

Employer Branding for Retention

By Frank Armstrong

Employer branding is becoming a recognized way to recruit new employees. Have you considered how your brand can help retain them as well?

Your organization's brand can include a wide range of factors, such as compensation, culture, benefits, management style, and organizational goals. Employees need more than just monetary rewards: They want to work in a place they can feel proud of and have a job that has more than just monetary worth. This is where employment branding can play an important role.

WHY EMPLOYMENT BRANDING IS IMPORTANT

Employment branding is the process of planting the idea that your company is a great place to work in the minds of potential job candidates. It is essentially a promise of what it would be like to work at your organization and is similar to corporate branding, which involves using a company logo to convey a certain image or idea to the general public.

However, an employment brand asks potential employees to essentially change their lives by coming to work at the organization. As the employment market gets more competitive for the best talent, the key to success in recruiting becomes how well your organization differentiates itself from others, both in attracting and keeping talent.

Why is your company different or better than others? This is where the concept of employment branding comes in. An effective employment brand:

- Develops the theme;
- Creates a career image of what life would be like to work there;
- Coordinates with the corporate brand; and
- Energizes the right candidates to apply and stay.

Developing an employment brand to meet these requirements can give your organization an edge in attracting and retaining the best talent and it need not require an expanded compensation budget to achieve these goals. Promoting the company itself as being the place to work can avoid budget battles. The brand campaign can also enhance internal culture development programs, as well as increase motivation and productivity.

Are your people actively looking for opportunities? A recent national survey by SHRM found that 41% of employees were "somewhat prepared" and 39% were "very prepared" to look for a new job.

So, creating a brand and a culture that supports it are especially timely endeavors now as a way to head off the large percentage of employees who may be getting ready to leave or considering it.

This doesn't mean that your organization can ignore pay-related issues, of course. You need to stay current on pay and benefits to make sure you are competitive with peer organizations. In addition to compensation, pride is a strong motivator for employees. Employees who can feel proud of where they work are more likely to remain with that employer.

An employment brand can help build that pride and make it easier to communicate to job candidates that your company is a desirable place to work and to build a career. Companies can extend their brand through employee referral programs, which typically offer current employees cash bonuses if they bring new talent into the organization.

CREATING A BRAND

Employers should consider the following eight steps in developing, implementing, and communicating an employment brand:

1. Step 1: Understand your company's business objectives and the commitment to growth. HR needs to know the company's objectives in order to include them in the brand development.
2. Step 2: Identify the talents and skills the company needs to meet its business objectives and goals.
3. Step 3: Identify your employment brand's attributes. Try to determine what differentiates your company from others in the minds of potential job candidates and to current employees.
4. Step 4: Seek synergy with the corporate brand. Some companies take this so seriously they have created hybrid HR/marketing positions such as "employment brand director"
5. Step 5: Create a communication plan. It should include the market, what media to use, the timing, and execution.
6. Step 6: Develop the creative content and look of the message.
7. Step 7: Use metrics to assess and track the success of the employment brand campaign. As with other HR initiatives, you need to learn how the brand is working and what results it is delivering in hiring and retention. Calculate cost, quality, speed, and efficiency, which are the typical four categories of measurement.
8. Step 8: Execute, evaluate, and extend the message into the marketplace. A good employment brand should be consistent through every medium, especially the company Web site. The experience you leave people with on the Web site may affect whether they come to work there—so leave them with an extraordinary experience.

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