

Conceptualizing a Strategic Business Model for Employer Branding and Talent Management



Management

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ABSTRACT

In recent years employer branding has attained prominence in the midst of HR managers as a significant strategy to build an organization's sustainable growth. Building a positive reputation and employer brand can be considered as a vital strategy to create a distinctive and attractive identity with which current employees and potential job seekers can recognize themselves. In general, employer branding communicates the uniqueness of an organization to the public. It is ultimately, the practice of projecting an image of being a "best employer to work" in the minds of prospective job seekers and present employees. Since every step of the organization towards building its employer brand will shape the impression of potential employee either to accept or reject a job offer, the employer brand is believed to be a crucial weapon in the battle to win and retain talent.

Introduction

Employer branding is not a symbol, letterhead or an intelligent advertisement, nevertheless it is the communication of an organization's individuality and unwritten assurance regarding its culture to potential candidates. Organizations are bound to develop competitive advantage over other organizations in the context of global business environment. Consequently, in order to battle in this situation, at present, organizations are positioning themselves as "brands", not only to sell their products and services but also to employ new talents and to retain the most excellent employees with them. An effective employer brand always relies on consistency in its message and should formulate right kind of employer brand strategies to ensure its employees to be brand advocates.

According to Moroko and Uncles, Employer branding is "the sum of organization's efforts aimed at communicating to present and future employees, that the company is a desirable work place"

Strategies to Ensure Employer Branding and Talent Management

Transnational Corporations across the globe adopt several strategies to ensure employer branding and talent management. Figure-1 shows the business model developed to conceptualize the strategies adopted by various companies in order to enhance the employer brand image and to acquire and retain talented employees. Each of the strategy is concisely discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

1. Effective Recruitment Strategy

Every company should formulate an effective recruitment strategy which consists of job standards and job applicant's motivation and behavioral assessments along with effective communication of employer brand as it will leave the job applicant with a real valuable career experience. This is true because even though, the job applicant is not selected to work for the company, when the candidate is provided with his/her exclusive assessment report, it will definitely serve as an self-governing validated tool to understand what are the strengths and weaknesses of that particular candidate and will help to enhance the organization's brand image to a greater extent. Moreover, utmost care should be taken to rightly position an organization as an employer of choice as prospective job candidates are indirectly considered as 'external customers' who may spread information by word of mouth about an organization.

2. Winning the Heart and Minds of Employees

Top Management should ensure that existing employees support employer brand very strongly and they should be strongest brand advocates. In the era of access to modern technology to every common man, job seekers and potential customers are more and more becoming well-informed persons and they do examine various offerings of the organization through the availability of variety of technology related communication channels. Therefore, organizations should treat their present employees who deliver excellent performance and are highly committed and satisfied with the organization as internal customers by providing them right kind of value added career enhancement programmes at regular intervals so that in turn they will act as 'goodwill ambassadors' to the organization.

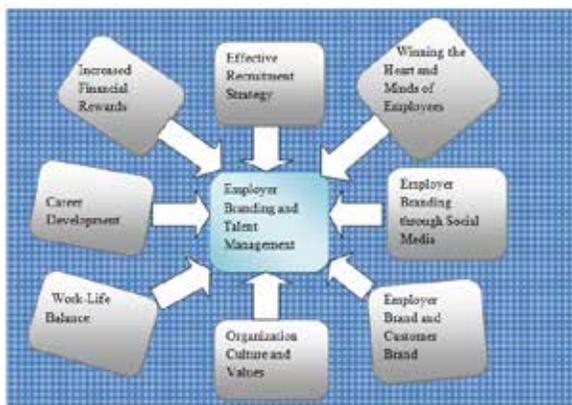
3. Employer Branding through Social Media

Unhappy employees tend to spread their discontent through word of mouth than satisfied employees. Whether the management likes it or not, pessimistic employees always try to convey their opinions about dissatisfaction towards the company through plethora of social media channels. The company absolutely does not have any control over the employees discussing their opinion in social media tools such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. Earlier, companies were focusing more on television and print media to market their products and services as well as to build their brand reputation. But today, with the rise of social media, companies need to formulate careful strategies to enhance employer brand perception not only in the minds of public but also in the minds of existing and potential employees as well. Therefore, appropriate steps should be taken to diligently communicate various positive aspects of employee value proposition.

4. Employer Brand and Customer Brand

Adequate steps to be taken to create an alignment between employer brand and brand strategies related to external customer. Hence, both the brands need to project their distinct brand messages in sync with each other so that the same is reflected in the minds of present and potential employees effectively in a consistent manner. When the size of the organization is big, then already more number of people would have formulated an opinion about it. Accordingly, top management should take utmost care to ensure an alignment so that their functioning does not conflict each other. When employer brand highlights and strengthens the values communicated through external brand, then for a prospective job seeker, it is ensured that both are communicating the same consistent message as what it is intended for.

Figure – 1 – Strategic Business Model for Employer Branding and Talent Management



Source: Developed by Authors

5. Organizational Culture and Values

To attract and retain talent, it is very important for the company to communicate its culture and values to both existing employees and also to job seekers. Conscious effort has to be made to demonstrate company values to employees in concrete actions. Employer brand can be enhanced by involving company in community related work, activities related to charitable and environmental cause etc., All these activities are perceived to attract and retain talent as it ensures a meaningful balance between both professional and personal life of employees'. Besides, customized employee surveys may be conducted at regular intervals to evaluate how well company values are conveyed to employees' in various forms and whether employees are able to perceive exactly the way the company wants it to be perceived.

6. Work-Life Balance

As a part of employer branding strategy, management should formulate appropriate strategies with regard to providing work/life balance to employees as talented employees always seek for flexibility in schedule and have work/life balance in their professional and personal life. It is all the more possible for the management to provide such facilities with the emergence of variety of technological tools which will enable them to maintain productivity and to communicate with the employees whenever required. Permitting employees some flexibility with regard to selecting their work schedule, will make huge impact on quality of life especially when some of the employees commute from long distance. Measures like, discounted memberships in gym, provision of indoor sports facilities, customized cafeteria etc., will certainly go a long way not only retaining existing employees but also to attract new talent to work for a company which helps to balance both work and family responsibilities while maintaining good health may undoubtedly strengthen employer brand.

7. Career Development

As a part of employer branding, organization should formulate and implement appropriate strategies to provide training and development opportunities to employees to provide professional development opportunities. It will not only help to retain talent but also to attract potential candidates to join an organization. Conscious efforts should be made to propagate that an organization's employer brand is more concerned about its employees' development and therefore various professional developmental programmes may be conducted to invest in their future. It not only increases the existing employees' morale but also visibly increases productivity and bottom line of the organization and attracts talent in to an organization.

Table – 1 – SHRM Survey – Employer Branding

Findings of SHRM's survey on employer branding show that :
61% of companies now have an employer brand and 25% either recently developed their employer brand or are planning to do so in the next month
81% of HR professionals said their organizations have either a formal or informal HR strategy to use their employer brand to attract talent and 69% use this strategy to retain talent.
97% of HR professionals said their employer brand is aligned with the company's mission and vision and 95% also align it with the company's business strategy.
<i>Source: SHRM – "The Employer Brand: A Strategic Tool to Attract, Recruit and Retain Talent" – April/June 2008</i>

8. Increased Financial Results

When the organization is able to build strong employer brand, it will ultimately help to bring down the costs in the areas related to recruitment, employee retention or reduction in sick leaves of employees. Moreover, customer satisfaction may be improved notably as it is directly correlated with commitment and involvement of employees towards their employer brand. Thus, decrease in costs and increase in customer satisfaction will lead to enhanced financial performance of the organization because of strong employer brand. Furthermore, as stated earlier, a strong employer brand facilitates to acquire talent which should also be considered as financial benefit as talented employees' contribution can make enormous difference with regard to sustainability and growth of an organization.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly still 'war for talent' is dominating the headlines as organizations are desperately competing for the right talent as most of the CEOs and HR directors are spending a notable time attracting and retaining the talent. Consequently, appropriate employer branding strategies should be formulated to offer a distinctive promise so as to attract potential candidates and retain existing employees. An evaluation should be made to check whether there exists alignment between the brand messages related to customer brand and employer brand. Sufficient measures may be taken to invest efficiently towards integrated media strategies which can attract right talent at right time with right employer brand message. Proper care may be taken to evaluate whether the present employees are experiencing the same kind of promises which were made to them at the time of their joining to organization, as building employer brand is just like building customer brand since it demands more strategic approach besides the utilization of established marketing communication channels.

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