



“Employer Branding: A Strategic Tool To Attract, Recruit And Retain Talented Staff”

Dr. Umarani.M.B

Guest Faculty, Govt. First Grade College Jewargi, Gulbarga, Karnataka, India

Abstract:

‘A product is made in a factory; a brand is bought by a customer.’ Everyone knows how a Brand can make or break a business. And everyone knows how vastly it is influenced by brands. One bad word can lead to the Condemn to misfortune of a business. When one thinks of branding, the first thought that comes into our mind is that it is a marketing function and they'll usually start talking about products and services. Very rarely does one associate Employer branding with an HR function. But in recent years, companies have begun branding themselves as employers too, betting that if they can convey to the world why their workplace is appealing and unique, they will have an easier time attracting good workers. And now the Environment is continuously changing it is hard for organizations to attract and maintain the best candidates. The organizations use many methods to recruit and hire, but now it is time to use the organization's brand to attract talents the organization would like. This article will defines about Employer Branding, Employer Branding Process and Importance, Steps in Building employer brand to attract, engage & retain talent, suggestions to attract, keep & motivate employees, Employee Retention Strategy.

Keywords: *Employee, Retention, Branding, Engage, Attract, Recruit.*

1.Introduction

The concept of employer branding can be traced back to the development of recruitment communications theory and the emergence of the 'psychological contract' model in the last two decades of the twentieth century. In the early 1990s Barrow and Ambler defined employer branding as: "The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company". Since then, an intensifying 'war for talent' and the increasing importance of 'employee engagement' have helped to drive the concept forward. In 2006, the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) defined employer branding as: "A set of attributes that make an organisation distinctive and attractive to those people who will feel an affinity with it and deliver their best performance within it". An employer brand is in essence the two-way deal between an organisation and its people. The reason they choose to join and are permitted to stay. The art of employer branding is to articulate this deal in a way that is distinctive, compelling and relevant to the individual, and to ensure that it is delivered throughout the lifecycle of the employee within organisations. As the concept continues to develop, it is clear that its potency is set to increase. The competition to become the employer of choice has intensified in recent years as the 'war for talent' continues to keep business leaders awake at night and shareholders see the value of top organizations increasingly defined by their intangible assets mainly brand and people.

2.Importance Of Employer Branding

2.1.Shortage Of Skilled Labor

With the emergence of China, Russia, India and Brazil as economic powers, and due to the aging population in the U.S., European Union and Japan, the competition for skilled workers has or will continue to increase. Adding to this trend, there is also a clear shift in students' preferences moving from technical degrees to non-technical degrees. Companies or organisations that are perceived to be attractive employers will have an easier time to recruit top talent.

2.2. More With Less

A mantra coined during this economic downturn, there is high pressure to cut costs and increase productivity, which has made the need to get the right people in the right jobs even more crucial. Employer branding results in more successful recruitment and

retention of top talent. Moreover, by properly communicating the reality of the work environment, companies are more likely to attract talent that fits their organisational culture, thus increasing the number of people with the right skills in the correct positions.

2.3. Growth & profitability

Hiring and retaining top performers is essential for growth and to maintain a competitive edge. Employees who have the right skills, experience and knowledge, in relation to the critical areas of a business to drive growth, are strategically important. In addition, as developed economies move more towards the tertiary/service sectors, people become the primary asset. Employer branding increases your profit margin.

2.4. Popularity

Research on the talent market reveals that graduates and professionals want to work for companies with great reputations; they often turn to family members, friends or colleagues for advice and approval when making a decision about which employers to consider. Moreover, the consumer/corporate/employer brands are intertwined: If a company is viewed as being an unpopular employer, it will consequently affect everything else and cause disequilibrium in the corporate ecosystem.

2.5. Strength

Being an attractive employer provides a company or organisation more bargaining power, as employees will want to work for them more than anyone else, even those that have rare or most in demand skills—irrespective of salary levels. An attractive employer can create for employees an illusion that their choices are limited outside of the organisation, constantly maintaining an image of being the most desirable employer, giving the right reasons or incentives for their top performers to stay.

3. Employer Branding Process

3.1. Research

To understand where an employer is positioned in the employment market and to determine the appropriate action plan is fundamental. The four important factors, both internally and externally, are:

- Know how the target group perceives the employer
- Learn what the target group wants and needs from the employer
- Discover where the employer is positioned in relation to its competition
- Ensure that the research is updated regularly.

3.2. Employer Value Proposition (EVP)

The company or organisation needs a unique employer offer. The EVP gives current and future employees a reason to work for an employer and reflects the company's competitive advantage. Employers that manage their EVP effectively benefit from an increase in their talent pool and employee engagement, as well as a potential decrease in salary costs. Typically, less attractive employers need to pay a wage premium to get top talent whereas attractive employers do not. By analysing the factors influencing the employer brand, and by defining a strong and true EVP, the employer will be able to deliver sound and consistent communications during the communication phase and develop an attractive, as well as unique, employer brand.

3.3. Communication Strategy

The development of a communication strategy is always based on research findings and a well-defined EVP. The EVP is a useful tool used by HR, Marketing or Communications to be able to emphasize the most attractive factors and be consistent in the employer communications. Once an employer knows who they want to talk to and what to communicate, the employer then has to choose the most efficient and effective channels for reaching them. Choosing the right channels and understanding how best to target various groups is also based on research.

3.4. Communication Solutions

The aim at this step is to express the employer value proposition (EVP) by using the right words and images, so it becomes consistent with the corporate identity and branding efforts. The communication material should have the same look and feel irrespective of communication channel. Since organisations use many different channels, it is vital that the target groups recognize the organisation and relate to the employer offer, no matter if they are being reached via the corporate website, reading an advertisement in the newspaper or taking part in an event. Employers should strive to develop consistency throughout their communication material.

3.5.Action

Implementing all the steps and monitoring closely what works and needs to be adjusted along the way is the final stage. It is of great importance at this point that the organisation sets targets on what they want to achieve with the planned activities in a clear and measurable way.

4.Steps In Building Employer Brand To Attract Engage & Retain Talent

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 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.

4.1.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. Survey tools such as the Minchin ton/Thorne Employer Brand Global Index which benchmarks employer brand activities against world's best practice can be used in the audit. 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 & HR data should also be compiled & analysed during this phase. Research conducted during the concept phase can result in significant savings further along the process continuum.

4.2.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:

4.2.1. 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. A good example of this is when the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) required 60 Part-time Quarantine Officers to start in June 2006. AQIS's recruiting partner, Select Australasia's strategy was to attract a high volume of applicants that 'best fit' the AQIS's employer value proposition - diverse, female friendly and flexible work patterns. Various print and television advertisements were designed around this theme. Select Australasia collaborated with recruitment advertising specialists, Advertising Energy to design an advertising campaign to run in both print and internet media. The objectives were to attract return to work parents whose lifestyles might suit the part time hours on offer. The campaign resulted in over 6,000 applications. – An outstanding result that demonstrates the value of clearly defining your EVP. Once managers have defined the EVP (be patient as this may take time!) the next step is to define your Employer Brand Identity (EBI).

4.2.2. 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.

4.2.2.1. 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

4.2.3. 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

4.2.4. 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.

4.2.5. 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.

4.2.6. 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.

4.2.7. 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.

4.2.8. 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.

4.3.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 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 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.

4.4.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, turnover 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.

5.Employee Retention Strategy

The reason for turnover may be personal or professional. These reasons should be understood by the employer and should be taken care of. Select the right people in the first place through behavior based testing and competency screening. The right person, in the right seat, on the right bus is the starting point. At the same time, don't neglect to hire people with the innate talent, ability, and smarts to work in almost any position even if you don't currently have the "best" match available. Hire the smartest people you can find to reduce employee turnover. Once the right person is recruited efforts should be made to retain them from getting poached. The organizations are becoming aware of the cost involved in employees from getting poached. The organizations are becoming aware of the cost involved in employee turnover and adopting many strategies for employee retention.

5.1.Compensation

Compensation constitutes the largest part of the employee retention process. The employees always have high expectations regarding their compensation packages. Compensation packages vary from industry to industry. So an attractive compensation packages plays a critical role in retaining the employees. While setting up the packages, the following components should be kept in mind:

- **Salary and Monthly Wage:** It is the biggest component of the compensation package. It is also the most common factor of comparison among employees. It

includes basic wage, house rent allowance, dearness allowance, city compensatory allowance. Salary and wages represent the level of skill and experience an individual has. Time to time increase in the salaries and wages of employees should be done. And this increase should be based on the employees' performance and his contribution to the organization.

- **Bonus:** Bonuses are usually given to employees at the end of the year or on a festival.
- **Economic Benefits:** It includes paid holidays, leave travel concession etc.
- **Long-Term Incentives:** Long-Term Incentives include stock options or stock grants. These incentives help retain employees in the organization's startup stage.
- **Health insurance:** Health insurance is a great benefit to the employees. It saves employees money as well as gives them a peace of mind that they have somebody to take care of them in bad times.
- **After Retirement:** It includes payments that an employee gets after he retires like EPF (Employee Provident Fund) etc.
- **Miscellaneous Compensation:** It may include employee assistance programs (like psychological counseling, legal assistance etc.), discounts on company products, use of a company cars, etc.

5.2. Growth And Development

Growth and development are the integral part of every individual's career. If an employee cannot foresee his path of career development in his current organization, there are chances that he'll leave the organization as soon as he gets an opportunity. The important factors in employee growth that an employee looks for himself are:

- **Work Profile:** The work profile on which the employee is working should be in sync with his capabilities. The profile should not be too low or too high.
- **Personal Growth and Dream:** Employees responsibilities in the organization should help him achieve his personal goals also. Organizations cannot keep aside the individual goals of employees and foster organizations goals. If he is not satisfied with his growth, he'll not be able to contribute in organization growth.
- **Training and Development:** Employees should be trained and given chance to improve and enhance their skills. Many employers fear that if the employees are

well trained, they'll leave the organization for better jobs. Organization should not limit the resources on which organization's success depends.

5.3.Support

Lack of support from Employer can sometimes serve as a reason for employee turnover. Supervisor should support his subordinates in a way so that each one of them is a success. Employer should try to focus on its employees and support them not only in their difficult time at work but also through the times of personal crisis. Employer can support employees by providing them recognition and appreciation. Employers can also support their employees by creating an environment of trust and inculcating the organizational values into employees. Thus employers can support their employees in a number of ways as follows:

- By providing feedback
- By giving recognition and rewards
- By counseling them
- By providing emotional support

5.4.Relationship

Sometimes the relationship with the Employer and the peers becomes the reason for an employee to leave the organization. There are times when an employee starts feeling bitterness towards the Employer or peers. This bitterness could be due to many reasons. This decreases employee's interest and he becomes demotivated. It leads to less satisfaction and eventually attrition.

To enhance good professional relationships at work, the Employer should keep the following points in mind.

- Respect for the individual: Respect for the individual is the most in the organization.
- Relationship with the immediate manager: A manager plays the role of a mentor and a Coach. So an organization should hire managers who can make and maintain good relations with their subordinates.
- Relationship with colleagues: Promote team work, not only among teams but in different departments as well. This will induce competition as well as improve the relationships among colleagues.

- Recruit whole heartedly: An employee should be recruited if there is a proper place and duties for him to perform. Otherwise he'll feel useless and will be dissatisfied.
- Promote an employee based culture: Show employees that the organization cares and he'll show the same for the organization. An employee based culture may include decision making authority, availability of resources, open door policy, etc.
- Individual development: Create opportunities for their career growth by providing mentorship programs, certifications, educational courses, etc.
- Induce loyalty: Organizations should be loyal as well as they should promote loyalty in the employees too. Try to make the current employees stay instead of recruiting new ones. It is not about managing retention. It is about managing people. If an organization manages people well, employee retention will take care of itself. Organizations should focus on managing the work environment to make better use of the available human assets.

5.5.Environment

The organization is second home to the employee. Organization environment includes culture, values, company reputation, and quality of people in the organization, employee development and career growth, risk taking, leading technologies, trust.

6.Types Of Environment The Employee Needs In An Organization

- Learning environment: It includes continuous learning and improvement of the individual, certifications and provision for higher studies, etc.
- Support environment: Organization can provide support in the form of work-life balance. Work life balance includes flexible hours, telecommuting, dependent care, alternate work schedules, vacations, and wellness.
- Work environment: It includes efficient managers, supportive co-workers, challenging work, involvement in decision-making, clarity of work and responsibilities, and recognition.

7.Suggestions

In today's workplace, almost limitless job opportunities and less employee loyalty have created an environment where the business needs its employees more than the employees need the business. Here are some tips on retaining and motivating your work force.

Company or Organization can improve their ability to attract, retain and improve productivity by applying the PRIDE process:

- **P** - Provide a Positive Working Environment
- **R** - Recognize, Reward and Reinforce the Right Behavior
- **I** - Involve and Engage
- **D** - Develop Skills and Potential
- **E** - Evaluate and Measure

8.Conclusion

This Article suggests that employer branding will increase its importance over the coming decade if it can adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Talent and engagement are certainly set to become more critical than ever to business performance but the employer brand is now a 'two-way' deal. Delivering 'the promise' against a backdrop of greater transparency and changing social/ career norms will require the continued refinement of the employer branding model. The single greatest difference you can make to the future success of your employer brand is giving your trusted recruitment partners a pivotal role in your employer branding process so they can work with you to become part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Their access to candidates and closeness to the market means that they are perfectly placed to provide you with expert and independent advice on the development of your EVP – and uniquely able to articulate your employer brand in the market place to build a genuine talent pipeline for your organisation. Retaining best employees is a strictly rational business strategy. In business terms, there is need to calculate the costs of losing and replacing key talent. For those who believe in the "easy come, easy go" philosophy of hiring and turnover, assessing these costs objectively can be eye-opening. Running the numbers can sharpen commitment to keeping most valuable employees. In these turbulent times, exacerbated by a tight labor market, employers will be continually challenged to locate, attract, optimize and retain the talent they need to serve their customers. The most successful employers will be those who legitimately inspire highly talented workers to join them

and stay with them. In today's highly competitive employment world, employers of all kinds are eager to differentiate themselves from other organizations. Their objective is to create a high performance workplace and “high performance workplaces are characterized by their creativity, innovation, flexibility and competitiveness. This can be achieved by the talented committed employees – “high potentials”. They are the heart and soul of the organization and competitors want them. In such a situation attention to retention is critical. Employer should be interested in their employees’ interest because satisfied and committed employees have lower rate of turnover. Employer typically makes considerable efforts to retain employees; they get pay raises, praise, recognition, increased promotional opportunities, and so forth. They should realize that high pay alone is unlikely to retain employees. The most important things Employer can do to retain employees is that not a single strategy is enough to retain all the employees. Employees are unique individuals having their own mind sets and they should be treated accordingly. So instead of using any one strategy for all, a combination of all the strategies should be used. Every strategy goes hand in hand. More important, the strategies used for retention are controllable by Employer.

9.Reference

1. Innovation leaders: a breed different from corporate managers Ian MacMillan and Rita McGrath
2. Love 'me or Lose 'me: Getting Good People to Stay – By Bererly Kaye, Sharon Jordan, Evans
3. Managing Employee Retention: A Strategic Accountability Approach – By Jack J. Philips, Adele O. Connell
4. McKinsey & Company, 1998
5. Retaining Talent: A Benchmarking Study – By Paul R. Bernthal, Richard S. Wellins
6. Retention Leadership: Three Key Drivers for Retaining the “Best of the Best” in your Organization – By Karla Brandau
7. The McKinsey Quarterly: The War for Talent
8. The Times Of India, Ascent dated 17th March,2010
- 9.[http://blog.nasscom.in/emerge/2008/05/innovation-is-the-key-for-retaining-talent/Building talent for the new growth phase in services In a global Recessionary environment, India grows at six percent...](http://blog.nasscom.in/emerge/2008/05/innovation-is-the-key-for-retaining-talent/Building%20talent%20for%20the%20new%20growth%20phase%20in%20services%20In%20a%20global%20Recessionary%20environment,%20India%20grows%20at%20six%20percent...)
10. <http://www.coolavenues.com/forums/showthread.php?t=7931>
11. www.citehr.com
12. www.ebullpen.com
13. www.nasscom.in
14. www.retentionconnection.com/view_articles_retention.php