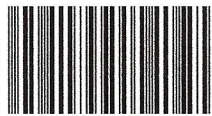




BUILD YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND



9771608850007

28 NEUROSCIENCE
NOW HELPS
DEVELOP LEADERS

30 WELLNESS CAN
POLISH YOUR
EMPLOYER BRAND

36 HEART SURGERY
FOR EMPLOYER
BRANDING

BUILD YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND

BUILD MARKET BASED ASSETS WITH EMPLOYER BRANDING

BRETT MINCHINGTON

Your employer brand is “the image of your organisation as a ‘great place to work’ in the mind of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market (active and passive candidates, clients, customers and other key stakeholders). The art and science of employer branding is therefore concerned with the attraction, engagement and retention initiatives targeted at enhancing your company’s employer brand.”

A strong employer brand is built upon mental (image) and physical availability (market reach) so your creative should work towards building consistent associations you want your employees, candidates and other key stakeholders to have about ‘what it’s like to work at your company.’ Your strategy should work

towards expanding your market reach to your target audience using the most effective internal and external communication channels. However, the biggest challenge I find among managers responsible for the employer brand strategy is they don’t understand the science of branding and lack knowledge in branding principles and practices which have been informed by decades of research into how brands grow.

COMMON EMPLOYER BRANDING MISTAKES

Some of the most common mistakes I see made by companies include:

- ❖ creating recruitment advertising that doesn’t build or refresh relevant memory structures or associations about what it is like to work for the company;
- ❖ viewing employer branding as merely a recruitment strategy or short term recruitment advertising campaign;
- ❖ 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

money hungry vendors as ‘reaching a niche audience’; relying on a ranking in ‘best places to work’ surveys as the sole metric for the employer brand strategy;

- ❖ promising in recruitment advertising what can’t realistically be delivered on in the real employment experience;
- ❖ investing massive amounts on 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 (human resources, marketing, communications) resulting in a disjointed approach;
- ❖ over complicating employer brand metrics and focusing too much on return on investment (ROI);
- ❖ derailing progress because of an untrusting organisational culture;
- ❖ using a different recruitment message across multiple channels and changing the message for each campaign in pursuit of campaign creativity and innovation (or simply to win an award!); and
- ❖ conducting employee research

and not using the findings to improve and address the gaps and/or failing to communicate the results to survey participants (afraid of delivering bad news!).

All of the above practices impact and derail employer brand growth.

HOW BRANDS GROW

We know from decades of empirical research about how brands compete that:

- 1 growth in market share comes by increasing popularity; that is, by gaining many more buyers (of all types), most of whom are light customers buying the brand only occasionally;
- 2 brands, even though they are slightly differentiated, mainly compete as if they are near look-a-likes, but they vary in popularity (and hence market share); and
- 3 brand competition and growth is largely about building two market-based assets, physical availability and mental availability. Brands that are easier to buy – for more people, in more situations – have more market share. Innovation and differentiation (when they work) build market-based assets, which last after competitors copy the innovation (Sharp 2010).

Applying this knowledge to the field of employer branding, managers responsible for the employer brand strategy, need to improve the branding of the employment experience (it should be distinctive and stand out!) and continuously reach large audiences of active and passive candidates cost effectively. This is one of the reasons why companies have reduced their job board spend and shifted their focus to social media as a way to communicate their employer brand as they believe it offers greater reach

at a lower cost. Global research by Employer Brand International shows social media now ranks second to the career website as the main channel being used by companies to communicate their employer brand. In their 2009 global study social media ranked fifteenth! Employer brand managers need to know what their distinctive assets are (physical working environment like at Google), company culture (for example, Zappos) and the more well known brand assets – colours (Vodafone red), logos (Nike), font (Coca-Cola), tone (Apple), and so forth, and they need to use and protect these. They also need to know why candidates choose to work for their company and reasons driving engagement and retention

IDENTIFYING AND BUILDING DISTINCTIVE ASSETS

There are two criteria that determine the strength of the distinctive assets of a brand: uniqueness and prevalence. Quality research with your target audience will determine how well your employer brand performs in this area.

The purpose of building strong, distinctive assets is to increase the number of stimuli that can act as identification triggers for a brand. One of the earliest and most effective uses of distinctiveness in employer branding is from Google, who are recognised globally as a fun (but serious!) workplace that offers free meals, massages, 20% time where you can spend 20% of your time on your own projects, a workplace where you can bring your dog to work, chill out rooms, funky meeting rooms and so on. Whilst many companies have copied this and created even more attractive working environments, Google's is most distinctive! They built market reach by posting links to videos and images of 'inside Google' which was virally shared around the world.

When ever I show a picture

from inside a Google workplace at a speaking event and ask the audience, 'which company is this?' – without any prompting the majority of the audience shout out, "Google!" In a recent recruitment campaign they received more than 75,000 job applications worldwide in one week, an impressive result indeed!

SO WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Employer brand managers can take a few steps to get their strategy back on track by:

- ❖ educating managers about the science of branding to provide knowledge and clarity on how brands grow and how they contribute to shareholder value. Shared knowledge is very powerful;
- ❖ collaborating with internal departments responsible for corporate and consumer branding initiatives such as marketing, communications, PR and others to ensure a consistent approach to managing the company's brand assets through a joined up approach;
- ❖ ensuring your vendors are on the same page and working to achieve your employer brand strategy. Remember they have company and profit objectives too and they may not always be operating with your best interests in mind. Drive your own strategy;
- ❖ aiming to build market reach through your employer branding communications to increase your market share of passive candidates who come into contact with your company; and
- ❖ developing your distinctive brand assets and ensure your employer branding communication initiatives refresh memory structures by consistently using these distinctive assets in communications. *(HR!)*

➤ **Brett Minchington** is the Chairman/CEO of Employer Brand International, a global authority, strategist and corporate advisor on employer branding (www.brettminchington.com). His new book Employer Brand Leadership-A Global Perspective is available at (www.collectivelearningaustralia.com).