerful enough that your employees invite others to work for you.
- Increasing number of referrals endorses your brand itself.
- Encourage your employees to share their stories and employment experience with others, online as well as offline.
 - ✓ Social media

Nowadays, most of the candidates look for employment on social media. Highlight your employer brand where your potential employees are searching for you.

- Company website
 - Use authentic pictures and videos
 - Pictures describing the culture of your company
 - Videos depicting the working of different departments
 - Pictures of seminars, workshops
 - Videos showing the life of employees at work
 - Pictures of collaborations
- YouTube, LinkedIn etc.

- Post videos of various events, celebrations regularly
 - Encourage employees to create profiles on different career sites to promote your employer brand
 - Blogs
 - Encourage your employees to write their stories through blogs
 - ✓ Contests and gatherings
- Employer brand can be communicated by organising contests and publicity programs among general public

Real, genuine and authentic employer brand should be communicated to the target audience utilising the proper mix of various communication channels.

9.5 Monitor and measure

To achieve desired results, the employer brand needs to be regularly monitored and effectively measured. Following metrics can be used for measuring the success of an employer brand:

- Retention rate
- Turnover rate
- Rate of absenteeism
- Quality of new hires
- Referrals
- Customer service
- Rate of return and revenue
- Job offer acceptance rate
- Giveaway/takeaway ratio
- Satisfaction of hiring managers
- Brand awareness
- Employee feedback
- Cost per hire
- Number of applicants
- Employer reviews and rankings
- Employee engagement and satisfaction level
- Target audience's engagement with online posted content
- Employee performance ratings
- Employee commitment and loyalty

10 SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The importance of employer branding in developed countries cannot be denied. But in developing countries like India, where the number of unemployed people are much more than the number of jobs available, the importance of an employer brand becomes doubtful because a large number of highly qualified people are jobless. These people are ready to accept whatever job they get, regardless of the reputation of employer. They don't want a reputed and attractive organisation to

work in, they just need a job. So the importance of employer branding in developing countries needs to be researched.

11 CONCLUSION

It can be rightfully said that a well-developed and carefully communicated employer brand can take an organisation to new heights. War for talent is increasing and employer brand will be the saviour as companies are ready to do anything, pay as much as possible to attract and retain competent employees. Organisations need to involve its people at every stage because they are the greatest assets. Companies that won't pay attention to its humans and the employer brand are destined to drown. Employer brand is the blood of an organisation. It can be said that employer branding is here to stay.

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