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# The Effectiveness of Employer Brand in the War for Talent

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## Issues covered:

It is widely accepted that a company's workforce represents one of its most significant competitive advantages. Attracting and retaining the right kind of talent is absolutely critical to a business's ability to compete, grow and be successful. Joanne McAuley looks at the role a powerful employer brand plays in dominating the talent market and how HR professionals can use employer branding to recruit top-notch candidates.

An organisation will of course have a reputation in the market for its products and/or services, but it also has a reputation as an employer. This reputation, now

more often known as 'employer branding', has become of more importance as the job market becomes increasingly candidate-centric.

When we think of great local employer brands, it always tends to be the big tech giants or financial services companies that spring to mind – such as Allstate and Kainos. However, employer brand is important for any organisation no matter what its sector or size.

Creating or re-defining an employer brand certainly isn't an easy task – it takes great commitment along with knowledge of the business and its mission, vision and values.

## The cost of a poor Employer Brand

Jobseekers are making an almost consumer-like decision when it comes to new career opportunities.

According to a recent study by the Harvard Business Review and ICM Unlimited, companies with a negative reputation or poor employer brand should expect to spend at least 10% more per hire. Not only that, but they will struggle to hire the right people in the first place. If employers have a negative brand people will be aware of this, candidates that are interviewing tend to research more thoroughly looking at online review sites such as Glassdoor. If their suspicions are confirmed they may decide not to continue to pursue that particular role.

On the flipside, prioritising and investing in employer branding appears to deliver:

- better quality candidates;

- better levels of employee engagement;

- attracting more talent; and

- reducing recruitment costs.

In short, if you fail to take the time to build a good employer brand, you could have difficulty keeping up in an otherwise hyper-competitive marketplace. So

what can HR professionals and businesses generally do to develop a strong employer brand?

## Know your Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Companies need to show both active and passive candidates why their organisation is great and why they should want to work there. While most companies are well versed on their strengths, a much fewer number have a compelling Employee Value Proposition (EVP).

This is a unique set of benefits an *employee* receives in return for the skills, capabilities and experience they bring to the company. The EVP is in effect the employment deal - what the company expects and what it will offer in return - the most effective of which align the whole work experience, from culture, mission and values, to total rewards, through jobs and people.

When defining the EVP, organisations need to address the following questions:

1. What does our current employer brand say about us to prospective candidates?
2. What types of candidates do we want to attract?
3. What motivates and interests those candidates?
4. How can we create an environment that caters to those motivations?

## Think like a candidate

Everything a candidate has ever heard, read or witnessed about your company will help them to make the decision of whether or not your company is the right place for them to work.

To really deliver a personal touch in your employer brand, you need to start thinking like a candidate. Put yourself in their shoes and understand what's important to them during their interactions with your brand. What will make that candidate come away with a positive disposition towards you and the feeling that the interaction mattered as much to you as it did to them?

Employer brand strategy has to be very consistent with the real employee experience. As such it should be informed not by an 'outside-in' approach, but

rather an 'inside-out' led process.

## Marketing & HR

HR and marketing need to work together to make sure there is an alignment with the brand. While HR may take the lead, a working group that includes marketing or corporate communication will allow for a broad spectrum of experience that enriches the process towards alignment with the customer experience and external brand.

## Top tips to improve your employer brand

1. Define your culture and involve current employees – naturally people trust what employees say over brand ads, use them as brand ambassadors when building your strategy.
2. Review your job descriptions - tailoring them to each role. Identify where you can add interesting aspects of company culture to make them stand out. Bring your brand to life.
3. Review your online visibility and use external resources to collect unsolicited feedback about the company e.g. Glassdoor, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter
4. Ensure the new-hire process is efficient, provide professional development opportunities, highlight internal career advancements and prioritise hiring within.

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*This article is correct at 05/10/2018*

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