

Employer Branding

WHAT, WHY, HOW IN ORDER TO GAIN A
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Introduction



While there might be many still out there who consider branding as solely a marketing activity, the reality is that the growing importance of internal in relation to external has reached critical momentum. We're now at the point at which one can fairly argue that to ignore bringing the brand alive with your internal audience is not only to ignore a critical opportunity to gain competitive advantage, but to do so at your peril.

These days, if an organization designs its branding strategy only with its external target groups and stakeholders in mind, they will be missing a phenomenal opportunity to drive value from those very resources closest to them and within their business: their own employees. In this whitepaper, we're looking at the employer brand, and how you can bring your organization's brand values alive to your internal organization to support it.

The fundamentals of Employer Branding



Definition of Employer Branding

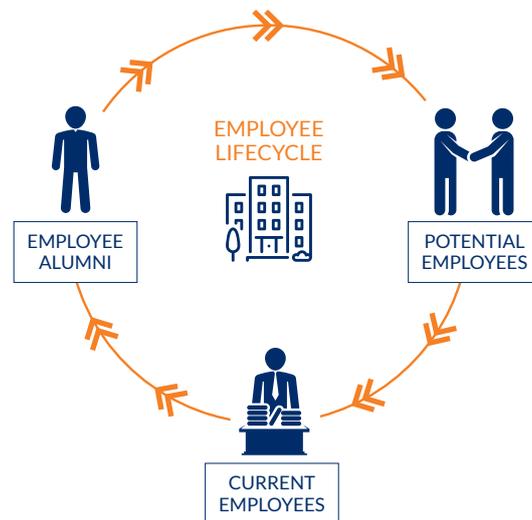
Surprise, surprise! As the term 'employer branding' implies, it's all about branding: the branding of your company as an attractive employer. When searching on the internet, you might find some different definitions and meanings, so we sorted through it all, sifted out the good stuff, and summarized it in a simple definition below



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.

Target groups

As the definition describes, when designing an employer brand, you need to consider multiple target groups, the Big Three being: potential employees, current employees and alumni employees.



POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES

These are the talents – either experienced employees or students – whom you’re aiming to recruit. What is their perception of your company and why should they want to work for you? Influencers, people within the direct environment of your potential employees, are a sub target group. These influencers could notify potential employees about vacancies or recruitment events.

CURRENT EMPLOYEES

You might already have an employee ambassador program. Very good! We can’t tell you enough how important it is to embrace your internal ambassadors. As a group, they are one of the most effective marketing tools. Keep on motivating and inspiring your employees in order to retain them.

ALUMNI EMPLOYEES

A target group that is often forgotten is the group of alumni employees. The word “ex-employees” is inaccurate, really, since they will, in fact, always be in the picture – albeit in the background – either working for or against your company’s interests. Universities figured out the value of this group a long time ago, and we see them as they do: as alumni. Stay connected with them. They are a very important part of the employee life cycle, and they can spread the word on your company.

The Importance of Employer Branding

In order to achieve your KPIs, you obviously need employees with the right set of skills, but you also need employees who share the same values and sense of purpose embraced and demonstrated by your organization’s brand every day. Employer Branding is therefore critical for attracting and retaining talent. The better you’re able to visualize and demonstrate why you’re an interesting organization to join for the particular profile of employee you want to attract, the better you’ll be able to attract and keep them. It seems straightforward and simple, but as every internal communication professional and good manager knows, it’s anything but that! A good plan, however, is a solid start that will make the journey smoother.

The secret ingredient; Alignment, Alignment, Alignment

IF IT ISN'T ALREADY, 'ALIGNMENT, ALIGNMENT, ALIGNMENT' SHOULD BE YOUR MANTRA IN EVERYTHING YOU DO AS AN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONAL, AND WITH EMPLOYER BRANDING IT'S NO DIFFERENT.

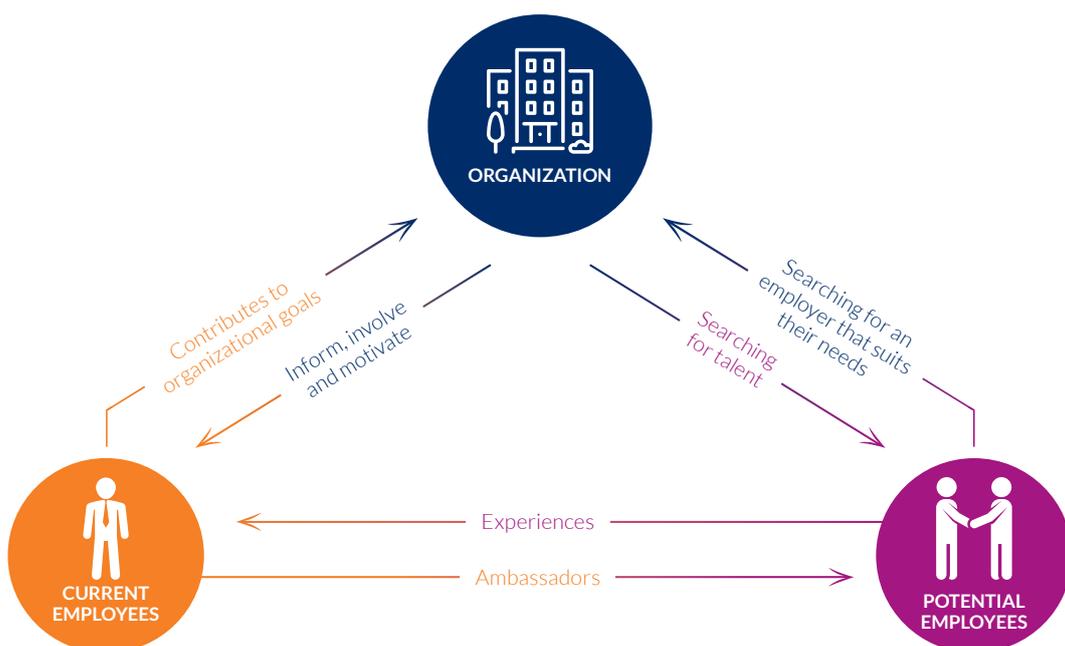
Your Employer Brand is not a project that can survive on its own. Actually it's not even a project at all, but something your organization needs to work on continuously. Terms that are related: employee engagement, employee well-being, and employee happiness/satisfaction. So, your Employer Branding is very close to your organization's culture, but also always aligned with your corporate brand and with the related activities of your internal stakeholders.

Orchestrating alignment between your different target groups, communicating a consistent storyline to point every head in the same direction – these are also the keys to effective employer branding. As such, Employer Branding is not only an important topic for Internal Communications, but also for Human Resources and Marketing.

One for all, all for one!

All communication channels (internal and external) should carry your organization's brand values. Employees should receive a clear and consistent message about your organization, including with the same logo, font and writing style, regardless of the phase in which they find themselves along their employee journey.

So it's one for all, all for one! The picture below shows you the fields of alignment.





The benefits of alignment

Creating and nurturing alignment in your communications to your target groups and important stakeholders will not only contribute to your employer brand, but will also have some very positive spin-offs, such as efficiency, clarity, recognition, more employee ambassadors.

EFFICIENCY

You will be able to work more efficiently, since workload will be spread between different departments; Internal Communications, HR and Marketing. Your main challenge will be in securing clear agreements concerning the content and form of your communications.

CLARITY

Joint agreement on the starting point will give you clarity moving forward, and go a long way to ensuring that you won't need to revisit or revise down the road. If your message is simple, then repetition will more easily embed your core messages in the minds of your target groups.

RECOGNITION

Repeating the symbols, core message and brand values again and again in various media and channels will trigger recognition in your target groups. If your messaging is crafted well and is consistent with the reality of the experience the target group has with the brand, then recognition may eventually be converted to supportive behaviour in line with your organization's strategic goals.

EMPLOYEE AMBASSADORS

There are no better ambassadors than employees who spread the word about brand values in an authentic way: telling positive stories about their own experiences.



An Internal Communication managers' role

Once the different departments have agreed to an employer brand strategy, you need to translate it into concrete tasks. Time to look at the main activities for an Internal Communication manager. These are not new activities or roles, but when aligned with other departments, you will reach another dimension. The main activities will be:

1. INFORM

Translate the employer brand strategy into a story that will inform and inspire your employees on the brand values of your organization.

2. INVOLVE

Create some situations where you can ask some employees for help, involve them in the process. Make sure you do something with their input. It will contribute to the employer brand.

3. POSITION

Think about how you bring a message. Your purpose is to embed the message into the minds of your employees and influence their supportive behavior for the whole organization. How does the message resonate in their daily lives? Will he or she find the message appealing?

4. ACTIVATE

Make sure your Internal Communications convey the employer brand story, every time. How will the story come to life? Let your employees know how they contribute to the organizations' success. HR will play a prominent role here, as they can activate employees with personal development programs or other development agreements.

5. MOTIVATE

This may seem obvious, but every message you send should drive motivation. For instance, let employees know how they could contribute on a small scale with practical tips or by celebrating the organization's successes.

6. FACILITATE

Make sure employees have the right tools so they can contribute to the employer brand. For instance, create dialogue with your employees or make sure they have access to organizational news, anytime and anywhere.

KPIs of Employer Branding

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHAT THE TERM EMPLOYER BRANDING IMPLIES AND WHY ALIGNMENT IS NECESSARY, IT'S TIME TO TAKE A LOOK AT SOME KPIS. ON THE ONE HAND, IT WILL NOT ONLY STRENGTHEN YOUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY TO HAVE SOME SET GOALS WITH RESPECT TO YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND, BUT IT WILL ALSO ENHANCE YOUR CHANCES FOR SUCCESS IN GETTING SUPPORT FROM IMPORTANT INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT'S SIMPLY GOOD SENSE TO BE AWARE OF YOUR NUMBERS IN ORDER TO MEASURE AND OPTIMIZE YOUR STRATEGY, BOTH AT THE START AND ALONG THE WAY AS YOU MOVE FORWARD.

Organizations often focus on recruitment goals when designing their employer brand. For example: optimize the application process or increase brand awareness externally. If you ask us, attention to the internal organization is at least of equal importance.

GOALS YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER:

- ✓ Increase employee satisfaction
employee engagement
- ✓ Increase referral recruitment
- ✓ Increase internal pride
- ✓ Decrease outflow of qualified employees

A word on increasing Employee Satisfaction

The ultimate aim is 100% awareness of brand values among your current employees, and with no desire to put that major achievement in the periphery, just for argument's sake, we'll take it for granted here as our starting point. Within your organization, it's actually even more interesting to look at employee satisfaction KPIs. This is actually quite easy to measure quantitatively. A great tool to do so is the Net Promotor Score (NPS). With the NPS, you ask your employees one simple question: "To what extent would you recommend your employer to your friends and family?". Employees can grade you on a Likert scale, for example from 1 to 10.

Measuring this dimension will give you a quick snapshot of that moment, and in this way the NPS is one tool that can help you optimize your Internal Communications strategy both in the long term, as well as incrementally throughout the year based on regular measurements. According to Geert-Jan Waasdorp, Martijn Hemminga and Sarah Roest in their book Building on the New Employer Brand, the average grade people give their employer is an 8.

Measuring employee engagement, however, is more complex. Worth it, though. Research and practitioner wisdom has taught us all that employee engagement is extremely powerful.

A word on increasing Referral Recruitment

The other goal you might want to include in your Internal Communications strategy is increasing referral recruitment. By referral recruitment, we mean recruitment via-via; recruitment via current employees. Research shows that employees who join your organization via referral recruitment are more likely to stay longer. Why? One simple explanation is that the potential employees would already have positive associations with the brand from stories told by his friends and/or family. The overall norm for referral recruitment is 30%.

Could Employer Branding have a positive effect on your company's revenue?

WHEN MAKING PLANS TO (RE)DESIGN YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND AND DEFINING YOUR KPIS, YOU AUTOMATICALLY CREATE A VISION ON WHAT THE OUTCOME SHOULD BE. AS SAID BEFORE, THE OUTCOME OF EMPLOYER BRANDING WILL MOSTLY AFFECT BRAND AWARENESS IN GENERAL AND THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS. SO, NOW LET'S PUT IT INTO NUMBERS.

Ranking results of Employer Branding

Research shows employers experience the most results of their efforts in the following ten topics:

1. Increased brand awareness **40%**
2. Higher quality of applicants **36%**
3. More reactions on vacancies **32%**
4. Bigger talent pool **22%**
5. Increased employee satisfaction **22%**
6. More followers on social media **20%**
7. Increased employee engagement **18%**
8. Shorter period between job opening and fulfillment **17%**
9. More open applications **17%**
10. Decreased recruitment costs **17%**

How employee satisfaction and engagement lead to increasing revenue

As you can see, Internal Communications definitely profits from Employer Branding. We hope we convinced you already on why increasing employee satisfaction and employee engagement should be on your agenda. Now, let's explain how these two holy grails lead to increased revenue.

ENGAGED AND MOTIVATED EMPLOYEES WILL INCREASE YOUR REACH

Together, employees often have a greater reach and influence than the brands they work for. Enabling hundreds and thousands of employees to share your story will increase brand awareness.

ENGAGED AND MOTIVATED EMPLOYEES WILL DEFEND YOUR COMPANY

Many organizations are fearful that their employees will destroy their reputations by sharing the company story on social media. But the fact is, we are always connected and this increasing connectivity is not going to reverse course. Moreover, the numbers show that employers shouldn't be too afraid!

Nearly 6 in 10 employees defend their employer to family and friends or in a more public venue – such as on a website, blog, or in a newspaper. Employees are even more active in organizations that experienced a

top-tier change, indicating that they are rising up to support organizations in time of need. *Reference: Weber Shandwick & KRC Research – 2014. Employees rising: Seizing the opportunity in employee activism.*

ENGAGED AND MOTIVATED EMPLOYEES GENERATE MORE SALES

When employees are encouraged to use social media, they are more likely to encourage others to buy your company's products or services. In fact, even a modest increase in advocacy can result in significant growth: a 12% increase in brand advocacy typically generates a 2x increase in revenue growth.

THESE ARE ONLY 3 OF THE 15 REASONS THAT WE DISCOVERED OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS FOR WHY YOU SHOULD PURSUE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT. KEEN ON FINDING OUT MORE? DON'T HESITATE TO DOWNLOAD OUR OTHER WHITEPAPER:



15 Facts that Prove Employee Advocacy is Powerful

The Roadmap to a successful Employer Brand

AT THIS POINT, WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD TO ZOOM IN ON THE STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE WHEN DESIGNING THE EMPLOYER BRAND. WE DEFINE FIVE STAGES OF BUILDING THE EMPLOYER BRAND. IT'S COMPARABLE TO BUILDING A HOUSE. THE FIRST STEP TO TAKE IS THE FOUNDATION. THIS IS A CRITICAL STEP SINCE YOU CAN'T BUILD ON QUICKSAND. AFTER THAT, YOU ARE ABLE TO DESIGN, PLAN AND ACTUALLY BUILD THE EMPLOYER BRAND. THE LAST STEP IS MAINTAINING YOUR CAREFULLY BUILT EMPLOYER BRAND. EASIER SAID THAN DONE, SO WE'LL WALK YOU THROUGH THE STEPS.

STAGE 1

Making the foundation for your Employer Brand

The foundation will define the solid grounds of your Employer Brand. Start with searching for support within the organization and create an Employer Brand Task Force. Alignment is key; therefore, make sure your task force consists of representatives from HR, Internal Comms and Marketing. Within large organizations, we recommend to also invite line managers to join the task force. But, the task force shouldn't be bigger than 6 individuals. Make monthly appointments and discuss your goals and actions.

STAGE 2

Designing the Employer Brand

After making the foundation for your new Employer Brand, we continue with the actual design. Answer the following questions with your task force:

- ✓ What is your organization's current situation and what are you aiming to reach?
- ✓ How do you want to position yourself in comparison to other organizations?
- ✓ What is your Employer Brand Identity? And how will it be part of the Company Brand?
- ✓ Who will be your target group(s)?

STAGE 3

Planning

At this point, you'll need to make the last preparations before actually launching campaigns. It means you'll have to make a detailed planning, gain access to budget, describe KPIs and make a base measurement. Only then you can track your successes later on.

STAGE 4

Start building the Employer Brand

Let the fun begin! This is the phase in which you actually start with building your Employer Brand by setting your plans in motion. A kickoff event will immediately create excitement among your current employees but, in order to succeed, your other communication channels need to be game strong as well. We'll talk about the optimal communication mix in the next chapter of this whitepaper.

STAGE 5

Employer Brand Management

Now, it's time to measure your results, evaluate and optimize your Employer Branding strategy. Measure if you've reached your goals. If your goal was increasing employee engagement, measure the results by doing interviews and the NPS. Also take a look at what the media published about your organization in relation to the employer brand campaign. After this you can take actions in order to optimize future campaigns.

Internal Communication Channels You Need with Employer Branding

AFTER TALKING ABOUT THE WHY AND THE WHAT, WE'VE NOW COME TO THE PHASE WHERE WE WANT TO DISCUSS THE HOW. IN OUR PREVIOUS INSTALLMENT, WE ALREADY DISCUSSED THE ROADMAP IN ORDER TO DESIGN THE EMPLOYER BRAND. NOW, WE'RE GOING TO BE MORE SPECIFIC AND TALK ABOUT THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS YOU NEED.

Earlier, we told you that the Employer Brand considers multiple target groups: potential employees, current employees and alumni employees. Each group requires its own communication channel(s). Since we're specialized in optimizing internal communications, we'll only discuss internal communication channels here. Keep in mind, however, that only a total Employer Branding strategy will lead to success.

Communication opportunities for Internal Communication

Research shows that the five most used internal communication channels are e-mail, electronic newsletter, town halls with senior leadership, line manager briefings, video and intranet.

Newsweaver 2014 :



**Internal Communications:
Emerging trends and the
use of technology**

Employees might be overwhelmed by the diversity and volume of messaging to which they're exposed. This invariably leads to information overload. Therefore, important organizational news might not draw the attention you are aiming for.

In order to reach your employees at the right time with the right news via the right device, it's most useful to have a single platform where all internal (and if preferred external) news channels can be managed together. In short: a multichannel internal communications platform. One platform from where the organization can distribute and manage news to employees via several communication channels and devices. From the employee perspective, they need to consult only one place in order to stay informed.

Corporate storytelling

Even though a platform like the imgZine platform is the responsibility of an internal communications manager, of course the communication created by other departments, such as Marketing and HR, have to live and breathe the same Corporate Story. Therefore, it's necessary to create a collaborative approach where these different disciplines are aligned. As we said, **alignment is the secret ingredient for a successful internal communications strategy.**

Exclusive interview:

The Importance of Internal Communications and Employer Branding at BG Group during the Merger with Royal Dutch Shell

SINCE THE MERGER WITH BG GROUP, ROYAL DUTCH SHELL HAS BECOME THE WORLD'S LARGEST OIL AND GAS COMPANY. A STRONG BRAND WITH A UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED LOGO. DURING THE MERGER, INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS WAS KEY IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES. IN AN EXCLUSIVE ONE-ON-ONE WITH PAUL OSGOOD, FORMER GLOBAL HEAD OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AT BG GROUP, WE DISCUSSED THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND EMPLOYER BRANDING.

Which key elements of internal communications do you think are essential in the Oil and gas industry?

You have to remember that a great deal of the Oil and Gas population is remote and often works shift patterns that make regular communication and traditional communication channels more challenging.

Essentially, local leaders need to feel confident that they are sufficiently briefed to be able to engage in local communication and that they are sufficiently skilled to be capable and trusted as communicators. The Oil and Gas industry is predominantly populated with technical experts and so communication skills are less of a focus in career progression and leadership. There lies the challenge for the internal communications team in supporting this environment and getting the most from the leaders in the business.

To what extent is (employer) branding and employee engagement important for internal communications?

In my experience, this depends on the industry. When I was working at Philips, the global brand was key to aligning the organization and engaging employees with each other and with external employees. In Oil and Gas, I found that there was immense pride and loyalty throughout the business, based on the experience of employees working in an environment where safety and performance were front and centre. It's almost an Oil and Gas Brand as opposed to a local business brand that wins out here.

But, employee engagement/employer branding was absolutely a topic on our agenda. We used a monthly engagement measure based on delivering an NPS (Net Promoter Score) for the business and this was administered to half the BG population each month. The demographic and geographic splits to this data made it very easy to highlight areas where our messages were not landing or where there were additional concerns to be addressed. We used a simple model of data collection, data analysis, local sharing with leaders, and then local action planning for communications. In parallel, we monitored the overall organization to ensure that global communications could benefit from this data as well.

How did you personalize your internal communications?

Jive as an enterprise-wide social media platform was relatively new in the business and became an excellent digital collaboration tool during the transaction. I would also point to video production as a means of quickly capturing messages and then distributing these across platforms and devices that are available to employees. This takes a very agile leadership to be successful and we were lucky that BG's leadership team were happy to work and help create this content, often at very short notice.

About ORTEC for Communications

ORTEC for Communications sets standards for internal communications, specializing in providing the most relevant news for your employees.

We are the acknowledged leader in internal communications – we have been in the business of internal communications since 2011, and are routinely identified as the “go-to” vendor for expertise in this field. ORTEC for Communications provides a standardized platform for internal communications, with the possibility to extend to external communications. This enables your organization to realize the full potential of individual and organizational growth by leveraging a communications platform. Our curriculum offerings provide its customers with the skills required to become knowledgeable, effective, and dynamic experts in the (mobile) communications area. We help professionals understand the world of mobile communications, empowering them with the skills to support their organization’s growth.

Our passion lies in improving the effectiveness of your internal communications, allowing your organization to reach its potential.

We work with organizations from all sectors, global corporations in numerous industries (including aviation, telecommunications, financial, medical devices, manufacturing, government, healthcare, software development, information technology).

Contact

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED READING ALL ABOUT EMPLOYER BRANDING. FOR QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT US VIA THE INFO BELOW

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