

INNOVATIVE HR BRANDING AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN CURRENT ERA

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Abstract

Branding is the process of establishing a greater positive image for an organization in the minds of prospect customers when compared to the competitors. HR branding is one such subset of branding. HR branding is the process of drawing attention of the potential employees using the brand image and eminence of the firm. The concept revolves around evoking interest among the capable aspirants, choosing the right person among the talent pool and retaining the efficient personnels. Amalgamation of HR functions with marketing strategy can improve the organization's stature and efficacy. Considering the present scenario of Covid 19, the economical position of most of the organizations has gone low. In order to revive the firms into normal state, effective employees are required for which innovative HR branding is essential. The paper explains about the importance of human resource branding, the purpose of transforming it as a competitive advantage to gain higher productivity to the organizations, factors influencing HR branding, challenges arose during effective implementation of HR branding and suggestions to implement innovative HR branding.

Keywords: Branding, HR Branding, Covid 19, Productivity.

Introduction

The expertise, competent, vigilant and organized work of each employee adds great value to the organizational development. The accomplishment of the organization mainly depends on the efficiency of the employees. In the present day context, instead of firms selecting the skilled resources, the resources are selecting their employer. Thus, innovative HR branding plays a vital role in right talent acquisition. HR branding is the process of drawing attention of the potential employees using the brand image and eminence of the firm. The firms that have strong brand image can easily attract the potential resources thus enhancing the hiring quality. Innovative HR branding results in creating a work environment where the employees have a sense of satisfaction thus improving engagement which leads to greater productivity. HR branding increases retention of employees. It makes all the multi-talented employees get together at one place and apply their creativity, innovation, proficiency, dexterity and intelligence to accomplish the tasks and gain competitive advantage when compared to other players in the industry. The main focus has to be on establishing a workplace which is ideal for the resources to work and making the prospect candidates know the distinctiveness of the workplace. HR branding can be internal branding as well as employer branding. Internal branding occurs within the organization where the employees at all management levels get motivated, empowered and aligned towards the goals achievement. Employer branding concentrates on communicating about the brand image, brand promise and efficacy of the employees who are meant to deliver the best services and products to the customers. Due to Covid 19, the firms are facing huge challenges and require skilled resources to make the organization prosper. Ability of the employees to think out of the box can only make the firm differ from its competitors. The right talent is considered to be asset for the firm and they are responsible for long term sustainability and profitability.

Significance of HR Branding

Branding in Human Resources is important for the company as it improves credibility and strengthens the bonds of trust among employees. A company is called as good company based on its ability to attract, motivate and retain the best and the brightest resources, thus gaining competitive advantage in the market place. As employee attitudes are directly linked with company performance, companies that are considered good employers have a strong identity and image in the marketplace. Companies opting to distinguish

themselves in the market through customer service require a workforce capable of providing a notable positive difference in the mind of the customer. The more the companies studied HR branding the more successfully they implement Human Resources as a business strategy. One of the primary reasons given by a steel company for its ability to continue to make money while the majority of its competitors went bankrupt is because its employees from the shop floor up to senior management clearly understood and were able to deliver on the brand promise. HR Branding helps the organizations identify the essence of what they are as a place to work--a combination of culture, reputation, benefits, and internal relationship. It is an emotional attachment that makes employees long-term partners in achieving company's goals.

Purpose of transforming HR Branding as a competitive advantage

There are a number of esteemed corporations throughout the world. But, HR branding is being omitted by few organizations due to the reasons; (1) it is an expensive activity, (2) if it is not executed properly, it may lead to misinterpretation by the resources, (2) it requires exclusive department to specifically work for branding, (4) extra time and efforts are prerequisites for HR branding.

In the current day context, human resource branding has become vital component to gain competitive advantage because it helps the firms to recruit the right talent by reducing the recruitment costs and improve productivity. Since potential resources select their employers, it is essential for the firms to have strong HR branding.

HR branding empowers employees and gives them accountability and responsibility. It creates a common understanding of the business organization. It encourages employees to offer excellent service to clients by appreciating their valuable contribution to the success of the business. It helps non-marketing staff to learn and be able to perform their tasks in a marketing-like manner. It improves customer retention and individual employee development, integrates business culture, structure, human resources management, vision and strategy with the employees' professional and social needs. It creates good coordination and cooperation among departments of the business. It facilitates proper information flow within the organization. It gives proper guidelines to the employees and it is useful for periodic evaluation of employee performance. Thus, HR branding gives competitive edge to both corporations and potential employees.

Factors influencing HR Branding

The factors that have impact on Human Resource Branding are Reputation, Integrity, Culture, Recruitment / Orientation, Pay and Benefits, Work-Life balance, Work-Life Integration, Leadership and Management, Performance Management, Growth and Development, Innovation, Creativity, Skills Development, Work Environment, Internal Management, Ethics and Morals. These factors have proven to be crucial for a large majority of high performing employees and organizations.

Challenges faced during effective implementation of HR Branding

The following are the challenges faced during effective implementation of Human Resources Branding in organizations.

1. Managerial incompetence in interpersonal, technical and conceptual skills are some of the blocks against successful implementation of Human Resources Branding.
2. Poor understanding of Human Resources Branding concept, individual conflict and conflict between departments makes the implementation of Human Resources Branding difficult.
3. Rigid organizational structure coupled by bureaucratic leadership hinders successful implementation of Human Resources Branding.
4. Ignoring subordinates and treating them like tools of the business.
5. Resistance to change.
6. Employee's perception at all times is not the same and there is no appropriate method for prioritizing things.
7. Lack of employee motivation
8. High attrition rate

Suggestions to implement innovative HR Branding

1. **Employee intake:** Prior to the commencement of employment, the human resource departments have to instigate an interview process whereby prospective employees are measured against their ability to align themselves with the brand values. Specific skills and attitudes are tested as part of the

recruitment process in order to improve the chances that future employees will be able to deliver on the brand promise and client experience determined by the business strategy.

2. **Orientation:** The new employees have to go through orientation programs and this is often due to a desire to introduce them directly to internal brand values and behavioral expectations. Furthermore, these orientation programs should become more formal and in-depth rather than the normal floating between departments.
3. **Specifically designed Training Programs:** Apart from training programs specifically designed training programs for imparting internal brand values and desired behaviors in the minds of employees.
4. **Communicating about the desired brand Behaviors:** There should be uniform agreement and one of the most effective ways of communicating the desired behaviors is through stories, whether they are case studies displayed in videos or print or communicating the circumstances around a particular award. Stories provided tangible evidence and context for behaviors that could be easily illustrated and remembered.
5. **Recognizing, Rewarding and celebrating the right behaviors:** In the sophisticated organizations as per the balanced score card approach, all employees' performance review criteria are linked to the achievement of the internal brand values and thus all their salaries and raises are tied to their commitment and recognition of the internal brand. The top award, usually given a name like 'The Chairman's Club', is awarded to those employees who consistently or significantly demonstrated behaviors aligned with the brand.
6. **Increase Image, Reputation and Credibility of HR by developing values:** The key issue of credibility is largely determined by HR's track record of delivering on its promises, consistently and timely. We should be careful about over-promising and under-delivering. In this regard, trust and reliability are important elements. Developing values like trust, commitment, innovation, continuous learning, passion/having fun etc will improve the credibility of the organization.
7. **More walk the talk:** As employees who have grown up with internal branding as a way of life and understand its importance enter the ranks of senior management, the large gap between senior managers actually walking the talk and not, will be resolved.
8. **Talk to Employees to Learn the HR Department Reputation and Brand:** The key is to open up conversations with all levels of employees, and present himself in the role of facilitator instead of enforcer. That communication must consist of equal parts of listening and promotion. First, HR department must listen carefully to what its customers need. Then it must promote what it has done and can do. Human Resource staff must educate the organization about its capabilities and potential contributions. No one knows one's complete capabilities except him/her self.
9. **Right HR People with the Right Competencies:** The key to achieving success is obviously to have the right Human Resources in the right positions. Whether Human Resources have the right knowledge, skills and attributes, whether they keep abreast of leading edge developments in the field by, for example, attending seminars, reading the latest Human Resource literature and visiting best practice organizations. Human Resource specialists are required to have a deeper knowledge of business. The ideal professional is well qualified in Human Resource, has a business mindset, is customer-oriented and has a caring attitude/affinity with people.
10. **Right People as HR Leaders:** HR needs to have the right leaders – leaders who are able to get the most out of their staff, are able to grow them and provide direction – so that the HR capabilities are properly aligned with the organizational needs. HR leaders also need to be able to connect with – and influence – other stakeholder groups, such as line management and the unions. It is vital that HR directors and managers be respected by all key stakeholders.
11. **Ability to Market and Sell HR:** Often HR departments have tremendous breadth and depth with regard to HR knowledge and skills, but lack the ability to market and sell themselves and their products/services to the rest of the organization. For Human Resources to have the desired impact, more emphasis needs to be placed on marketing and selling.
12. **Measure Current HR brand and Desired HR brand:** The surveys have to be conducted to measure the effectiveness of existing HR brand and they have to be used to recognize the limitations to get the desired HR brand. Strategies have to be formulated to overcome the limitations. The HR brands should represent the same ideology everywhere i.e., within the firm and outside the firm.
13. **Situation analysis and Defining objectives with respect to compensation:** Analysing the opportunities and challenges in strategic, tactical and calculated viewpoint of compensation and

rewarding, the specific objectives have to be defined to align the employee satisfaction and business need fulfillment.

Conclusion

HR Branding can be implemented successfully by changing the thought process, by proper communications, benchmarking the best practices, close relationship with the customers, by following values like trust, commitment, innovation, continuous learning, passion/having fun etc and the company should get credibility and respect by providing best services in time to the customers by proactive approach and ultimately achieve success. Human resources should deeply immerse in customer experience, corporate image, business development and design, and collateral materials that support brand values. Human resource professionals tend to be more concerned with tactics and implementation. The firm should concentrate in matters of compensation, employee attributes and behaviors and recruitment.

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