

**EMPLOYEE BRANDING: A KEY TOWARDS  
SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES IN  
BUSINESS**

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**ABSTRACT**

A great deal of organizational success with this approach proves that the best practices to build good public relations by marketing professionals always starts with building a brand is from inside an organization. Internal communication leads to greater levels of people engagement, productivity and prepare an organization to live up to its brand promise to customers and stake holders. In this context, employee branding is a game changer strategy to win over competitors. Employee branding helps an organization to better project a brand identity of their products and services by shaping their employees behaviour during a day to day work life. That is why Internal branding in behavior is on the top of minds for many businesses.

According to Rajendra Srivastava, a marketing professor at Emory's Goizueta Business School "Internal branding involves insuring all employees of a company understand their role in delivering with customer happiness". Delighted customers are better to deal with, and satisfied employees can only delight a customer by delivering a better service. Hence, customers appreciate for a better quality product or service which helps in building brand loyal customers as well as employees and associate them for a long term.

As the field of employee branding has begun to open up, more executives have become interested to know employee branding process can help them achieve a competitive advantage for their organizations. This paper provides a bird's eye view on how employee branding works

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and how it can be utilized to position the organization in the minds of customers, employees, and stakeholders. Satisfied people add satisfied customers which results in more profitable business.

Key Words: Employees Branding, Customer Satisfaction. Brand Loyal, and Retention.

## INTRODUCTION

Branding a company brand towards their employee is an indirect process which exhibits in communication of company employees while serving their customers. The term also refers to the effects that company employees have on the image of their employer and the employee brand by openly speaking their view about their work place.

Employee branding is defined as "the process by which employees internalized the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents" (Journal of Relationship Marketing, Vol. 3 (2/3), pages 65-87). Employee branding is a specific kind of identity regulation for a business, through which workforce are guided to develop self-images and work orientations that are deemed congruent with managerially defined objectives (Willmott, 1993; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Organizations attempt to influence how employees define themselves so that when employees express themselves at work they automatically make decisions that advance the organization's goals. One common influence on employees' self-definitions, and a well-known form of identity management in organizations, is organizational identification.

Employee branding regulates employees' identity because it attempts to control what behaviors an entity can display with its subordinates, the individual's autonomously-defined self, and it lowers the employee's opportunity for self-expression. The employee branding is attained by maintaining employee welfare and retention consistently throughout the organization. This is only possible by improving HR system of an organization, including staffing, compensation and performance management. Each message should reflect and reinforce the organization's desired brand image which, in turn, should be consistent with the organization's vision, mission and

values. When it happens, both psychological and employee brand knowledge will be managed effectively, which results in a positive brand image as desired by any organization.

Companies looking for a sustainable competitive advantage should take employee branding as key to reach desired business goals. All organizations consistently deliver the desired brand image to others because their employees are both able and motivated to do so. By using a collaborative approach to develop messages that are meaningful and constant, enlightening leaders on their responsibility in this process, continuous strengthening of messages through leadership actions and organizational initiatives, and measuring success, organization will win the hearts, minds and hands of the employees as they help the organization to achieve business success.

Numerous studies conducted around employee engagement also indicate that creating a line of sight between employees and business strategy is a key driver of engagement.

### **IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE BRANDING**

The employee branding process enables the organization to consistently deliver its desired brand image to customers, thereby strengthen a clear position at the top of the mind of their employee's first, before going to the customers. This creates distinctive competitive advantage that is achieved through internal branding, which motivates the employees to reciprocate the similar image towards the customers and other. Although employees can accommodate brand identity attributes in their behavior without adopting them as self-defining, behaving in a ways that project the brand's identity can lead an employee to internalize the brand identity. When employees internalize the brand characteristics, they exercise the brand's attributes to define their own identities, establishing employee-brand identification. Employee branding practices encourage employees to think about the brand more consciously and actively consider the brand's interests as they make decisions. Marketing experts always advocate employee branding by encouraging the employees to get a close association with corporate brand and its attributes as closely as possible.

Concept of employee branding should be embedded into organization's culture that everyone like to expression it so openly that it become religious in their behavior. It should be visible across, starts from a vision, mission, goals, and objectives through their common organizational artifacts such as communication décor, marketing equipment, media, publications, and uniform to underlying organizational values, manifests the employee values and brand attributes.

A common goal of employee branding is to create employees friendly work environment where employees are active participants of planning and decision making process. Similar work spirit and ownership should clearly exhibits in their behaviors.

Together, both marketing and human resource consultants advocate Employers to focus on internal branding first by looking into employees perceived values of a corporate brand. Because it has been seen that employees who have positive believe in corporate brand always share similar experience while interacting with customers. They would like more to get associated with those positive attributes of the brand.

Employee branding uses 4 basic tactics:

- Teaching employees about the brand.
- Mentoring them on how to represent the brand attributes in their behavior.
- Creating opportunities to practice and representing a corporate brand.
- Identifying and associating the employees with attributes of the company brand.

Initial two tactics develop the employee's behavioral connection with the brand, and the only difference between employee branding and previous forms of brand training is that each employee gets this training. Last two tactics develop the employee's psychological connection with the brand, using the marketing logic of meaning transfer (Mc Cracken, 1988).

Besides this it's a responsibility of marketing people to build a brand identity by teaching brand, attributes, loyalty and association to their customers by continuously comparing the positive attributes with the title of brand, product type, image and packaging, through various marketing

communications channels. Because these attributes are shown as being attached to the brand, so that customers can see them as a part of the brand and the defined identity.

## THE EMPLOYEE BRANDING PROCESS

### Steps to Create Line of Sight

#### 1. Develop and Validate Core Messaging

For employees to truly be able to connect to the business, they must have an understanding of the business strategy beyond the high-level corporate speak. They need to know the context of the strategy - the reason behind it. They want to know how the organization is going to change (and how it will remain the same), what exactly they'll be expected to contribute and how the organization will support them. It's critical that senior leaders and managers have a consistent understanding of these issues, so that they're communicating them in the same way. Core messages that address each of the issues need to be developed and used as a "blueprint" by all communicators in the organization. These messages need to be developed through a collaborative process.

#### 2. Align Leaders and Define their Roles

There's been a great deal of recent discussion and research among communication professionals around the importance of engaging leaders (both senior and middle management) to play their part in connecting employees to the business. An effective leadership and management communication is a key driver in employee engagement. To support leaders and enable them to be effective in their communication role, we need to define their role, determine the skills they need and provide the tools to support them.

#### 3. Commit to Proof Points

Leaders can talk and talk, but the proof of their messages is in their actions. For employees to have a compelling line of sight with the business, they need to know the strategy, believe in it, committed to it and align their behavior with it.

#### 4. Measuring Success

To prove the value of helping employees connect to the business, it's critical to establish clear outcomes and measures for success in the beginning. It's also key to hold managers accountable for their role in successfully creating a line of sight for their employees. This can be done through inclusion in the incentive plan, individual coaching and development plans, or through a "buddy system", where a best-practice executive coaches someone who is not so strong. For example, in one holding company, 25 percent of each executive's bonus is based on achieving a specified engagement score on the annual survey. Branding and the Employee When a company has an internal branding strategy, their employees can better share a true brand image with the customers. They are more likely to experience the brand in a way that is consistent with the public face of the brand, and the customers' experience.

Satisfied employees are delighted to get associated with a company brand in their day to day experience while communicating the same within the market. Managers can play vital roles in supervising and ensuring e this behavior. By observing their subordinates talking about the company brand.

Branding is the practice of making a product, service, or experience distinctive by other associated products available in market. This ultimately helps a marketer while their customer prefers his brand over others. "The brand itself is the social construction that links a material product with a set of beliefs about the product's tangible and intangible attributes. Brands help differentiate a product from similar or competitive others on three dimensions: performance, imagery, and consumer insight" (Keller, Sternthal, & Tybout, 2002).

Brand performance associations distinguish the product in terms of its functional benefits. Finally, consumer insight associations show how the brand can resolve the consumers' own problems better than similar brands. These associations create a emotional, symbolic, and functional aspects of the brand.

## SUMMARY

Employee Branding in simpler terms means what an employee projects about himself and the organization culture. Organizations spend huge money to build a brand for their products and services to remain competitive. However, they forget to see precious values driven by their employees in building these brands by consistent endorsement in front customers. Which is only possible with internal branding of employees, constituent a critical factor in a success of any business. Internal branding presents a credible, compelling or differentiating story about a company, product or initiative that drives engagement and behaviors among employees. Having employees as ambassadors capitalizes on using word-of-mouth as an effective corporate branding outcome. Employees should be get chance to be a brand ambassador for his/her organization. Because they have a better sense of association towards the products or services his/her organization.

Employee branding programs advocate that executives should redeploy practices that reinforce the norms and values of the organization itself -- practices such as socialization (e.g., training and communication), organizational decor, the distribution of organizational artifact, and controlling employee appearance – and use these practices instead to educate and reinforce beliefs about the brand. Perhaps the best employee branding is possible by conducting a training program where all of them are taught about the basics of marketing and branding principles along with the attributes to be associated with a specific brand.

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