

LEARNING MADE EASY



# Employer Branding

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



Perfect your  
recruitment marketing

Develop a compelling employer  
value proposition

Demonstrate your  
employer brand ROI

**Richard Mosley**  
**Lars Schmidt**



universum





# Employer Branding

by Richard Mosley and Lars Schmidt

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## Employer Branding For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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**W**hen it comes to talent, business is a lot like sports: The teams with the best organization and players win, and these same teams attract the best players, keep them, and build franchises with the momentum to continue their success.

As the global competition for talent heats up, your organization must do more to attract, engage, and retain the talent it needs to succeed. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this goal is to build a strong *employer brand* — a reputation and proven track record for being a great place to work.

Follow our lead, invest the necessary time and effort upfront, and your organization will soon have an employer brand that does much of the heavy lifting required to attract, engage, and retain the most talented candidates in the workforce.

Already have an employer brand? Then this book is also for you. You can apply the same guidance presented in this book to fix a broken employer brand, build a better employer brand, or create a new employer brand from scratch. You also discover strategies for giving a global employer brand local relevance.

## About This Book

---

Is your organization losing the talent contest? Are you disappointed with the applicants, struggling with high turnover, and plagued by employee disengagement? Then *Employer Branding For Dummies* is the book you need. With this book, you can begin to turn your situation around.

Organized in an easy-to-access format and presented in plain English, this book brings you up to speed with what an employer brand is, how it can help your organization perform better, and how you can build a strong employer brand from the ground up. Here you discover how to lay the groundwork, evaluate your current situation, develop an effective employer brand strategy, communicate your brand

through the right channels, deliver on your employer brand promises, and then measure your success with key metrics and make adjustments as necessary to maintain and build momentum.

Although we encourage you to read every single word of this book from start to finish, you're welcome to skip around to acquire your knowledge on a need-to-know basis and completely skip the sidebars (which are shaded gray). Although the sidebars may be too fascinating to ignore, they're not essential.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

## Foolish Assumptions

First things first: If you're smart enough to pick up a book about employer branding, you're one smart dummy. You're smart enough to rise to a level in your organization where you're involved in employer brand development, but you're not completely confident in your knowledge and skills in this area. That's okay, because that's exactly what this book is for.

Here are a few additional assumptions we made about you and others we hope will read this book and apply its guidance:

- » You're open-minded enough to consider the value of an employer brand and not cemented in the traditional approach of either posting job ads and praying for a good response, or leaving it up to headhunters to deliver the talent you need.
- » Your organization has room for improvement in terms of attracting, engaging, and retaining the best people.
- » You're committed to creating a strong employer brand for your organization or strengthening the organization's existing employer brand.
- » You're willing to invest your time and effort and your organization's resources to reap the benefits that result from a strong employer brand.

# Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, icons in the margins highlight different types of information that call out for your attention. Here are the icons you'll see and a brief description of each.



REMEMBER

We want you to remember everything you read in this book, but if you can't quite do that, then remember the important points flagged with this icon.



TIP

Tips provide insider insight. When you're looking for a better, faster way to do something, check out anything marked with this icon.



WARNING

This icon appears when you need to be extra vigilant before moving forward. Here, you find out how to sidestep the obstacles that are likely to trip you up.

# Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. Check out the free Cheat Sheet for tips on making the case for employer branding, developing your employer value proposition, and more. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type **Employer Branding For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

# Where to Go from Here

We structured this book so you could use it in a couple different ways. To get the most out of it, read it from cover to cover, so you don't miss out on any valuable information and insight. You may also use it as an employer branding desk reference; when you're dealing with a particular issue related to employer branding, simply look up the topic in the Table of Contents or the Index and flip to the designated page to find the information and guidance you need.

If you're not sure where to start, you can't go wrong with Chapter 3, which is about conducting an employer brand health check. Even if you're not actively engaged in creating and promoting an employer brand, you already have one; your employer brand is your reputation as an employer — the collective perception of

everyone inside and outside your organization. You don't know how well or poorly you're doing from the perspective of those who really matter until you collect and analyze relevant data, both quantitative and qualitative.

If you don't have an employer brand, or you have one but need to refresh or improve it, head to Part 2, where you find out how to define your employer proposition, build your employer brand framework, generate engaging content, and develop and implement your brand strategy. The chapters in Part 3 provide additional guidance on how to promote your employer brand through the proper channels — including websites, social media, recruitment advertising, and college campuses.

No matter where you start, this book will help you build a strong employer brand. You simply need to decide where you are in the process and take it from there. Happy branding!

# 1 Getting Started with Employer Branding

## **IN THIS PART . . .**

Discover what employer branding is all about and how it can benefit your organization in attracting, engaging, and retaining the right people.

Identify the four steps to developing and executing an effective employer brand strategy.

Clarify your organization's strategic objectives, identify the talent required to achieve those objectives, and gain the support of your organization's leadership team.

Evaluate your existing employer brand to determine how well it's currently perceived and whether it's delivering the kind of talent your organization needs to succeed.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Wrapping your brain around the concept of employer branding
- » Planning and executing your employer brand strategy
- » Exploring and assessing various marketing channels
- » Delivering a distinctively great employment experience
- » Gauging and improving on your employer branding success

# Chapter **1**

# Building a Strong Employer Brand

**E**mployers used to assume they were in the driver's seat. Advertised vacancies would attract a plentiful selection of candidates. Employers would select the best, and the best would gratefully accept their offers of employment. Times have changed. Established companies can no longer assume that the right kind of talent will beat a path to their door. The new economy requires significantly more people qualified in science, technology, engineering, and math than our education systems are producing. The most innovative and entrepreneurial are increasingly choosing to join or found startup businesses rather than join established companies. And the declining birthrate in many countries means fewer young people are replenishing the workforce as baby boomers retire. Given these trends, it's no surprise that competition for talent is now more intense than it has ever been.

Although times have changed, many companies haven't. They continue to recruit the same way they did 20 years ago — posting openings and screening out unqualified candidates. Although this process of elimination has worked reasonably well in the past, more progressive companies are realizing there are more efficient and effective ways to attract and retain talent. They've begun to harness

the power of employer branding, applying the same kind of rigor and creativity that companies have long applied to winning and keeping customers.

Throughout this book, we provide detailed guidance on how to begin to build the kind of workplace and employer brand that attracts, engages, and retains the world's top talent. In this chapter, we deliver the big-picture view, so you have a conceptual framework of employer branding and an overall understanding of what it involves.

## What Is Employer Branding?

*Employer branding* is the process of creating a distinctively great place to work and then promoting it to the talent whose knowledge and skills are needed by the organization to meet its business goals and objectives. Like consumer branding, employer branding involves less push and more pull — developing the kind of positive reputation that will help attract talented individuals when and where they're needed.

In this section, we highlight the benefits of this approach and step you through the process/cycle of employer branding, so you have some idea of what you're about to get yourself into.

### Recognizing the benefits of employer branding

Some companies are reluctant to invest in employer branding, because the costs may seem steep in relation to the immediate returns. After all, to build a strong employer brand, you need to spend money on research and creative development and add to the workloads of already busy departments, including recruitment, human resources (HR), and marketing. Before you commit time, money, and other resources to employer branding, you and others in your organization naturally want to know “What's in it for us?”

To spark the passion and drive needed to build and maintain a distinctively great employer brand, you need to answer that question for yourself and for everyone else in your organization, especially for those in leadership positions. Everyone involved needs to be aware of what's at stake and the positive impact a strong employer brand can have on the success of the organization and everyone who's a part of it.

Here are just a few areas where employer branding can positively impact an organization's success:



- » **Recruitment:** Companies that have a strong employer brand attract larger numbers of qualified candidates, improving the quality of new hires while reducing the overall cost of recruitment.
- » **Engagement:** Employer branding involves creating an environment in which employees are fulfilled by their work and proud of the company they work for. Such a work environment drives engagement, and higher levels of engagement lead to higher levels of productivity and customer satisfaction.
- » **Retention:** A great workplace populated with highly talented and engaged employees is a place employees want to stay. In addition, a strong employer brand clarifies what people can expect from the organization before they apply. Companies with strong employer brands experience significantly lower attrition rates.
- » **Competitive advantage:** Employer branding enables you to build an all-star team with a roster of the most talented individuals in your industry. The collective intelligence, creativity, drive, and determination of highly qualified individuals enables you to gain and maintain a competitive advantage within your industry.

## Stepping through the employer branding process/cycle

The approach to building a strong positive employer brand can be summed up in two steps:

1. **Make your organization a distinctively great place to work.**
2. **Make sure the right talent knows how great you are.**

Of course, the process is more involved than that, and it's more cyclical than linear — a continual process of building brand momentum and making adjustments in response to an ever-changing business and workforce environment. A more detailed summation of the process/cycle looks more like this:

1. **Develop a clear understanding of your organization's business objectives and the talent needed to meet those objectives.**
2. **Evaluate your current employer brand image among potential recruits and the employer brand experience of your current employees.**

Identify how this compares with what your key target talent groups are looking for. (See Chapter 3.)



REMEMBER

3. **Define your *employer value proposition (EVP)*, the key ingredients that will make your organization a distinctively great place to work.**

An effective EVP describes your current reality, as well as realistic aspirations — the employer you want to be and be known as. (See the later section “Defining the give and get of the employment deal.”)

4. **Build your *employer brand framework*, the creative elements that collectively capture the look and feel you want to convey and the emotion you want to evoke. (See the later section, “Establishing employer brand guidelines.”)**
5. **Generate engaging, story-led content and employee experiences that bring your EVP to life in ways that resonate with the talent you’re trying to attract.**
6. **Actively engage with prospects through selected channels, including your organization’s career website, social channels, job boards, and *programmatic* (automated ad placement driven by analytics). (See the later section, “Spreading the Word through Various Channels.”)**
7. **Measure your success to determine what’s working and what’s not, from your overall brand strategy down to individual recruitment marketing activities. (See the later section, “Monitoring Your Employer Branding Success.”)**
8. **Adjust your employer brand strategy and individual recruitment marketing activities, as needed, to improve results.**

After you’ve gone through the process once, building brand momentum becomes cyclical — shampoo, rinse, repeat.



REMEMBER

A key step we intentionally omit from this process is getting everyone in the organization, especially leadership, involved in your employer branding efforts. Your C-level executives and managers need to embrace the importance of employer branding, encourage and facilitate collaboration, and commit resources to support your efforts. Various departments, including HR and marketing, will need to contribute their insights and expertise. Employees must help with content generation, engaging with prospects, and serving as brand advocates. Without a coordinated effort, your EVP will be DOA (dead on arrival). (See the later section, “Rallying the troops [and leaders].”)

# Laying the Foundation for Your Employer Brand

In many ways, branding follows the laws of physics. In physics, vectors represent forces that act on an object to move it, like a pool cue striking a ball. Every vector has a magnitude and a direction. The more vector forces and the greater their magnitude propelling an object in the same direction, the faster and farther that object travels. Forces that act in the opposite direction slow the object, stop it, or reverse its course. Forces that strike the object from different angles move it off course.

When building an employer brand, everyone in the organization needs to push in the same direction with a force of the greatest magnitude possible. With everyone working in unison, brand momentum begins to build, and you begin to win brand advocates outside the organization who put their weight and force behind the brand, moving it ever faster forward.

Branding of any kind works best when everyone agrees and all branding activities align. To achieve this alignment, you need to build your employer brand on a firm foundation. In this section, we cover the basics of laying that foundation.

## Aligning with business goals and objectives

Just as forces within an organization advance the employer brand, the employer brand is a force that propels the organization forward by delivering the talent needed for the organization to meet its business goals and objectives. As such, it must align with other forces within the organization that share that mission. Specifically, your employer branding strategy must align with the following three strategies that drive the organization's success:

- » **Business strategy:** The employer brand must support the kind of talent capabilities required for the organization to compete effectively. In addition to being fit for talent, it must also be fit for business.
- » **HR and talent strategy:** Your employer brand must either reflect or shape the way HR and talent management operate within the organization to ensure promises are consistently aligned with experience.
- » **Marketing strategy:** The employer brand must reflect corporate and customer brand promises to maintain a general sense of brand integrity.

For maximum impact, all strategies should align perfectly, but in the imperfect reality of a business, different functions will inevitably have their own goals and

objectives. Don't be surprised if you find yourself having to actively reconcile competing agendas and conflicting perspectives among your key internal stakeholder groups.

## Fitting in with your other brands

Employer brands never exist in a vacuum; they're created in the context of the corporate and consumer brands, and, for the most part, they need to align with their corporate and consumer counterparts:

- » **Corporate brand:** The reputation your company is seeking to build based on its *purpose* (the reason for its existence, beyond making money), *vision* (what it's striving to achieve), and *values* (guiding principles)
- » **Consumer brand:** Customer perceptions of the company's products and services and the brand associations that the marketing team is trying to promote
- » **Employer brand:** The company's reputation as an employer inside and outside the organization

Aligning the employer brand with the corporate and consumer brands is complicated by the fact that corporate and consumer brands can be associated in several different ways. In some cases, such as Apple and Shell, the corporate and consumer brands are synonymous. In others, such as the Coca-Cola Company, the company shares the same name as its leading product but not the rest of its product portfolio. And in other cases, such as Unilever and P&G, the corporate brand may be only loosely associated, if at all, with its many consumer brands.

Prior to launching any employer branding initiative, you need to decide how closely and in what ways you want your employer brand to align with your existing corporate and consumer brands. When the needs of consumers diverge from those of employees, close attention needs to be paid to how the brand is communicated to each target group. For example, "Citi Never Sleeps" made perfect sense to potential CitiBank customers, but would have made a particularly poor call to action for potential CitiBank employees.

## Rallying the troops (and leaders)

If you're in charge of employer branding, part of your job is to make sure everyone's on the same page, clear about his or her responsibilities, and collectively accountable for doing his or her part. To be successful, you need the backing and support of a wide range of different stakeholders throughout your organization:

- » **Senior leadership:** For the brand to be truly authentic and fully embedded in the organization, it needs to be led by the CEO and collectively owned by the entire senior leadership team. The key to getting the leadership team onboard is to make a strong case for employer branding, as explained in the earlier section, “Recognizing the benefits of employer branding.” Senior leadership needs to appreciate the crucial role employer branding plays in securing the talent the company needs to achieve its growth ambitions.
- » **Marketing and communications:** The folks in marketing and corporate communications tend to be very protective of the corporate and consumer brand and resist the notion of a separate employer brand because it can appear to threaten brand integrity. You can make them more receptive to the idea of an employer brand by showing them how it can help to build internal brand engagement and extend the appeal of the brand to external audiences who may not have otherwise considered the brand.
- » **HR:** You definitely need HR on your side. Nobody has more direct accountability for shaping people management processes and more influence over talent strategy. Initially, HR may be reluctant to take on the additional responsibilities associated with employer branding, but making a strong business case and appealing to HR’s desire to keep up with best practice are generally sufficient to win its support.
- » **Line management:** Like HR, line management is likely to be reluctant, at first, to commit time and personnel to employer branding. To rally their support, tailor your presentation to their pain points and aspirations. Highlight the fact that a strong employer brand will help to deliver the kind of talent they need to meet their objectives and ensure they lose fewer key players to competitors.

## Taking an Honest Look at Your Employer Brand

Regardless of whether you’ve done anything to build an employer brand, you already have one. Your employer brand is written on the faces of the people you meet who ask you where you’re working. It’s present in the gory or glorious detail of your Glassdoor reviews. It’s embedded in the energy or malaise of your every-day working environment. Your employer brand is your reputation as an employer — whether your organization’s work environment is distinctively great, generically mediocre, or exceptionally bad.

Before you invest time and resources into building an employer brand, perform an honest self-assessment of the brand you have to work with. In Chapter 3, we provide detailed guidance on how to conduct an employer brand health check. Here are the four areas to examine:

- » **What you already know or perceive:** You probably have some sense of what your organization’s employees and people outside your organization think of it as an employer. Add to this knowledge any additional information you may already have, such as feedback from customers and partners, recent employee surveys, or a general review of sentiment across your social media channels.
- » **Employment experience:** The employment experience and how employees perceive it contribute significantly to your organization’s reputation as an employer. Conduct employee surveys and focus groups to find out what current and former employees think of you, and any gaps that may exist between what you offer and what they want. Although compensation and benefits are often ranked pretty high, they’re rarely at the top of the list.
- » **External perception:** You need to figure out what people outside the organization think of you as a potential employer. How well are you known among the talent you’re trying to attract? What are you known for? And how do people feel about you? In Chapter 3, we provide suggestions on how to gauge awareness, brand associations, and sentiment.
- » **Competition:** The organizations you compete with for talent are typically those within your industry from which you hire and lose the most people. Add to that list the top employers attracting the best talent from every industry to learn what they’re doing better.



WARNING

Don’t mimic what other organizations are doing to win the competition for talent. Your goal is to become *distinctively* great, and you can’t accomplish that by doing what everyone else does. What other organizations do may not work for you. Find ways to capitalize on your organization’s unique qualities. Use your research on other companies as a stepping stone for your own creative ideas.

## Putting the Pieces in Place

As with most strategic operations, execution of your employer branding initiative requires coordinated and persistent effort, which is best accomplished if you have everything in place prior to launch. With employer branding, “everything” consists of your EVP, brand framework, and compelling communication content. In this section, we describe the three pieces you need to have in place before initiating any employer branding operations.