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Conceptualizing Employer Branding as an Effective Technique for Talent Acquisition and Retention: A Framework Based Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Today, due to globalization and technological advancements, an extremely competitive knowledge-based economy has emerged. Accordingly, the need for highly skilled employees has increased enormously in the market. It is an established fact that talented employees are considered essential for organizational growth but at present they have become essential for the survival. This state of attraction and retention of the talent from exceedingly competitive market has led to a war of talent. Furthermore, in today's business scenario, employer brands have developed into extremely valuable assets. As everyone is obsessed by branded products and services, employer brand has attained a position of status symbol and organizations are using their employer brand to attract fresh pool of talented workforce and to retain potential talents. In order to create an appealing employer brand organizations' are investing huge capital on building and communicating their employer brand to the potential talent. Given the scenario of "War of Talent", developing a strong employer brand image by an organization helps in a substantial way to acquire and retain talent. Having said that, organizations' should exercise utmost care while developing and implementing employer branding process as it acts as a crucial game-changer to attract and retain talent.

KEYWORDS : Employer Branding, Competitive market, Acquisition of Talent, Retention of Talent.

Introduction

Exceptionally qualified and motivated employees are a vital, yet ever scarcer resource in almost all the areas from manufacturing to service sectors. In the competitive market, it has become a norm that only the most attractive employer brands can attract and retain the best talent for a longer period. Today, many organizations face the situation of decline in loyalty, increase in willingness to change jobs frequently among employees to enhance their both professional and personal life. How people think of an employer brand as most significant factor that determines an organization's success or failure. In the light of globalization and knowledge based economy, leading organizations recognize the fact that it is all the more important to attract and engage talent in order to achieve profitable growth. Consequently, 'Employer branding' has in recent times been regarded as an arsenal to conquer the 'War of Talent'.

Definition of Employer Branding

According to Lloyd, *Employer Branding* is defined as "the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work"

Employer Branding as an Effective Technique for Talent Acquisition and Retention

Leading organizations around the world adopt different employer branding techiniues to attract and retain talent. **Figure-1** shows the conceptual framework developed to depict how employer branding techniques help to attract and retain talent. Each of the technique is concisely discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Talent Attraction

Brand reputation of large organizations helps them to attract more talent compared to the fact that generally small organizations find it more difficult to attract talent in the recruitment process. However, even when small organizations do not enjoy high brand reputation and are unable to offer high salary packages compared to large organizations, still it can find various means to attract talent by communicating other critical factors in right manner which holds importance to talent. Companies should plan and implement a defined career plan after cautiously mapping the expectations of both individual and organizational needs and the overall goals to achieve from either side, as meaningful career progression is often regarded as critical factor than the salary expectations. In addition, Talent tends to place more importance on culture of an organization and hence, adequate steps need to be taken to formulate appropriate organization culture and consciously communicate the same during interviews in such a manner which attracts talent.

Table-1 Reward categories influencing Attraction, Motivation and Retention of Employees

Reward Categories	Attract (in %)	Retain (in %)	Motivate (in %)
Monthly Salary / Guaranteed Remuneration	73.5	19.7	9.8
Variable Pay	5.4	22.1	29.7
Benefits	3.1	7.0	1.8
Performance and Career Management	8.9	27.0	34.3
Quality of Work Environment	1.8	3.3	6.2
Work/Home Integration	7.3	20.9	18.1
	100	100	100
Source: Nienaber & Bussin, 2009			

Target Audience

Organizations need to always adapt their employer brand according to their varied target audiences considering the existence of different cultural and geographical backgrounds, needs, ambitions, values of job seekers. It is very critical to recognize the motivating factors of the potential candidate to join the organization and consequently the message of employer brand to be communicated which makes the candidate to join the organization. There exists a huge difference between needs and ambitions among varying workforce generations as the needs of Generation 'X' candidate may vary significantly from that of Generation 'Y' candidate. As Generation 'Y' demands more flexibility in work environment and better incentives, it will be difficult to manage this category and if not satisfied with work environment of present organization, then they will voluntarily search for jobs in other organizations.

Table-2 Generational Differences in Workplace Behaviors

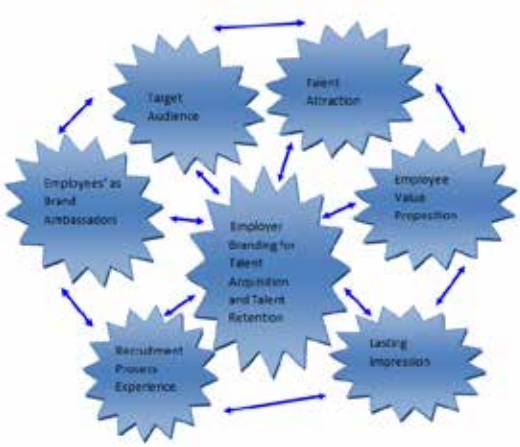
	Traditionalists (61 – 84)	Boomers (42 – 60)	Gen X (26 – 41)	Gen Y (18 – 25)
Training	The hard way	Too much and I'll leave	Required to keep me	Continuous and expected
Learning style	Classroom	Facilitated	Independent	Collaborative and networked
Communication style	Top-down	Guarded	Hub and spoke	Collaborative
Problem-solving	Hierarchical	Horizontal	Independent	Collaborative
Decision-making	Seeks approval	Team informed	Team included	Team decided
Leadership style	Command and control	Get out of the way	Coach	Partner
Feedback	No news is good news	Once per year	Weekly/Daily	On Demand
Technology use Uncomfortable Unsure Unable to work without it				Unfathomable if not provided
Job changing	Unwise	Sets me back	Necessary	Part of my daily routine

Source: Lancaster, L., & Stillman, D. (2002). When generations collide. New York, NY:HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Employee Value Proposition

Designing and implementing a meaningful employee value proposition in such a way that all employees working in the organization can understand will certainly facilitate a more productive workplace culture. "Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is the balance of the rewards and benefits that are received by employees in return for their performance at the workplace". The development and delivery of EVP demands usually a lot of time and commitment from various departments across organizations. The development of EVP should be distinctive, relevant and persuasive in order to attract, engage and retain talent. Whenever there is a match between the EVP of an organization and employee's values and beliefs, then there exists a win-win situation. The EVP proposition should discover distinctive employee policies and programs that exhibit the organization's commitment to the growth and development of employees and should be enthusiastically communicated in all possible medium of communication channels.

Figure-1 Conceptualizing Employer Branding as an Effective Technique for Talent Acquisition and Retention: A Framework Based Analysis



Source: Developed by Authors

Lasting Impression

The jobseeker's immediate interest in the organization will be mostly established by his first impression; there is no guarantee that it will remain stable. A person's perception of the organization will be influenced by each and every component of employer brand. Consequently, the procedure for building a positive employer brand, in reality, should begin far earlier than the actual recruitment process. Adequate steps should be taken to analyze every possible encounter that an individual might make with the brand like seeing organization's billboard as a customer, making his first meeting with the security at office entrance for attending interview, Interacting with the organization's call center executive/receptionist/PRO or in the organization's helpline etc., as every component of employer brand matters most. Appropriate strategies to be formulated in consultation with HR department, Marketing department, recruitment consultant, organization's advertising agency after identifying areas (if any), that may damage the employer brand in order to create enriching experience at every encounter.

Recruitment Process Experience

Every organization should take extreme care in formulating and implementing various recruitment strategies to attract talent. In order to attract and retain right talent, it is very crucial that the recruitment experience should consistently reflect positive image about employer brand. As a result, in which medium the job is advertised, ease and accessibility for the potential candidate to apply, the way the organization responds to the applications received for the advertised jobs, the conduct of whole interview process including the number of rounds in the interview, Quality of interviewer(s) with regard to their qualification, experience and knowledge, method of handling both offer and rejection process of the job applicants and securing the hearts and minds of the selected candidate to work, all matters a lot towards enhancing your employer brand.

Employees as brand ambassadors

Present employees working in the organization can be turned as brand advocates as they know the organization's mission, vision and culture very well. In order to make this happen, always try to involve every employee in the process of brand propositions, elicit their valuable ideas and suggestions in various steps involved in the brand building process according to their knowledge and skill. In addition, extreme care should be taken to communicate, make understand and embed the brand proposition internally to all the present employees before taking it to the market. This is mainly because of the reason that spending huge amount of money on marketing campaigns may become a failure if the present employees' fails to embody the brand to organization's potential customers or potential job applicants during their communication. Appropriate culture should be built and maintained in order to make the employees to live and breathe organization's brand and be enthusiastic about achieving organization's goals. The organization culture should help all the employees to recognize, appreciate and epitomize the employer's brand promise in all their actions.

Conclusion

In an era where, competency and knowledge of employees are amongst the major competitive enablers, organizations cannot disregard the importance of attracting and retaining talented employees. As a result, organizations' realize that employer branding can be one of the crucial solution to attract and retain talent. In addition, employer branding can also lead to a positive effect from the organization point of view during the recruitment process of potential job seekers. Appropriate steps need to be taken to position employer brand with the right message through the right channel in order to be successful in the aggressive market. Organization leaders along with marketing and human resource managers need to place a high premium on employer brand as it is considered to be a critical success factor for companies determined for competitive advantage in the "War of Talent".

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