The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Employment: Employer Branding: A Passing Fashion or Acute Need?

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August 20, 2013



The Employment section did not involve the reporting or the editorial staff of The Moscow Times.



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In the world today you will find companies that are the preferred employer of thousands, if not millions, of people. Sometimes the wish to work at a company may be dictated by loyalty to the products that they manufacture; sometimes by information about the wonderful terms and conditions offered to the company's employees; and sometimes by the company's high profile name, which is synonymous with prestige and prosperity. Whatever may cause people's desire to work for a given company, this factor has in any case one implication: The company has a strong employer brand. It is extremely rare for a company to achieve success without investing corresponding effort. A significant amount of work is required to make a company an attractive employer. This is also known as employer branding (EB). The gist of this process could be summed up as follows: EB represents the efforts invested in the creation, development and support of the employer's brand.

EB has two audiences — external and internal. The external audience means actual and potential candidates who need to be attracted to the company. The external audience may also refer to the professional community, as companies need to earn the reputation of an ideal employer not only with candidates and employees, but also with experts, as this is also highly valued. The internal audience of employer branding means the company's employees who need to be engaged and retained. In other words, the employer brand should elicit the desire to join the company and stay there for a number of years.

Employer branding is a process that is to a large extent governed by the laws of marketing and uses marketing or advertising tools. Just like any other product or service, the employer brand should leverage the company's unique competitive advantages. In our case they are termed the employee value proposition, or EVP. EVP sets a company apart from its

competitors. This is similar in a way to classic USP, or the unique selling proposition.

At the same time, employer branding is not simply an "offshoot" of marketing — employer branding branched out a long time ago into an independent area and line of activity, as can be seen from a number of facts. For example, service providers have already started working on this market — agencies specializing namely in EB and ready to perform the necessary research identify EVP, organize events and meet "all your needs with your money." In addition, ratings of ideal employers are actively compiled. Many companies pay similar levels of attention to them as TV channels do to the TV ratings of various programs. Prizes have even been established in EB for the best employers.

Employer branding is truly multifaceted. It uses lots of tools: these are the company's website, advertising in print publications and the Internet, participation in career days and job fairs, and also office open days, the implementation of various educational programs and work with the social media. EB tools also include sponsorship and word-of-mouth marketing. If a company has the opportunity, it can benefit from its own "business card" — an image-based concept aimed at increasing employer brand recognition and attracting a large number of candidates to the company. As a rule, such a concept includes several advertising images and a motto or several slogans. An employer branding agency or a creative agency well-known on the market can be contacted to develop such a concept. The more interesting the advertising images and the more memorable the slogan, the easier it is to engage the attention of the target audience and the greater the chance that your messages will stick in their minds.

However, the list of EB tools does not end here and could continue for quite a while. Arguably, the list is only limited to the imagination and experience of employer branding specialists. Even the company's budget does not play a key role here. The advantage of employer branding is that it can also be performed on a very small budget. Even in the midst of an economic crisis, you can maintain your visibility and make yourself known. You can realize various educational programs with the assistance of internal resources, engaging employees to participate in different events and using office premises for this purpose.

It is essential that management understand and support the need for employer branding, as it is extremely hard in the world today to attract talented specialists to a company without such branding. You need to constantly be in the public eye. Otherwise people will forget about you very quickly and decide instead to work for more visible and active rivals.

Incidentally, work on promoting the employer brand with the external audience simultaneously provides you with an opportunity to involve the internal audience, as many EB initiatives imply the participation of the company's employees — from the delivery of a presentation to the adjudication of a competition. When employees note the efforts to which their firm goes to attract new talent — their future colleagues, when employees communicate personally with the participants in different events — they themselves burn with desire to promote their own company, start explaining with pride why they love their work and what drives them, and become more engaged and proactive in general. Just as teachers are boosted by the positive energy of their students, so the company's employees often become more inspired, perform work with added enthusiasm and rediscover their passion after participation in EB projects.

It is clear that employer branding yields significant benefits for a company. By contrast, the absence of such branding will have a negative impact on a company sooner or later. It is obvious today that employer branding is not simply a temporary phenomenon or fashion that will soon pass, but instead a real requirement of companies today. With every year, this area will gain momentum and become more and more popular. Only five to seven years ago, hardly any companies in Russia had even thought about maintaining a presence in social networks — now this is a daily reality for the overwhelming majority of them. It looks as if employer branding will meet the same fate.

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