

# A How-to Guide to Employer Branding

# Introduction



A strong employer brand is a window into your business. It determines how you present your organisation at every touchpoint across the employee lifecycle, from hiring to retiring and beyond.

It also helps people outside your business understand what it's like to work for you. It makes you stand out in a crowded marketplace and makes it more likely you'll attract those who share your values. They'll also be more likely to join, engage and stay.

Get your employer brand right and you'll also strengthen your relationship with existing employees, drive engagement and improve the bottom line.

This guide explores what employer branding is, why it's important and how to do it. Be aware that this is a commitment, not a one-off project. Your employer brand will develop, grow, and at times, transform to reflect the development of your organisation.



# What Is Employer Branding?



We're all familiar with the concept of branding in marketing terms. While your company brand makes your business attractive to customers, your employer brand makes you attractive to employees.

But it's not just about a nice logo and pretty brand colours. It should replicate what your business is like internally and should inform and be informed by the company's strategy, values, behaviours, goals and objectives.

Internal communication specialists, Ortec, provide this well-rounded definition:



“Employer Branding refers to the branded communication activities involved in reaching and retaining that special, authentic and distinguished position as an employer in the minds of your potential, current and alumni employees and their influencers with the primary goals to attract, recruit and retain ideal employees.”<sup>1</sup>

In line with current marketing trends, authenticity is central to employer branding. Cut an organisation and it should bleed its brand values because they are integral to the business.

As with all marketing, employer branding influences a wider audience than the intended recipients. Employees will be influenced by the perceptions of those around them when it comes to making their next move and deciding whether to stay with an organisation.

<sup>1</sup> Ortec, <https://www.orteccommunications.com/>, 29th June 2017



# Employer Branding Benefits



Establishing your employer brand might feel like yet another task on an already extensive list. But, as Andrew Brown-Allan, Group Marketing and Propositions Director at Trak Global, says,

“A strong employer brand is important and it’s only going to grow in importance as the market becomes more competitive.”

The advantages of employer branding far outweigh the investment in time and effort. These five benefits illustrate the positive impact of a good employer brand.

## Benefit # 1 - Attraction

Did you know that 75%<sup>2</sup> of job seekers consider an employer’s brand before applying? Developing an effective employer brand can help you stand out in a crowded marketplace and keep your organisation top of mind. Which will give your company an enviably wide talent pool to choose from.



What’s more, a strong employer brand can present compelling reasons to join your company, not your competitors. With a predicted world-wide shortage of 18 million skilled workers by 2020<sup>3</sup>, standing out will be critical.

But you want to attract more than a skillset; you want to attract a person who will fit with your organisational culture. Which is where your employer brand comes in. It can act like a filter getting applicants to self-select (or de-select) resulting in fewer, better quality applications for your team to review. Brown-Allan says,

“Salary will always be an extremely important factor in attracting people. People don’t just do it for the love. Once you’ve got that box ticked it comes down to what else differentiates you.”

2 CareerArc, <http://www.careerarc.com/blog/2015/06/38-percent-of-employees-who-were-let-go-share-negative-views-of-employers-new-careerarc-employer-branding-study/>, 29th June 2017

3 McKinsey and Company, <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/talent-tensions-ahead-a-ceo-briefing>, 29th June 2017

# Employer Branding Benefits



## Benefit # 2 - Engagement

Use your employer brand to inform recruitment and you'll attract candidates who will fit with your business. They'll also be more likely to engage with your organisation's mission and be motivated to greater levels of productivity.



Ric Brooks, Operations Director at Tuna Fish Media believes that recruiting new hires who align to the organisation's culture "allows a new starter to embed themselves into company culture rather than pushing them in a certain direction."

Your employer brand can also engage existing employees by reflecting the embedded values, personality and behaviours of your organisation. Since the 1950s, the annual employee engagement survey has been the tool of choice to assess employees' engagement levels. However, the demise of this approach is an emerging trend<sup>4</sup>.

In its place is a more holistic, integrated, real-time approach to measuring employee commitment and passion using social media for instant temperature checks. And employer branding forms part of this shift because, to remain authentic, employer brands must adapt to reflect sustained internal changes.

## Benefit # 3 - Retention

Better employee engagement means improved loyalty and higher retention rates. This builds knowledge and skill within your business which, ultimately, improves your bottom line. Keeping hold of your best people also improves your competitive advantage and reduces the costs associated with recruitment and on-boarding.

<sup>4</sup> Engage For Success, <http://engageforsuccess.org/show-163-death-annual-engagement-survey>, 29th June 2017

# Employer Branding Benefits



## Benefit # 4 - Strategic Cohesiveness

An employer brand should sit at the centre of your people activity. It should provide an overarching way of communicating with employees at every touchpoint across the employee lifecycle.

This means you can link every element of people management to your employer brand. From improving the employee experience throughout the recruitment process, to developing an aligned reward brand, to making people redundant and communicating with alumni and pensioners.

However and whenever you are communicating with your employees, your messaging should be on-brand.

## Benefit # 5 - A Better Bottom Line

A strong employer brand can drive recruitment efficiencies and retain employees which saves time and money and frees up resources to focus on other work. It's also closely tied to customer experience because the quality of service offered by employees is closely linked to engagement levels.

Happy employees = happy customer = better bottom line.



A strong employer brand that's managed effectively can also help protect employers from poaching, something that's on the rise according to Aversure HR<sup>5</sup>. In 75% of such cases, organisations make a counter-offer pushing costs up unexpectedly.

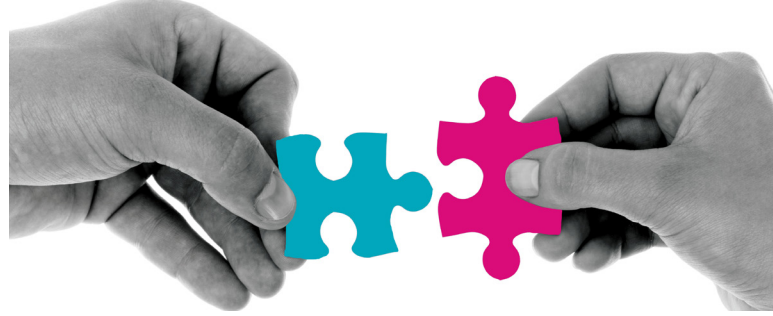
Too many instances like this and one of your business' major costs will spiral. If employees' heads are turned by a competitor, a strong employer brand that is regularly and positively reinforced is likely to reduce the level of counter-offer required. And it can even prevent employees' from looking elsewhere in the first place.

As mentioned previously, employer branding is a process, not a one-off project and there are a number of steps involved in the cycle.

<sup>5</sup> Aversure HR, <https://hr-24.co.uk/industry-news/staff-retention/>, 29th June 2017



# How to Develop Your Employer Brand



## Build Your Branding Team



Employer branding isn't a top down exercise but it does need buy-in from the CEO. While it's often managed between HR, Internal Communications and Marketing, you can also include line managers to create a cross-function taskforce. Limit your team to around six people; invite many more and things can get messy.

## Establish Your Goals and Parameters

A briefing document will clarify your aims, outputs, in- and out-of-scope activities, risks, key stakeholders, KPIs and project plan. Consider the main challenges your business faces now and for the foreseeable future, define what success looks like and consider who you want to attract and retain.

Establishing KPIs allows you to assess the effectiveness of your project in terms that are meaningful for your business. Common KPIs include:

- Employee satisfaction, pride and engagement
- Increased referral recruitment (reducing recruitment costs)
- Improved candidate response to job adverts
- Reduction in turnover, particularly in key jobs or top performers
- Reduced cost-per-hire
- Enhanced company reputation

You will need to ensure you have the tools in place to measure and track these metrics.



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## Establish Where You Are Now and Where You Want to Be

### Research

Your taskforce should start by understanding the mission, values and behaviours at the core of your employee value proposition. Review your current business strategy and five-year plan, employee engagement survey results and data on external trends that may impact your business in the future.



### Engage

While it might be tempting for your taskforce to design your employer brand based on your research alone, you'll get a much better result by understanding your workforce's existing perceptions.

Take a cross section of the business at different organisational levels to get a handle on your current position and seek their views. The following questions give you a good starting point:

- What are the most and least attractive features of the organisation?
- How do you feel about working for the organisation?
- How do you think the business is perceived by current and potential employees?
- How do these perceptions impact your ability to recruit top talent?
- What are the typical characteristics and attributes of current employees?
- What attributes and characteristics do we require from employees for our business to be successful in the future?





# How to Develop Your Employer Brand



## Decide on Your Positioning

There are two aspects to the positioning of your employer brand:

### 1. **Internal alignment**

Your employer brand needs to align with your company brand otherwise there will be a clear disconnect between how you present your business to the public and how your employees perceive the business from the inside.



### 2. **Position in comparison to other organisations**

You need to consider what's different about your business. There's no point having an employer brand that's exactly like your competitors; you need to establish what's unique about your organisation. The strongest employer brands are authentic; they reflect the experience of their employees while aligning to the company brand, mission, vision and values.



As Trak Global's Brown-Allan says,

“We are constantly developing our employer brand. Once someone is in our organisation they very quickly understand the culture and that is something we are working on demonstrating externally.”

However you position your employer brand, the internal and external perspectives should be mutually reinforcing.

# How to Develop Your Employer Brand



## Draft Your Employer Brand

Using the data gathered and your decision regarding your positioning, you can draft your employer brand. It doesn't need to be complicated. L'Oreal<sup>6</sup> established three main pillars to their employee brand:

1. A thrilling experience
2. Inspiring company
3. School of excellence



These pillars will likely be supported by an additional layer of detail and supporting information but all their employee messaging will be based on this branding, from recruitment adverts to promoting new benefits and internal communications.

Establish the look and feel of your brand at this stage. L'Oreal's careers slide deck<sup>7</sup> demonstrates a strong and consistent use of vibrant colour to reinforce the thrilling and inspiring aspects of their employer brand.

## Test and Finalise

Test your draft with your employees. People love to feel that their views matter and they'll help you to finesse your final product.

You should create a single employer brand that will work across the different segments of your employee population. However, you may have slightly different messaging or emphasis for different sections such as talent, geographies, gender, age or business unit.



6 Link Humans, <http://linkhumans.com/blog/loreal-employer-value>, 29th June 2017

7 Link Humans, <http://linkhumans.com/blog/loreal-employer-value>, 29th June 2017

# How to Develop Your Employer Brand



## Consider What This Means for Your Business

Your employer brand shouldn't be a document that you publish and forget about. It should live and breathe in your processes, communications and at every employee touchpoint across the employee lifecycle.

Here are the areas that internal communications experts Synergy Creative<sup>8</sup> say you will need to review and align to your employer brand:

- Brand perception and attraction
- Online presence
- Application, interview and acceptance
- Keeping in touch through the notice period
- Induction and onboarding
- Team bonding
- Leadership and management
- Vision and strategy
- Performance and learning
- Career development
- Reward and recognition
- Exit
- Staying in touch
- Re-joining



Living your brand should be about more than processes, documents and communication. Brooks says Tunafish Media's commitment to being a social place to work is central to their brand. Which is why new employees are invited to do "something outside of the office as soon as possible...It's important to start as we mean to go on with something as simple as a team lunch or going to a social event."

8 Synergy Creative, [http://www.synergycreative.co.uk/images/Finders\\_Keepers\\_whitepaper.pdf](http://www.synergycreative.co.uk/images/Finders_Keepers_whitepaper.pdf), 29th June 2017



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## Plan Your Launch

Now you have your employer brand, start communicating it to employee and managers; explain what the brand is, and how they can use and sell it. You should also have a range of documents and tools, both off and online, for employees to use. These will help retain brand integrity.



Take opportunities to demonstrate your brand to your team. Kate Howell, CEO of social media agency Immediate Futures, positions her employer brand as one that's open and honest. Which is why they place a huge emphasis on sharing information and knowledge.

“We have a quarterly review meeting where we share the numbers on the bottom line, our successes, and our areas of improvement. We are open about where we are and how we will be moving forward.”

## Build Your Brand

Now you need to decide on some campaigns, establish specific KPIs and make a base measurement so you can track your successes.

Target your first campaigns at the most important audiences first and work your way through your plan, tracking what works, what doesn't and learning as you go. Your communication channels will need to be strong, both internally and externally, and you'll need to establish the optimal communications mix to get your message across to the right audience at the right time.



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## Manage Your Brand

Measuring your results against KPIs is at the heart of good brand management. In the short term, this should be an ongoing process of evaluation, tweaking and improving your campaigns. In the long term, you should adjust your overall employer brand to reflect changes in business plans, the external environment or within your workforce.

Use employee engagement surveys, exit interviews and employee workshops to track perceptions internally and evaluate media reports to gain insights externally.

## In Conclusion

Like a stick of rock, a strong employer brand looks good, has a clear message and, wherever you delve into it, the message is consistent.

Establishing and maintaining an employer brand is about being a curator, not a dictator. By accurately reflecting to the outside world what the business is about, you'll attract, engage and retain across the employee lifecycle.

Monitoring your employer brand will give you competitive advantage in the long term. Instead of throwing money at short-term recruitment campaigns or paying people more money to stay, invest in your employer brand. By being authentic, you'll differentiate yourself from your competitors and ensure your business success for the long term.



# Our roadmap for talent attraction



Attracting the best talent is vital to your growth ambitions. We've developed an extensive process which ensures we understand your vision, culture and objectives to help us identify the right candidates to help take your business forward.



## We are Manchester and London

We love to hear from you, in fact we travel all across the UK to meet old and new faces. Give us a call today to chat to one of our team.

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# How to Develop Your Employer Brand



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