

How employment branding attracts the right talent

Thinking back to your job hunting days, you'll probably remember that some company's ads clearly stuck out in your mind more than other ones.

Not only did you notice those ads more readily, but you probably even had the impression that that company would be a good place to work. Yet other ads, even ones for the same type of position for a similar company, did not give you that same impression. So why would you think one ad creates a better impression of an opportunity over another?

The more enticing ad reveals the power of what is called employment branding. When used successfully, it can actually help your company form powerfully positive impressions of your opportunity in your employees' minds and within your local community. When this strategy is correctly executed as an extension of your marketing department, it will enable your company to both attract and retain the highest quality employees who just as importantly will fit well into your culture. That said, the methods that you use for advertising your products and services are really the same types of methods that you can use to draw and keep your best employees.



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Understanding this truth will enable you to get and keep the best. Companies that successfully attract and keep the best employees look at their HR department and hiring managers alike as a direct extension of their marketing department. Talent sourcing is a part of employment branding. When looking to fill vacant positions, it is also necessary to focus on internal talent with the same emphasis, realizing that this will also help to create lasting loyalty, a lower turnover rate and more employee referrals.

Before a successful employment brand can be established, it is necessary to be sure that everyone understands exactly what it is. Once they do, then the employment brand can be successfully built from the ground up so that everyone will be on the same page. Forming this uniform base first will enable you to maximize your employment branding strategy and get the results you want later.

WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT BRANDING?

employment branding is best described as a combination of things that work together to form a single calculated impression. This single impression is caused by working on the physical feelings, the intellectual impressions, and also on the emotional experiences of the employees

and potential new hires as they interact with your staff. Maintaining a successful employment brand does take work and has to be regularly updated and modernized for better and lasting results. It will take the input of the managers, supervisors, and leaders on an ongoing basis to keep it optimally working as needed. Hiring managers especially will need to help keep job descriptions up to date with skills, competencies and expectations for each department. When this is done in combination with marketing research, it will enable a candidate flow that continually provides your company with the ideal type and desired candidates.

Creating an analogy of how this works, imagine a lump of clay being given to an expert sculptor. Imagine further that this lump of clay is representative of all the information you have gathered about the open position. You then instruct the sculptor to create a statue that represents the ideal image of what would most likely attract the type of person you are looking to hire. For example, if you want to attract people for a nursing role that is deeply committed to nurturing and caring for others, you might want the sculptor to make an image of Florence Nightingale, or a baby in a mother's caressing hands. On the other hand, if you are looking to attract sports doctors to your hospital, you might want the sculptor to create a muscular looking athlete with a gold medal or a person playing a sport. The thing that you must see here is that the employment brand you choose to develop must appeal to the highly talented people you want to attract to your company.

DETERMINE WHAT YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT BRAND IS SAYING

Whether or not your company has successfully created an employment brand may not even be the question at this point. Perhaps you realize that your

company has never even tried to develop one. No matter, because the truth is that the employment brand already exists in the minds of your employees and in the minds of all potential hires as they meet and interact with your staff. They have all already formed opinions about your company and what it is like to work there – that opinion is what they perceive as your employment brand.

Here is a small sample of questions you need to ask about your current employment brand.

– What's it like to work here? Is it a fun place to work, with plenty of opportunity and room for growth? Or, is it monotonous, high-stress, overly critical, and unfair?

– Is there a reward system in place for employees when they meet learning, physical, or emotional challenges, and do they get rewarded with recognition and/or compensation?

– Is the workplace exciting and cutting edge, pleasant, or is the work dull and boring?

– How is the organization performing on a day to day basis? Is it growing, expanding, or on a downward slope?

– Does your organization's leadership present a consistent message to develop a strong and unified employment brand, or is it one of confusion and uncertainty?

– After going through the interview process, how do new candidates feel? Are they confused, enthusiastic, depressed, or indifferent?

It does not take long for a candidate to form an impression about your company. It will be based on what they see, hear and feel. An employment brand that is effective will be able to inspire loyalty, pride, productivity, and also a sense of community for both new hires and your present employees.

POWERFUL BRANDS HAVE THREE MAIN INGREDIENTS

In order to develop a well-defined employment brand, it should include three dimensions. Monster.com's book

entitled *Finding Keepers: The Monster Guide to Hiring and Holding the World's Best Employees*, clearly describes these three dimensions:

– Functional benefits. Tangible rewards of working at the employer: salary, healthcare, a clean, safe workplace, and a convenient location; for example: "XYZ Co. has great compensation and has a beautiful office near my home."

– Emotional benefits. Intangible rewards: Mission, pride, status, job satisfaction, companionship/collegiality, belonging to a "winning team" and so on; for example: "I'm proud to work for XYZ Co. – my pals and I make the best widgets in the world."

– Reasons to believe. Validation of the employer's claims; for example: "My friend says XYZ is a great place to work," and "The local news station calls XYZ a hot company for talented young people."

When it comes right down to it, employment branding is like art – it really is in the eye of the beholder. An employment brand of any kind will attract a certain kind of employee. Making it a little different will allow you to attract another kind. The key to successful employment branding is to figure out what type will work for the kind of talent you want to attract – and you will have to rethink it for each position you have open. This works just the same as advertising a certain type of tennis shoe to a certain type of wearer in the right medium where that type of customer will see it.

Once you understand what interests attract that talent, then you will need to develop a compelling message around those interests so that they can see, hear and feel them. If you appeal to each of those senses, then you will be able to reach them on an emotional level. This is important because people tend to make decisions based on their emotions, and then they will look for reasons to justify and support those decisions with logic.

Employment brands that have proven to work the best have a theme woven through all of their promotions. They also show them consistently, and they

can work well with any medium, including:

– A billboard near the company hiring;

– A display at a career fair;

– A career page at a Website;

– An ad on a job board;

– An opportunity marketing piece;

– A welcome package.

Attracting talent is all about appealing to all of their senses and reaching their emotions. Whether you realize it or not, your corporate brand is consistently portrayed to your employees and to your new hires. It is constantly perceived and felt from the very first time that they hear your company's name until they leave your company. Your employee brand is actually a statement on your reputation both internally and externally. By making sure that your message is consistent in all your company messaging and promotions, and by regularly checking and upgrading it as needed, you can generate and maintain the employee brand you and your marketing team want.

If there is any important factor in generating a successful employee brand, it is that it must always be credible. You want your brand to reach your potential candidate through as many senses as possible throughout the candidate process – before, during and after the introduction, interview, offer and start date. Note that it actually is just like making a sale – supported with consumer marketing.

Employee branding is really no different than any marketing concepts you would use to attract buyers for your products or services. You are simply going to use marketing as a means to motivate the right top talent to consider working for you rather than for your competitor.

BUILDING YOUR BRAND – COMPONENTS THAT MAKE IT EFFECTIVE

There are many components of an employment brand. They include:

- The reputation of your organization;
- Your company's culture;
- Press reports – good and bad;
- Word-of-mouth referrals;
- Statements about your organization – internal and external;
- Expectations about your company's future; and
- Your company's competitive position.

Apart from all of the above factors there is one more thing that is very important to notice – your candidate's subjective view. He or she will consider everything that was experienced as a part of the whole candidate interview process. This includes:

- The ease of using your company's Website;
- Whether or not they could easily or at all apply online;
- The whole interview process and interactions with all who were involved;
- How the receptionist and others in the hallways treated them;
- Their own impression of your company's products, services, promotions, etc.

...all of it plays a part in forming the employment brand in their own mind. There is one more thing. Candidates are also sure to compare what they experience in the interview process to where they were before coming to your company. This means they will think over and compare and contrast you and yours with their past or present employers. If you have not fully answered their questions, or responded promptly, or made a strong impression it will be added to the overall perceived brand you are building – whether consciously or unconsciously.