

Employer branding

By  [Vanessa Gibb](#)

6 Nov 2017

When we think of brands, we tend to first ponder about the big consumer brands that have become so recognisable and have even crept into language usage as verbs and nouns. (Think of making a 'Xerox' or 'Hoovering' your lounge.) Branding is the domain of the 'creatives' or the marketing team. But there is a brand that is as important as the one your organisation projects to the public; that is your employer brand.



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Employer branding is simply the way organisations differentiate themselves in the labour market. It is a complex concept though – it will determine the way you approach human resources (or as I call them “people”) and conversely, it will also be determined BY your people. Employer branding becomes especially crucial to differentiate your company and your employee value proposition in a market where talent is scarce or where there is a skills shortage.

Your employer brand on social media

In this age of social media, where sharing of absolutely every detail of one's life is the trend, it is easy to find out what it's like to work somewhere without having to dip one's toe into the water. Getting intel into a company's corporate culture is as easy as tapping into an employer's wide network of personal and professional connections on the various social media platforms. When your friends post about their academic progress, their involvement in social responsibility projects, their sense of belonging, achievement, self-worth... it all adds up to one's perception of a corporation.

This makes it imperative that your employee brand is well-aligned with your corporation's brand as a whole. It will seem incongruent and probably raise questions if the public is being shown a caring, socially and environmentally responsible image and your employee brand reflects something quite different.

Responding to reviews on social media is also important. Whether the review is positive or negative, it is an opportunity to improve the perception of your organisation. Include positive articles about your employee brand on the company's website and actively promote it wherever possible. If the brand is strong, every employee will be a 'brand ambassador'.

What do employees really want?

Companies like Google have taken this concept to the new level and their company culture has become the stuff of legends.

But do top candidates really want macrobiotic food, massages and foosball tables at their disposal?

The [Gallup](#) poll has shown that what most candidates want is to learn. Therefore, creating the right employer brand means having an environment where there is a constant opportunity for self-improvement. This applies to employees of all ages as people have realised that in this fast-changing environment, skills have to be upgraded all the time to stay relevant.

Organisations that encourage people to explore new roles and departments and where everyone is encouraged to better him or herself, see notably better retention and engagement. Although it is hard work to have dynamism in the workforce, ultimately, it benefits the organisation to have people who are improving themselves and at the same time, strengthening the corporation and its image.

Also featuring strongly on what top candidates are looking for (according to Gallup April 2017) is meaning and purpose. Millennials – especially – are adamant that they gain this from their work. According to Deloitte's 2015 projection, millennials will make up 70% of the work force by 2025. This means that the HR job is to inspire them. But how do we do that?

The new role of HR

HR departments should do some marketing too. As we actively promote our product or service, so should we promote our organisation as a preferred employer? Whether that's by boasting about the good we do in the community too and bragging about our current employees who are going places – graduations, promotions and other accolades.

We should also keep the promises we make when we are trying to secure a candidate. A company should never go back on an offer to work flexible hours or a promise of promotion or travel. These actions are invaluable to good staff and will certainly encourage them to promote your organisation as an employer of choice.

Another tip is to make your job specs more personal. When writing them, instead of describing the job itself, try to describe the ideal candidate for the position and how that person would *feel* working in this position. This way, you're more likely to find the candidate who is the perfect fit.

In the quest for engaging top talent, we need to ensure that our employer brand is aligned with what the company stands for in the eyes of the public. We need to offer on-going opportunities to employees for their own development and we need to show that the work they do is meaningful. The employer brand is crucial to securing the best candidates now more than ever before.

ABOUT VANESSA GIBB

With experience in Human Resources generalist roles, Vanessa is tasked with finding, placing, engaging and growing top creative and technical talent for Native VML.
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