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Five Reasons to Build a Strong Employment Brand

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Whether you realize it or not, your company has an employment brand – the perception your employees and prospective hires have of what it's like to work at your company. Your employment brand is the first impression you make on potential employees. It's the expectations you set for new hires. And it's the reason that your most valuable employees decide to either stay with you or leave for ostensibly greener pastures.

Too many companies fail to take an active role in shaping their employment brand. They allow it to be shaped by things such as word-of-mouth of current and former employees, customer interactions with staff and media coverage of the company, whether employment-related or not.

Working to shape your employment brand is critical to attracting and retaining your ideal employees – the ones you have deemed critical to your success. Fortune Magazine's list of *100 Best Companies to Work For* reads like a rundown of industry leaders such as Google, Starbucks Coffee, Aflac, S.C. Johnson & Son, Network Appliance and Wegmans Food Markets. These companies aren't great employers just because they're at the forefront of their markets. Their success is due in great part to their ability to hire and keep the right people.

In addition to the recruitment and retention benefits, here are some additional reasons for taking an active role in shaping your company's employment brand:

1. Enhance revenues, profits, and customer satisfaction

Building your employment brand has an impact that reaches far beyond recruitment and retention. Studies have shown correlations between a strong employment brand and:

- Increased revenues and profit margins
- Higher levels of customer satisfaction
- A more consistent customer brand experience

These benefits are tied in some way to having the "right fit" employees at your company and having employees who are committed to the success of your business. Developing an effective employment brand has a direct effect on these factors.

2. Stand out from your competition

A strong employment brand positions you as an "employer of choice" by highlighting how you address the needs of prospective hires better than your competition. Time and again, studies show that salary is not the most important factor when people are deciding where to work. Instead, they are looking for which workplace offers the best "value" – the group of benefits that address their specific needs.

Being perceived as having a better employer value is supported by the prospective employee's educated perception of what you offer. A fully understood and well-articulated employment brand keeps the focus on overall value, not just salary. In the talent acquisition arena, winning margins are often small. The winners are usually those who are perceived by their targets as delivering the best sustained value.

3. Get more out of your HR budgets

A properly developed employment brand will include messaging that convincingly communicates the benefits and value that you offer to prospective hires. Developing your HR and talent acquisition collateral and tactics around your employment brand and its related messages allows you to focus your resources and communicate more effectively. This will aid in getting more out of every HR dollar you spend on recruitment and retention.

A strong employment brand also enhances employee retention, reducing the need to recruit to fill vacated positions and allowing you to stretch your HR budgets further.

4. Deliver on promises made to employees

Your employment brand faces both outward (to prospective hires) and inward (to your current employees). A well-defined employment brand aligns employee and management expectations so that promises made during the hiring process are delivered. This continuity is critical to retaining your employees and fostering a more productive work environment. Disconnects between expectations set before accepting a job and the actual employment experience can have a significant effect on employee morale and retention rates.

Did you know?

A 2002 Watson Wyatt Work USA study determined that the three-year return to shareholders was 36% higher at companies with a strong employment brand and high employee commitment than at companies without these qualities?

5. Help your employees "live the brand"

Good employment brands complement, leverage and are aligned with the power of their companies' corporate brands. In many ways, your employment brand is the employee manifestation of your company brand. It helps set expectations for how employees should represent your company and how customers should be treated. A strong employment brand helps employees commit to your business and its mission by clearly laying out the value they receive from their place of work.

The employment brand is just one aspect – although typically the most overlooked piece – of corporate branding. A strong employment brand, while enhancing recruitment and retention efforts, brings companies benefits that reach beyond the HR function. It should be a part of every corporate branding effort.



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