

## UNLOCK THE DOOR TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REALITY



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**28** PLAN YOUR  
TALENT  
OFFENSIVE

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TALENT THROUGH  
MENTORING

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LEADERSHIP  
PERFORMANCE

# Build employer brand equity

## YOUR SUSTAINABILITY RESTS UPON BUILDING YOUR BRAND IN THE EYES OF YOUR PEOPLE.

BRETT MINCHINGTON

*(a)* A company has one brand and the art and science of employer branding provides a focus for the role of the 'employee' in building brand equity. In addressing the challenge of measuring the ROI of your employer brand strategy, your approach can be informed by previous research in marketing, specifically in

the area of brand image and brand equity.

### BRAND IMAGE

Brand associations are the determinants of brand image. Keller defines brand image as an amalgamation of the perceptions related to the product related/non-product related attributes and the functional/symbolic benefits that are encompassed in the brand associations that reside in consumer memory.

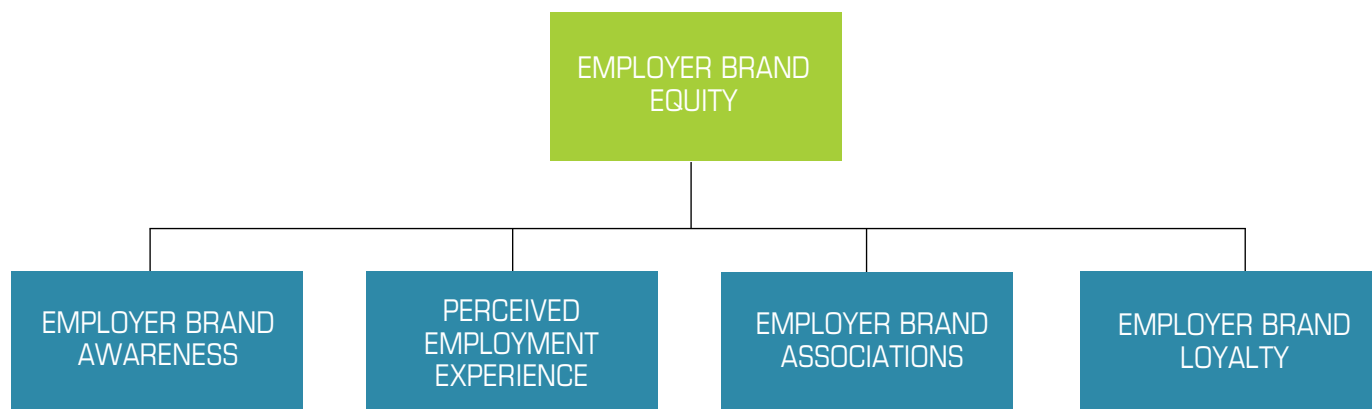
Marketing literature supports the concept that product brand equity is strengthened when the brand image resonates with the consumer. As brand awareness heightens, consumers begin to develop positive identification with the brand. The more positive the brand is perceived to be, the more highly identified the consumer becomes with the product. As social identity theory suggests, in the end, the consumer purchases the brand because of the positive self-concept

that results from feeling membership with the brand. In a similar manner, as potential employees find positive aspects of the employer image, they are more likely to identify with the brand, and will more likely choose to seek membership with the organisation for the sense of heightened self-image that membership promises.

### BRAND EQUITY

The concept of brand equity provides a complementary theoretical perspective for understanding employer branding. In brand guru David Aaker's book, *Managing Brand Equity*, he defines brand equity as the brand assets (or liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to (or subtract from) a product or service. These assets can be grouped into four dimensions: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and brand loyalty. Applying this thinking to employer branding, I have developed a Model of Employer Brand Equity™.

## MODEL OF EMPLOYER BRAND EQUITY™



Employer brand awareness is the level of recognition people have about an organisation's positive and negative employment attributes. Global food services group Sodexo's social media activities have given me a strong awareness of the community work the company is involved in, whereas the negative press about Foxconn's employment practices has made me aware of just how different working conditions are for some employees in China compared to Australia or the USA.

Perceived employment experience is the association current and prospective employees have about working for an organisation and is based upon the online (career website, social networks, YouTube channel and so forth) and offline (word of mouth, career fairs, induction programmes, among others) touchpoints the person interacts with. When I hear the name Google I perceive the employment experience as challenging, inspiring, fun, and one that offers career and personal development. I have been fortunate to visit their Zurich headquarters on two occasions and the physical environment from the cafeteria to the chill-out rooms to the themed meeting rooms is exactly the type of environment that would inspire me to give my best.

Employer brand associations are the thoughts and ideas an organisation's name evokes in the minds of current and future employees. It can include imagery, personality, symbols, and rational (career development, pay, staff benefits, location and so on) and emotional (strong reputation, friendly working environment, inspiring leadership, engaging culture and others) employment attributes. Brand associations can be verbalised, but also might reside at a more sensory level. In other words, employees have a feeling about a brand, an

**“Employer brand loyalty is a person's commitment to join or remain employed with an organisation as a result of the positive associations with the organisation.”**

emotional response or the memory of an experience with the company or via touchpoints such as social media channels. When I think of global NGO, World Vision, I associate the organisation with creating a better society, global community, strong reputation and people feeling good about the work they do.

Employer brand loyalty is a person's commitment to join or remain employed with an organisation as a result of the positive associations with the organisation. Loyalty is demonstrated by positive behaviours such as word of mouth advocacy. When I read Facebook posts of people saying they love their job (and mind you there are very few who do this!) it sends a strong message to me there is something good about working for the company. Employee advocacy is the strongest level of endorsement a company can receive. Remember it's

not what you say your employer brand is, it's what others say it is when leaders are not in the room!

In terms of employer branding, brand equity is a strategic asset that can be leveraged on the basis of competitive advantage in the firm's ability to attract, engage and retain talent. It is the desired outcome of the collective impact of employer branding initiatives. Prospective employees choose to join an organisation and existing employees choose to stay because of the underlying employer brand equity associated with these firms.

As you can see, calculating ROI of employer branding can be a very complex area. However if you focus efforts in these three key areas, you will achieve some meaningful results:

1. A clear understanding of your inputs (strategy development, employee communications collateral, recruitment advertising, ongoing management costs) and outputs (increased employee engagement, decreased turnover, increased time to productivity) and how this is linked to your bottom line;
2. An ability to track change in sales and revenue performance over time versus changes in employee and customer engagement; and
3. Ideally, companies should be able to identify the extent to which a change in one behaviour (increased engagement) leads to a change in another (sales). Companies should develop their own ROI equations depending on their employer branding objectives, performance outcomes and so on, so they will be able to enter in the numbers and determine the likely change in one of the variables (sales) by changing one of the other variables (employee engagement). (*HRJ*)