

Employer Branding Without Borders— A Pathway to Corporate Success

It's time to focus more on branding, make sure you have the right brand manager, take into account cultural differences and don't over-rely on your ranking in "best places to work" lists.

By Brett Minchington, MBA

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster."

Professor Geert Hofstede, Dutch social psychologist

One of the greatest challenges facing global companies right now is their ability to exploit synergies and efficiencies in their global talent acquisition and retention programs. When considered with the fact we are about to enter an era of unparalleled talent scarcity around the world, the role of the global employer brand manager is set to become one of the most critical roles inside global companies.

Global talent acquisition used to be such a straight-forward process. Bring the recruitment team together at global headquarters to discuss the [employer brand](#) strategy, hire an agency to come up with a creative recruitment advertising campaign, adapt the imagery so people in ads reflected the nationality of the local country, translate the text, place the advertisements in local newspapers and [job boards](#), and drive candidates back to the careers site to apply for vacancies. Then sort through the thousands of applications to pick the top 10 to interview and finally appoint the best person at the best price! Don't even bother about replying to candidates who were unsuccessful: too much work, and not enough time!

The strategy never really worked to build sustainability into recruitment practices, least of all contributing to value creation by engaging and retaining talent who were most productive and could mentor colleagues with lower skillsets.

However it was the process we adopted before the availability of the seemingly endless tools, systems, and processes targeted at assisting talent acquisition which are now widely available at increasingly affordable prices. Leaders I speak with around the world are saying they are running hard to stand still and where previously they could take 1-2 years

to research, develop, and implement talent acquisition and retention strategies, the competitiveness for talent is demanding leaders react quicker and more decisively to stay ahead of the competition.

Even the top employer branding companies like Google, Adidas, and Deloitte are constantly seeking innovative ways to source, develop, and retain talent. If that's what is happening with the market leaders, consider the millions of other companies around the world who have similar challenges. At a global level the problem is magnified to unthinkable proportions and the solutions are going to need a mix of short- and long-term initiatives including collaboration between companies, industries, universities, and governments. There is no benefit to global corporations if talent is in high supply in Scandinavia when manufacturing operations are in India and there is a dearth of the right people with the right skills.

The Reality of Globalization and its Impact on Employer Branding

The social and culture integration brought about through globalization can foster broader understanding and co-operation between employees around the world, and potentially economies of scale in the allocation of human resources, but is it really that simple?

Following the debilitating global financial crisis (GFC) in 2008, companies based in North America and in Western Europe took the most drastic action, with 69 percent of U.S. companies and 63 percent of UK companies reducing headcount. We trusted our global financial systems would be kept under control by economists and that markets would move freely, and trade would become increasingly borderless. The GFC taught us just how vulnerable we are in a globalized, connected world. What often goes

unreported is the impact on the poorest countries which were hit hardest, with 90 percent exposed to the impact of the crisis. As a result 50 million people were sent into extreme poverty and 100 million into chronic hunger.

Since the GFC, there has been an uneven recovery in labor markets, with a continued rise in joblessness in the developed economies and European Union region and a steady to slightly improving unemployment picture in most developing regions. This downward “stickiness” of unemployment—that unemployment rates tend to remain high despite a recovery in economic growth—is also reflected in the country-level data, raising concerns that many countries are experiencing a jobless recovery.¹

It used to take roughly six months for the U.S. to get back to a normal employment picture after a recession. The McKinsey Global Institute estimates it will take five years this time around.²

In 2011 the global employment landscape looks a little different from what we learned in textbooks at school! The ability of organizations to attract and retain talent that contributes to growth and profitability is no longer limited to drawing upon the local or national workforce—companies now have tools at their disposal to tap into the global talent pool and what I call “pockets of talent excellence”—small clusters of highly talented individuals or small groups who are on top of global issues and trends, adaptable and agile enough to move in and out of companies on a project-by-project basis providing expertise to companies at a speed far more superior to hiring of full time employees. However we have not yet found a way to scale and optimize these “pockets of talent excellence,” across borders, though it’s only a matter of time before someone does!

We have already witnessed some of the dangers of globalization with Mattel having to recall millions of toys in 2007 due the threat of high levels of lead contained in the products made in China, a country where for many years companies have exploited the low cost of wages at the expense of negative societal impacts such as displacing families, polluting environments, and failing to invest back into the development of local communities. We are starting to see some positive moves in this direction with manufacturers of coffee and chocolate now buying from communities where the raw products are produced in “harm-free” environments. With the threat of long-term damage to their consumer and employer brands it is becoming increasingly important for global brands to have a good handle on what is occurring

in all their regions. The shift to transparency and demand for authenticity is a strong reason for local employer brand managers to be appointed to support the global employer brand manager.

The Mobile Workforce

Mastering the management of today’s traditional worker is no simple task. As global priorities continue to shift and change, organizations are looking to make strategic financial and human capital decisions—and one of the most prevalent changes is an increased use of contingent labor to fill short-term gaps and specific labor segments. This group of workers is growing at more than twice the rate of the full-time workforce and the trend looks set to continue.³

A report by labor law firm Littler Mendelson predicts that contingent labor could rise to as much as 30 to 50 percent of the entire U.S. workforce, triple the average of 13 percent that a Staffing Industry Analysts survey estimated it to be in 2008.

The challenge for organizations is how to strike the right balance between producing the work themselves or outsourcing parts of it to locally or overseas workers. The winners will be those organizations that move early to tap into the global pool of misplaced talent who are ready, willing, and able to do the work others in the local country may be unwilling or incapable of doing.

Citizens in poorer countries with access to the Internet are now home schooling their children by accessing the vast amount of educational resources available on the Internet. The trend of self education is likely to accelerate as parents are no longer prepared to wait for governments to reinvent their education systems—all that is missing for these parents is an Internet connection. Wikipedia alone contains enough information in the right hands to educate the world’s poorest children with the potential to unlock “pockets of talent excellence.”

With 59 percent of the global population living in just 10 countries and the remaining 41 percent living in the remaining 219 countries, it may at times seem like finding a needle in a haystack. However online talent matching platforms such as LinkedIn should go some way to assisting companies to locate, engage, and contract or employee top talent we’re all searching for.

Today, foreign-born workers with university degrees or equivalent qualifications make up just 2 percent of the European labor market, compared with 4.5 percent in the

United States and nearly 10 percent in Canada. Improved education and training must go hand in hand with increased labor migration.⁴ Employability will continue to be a huge problem worldwide. Because of the uneven quality of education systems, only 25 percent of Indian and 20 percent of Russian professionals are currently considered employable by multinationals.⁵

Governments will need to ensure elements such as employment law, taxes, and education standards are appropriately structured to attract employers and key talent across borders. It's as if government policy will be driven by community sentiment more than ever. We are already seeing signs of this in countries such as Greece and Spain. Their citizens are now demanding their governments reveal all surrounding their past economic management which have left these countries in a vulnerable situation, with media reports that Greece may default on its debt. A lot of this debt is connected to the financial positions of other European nations, demonstrating once again the systemic risks of globalization.

Within the context of closely aligned international regulatory frameworks, the growth of cross-border acquisitions by sovereign wealth funds, lingering public investments in private business concerns, greater security cooperation between nations, and information technology that can identify and connect talent in an instant, global mobility becomes part of the new normal. Mobility of talent is fluid.⁶ For example, an Indian company may engage an American team to manage an investment in Africa.

The growing importance of emerging markets will create a significant shift in mobility patterns, as skilled employees from emerging markets increasingly operate across their home continent and beyond, creating greater diversity in the global talent pool. Governments and regulators will accept the economic benefits of talent mobility to stimulate economic growth. This acceptance will lead to greater collaboration between governments and businesses, and within the business community, to remove some of the barriers to mobility around the world.⁴

American firms generated \$1.68 trillion in profit in the last quarter of 2010 alone and have little incentive to invest it back into R&D in their home country when they could put it in Brazil, India, or China.⁷ These profits won't stay on balance sheets for long; companies will be merged or acquired likely with the mission to keep labor costs as low as possible in order to maximise shareholder returns. With the richest 2 percent in the world owning more than half of all

global assets, this figure may come as no surprise. Welcome to the new normal! There is so much corporations can do to build a pathway to corporate success than traditional ways of value creation.

There are real societal problems waiting for corporations or industries to solve, yet there seems to be a reluctance to engage in issues which seem unsolvable. This is where employer branding without borders can have a significant impact. The focus is on resolving societal issues using a coordinated approach between corporations, industries, and governments. If the continents of Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and Latin America were able to each increase their share of world exports by just 1 percent, 128 million people would be lifted out of poverty, five times what it receives in aid. Or consider that nearly 1 million people are trafficked across borders, most of these for sexual exploitation with around half of them minors. Herein lies an opportunity for some of the world's leading brands to really make their employer brand distinctive.

Skills Mismatch

To "manufacture" talent for the long term, national governments, academia, and industry need to work together to better align education and workforce training with the needs of industry. Companies need to implement a robust workforce strategy that takes into account not only the skills needed to execute business strategy, but external factors that impact talent sources such as demographic shifts, technological revolutions, and the rise of emerging markets.

This analysis of skills needed now and in the future must involve governments and learning institutions investing in the right kind of training in order to plug skills gaps. Businesses should be incentivized to develop talent locally and collaborate with schools to make sure they are providing the skills and training that the marketplace needs over the long term. Universities traditionally fully review curriculum every 2-3 years, which is too long in today's rapidly changing environment.

Demographic Changes

As many world populations age, birth rates in most mature economies are trending downward. Many Western economies cite declining birth rates as a major problem in attracting talent. Yet China, India, Eastern Europe, and parts of South America are also grappling with critical talent short-

EMPLOYER BRAND EXCELLENCE PATHWAY



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Figure 1 : Employer Brand Excellence Pathway

ages. Russia alone faces an estimated reduction of approximately 20 million working age people by 2030.⁸ The UN anticipates that China's working-age population (those aged 15-59) will fall behind Vietnam's in 2020 and lag behind India and Brazil in 2025.⁹ China is already facing skills shortages at the senior management and executive level, and expects workforce growth of less than 5 percent by 2015, at which time one-third of the country's billion-plus population will be over 50 years old.¹⁰

In reality 90 percent of the world's people will never leave the country where they were born. People get 95 percent of their news from domestic sources, and those sources focus most of their coverage on domestic news. Only 21 percent of U.S. news coverage is international, and, of that, half deals with U.S. foreign affairs. In European countries about 38 percent of news is international, but almost half relates to stories involving other countries in Europe. No wonder a better understanding of cultural diversity needs to find its way into your employer brand strategy.

The Northern hemisphere faces talent shortages in a wide range of occupational clusters.

The United States will need to add more than 25 million workers to its talent base by 2030 to sustain economic growth, while Western Europe will need more than 45 million. In developed countries, aging and the retirement of baby boomers will have significant implications for how to manage workforce quantity, quality, and costs.¹¹

According to Manpower Group's 2011 Talent Shortage Survey, 34 percent of employers are having difficulty filling vacancies, yet in response to ongoing economic uncertainty, many governments have tightened immigration policies.

It's not surprising that we are yet to see many companies achieve success as a Tier 1 global employer branding company (see Figure 1). The ability to manage a global employer brand strategy is becoming more complex even though leaders are supported in their efforts by rapidly improving technology that allows them to connect with employees faster and cheaper than ever before. Global companies need to act now to put the systems in place to ensure they can tap into the rising entrepreneurial workforce that will emerge from developing countries. The Internet has been inaccessible until now, but mobile technology and low-cost laptops, netbooks, and tablets are flooding into these areas. This approach must be part of a coordinated approach with local leaders empowered to unlock this potential.

Social and Technological Changes

Since its birth in 1991 the World Wide Web has transformed our access to information and to each other. The focus for companies over the past 10 years has been on how to sell more products using the Internet. Many commentators talked about the end of the face-face sale, an attitude that led to the technology bubble that crashed in 2000, sending many investors and companies into bankruptcy when all they had invested in was a domain name and grand ideal. The Internet has now penetrated more than 30 percent of the world's population and is set to continue to accelerate its growth as more citizens in India and China connect to the web using low-cost mobile and PC technology.

In the past five years we have witnessed the rise of the popularity of social media (I say popularity because the jury is still out on whether social media delivers a better ROI in isolation than traditional recruitment and [retention](#) initiatives) with companies shifting their spend from job boards they relied on for so many years. They're often bringing recruitment in-house, which seemed like a logical cost-cutting move following the GFC.

An uprising in the Middle East fueled by the power of social media to engage a community has the potential to unlock millions of young, talented generation Y employees who are ready and willing to connect into the global employment grid, albeit virtually! PwC research shows 80% of young people who entered the workforce after 2000 want to work abroad, which will lead to a gap in the local talent pool for many countries. Previously they would look to developed markets such as the U.S., UK, and Europe. With growth slowed in these regions and their economies spluttering along at different speeds, their intentions are likely to shift to emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) where growth rates are stronger and cash-rich global brands are focusing investment efforts. Turkey also provides attractive opportunities with the Turkish government heavily encouraging foreign direct investment and promoting a young workforce.

Currently, there are more than 1.2 million university students in Turkey. Approximately 730,000 students graduate every year from Turkey's high schools, one-third of whom graduate from vocational, technical, and professional high schools. At the end of every academic year, nearly 400,000 graduates from 116 universities in Turkey join the labor market, adding to a talent pool of more than 24.7 million young, well-educated, and motivated.

These statistics demonstrate the important of global companies developing localized employer branding strategies targeting Generation Y employees and candidates as part of their global strategy.

Sheer numbers do not always provide a clear picture. In a study of employer branding in Turkey by Employer Brand International in 2010, it found only 13 percent of companies have specific talent management programs for Generation Y employees and only 21 percent have a specific recruitment strategy for Generation Y.

What was missing in the early stages of employer brand strategy by early adopters of the concept and still is today in many countries is an understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity. While many commentators talk about “one world” or “statelessness” where global corporations can exploit low costs of labor in emerging economies while selling to the masses in their home country, the reality of a global employer brand strategy is still many years away for many global companies.

Most of us can belong to many networks at the same time. However to achieve success with your employer brand strategy and to get things done, you still need to engage and collaborate (or compromise!) with employees from other cultures. It is critical if you are to achieve a Tier 1 employer brand status.

Comscore research shows social networking continued to gain momentum throughout 2010 with 9 out of every

10 U.S. Internet users now visiting a social networking site each month. Social networking sites accounted for 12 percent of all time spent online in 2010, with the average Internet user spending more than 4.5 hours on these sites each month. Globally, social networking accounts for 15.6 percent of online time among those age 15 and older. Among this same age population, social networking accounts for 14.4 percent of Americans’ online time. Social networking has become an integral part of the fabric of the Internet and one that is increasingly becoming integrated into the experience of so many different employer branding activities online. We are starting to see a shift in how companies are managing their brand through increased collaboration between departments responsible for managing the consumer and employer brand with companies such as Starbucks, Adidas, Ford, Zappos, and Sodexo leading the way in this area.

Technology is evolving a lot quicker than the law can keep up. Governments are becoming increasingly concerned about the role of social media in changing government policy, and some governments are calling for more regulation of the Internet, especially relating to privacy of personal data. That’s one of the reasons why Facebook is constantly under the government radar when it makes changes to privacy settings—it uses an “opt-out” model rather than the “opt-in” model legislated in many countries. Some countries (e.g. China) go even further and have blocked access



Figure 2: Job trends for employment branding positions

Source: www.indeed.com

to some sites such as YouTube and Twitter. Making sense of the increasingly borderless employment landscape and its impact on talent attraction and retention, global companies such as Google, Amazon, Vestas, and Deutsche Bank are now forming employer branding departments to manage the global employer brand strategy.

This approach will go a long way to minimizing the risks of developing a global employer branding strategy and eliminate some of the common mistakes made by companies in pursuing this approach.

It's Time to Re-think Your Strategy and Challenge the Status Quo

Some of the most common mistakes I see made by companies in pursuing a global employer brand strategy include:

- Lack of synergy across regions due to lack of planning and understanding of local nuances abroad
- Deploying a centralized strategy with little regard for the cultural diversity of regional markets
- Developing a one-size-fits-all career website that provides very little information of working and living conditions abroad
- Lack of succession planning because the director of employer branding is more interested in their own career progression than the company's development
- Lack of integration and impact of the strategy on the company culture as employer branding is viewed as a project-based solution to talent attraction and retention
- Lack of coordinated planning between the needs of the company and vendors supporting the strategy, resulting in a disjointed approach that causes more frustration than value creation
- Copying the strategy of industry competitors, resulting in a similar look and feel and lack of distinctiveness
- Failing to conduct research with the internal and external audience to determine what makes their employer brand distinctive
- Paying premiums for low-reach media that is sold by vendors as "reaching a niche audience" such as advice "to invest in social media at all costs" or be left behind!
- Relying on a ranking in "best places to work" surveys as the sole metric for the employer brand strategy. Employer Brand International's global research shows ranking in Ideal Employer, Best Places to Work, or similar awards is used by less than 18 percent of companies

to measure return on investment for the employer brand strategy, well behind employee engagement (36 percent), retention rate, and six other leading indicators of ROI

- Investing massive amounts of recruitment advertising in short bursts and then going silent during the periods in between
- Failing to collaborate across departments responsible for corporate, consumer, and employer branding initiatives (e.g. human resources, marketing, communications), resulting in a disjointed approach

All of the above practices impact and derail employer brand growth. They are magnified even further when trying to implement an employer branding strategy across borders.

The Rise of the Global Employer Brand Manager

The job trend for employer branding positions have been on the rise. There has been more than a 250 percent growth in job vacancies since 2006. I forecast this will continue to increase in line with economic growth (albeit at different rates) across the world as employer branding is still closely viewed by many companies as aligned with recruitment practices, though this is changing. Best-practice employer branding companies such as Adidas, Google, and Vestas Wind Systems have dedicated employer branding functions to drive the employer brand strategy across the employee lifecycle from pre-hire to retire.

Dedicated employer branding departments will be supported by an increase in investment in employer branding, with Employer Brand International's 2011 global research study showing investment will be stronger around the world in the 2011/2012 financial year, with 48.4 percent of companies in Asia planning to increase their investment, followed by Turkey (45.6 percent), Australia (40.1 percent), USA/Canada (40.1 percent), and Europe/UK (32 percent). It looks like Russian managers need more convincing, with only 25.3 percent of companies planning to increase their investment. However we are seeing trends that show Russian leaders are benefiting from being late adopters, with executives (25.6 percent) and teams of HR and Marketing (25 percent) being responsible for the employer brand strategy in of companies compared to 11.6 percent (executives) and 5.2 percent (teams of HR and marketing) globally.

Less than 20 percent of firms around the world have a clear

employer brand strategy, and as expected developed markets are leading the way with USA/Canada rates the highest (19.7 percent), followed by Asia (19.4 percent), Europe/UK, Australia (15 percent), Turkey (12.3 percent), and Russia (7.6 percent). Clearly there is still a lot of work to do!

With the rise in employer brand dedicated functions appearing in organizational charts over the coming years, there are three key focus areas organizations should focus on to build capabilities of leaders who will be responsible for the global employer strategy.

Cultivating the Global Employer Brand Leader

My own perspective on developing the capability of the global employer brand leader is greatly influenced by the places, people, and learnings from my two global tours which has allowed me to experience the cultures of employees from more than 38 cities in 24 countries since 2007. In many ways we are all very similar (the global citizen!) yet in many ways we are very different (our cultures help shape our values and beliefs which have prepared us to survive in our local regions). This supports the need for employer brand leaders with 1) a good understanding of global issues and cultural diversity, 2) an ability to localize the global employer brand strategy, and 3) an ability to manage the employer brand for the long term.

1. Understanding global issues and cultural diversity

First leaders need to understand how the world really works (not just from what the media feeds them!) and the impact on employment. Keep up with information on current issues and trends relevant to employer branding which has already been aggregated by thought leaders, experts, and reputable journalists. My top three are *The Economist*, *Time*, and *Harvard Business Review*. Visit and download white papers from leading global consulting firms such as Bain and Co, PwC, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG, Gallup, and McKinsey & Co, and Aon Hewitt. These firms regularly publish research on global issues and trends. Consolidate the learnings and share them among managers inside the organization to foster an understanding of cultural diversity and lifelong learning.

Encourage leaders to develop a network of employer brand managers, thought leaders, and academics from around the world and follow them on the most popular social media networks including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. You're likely to gain insights into their thinking well in advance of it appearing in articles like this!

Send managers on international assignments to connect the theory to reality. It wasn't until I started to travel and spend time outside Australia that I gained a clearer understanding of the cultural nuances impacting on employer

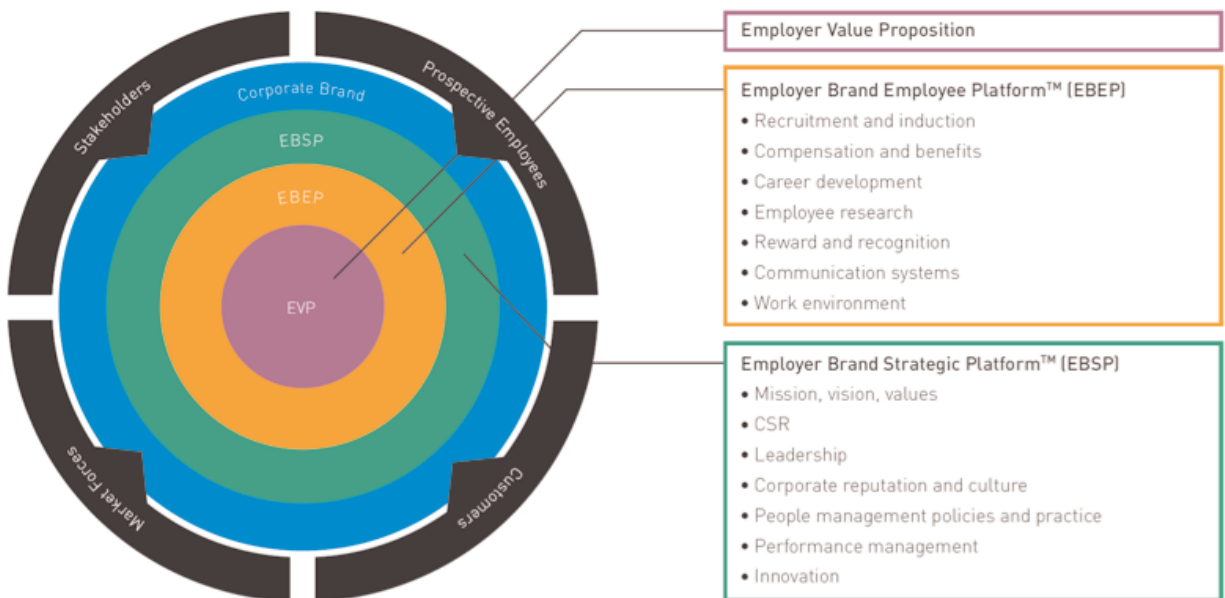


Figure 3: Employer Brand Excellence Framework

Source: © Brett Minchington (2005)

branding in different countries. I have found Asian employees are more motivated by salary than Scandinavians, and Europeans are more interested in working in a collegiate environment than Indian or Chinese workers. The commonality I have found among employees (albeit in different orders) I have met in my travels is that employees are seeking fair pay, career development, working in a friendly and collegial environment, and respect. These appear to be universal employment needs; it's just that not enough companies are good at delivering on them, which has led to declining levels of employee engagement in many regions around the world.

The Internet can only provide a one-dimensional view of the world; it's important to experience local culture on the ground. Spending time with managers in their home country will also foster a culture of trust, engagement, and support of global employer branding initiatives.

Conduct training in cultural diversity for managers to

enhance knowledge, understanding, and empathy in differences in culture and how they impact the employer brand.

Understand how the shift toward mobile communications will impact on your employer brand communications, and start planning your mobile strategy now. While 28,000,000,000,000,000,000 (28 quintillion!) bytes of data flow across networks per month, it's not knowledge that is limited; it is the time available to access and digest it. Explore ways to bring the knowledge to your employees. Invest in mobile technology such as iPads or tablets to take the knowledge transfer from desktop to couch (or the train) and enhance the learning experience for employees. It's hard to believe that only two years ago employers were blocking employee access to social networking sites for fear they were wasting time or would spread negative rumors about the company.

Manage expectations around what is achievable given



Source: © Employer Brand International's Employer Branding Global Research Study (2011)

Figure 4: Metrics used to measure return on investment (ROI) for the employer brand strategy

time, resources, and objectives of the enterprise. Rome wasn't built in a day but it is still around for the whole world to enjoy today in all its splendour. Define a clear strategy and celebrate achievement of milestones along the way. Understand, however, that your employer brand is closely linked to your culture, so it may take time to shift to a position that aligns with where you want it to be.

2. Localize the employer brand strategy

Establish a framework for your global employer brand strategy and ensure internal and external stakeholders are on the same page.

In researching for my first book, *Your Employer Brand attract-engage-retain*, I found companies with strong employer brands were successful in managing the employment experience across 14 employer brand attributes which define the employment experience from a stakeholder perspective (see Figure 3). The Framework considers the role of stakeholders including employees, prospective candidates, customers, investors, and society in employer branding.

During my research I found much of the focus in employer branding was on recruitment with little regard for the role of employer branding in employee engagement (the main metric used to measure ROI of employer brand strategy—see Figure 4) and retention.

Adapting the global employer brand strategy to local environments should begin with a focus on the employee experience. While companies like to use a “one-size-fits-all” engagement strategy, most employees want to have their own needs met before they consider those of their team members or the organization as a whole. The employer brand strategy has to be built from the ground up. The days of top down control and command of the global employer brand strategy are over. Top talent are free to move and they are being targeted by your competitors, so if the threshold to disengagement is crossed they will take up the opportunities offered elsewhere. Headhunting will become more aggressive in the future as the talent shortage becomes more critical and better matching technology becomes available for companies to source talent from.

Organizations are grappling with the task of providing a candidate and employee experience that encourages employees to give their best while they are with them. Google has come close with its value proposition based upon providing exceptional employee benefits (in some locations) such as free massages, language classes, chill out areas, casual day

every day—all of which provide an environment which allows employees to be most productive. Google's 20 percent time where employees are allowed to work on their own projects with the opportunity to commercialize successful ventures promotes a culture of trust, innovation, and creativity—very strong value propositions, especially to talented technical engineers. These practices have been copied by organizations around the world, but Google has been successful in building a distinctive global positioning around these EVPs.

Develop innovation clusters inside the organization which allow the employer brand team to develop creative ways to enhance the employment experience and ways to communicate the company's EVPs to the key stakeholders.

Provide managers with the tools and allow them time to test and trial them. Companies that rushed into participating in social media without a strategy soon realized that networks needed to be developed, nurtured, and responded to. It seems like everyday there is a new tool available for companies to communicate their employer brand. Two years ago “Second Life” was set to become the next big employer branding tool, and then came Facebook, Twitter, and now, gaming technology is the “wait-and-see” tool. Use the innovation clusters to understand how and if the tools contribute to value creation in attracting and retaining talent. They may be successful in some of your markets but not others. This is where local employer brand managers play a major role.

Seek creative ways to increase collaboration inside the organization, and realize that making mistakes is part of the evolution process. Global insurance group AXA conducts global forums on issues such as corporate social responsibility where employees throughout the world are invited to participate in an online forum to share their views and opinions. There's extremely strong engagement in emerging markets compared to other, developed ones.

3. Manage the employer brand for the long term

If there is one variable that causes more employer brand strategies to fail or to not even get started, it is the lack of relevant measures to determine the return on investment of the employer brand strategy over the long term. Most metrics used are short-term measures such as recruitment advertising costs or job board spend. Metrics need to be more strategic and should include measures such as quality of hire, retention rate, and employee engagement which will pro-

vide deeper insights into the level of value creation from your employer brand strategy.

At the onset of your employer brand strategy, metrics based on desired outcomes should be established. There is “no one-size-fits-all” measurement tool for your employer brand program. The key is developing a set of metrics that is based on your own unique challenges and business objectives. I encourage senior managers to develop a dashboard of metrics that is relevant to their organization’s strategy rather than implementing a “me too” ROI measurement tool.

Employer Brand International found that in Europe, Turkey, and Asia “employee engagement” is the main metric used whereas “retention rate” is the main metric used in Australia and in the U.S./Canada (see figure 4). “Cost per hire” is also more important than “quality of hire” in all regions except Turkey. In Employer Brand International’s first global survey in 2008 (data collected prior to the GFC), “quality of hire” was more important than “cost per hire.”

Different types of information will be of value to different audiences within the business:

- Shareholders want to know how the employer brand is likely to influence long-term financial performance,
- Prospective employees want to know the total package/em-

ployment offering and how the firm performs compared to competitors on its treatment of employees,

- Employees want to know that their jobs are secure and how they can develop themselves and their skills while receiving fair pay and the opportunity to work in a friendly and collegiate environment where they are respected,
- Managers need to know what actions they can take to improve the performance of their business units and how to optimize employee engagement.

The key differentiator of companies that adopt the employer brand concept in the future will be those that appoint dedicated employer brand resources and staffing, develop a clear strategy to work toward achieving a Tier 1 status, and whose outcomes consider the objectives of candidates, employees, customers, investors and society.

If my Generation NEXT 12-year-old son is anything to judge by, we have less than five years left to create a workplace that is going to motivate and challenge the next generation of talent that will be responsible for value creation in organisations over the next 40 years (see Figure 5). Typical Generation NEXT is connected, wired, mobile and Internet-savvy, active, with diverse interests.

We have a responsibility to begin laying the foundations for a better world now!



Figure 5: Generation NEXT - you have six years to prepare!

Some Final Thoughts

While most global brands have evolved to at least a Tier 3 employer brand status, there is so much more opportunity for these corporations. They can continue making profits while working on climate change, poverty, child slavery, people trafficking, and environmental damage. A successful global employer brand strategy which drives value creation will require a collaborative approach between business, industry, and governments and an ability to connect a company's employees across borders through effective management of cultural diversity.

The appointment of a global employer brand manager may just be the answer to get things moving.

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