

# EMPLOYER BRANDING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF ORGANISATIONS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of branding for products and services is well known. Employer branding may be the least known type of branding yet is becoming more important to organizations. The reason is changes in workforce demographics. The baby-boomers are retiring and the pool of new recruits is not sufficient to fill the gap. According to an Accenture survey, 60% of CEOs are very concerned about attracting and retaining people. The concept of Employer Brand has gained importance since 1990's or it is a result of Global manic competition but above all it has become a magnetic force, a catalyst, an accelerator and a prime factor which determines an organization success and future. Employer brand has overshadowed and synchronized all other factors which had their individual importance like customers, relationship, PR, networking, 2- way communication etc and is now the sole prima factor or the turnkey of success.

In the present job markets, where companies compete for attracting the best of the talent, employer brand, sometimes, becomes more relevant when compared to various critical factors like job profile and the compensation package. Employer brand is the image of an organization as a great place to work in the minds of its current employees and key stakeholders. It is the development of such an organizational culture which fosters a sense of belongingness with the company and encourages the employees to share organization's goals for success. In short, it is the value of the company in external marketplace. The goal of employer branding is to create loyal customers; the customers here being the employees.

From an HR point of view branding is very important. If your organization has a good brand image in the market, it will help you in getting right workforce at right time and at the same time you will have a control over the employee cost. An organization with no brand name has to shell out lots of money to attract and retain the right candidate.

This paper begins by defining the concept of Employer Branding practices carried out by the organisations to attract talents which help them to move towards their vision in a successful style. Types of Employer Branding, Branding Strategy and the benefits received by the organisation by adoption of the concept of Employer Branding in Indian context are then discussed.

## II. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

Brett Minchington (The Employer Brand Institute), defines employer branding as "the image of the organization as a 'great place to work' in the minds of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market (active and passive candidates, clients, customers and other key stakeholders)." It is the 'sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work' (Lloyd 2002)<sup>2</sup>. Increasingly, it is likely to also be used to create what has in the popular business press recently been referred to as 'employment brands' building and sustaining employment propositions that are compelling and different. The moniker 'employer brand' appears to have first been coined by Ambler and Barrow (1996)<sup>3</sup>, who defined it as 'the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company'. The authors go on to suggest that, just like a traditional brand, an employer brand has both personality and positioning. Employment branding is therefore concerned with building an image in the minds of the potential labour market that the company, above all others, is a 'great place to work'. According to human resources consultants Hewitt Associates, there are four steps to developing a strong employer brand:

- (i) understand your organisation,
- (ii) create a 'compelling brand promise' for employees that mirrors the brand promise for customers,

- (iii) develop standards to measure the fulfilment of the brand promise,
- (iv) 'ruthlessly align' all people practices to support and reinforce the brand promise,

Moreover, it is posited that companies with strong employer brands can potentially reduce the cost of employee acquisition, improve employee relations, increase employee retention and even offer lower salaries for comparable staff to firms with weaker employer brands (Ritson 2002)<sup>4</sup>. Collins (1995)<sup>5</sup>, confirming prior research, suggest that early recruitment activities are indirectly related to intentions and decisions through two dimensions of employer brand image: general attitudes towards the company and perceived job attributes. Examples of employer brands, and indeed employer advertising, are becoming increasingly common.

Employer branding is the development and communication of an organization's culture as an employer in the marketplace. It conveys organisations "value proposition" - the totality of organisations culture, systems, attitudes, and employee relationship along with encouraging organization's people to embrace and share goals for success, productivity, and satisfaction both on personal and professional levels.

Employer branding is the essence of the employment experience, providing points that commence with initial employer brand awareness, and continuing throughout the tenure of employment, even extending into retirement. Employer branding is a distinguishing and relevant opportunity for a company to differentiate itself from the competition creating its branded factors as its USP for employee satisfaction and happiness resulting in retention, productivity and efficiency<sup>6</sup>.

### III. RISING IMPLICATION OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

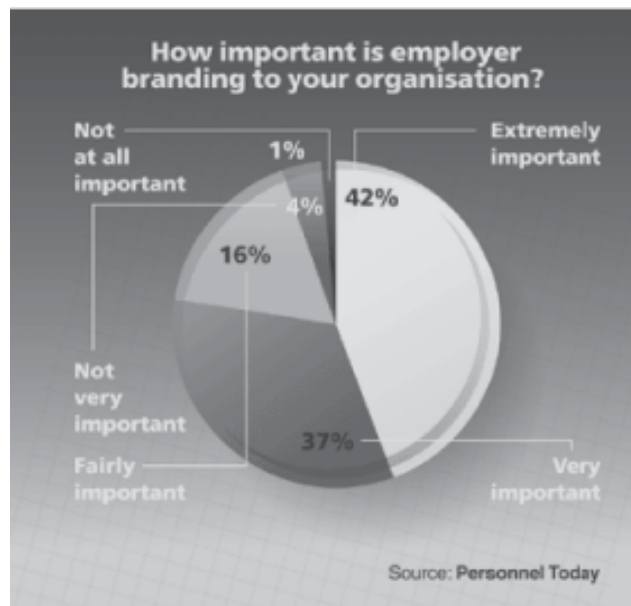
It is said that an unsatisfied customer tells ten people about his experience while an unsatisfied employee tells a hundred. Employer branding reflects the work culture in an organization. It has become more critical in today's times, as most professionals are looking at a stable career and establishing a long-term relationship with the company. Research shows that employees of industrial brands feel a much greater sense of pride, attachment and trust towards their employer. They are also significantly more likely to recommend their company to others and claim it treats employees well. Through right branding, the company can recruit the best talent and reinforce its positioning amongst its employees. It helps build trust and reliability. A good employer brand makes it easy to attract good talent and curb attrition. The strength of an organization's brand has a significant impact on the performance of its employees. Working with one of the largest or most innovative companies in a specific industry acts as a motivator too.

But as one moves higher in his career, brand name becomes of little significance as job role takes over. Brand name is the most important factor but at entry level only. When one is a fresher and embarks on one's career, the brand of a company matters. It helps in reflecting a stronger resume. With career growth, one places importance on things that are more meaningful to one's sense of purpose. It is also being argued that in most cases, companies treat employer branding as a mere short-cut for attracting the talent. Instead of self-analysis, the HR departments tie up with ad agencies to conjure up an image that may be attractive to their target market, even if not their own. While some argue that organizations like Google with strong employer brand hardly spend money in building the brand; instead they focus on living the brand. Saksen, for example, has a stated 'People First' policy to emphasize that employees are the focus. Fedex has a core philosophy of 'people - service - profit' to indicate what comes first. Bill Marriott of Marriott Hotels does not tire of repeating the founder's belief "Take care of the associates, and they'll take good care of the guests, and the guests will come back." These organizations reveal a high degree of trust in the management of the organization. Managements must understand that the core value offering of the organization is to engage employees towards being productive and responsive to customers. In the end, it is believed that if the company takes care of people, people will take care of the company.<sup>7</sup>

### IV. SURVEY RESULTS

An exclusive survey of 1,889 *Personnel Today* readers with responsibility for recruitment reveals that 95% of respondents believe employer branding is 'important' (Fig. A)<sup>8</sup>.

Fig.



## V. BRANDING STRATEGY

### A) Nature of Business

Branding should be based on the nature of business. Like if an IT company goes for a fashion show, it may not yield the same results as it would have got by going to IT Fair or something similar. A real estate company may go for some road show on property market.

### B) Nature of Market

It is always recommended to gauge the market before going for any project which involves market risk. Like if targeting to explore a financial market or banking and at the same time it is marred by some other factors like Inflation, you need to design your strategy which could help you in overcoming the negative trend.

### C) Reception Target

It's always good to define the reception target or the audiences. The audiences under employer branding are the internal customers of the organisation. The attempt of employer branding boosts up the morale of the employees and thereby keep the employees feel satisfied.

### D) Long Term Mission of Organization

Also the long term as well as short term goals of the organization should be kept in mind. If the organization does not have any long term goals in the target market or location, it's always recommendable not to go for branding or it is very much required go for a small, low budgeted branding event.

### E) Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is also very vital part for deciding any strategy. Organizational structure is the strength of any organization and any event or branding can be done based on that. Like if the organization does not have lots of hierarchy steps, it can boast of Flatness and claim of equal behavior. And if it has different layers, it can market the clear definition of roles etc.

## VI. EXTERNAL BRANDING

External branding refers to branding which is done by using external sources and which may (or may not) require some investment in monetary or other forms. The different means of doing external branding are;

- (a) **Use of Job Sites** – As HR the first thing which comes to the mind is recruitment, so Job sites also offer good branding opportunities through different means like Pop ups, pop ins etc. It's always better to go for pop ins as most of web browsers come with pop-up blockers.

- (b) **Banners** – Banners are also a good mean for branding. Banners can be of both types' means Online Banner and Street banners. By Online banner, your organization name will be flashed on different web pages as per your choice and price. Street banners are good for bigger requirements.
- (c) **Road Shows** – Road shows are also an important mean for creating brand awareness. Corporate can organize talks, presentations, seminars etc. for attracting people towards your organization.
- (d) **Corporate Social Responsibility** – Corporate social responsibility refers to corporate getting associated with society for some noble cause. The association can be in any mode either getting associated with a Charitable Trust or a NGO or some other public venture. Corporate can align and attach with any of these and share the stage. Always keep in mind that choose as per organization status meaning if its a small firm, do associate with a medium sized organization and if medium it can align with either of these- large or medium. Idea should be get a nice coverage in the popularity cake.
- (e) **Public Events** – Public events are one of the major ways of creating a brand image. An organization can participate in any of the public event and assuring that it does not get disappeared in the crowd of many brands or big names.
- (f) **Newspapers** – Branding can be done through newspapers as well. If you target the local public, you can go for advertisements considering the individual day circulation, target readers, rapport of newspaper, type of newspaper etc. If you target only to employ people for your workforce requirement, you can place job Ads which may seem expensive at the first glance but in terms of attracting the correct workforce, it can do magic.
- (g) **Email** – For mail ids related to job portals, you can create an auto reply which can contain brief description of the key aspects of candidate's and public interest and at the same time introducing your company to the public. It should be informative as well as crispy so that the audience reads it and just doesn't do Shift Delete.
- (h) **Tagline** – Create a nice, attractive tagline or a punch line for your brand and give it a significant visibility in all your branding efforts. The tag line should be in accordance with the organization values, goals, work etc. so that it reflects an overall image of the brand everywhere.
- (i) **Align with celebrity** – Aligning with a celebrity is also a good way of creating a brand image. But this may cost big bucks and ultimately increasing your cost dramatically. This is an expensive method of branding.

## VII. INTERNAL BRANDING

Internal Branding is comparatively a cheaper way of branding. Organisation can use its internal organizational staff for this purpose.

- (a) **Front Office** – Always pay attention to your front office because first impression is last impression. It should be kept neat and clean with a pleasant receptionist who always maintains freshness and welcomes the guests with courtesy.
- (b) **Stays Interview** - HR can always conduct stay interviews in which they can interact with the employee and ask them regarding their career prospects, there alignment with the company, there feedback regarding their concerned departments, etc. These feedbacks can be analyzed and used for different purposes by which you can create an internal brand image of the country.
- (c) **Exit Interview** – An exit always carries a fair chance of initiating the chain reaction among the employees so always be very careful in analyzing the exiting reasons so that you can overcome the justified ones in the future.
- (d) **Employee Satisfaction** – Employee satisfaction is always very important for any organization to grow. A satisfied employee is a productive employee. If your employee is satisfied, you can relax because they will create a good and positive rapport for the company in the market outside.
- (e) **Policy Information** – Always design your policies very strategically. A policy should be designed in such a way that it holds good even after a long period of time. A frequent internal policy change sends a message to the outer world that the company is not consistent and knowledgeable and reliable.
- (f) **Customer Orientation** – Customers are always the most important factors. Always keep your workforce motivated towards delivery of customer oriented services. Customers can be of either type, internal or external.
- (g) **Employee Participation** – Ensure the maximum participation from the employee side, either in terms of internal events participation or external events.
- (h) **Trained Employees** – Always ensure proper training of employees before they are engaged in work. The training should be in all the aspects like policies, vision, mission, organization. This will project a good picture of organization on the new employee <sup>9</sup>.

### VIII. EMPLOYER BRANDING IN INDIA

“The Employer Branding—A Strategic Tool to Attract, Recruit and Retain Talent” highlights that HR uses the employer brand for three main reasons: 1) organizational culture and employee fit; 2) positive outcomes for recruiting; and 3) retaining talent with corporate values and a team-based culture. At its most effective, the employer brand is a long-term strategy with a transparent message that promotes the organization as an employer of choice. The increasing focus on competitive advantage is leading many firms to rethink their employer brand<sup>10</sup>. “India, Inc.”—a common term used in India to refer to India’s corporate sector—aims to positively build on opportunities as the world economy strengthens, and the employer brand is a prime example of a progressive HR practice in India. The fit between employer and employee is important for hiring compatibility. Yet, research shows that Indian companies do not always intentionally develop employer branding interventions. “Infosys, Wipro and TCS did not intentionally build their brands; rather, they focused on building a productive workplace, resulting in happy employees, and their brands were the result of that foundation.” “For other organizations in India, such as RMSI and Google, which already have strong employer brands, their goal is to ‘live’ the brand.” As Indian firms focus on strategies of turnaround, diversification, expansion and internationalization, human resources and human capital performance in India have become increasingly important. Consequently, HR’s role in effectively using the employer brand has tremendously expanded and grown in importance. Employer branding becomes a tokenism when it doesn’t fit in the DNA of the company. And, there needs to be a lot of self-sustained and conscious effort needed to create such a fit; to ‘become oneself’. The Tatas would never like to become like Reliance, or vice-versa. The brand as an employer must provide a long-term advantage. And this advantage comes only when the profile of the candidate fits well with the profile of the company. Also, one must also appreciate that employer branding works mainly at the entry-level since the middle level workforce and upwards look at other things, such as job profile, career enhancement et al<sup>11</sup>.

### IX. OUTCOME OF EFFECTIVE EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer branding gives an organization a competitive advantage. Employer branding is a tool to attract, hire, and retain the “right fit” it also has an impact on shareholder value, creating positive human capital practices, contribute to bottom-line. Strong employer brands have employer value propositions (EVP’s) which are communicated in company actions and behaviors and evoke both emotive (e.g. I feel good about working here) and tangible benefits (this organization cares about my career development) for current and prospective employees. These organizations segment and communicate EVP’s which reflect the image that the organizations want to portray to its target audience. Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is a set of associations and offerings provided by an organisation in return for the skills, capabilities and experiences an employee brings to the organisation. A company’s employer brand is reflected in the actions and behaviors of leaders and is affected by company policies, procedures, and practices and the same when well planned and implemented results in profitability of organizations. Thus to retain talents inside the organisation not only during the bliss of the organisation but also in its tough times employer branding strategy plays a vital role.

### X. CONCLUSION

Thus it can be concluded that not only there is a need of creating a satisfaction in minds of employees (Internal customers) but there is an urgent need of creating this positivism in the minds of external customers and stakeholders. The created image has to be monitored and sustain in such a way so that it will help in increasing profits as well as would create belongingness, pride, self actualization and true commitment in true words and spirit.

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