

An attractive workplace is always “dressed up”



Move Tomorrow's World Photo: Erik G. Lund

Employer Branding is a HOT subject at the moment. Talents today are well aware of what their dream jobs look like and what career possibilities they have. In the quest for talents, how do companies “dress up” to make themselves attractive to the talents they want?

In today's recruitment who takes the lead: the candidate or the company? Applicants today try to separate themselves from the other applicants with creative CV's and cover letters. Companies “dress up” with appealing employment promises to attract the best talents. Both applicants and companies strive to be unique.

To know what is unique about a company requires a lot of data collection, analysis and creative work, but it pays off to know who you are and what you can offer - both in boom periods and in times of crisis.

ROI on strong image

“A good image is an advantage, when you are calling potential candidates. If you say that you are from Google, the response is seldom “who?” says

Staffing and Recruiting Manager Randy Knaflic. And it pays off to have a good image in today's world where information travels fast.

“Employer Branding is about identity and about how we should be as a workplace. In short it's about our reputation,” says Majken Schultz, Professor, Ph.d. at Copenhagen Business School. “The challenge is to create coherence between the company's **strategic vision**, the **organisational culture** and **stakeholder image**. Put in other words: Where are we going? Where are we coming from? How does the outside world see us?”



Source: Reputation Institute, based on Hatch & Schultz 2008

Majken Schultz warns against looking at Employer Branding as something elitist. “On all levels, employer branding is simply about getting the best talents and keeping them.”

To define the employer brand, it is important to know which competences the existing employees have in order to attract new employees. And it is important to know which impressions, employees have about the company, they look for a job with. It is all about impressions and wishes. In this context, Employer Branding is future oriented, new and part of the company culture.

Why brand the workplace

The reasons for defining an employer brand can be a labour market under pressure, large growth plans in the company or an integration of company cultures after an integration in order to signal being "One company". Often the project is initiated by HR and Communication, but it is important that all departments are involved.

If a company has a strong brand, it is easier to attract and retain key talents. If a company has a weak brand, the talents opt out the company again and again. The result is: no people – no business!

A thorough Employer Branding process include: 1) **Segmentation** of employees, 2) **Analysis** of existing and future positioning, 3) **Development** of the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) and testing, 4) **Implementation** of the EVP in internal processes, 5) Creative **communication** and external activities, and last but not least, evaluation. But why bother at all?

The purpose of Employer Branding is to understand the attitudes and values of the company better. The common EVP should include different employee groups and will result in effective communication and better recruiting and retainment. The results in the implementation phase could be an update of the career portal and company brochures and a strategy for enhancing university relation activities.

Employer branding thus involves two goals: 1) Good, positive **brand associations** (a good employer image) which has an external effect. 2) **Brand loyalty** (how to impact the organisational culture and create loyal employees) which has an internal effect.

Living the Employer Brand

Talents today are very aware of their job requirements. The salary is often not their primary focus. Top three requirements in general terms are: 1) Stimulating and challenging work, 2) Training and development opportunities, 3) Total compensation and benefit package, 4) Flexible work environment &

work-life balance, 5) Culture, atmosphere, collegial work environment.

The question is how to create a credible "Employer Brand". It is not enough to "dress up" a company in nice employee promises such as "We are dynamic and innovative" and hand out glossy brochures on students fairs. Especially not, if the response time for applicants is over a month and the brochures are written in a passive language.

Credibility means the coherence between what the company **does** and what the company **says**. A company is only visible when it has some core values and a profile, which is clearly and well communicated.

The Danish healthcare company, Novo Nordisk, is good at branding their business purpose. They changed their slogan in recruitment adds from "Being there" to "Life-changing careers" and they try to make coherence of the brand in all areas by using the corporate slogan "Changing Diabetes". A strong top manager is another way to brand a company and make a turnaround.

In Nike's products and the slogan "Just do it" it is "the winning experience" which is associated with the product.

In brief, companies such as Google, Novo Nordisk, and Nike are symbolised by the credibility, which is associated with them. When they speak, they give some of the associations which attract the target groups.

An all-round tool

Branding is a translation of the business instead of focusing only on the organisation and culture.

The Employer Branding way of thinking helps the company to focus on what the company want and do not want. It helps the company to look at the strategic processes in the company and to look thematically at the competences, which are in the company and the competences, the company want in the future.

The challenge is to develop a harmonic Employer Brand in coherence with the Corporate Brand. Things and activities in society constantly change the demands to a company, e.g. the climate debate. Therefore, Employer Branding is just as relevant in boom periods as in times of crisis.

A good workplace reputation has an impact on the performance of the entire company. Just "dressing up" is not enough. ©Linda Danielsen Røyggaard

