

SUCCESSFUL BRANDS OR THE KEY TO SUCCESS OF ANY COMPANY THE EMPLOYER BRAND

Emanoil MUSCALU*
Alexandra STĂNIȚĂ**

***Abstract:** Human resource management is developing today like digital technologies, almost in real time. A multidisciplinary field by excellence, human resource management has moved from Taylor's principles of scientific management where people were considered labelling employees, to personal, human resources, and currently we are talking about human capital. All these terms actually mean major paradigm shift in the field, changes which mean every time another way of doing business, including another way to perceive, think, deal, attract, coordinate our current and future employees. In this context, the use of marketing techniques to attract the right employees has become an imperative. Given that fact that the labour market is still a market, here we are also talking about the competition to attract and retain the best candidates. These constraints have imposed the appearance of a new strategy, direction, even concept in human resource management: the employer brand.*

***Keywords:** Human resource management, brand, employer brand, human resources.*

***JEL Classification:** O₁₀, O₁₅*

* Faculty of Economic Sciences, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Romania, emanoil.muscalu@ulbsibiu.ro

** Faculty of Economic Sciences, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Romania, alexandra.stanit@ulbsibiu.ro

1. Introduction

People are the active resources of the organization, because their potential, experience, passion, their initiatives and development actively contribute to increasing organizational efficiency and effectiveness, with the ability to amplify the effect of other resources. That is certainly why organizations are constantly concerned with finding the ideal employee - competent, loyal, and capable of performance.

The modern theory of economic growth teaches us, that in high developed countries, the human capital production factor is decisive for growth. In this context, there takes place a recognition of the human capital importance and management, as a key to much innovation and flexibility. (Petrescu, I., 2008)

Currently, organizations fight on the market is also about employees' personal skills to be competitive in the changing and unstable business environment. In Romania, the attraction, the talent retention is a matter of relief, especially since we are witnessing to a labour migration to other countries that offer a reality or just a promise of employment that seem to match people's expectations and wishes better than the intern offer. As such, many companies in Romania want to find and attract young people with potential and actual skills to promote organizational values, especially among students, preferring to invest in their training and to "grow" them in the spirit of the company - a strategy of obtaining attachment to the organization / brand (brand engagement).

This major change in employee's expectations that put pressure on employers to travel in new strategic directions contributed significantly to shaping employer brand, especially in the directions of the brand attachment and employer quality (Employer of Choice-EOC).

In this very difficult period for all economies, in most organizations when budgets are lower and the pressure to pass over crisis situations is bigger, employers are looking for talent, valuable employees to contribute to organizational objectives and to obtain performance. Reality has shown that loyal, involved people motivated to work, to support business objectives and to implement strategies constitute a competitive advantage and may be what makes the difference between those who will survive and who will die. Certainly one of the biggest challenges during this period for any organization is to attract and maintain valuable employees.

In Romania, attracting and retaining talent has been and continues to be a real problem for all organizations, regardless of size or activity field, especially since they have faced in the last 20 years, a serious labour migration to other countries where offer labour market is more attractive than domestic supply.

Human resources specialists consider that an answer to these problems faced by Romanian organizations is the employer brand. The concept is at the border between human resource management, public relations and marketing, and it is not synonymous only with a reputable organization, it also involves the reproduction of that reputation to the intra-organizational reality.

In this period the employer brand has gained importance generated by the need of organizations to have a strong position to attract talented people and pass easier this very difficult period of their existence. Benefits of employer branding intends through its implications, to facilitate recruitment, increase retention and employee engagement. In the fight for the best employees will win those companies that will implement retention plans for key employees and also have a strong brand that attracts talent. Organizations have realized that to be able to attract those people capable of performance and able to adapt to the existing organizational culture, it is necessary to properly promote the organization image just like any other product, and try to sell it better on the labour market. Thus was born the concept of "employer branding" (employer branding).

Experience has shown that organizations must take care of key employees, because they are the image of employers in the market and have a significant impact on employer brand perception.

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, a design or a combination, in order to identify the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. In essence, a brand identifies the seller or manufacturer - can be a name, a brand name, a logo or other symbol. A brand is a promise given by the seller to provide shoppers consistently a specific set of attributes, benefits and services. Good brands communicate a guarantee of quality. But a brand is a symbol, even more complex than that (Kapferer, J. N., 1992).

1. A brand message can have up to six types of meanings:

Attributes -evoke in the mind of the buyer certain attributes;

Advantages - attributes must be translated into functional and emotional benefits;

Value - the brand says something about the value system of the manufacturer;

Cultural symbols -the brand may represent a certain type of culture;

Personality - can evoke a certain kind of personality;

User Type - suggests the kind of consumer who buys or uses the product or service.

The most sustainable significances of a brand are the values that are invoked, along with culture and personality. These three dimensions define the very essence of a brand. From cowboys here, the brand is more than a sign marking the property and is a set of shared values of the family. Brand is the mark left after the hot iron. The brand is the family crest. (Iordache, A., 2004).

The brand is owned by the business, is recorded by a specialized authority in each country. But brands are not just owned by the companies, it represent the value and importance that customers attach to them.

Some definitions of the brand are: "A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, a design or a combination, in order to identify the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors" (Jennifer, L.A., 1997).

A brand is a promise by the seller to provide shoppers consistently a specific set of attributes, benefits and services. Good brands communicate a guarantee of quality, but a brand is a symbol of a even more complex message, and it may have up to six types of meanings." (Kotler, P., 2002).

The concept of "employer brand" was introduced, initially in the UK, experts say, knowing then a rapid development in all other countries. Being a border concept, employer brand means great efforts of all departments in the organization. "Any brand is a perception" involves product marketing strategies, but in this case, the product are 'humans' and the employees or applicants are the consumers. A method quite innovative and very recent for the construction of an employer brand is "PR for HR", according to Cristina Gheorghe, partner at Crescent Consulting, a Human resource management organization. (Dogariu, T., 2007)

Eliza Rogalski, PR manager at Tempo Advertising, defines the concept as "planned effort of a company to attract and retain the most recognized talents, using the same techniques as for building and sustaining

a brand". In her opinion 'employer brand' is a 'trusted brand'- which is unique to each employee organization, the organization's personality. It communicates the company's promise, employee's benefits found in the relationship of partnership. "It captures the essence of an organization so that appears a significant growth of the level of employee's involvement". (Dogariu, T., 2007)

Theory defines employer brand as a set of attributes and qualities - often intangible - that makes an organization distinctive, promises a certain type of work experience, and appeals to those who endeavour and will respond as well as possible in its organizational culture. (Barrow, S. and Mosley, R., 2005).

It is essential that before it is a known brand, it must be well communicated, understood and implemented within the organization.

Employer brand as any brand involves an investment, great effort and building it is time consuming. Generally multinationals or large companies with accelerated growth and big budget are concerned with developing a strong employer brand. It is a strategy experts say "to switch from a motivation based only on salary to one based on common values, loyalty and mutual support. It is a way to build long term through people". (Dogariu, T., 2007)

Practice shows that there is only one universal formula, valid for any organization to create a strong brand. In the case of the employer brand is important to which degree a brand is true to itself, which means that it must be built on a foundation of truth. Very important also in brand building are internal communication policies. Branding is, as we have noted, an investment in time, in people reputation especially. Even if in this economic recession labour supply is higher than demand, employees and especially those "talents" that any organization needs are people who will select the preferred company. Regarding employer brand in the first place, it makes a difference - shows how a company compares to another. Second, a brand is free to compete on criteria other than price. While many companies offer higher wages than competitors, to attract the best candidates, a true brand offers the opportunity to work for the organization, and this is seen as an attraction. Many employees will think that working for a certain company will make a real difference in the future.

The third attribute that the brand offers is the loyalty that it inspires. If with the initial purchase the customer is satisfied with the performance of

the product, the customer is likely to choose the same brand again to purchase other products. This is a more effective publicity and more difficult to obtain than advertising or marketing. Satisfied customers will most likely recommend the brand to others. Similarly, satisfied employees are attached to the company, and want to demonstrate loyalty to the employer. They will be proud of the company for which they work and their future plan in this regard. They also can encourage friends to apply for vacancies within the company.

An interesting aspect about the employer brand, experts believe, is that this approach can not be controlled and defined by the company in its complexity. "A brand is a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer", said Colin Bates marketing strategist at Building Brands (Bates, C., 2004)

This means that the brand is defined by the public beginning from how it will perceive it as a company, employer or corporate citizen. Employer brand is the image that a company has on the labour market and, in many cases, it is the essential information on which a candidate relies in when he has to choose from many other opportunities. Brand speaks before management being the early relationships with potential candidates and supporting the organization's cause in the war for talent.

2. The need for employer brand

Actual and future generations must be treated correctly, with responsibility, and to do this, special efforts are necessary to be sure that human development is enduring and sustainable. (Ștefănescu. C., Konrad, C., 2011).

Oana Tanislav, HR Learning & Communication Specialist at Orange, believes that at organizations level "all activities taking place - from recruitment, selection and integration of employees, career development, internal and external communication, recognition of exceptional merit, encouraging innovation, social responsibility programs, benefits package offered to employees - all are elements that build the overall picture of an employer". (Dogariu, T., 2007)

HR specialists consider that the decision to build an employer brand is not influenced by the size of the organization; the competitiveness of a firm is decisively influenced by its talented people regardless of company size,

effort being directly proportional to the results wanted by each of them. Today, due to the potential large employer brand from the perspective of sustainable development, competitiveness in terms of resource management, labour migration – is considered an essential tool for organizations survival and development. (Dogariu, T., 2007)

The recruitment system, problems regarding the promotion, lifelong learning, ensuring a satisfactory informal and relaxing environment, reward system, is especially important for the employee and employer being part of the brand. It is a fact that once built it optimizes the recruitment process itself and employee motivation and conservation. Start during this period a new derivative concept is used more frequently by the HR professionals 'Employer of Choice' (EOC or the employer of choice), that American specialists define it as “an employer in the public, private or non-profit organization that attracts and retains long-term specialists because they deliberately choose to remain in the organization”. Becoming EOC is an investment and therefore requires time, material effort, an innovation strategy, consistency over time. All this requires quality management and total involvement of human resources management at all levels. Results are not immediate, but efforts to prove their usefulness over time, become quantifiable. (Jennifer, L. A., 1997).

We can say with certainty that investment in employer image will be recovered by reducing effort in recruitment and conservation of valuable employees - a sure way to increase the performance and competitiveness of the organization. In an attempt to determine the elements of image that influence employees and potential employees, most active persons in the labour market make the decision to apply to a particular company influenced by elements of image, and the most essential are: (Jennifer L. A., 1997).

1. Organizational culture – with the defining elements relating to how work is organized, authority is exercised and distributed, rewarding work, values considered essential, given employees the freedom to say and take risks, rules and expectations regarding a cod dress, informal relationships, importance given to procedures, individual or team results.

2. Products or services offered by the company and keeping promises made to customers, reputation and quality, all these aspects affect employer image.

3. Corporate involvement, respecting the environment and social standards as well as competition.

4. A complete and accurate HR policy: integrating human resources management in the organization management, creating a climate that values the potential of each employee, recognizing and motivating employees to perform, stimulate employee desire of continuous improvement of activities, involvement in decision making for those who demonstrate professional competence etc.

5. Reputation and size of organization. It is a fact that small organizations can hardly impose their employer brand. It is a classic psychological effect that influences both employees/potential employees and consumers: the greater the number of employees is, the more stable the company is, also if the advertising is powerful the company has better products/services.

3. Benefits of employer branding

Emotional benefits. Studies show that employees are motivated by more than financial rewards, mobile phone or car. "People's emotional attachment to their employer tends to be driven by the value they receive from their work experience as a whole, including inner satisfaction they feel in solving tasks, if they feel appreciated by their colleagues and confidence in the quality, purpose and values of the organization they represent" (Barrow, S., Mosley, R., 2005). Brand personality must be rooted in organizational culture, "an employer brand personality is about the organizational culture and shared aspirations of employees" (Barrow, S., Mosley, R., 2005)

Positioning and differentiation. A message to make organization unique. We need to know what brand is designed for consumers, not only communicate the vision on paper.

Must take into account the brand as it is perceived (reality brand) and how the company wants to be perceived (brand vision). In the case of the employer brand this difference should be reduced because employees live daily in the reality brand.

Research and analysis. Questions that should be answered before designing a brand strategy: (Barrow, S., Mosley, R., 2005)

1. How will a stronger employer brand support the business strategy?

2. What kind of employer brand strategy will help management agenda?
3. Which actual factors are responsible for the employees' involvement and commitment?
4. What kind of organizational culture do you have? How strong is it in all divisions?
5. Do people have a good understanding of the purpose and values of the company? How big is the difference between stated ideology and what employees really experience?
6. What kind of behaviours is characteristic to the organization?
7. Which is the best method of segmentation of employees regarding cultural characteristics and distinct needs?
8. Which are the most effective channels of communication with employees?
9. What kind of employees does the organization appreciate? Which are the most needed now and in the future?
10. Which are the main requirements of these target groups in the labour market context?
11. Which are the most attractive and determining organizational attributes for both prospective employees and to potential candidates? (Barrow, S., Mosley, R., 2005)

The answers to these questions are based on the research profile of employees, organizational culture, and labour market conditions. Organizational culture is useful in building employer brand. "One of the most common tools in the research of the organizational culture is to introduce people to a series of bipolar scales describing the organization's general preferences".

Organizational culture is useful in building employer brand. "One of the most common tools in organizational culture research refers to people presenting a series of bipolar scales describing the organization's general preferences". (Barrow, S., Mosley, R., 2005)

Employer brand to potential candidates. Such research must take place outside the company. The first step is to identify the target audience. An effective method is to start from the objectives of the organization, so you can find the ideal employee profile. The setting values, skills and attitudes required to suitable candidates, guides external communication of the brand.

4. Conclusions

As a general conclusion it can be said that the employer brand is an important factor for any employee or potential employee, its dimensions and values are forming the essential criteria when he decides to maintain or search for a job, as a result, each organization, company or institution should be concerned with this phenomenon and include it in their strategies on personnel policy, recruitment and selection of employees.

In our country employees' conservation has become a serious problem and a constant challenge, giving the company's ability to retain, maintain and develop human capital, creating a positive perception in the human resources market, perception which propels the organization to the top brands employer, and this will help facilitate the work of the successful organization. In the continuing battle for talent, building a strong employer brand offers companies a big advantage. Organizations that rely on marketing techniques that have proven they can build successful brands are best placed to attract and retain talent.

In the current context, organizations must continue to strengthen its employer brand even if we are in times of crisis like the one we are going through right now, just to boost their own business development and cross over difficult periods with minimal possible losses.

The employer brand concept is of crucial importance for a top company, who wants to gain access to this position. Externally, a strong brand supports organization in the talent war, and internally, it helps their retention. A strong employer brand is not born overnight and is a process that has an important finality.

References

1. Barrow, S., Mosley, R., (2005), *The employer brand: bringing the best of brand management to people at work*, Wiley Publishing, London.
2. Bates, C., (2004), *Managing your total brand*, BuildingBrand Ltd.
3. Iordache, A., (2004), *Metonimia Brandului*, Editura Markmedia.ro, București.
4. Jennifer, L.A, (1997), *Dimensions of Brand Personality*, in: "Journal of Marketing Research", 34(3), pp. 347-356.
5. Kapferer, J.N., (1992), *Strategic Brand Management: New Approches to Creating and Evaluating Brand Equity*, Kogan Page, London.
6. Kotler, P., (2002), *Marketing Management*, Prentice Hall Ptr.

7. Petrescu, I., (2008), *Managementul capitalului uman*, Editura Expert, București.
8. Petrescu, I., (2012), *Elements of scientific challenge in the human capital management*, in: "Review of General Management", 12(2), pp. 5-22.
9. Ștefănescu, C., Konrad, C., (2011), *Sustainable development indicators of human capital*, in: „Review of General Management”, 13(1), pp. 79-88.
10. Dogariu, T., (2007), *Brandul de angajator*, <http://www.theinvestor.ro/hr/brandul-de-angajator/>
11. <http://marketing.about.com/cs/brandmktg/a/whatisbranding.htm3>