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HR BRANDING – AN INEXPENSIVE WAYS TO MAKE A COMPANY FAMOUS

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ABSTRACT

Organizations, in the past, looked up to functions like sales, marketing, research and development, etc, to foster the growth of the company, but today, they are also looking at Human Resource (HR) function for the same. Most professionals now admit that one of the few channels left to communicate the corporate brand to its customers is the employee. Various researches have revealed that strong brands contribute to strong competitive presence in the market. Therefore, the importance of branding HR follows as a consequence. Human resource branding is like a consumer brand, it is an emotional relationship, but between an employer and employee, one that radiates out from their core to other stakeholders, to the community at large, and obviously to positional employees. Brand is based on behavior and is one which can be easily maintained. Consistent behavior helps develop reputation which generates an image of the minds of the public. The brand aids in inspiring confidence, trust an assurance to the target audience. A strong organizational image is the interface for the brand created and the organizational delivery on the assurance promised. The most important point to be noted here is that building a brand is a corporate strategic issue and not a short term tactical activity. While HR branding has been an established phenomenon in the western countries it is still to catch on in Indian organisations. The objectives of this study are to present the need for HR branding and achieving brand success through employees and to highlight some guide lines and less expensive ways to make a Company famous by all means with HR Branding.

KEYWORDS: Company, Employees, Organization, Corporate, Business, Brand.

INTRODUCTION

The past few years have seen dramatic changes in its perception or outlook by corporate leaders. From just being looked as a support function, HR today is viewed as a key player in driving corporate success and customer satisfaction. In today's knowledge driven economy, HR plays a strategic role in bringing in the right kind of people into the organisation. In a sense, HR is the first face of an organisation that a new prospective employee sees. HR is of paramount importance for an organisation. Market research has shown us many times over that strong brands do contribute to strong competitive presence. In that sense, in HR's new avatar, the importance of branding HR follows quite as a corollary. In the present times, the role of the HR manager is more of public relations skills combined with strong problem-solving skills. The top management is able to recognise the HR team's contribution to the business objectives of the company, which, by and large; other employees tend to overlook its role in the success of the organisation. The biggest hurdle is the fact that HR departments derive their importance by becoming 'power centers' and that have to change. It has to become a partner as the other functions are, than just remaining as support arm

To make the right impact on the target audience, the HR head needs to have a good understanding of the business and its future course. This can help him/her increase the value and stature of the HR function within and outside the organisation. A good balance between task and people-orientation, responsiveness to employee issues and concerns, coaching and training people managers to take responsibility of people-related issues can help in establishing a good brand.

ACHIEVING BRAND SUCCESS THROUGH EMPLOYEES

A brand is an external manifestation of several internal processes of a company. The stronger the internal processes the better the chance of the brand getting stronger. Time and lack of a continuous brand perspective can create problems in its success. Potential employees in the market place would like to associate themselves with companies that have a brand of success, leadership, people-development, and which instill a deep sense of pride and commitment. Not many HR departments market themselves correctly, internally as well externally. However, there are few companies like Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, IBM, Cadence, HP, Sun Microsystems, Wipro, Daksh, Satyam, Tata telecom, I-Flex solutions, Texas Instruments, Polaris Software and Birlasoft, who have successfully established their HR brands both in India and abroad. The Indian companies Wipro and Infosys would be the leaders in branding. In case of MNCs, it is Microsoft, IBM, Intel, Oracle, HP and Accenture, which are the leaders. Experts state that to reach out to all levels of employees, the HR team has to perform the role of a facilitator instead of enforcer. Effective communication (listening and promoting) and educating the employees about their capabilities and potential contributions can help strengthen the HR brand. There are three steps to embed the HR brand. First is the strong internal anchoring of HR. HR members must have a pride in their profession and must not be limited to activities like staffing, training, and compensation. HR members must see themselves as architects, not as functionaries alone. Secondly, HR has to function as the CEO's closest ally and must extend this to each of the business leaders within the organisation. Lastly, the HR must take the lead in investing in 'reflecting' and 'visioning' processes in the organisation.

Take the case of TCS, which started its HR branding initiative two years ago. While the company had successfully implemented the HR policies, TCS was lacking in effective communication with its employees across the globe. TCS decided to bring about a significant change in the company communication processes, i.e., the way things were communicated. In addition, the company also decided to align the HR and corporate communication relation to make an impact on its internal customers. Understanding the importance of communication, the HR adopted different PR related activities to reach out to its employees. Things like changing the tone of communication, encouraging Friday dressing, evolving a separate HR logo or sending them calendars (listing monthly HR activities) has helped TCS score high on the employee satisfaction surveys.

After getting a feel of things, the HR team can decide which brand identity works best for their work culture and create it. These can be taken from the basic values, which the company stands for. For example, if the HR has identified 'trust' and 'timely delivery' as their key brand, they have to make sure that their workforce delivers accordingly. For this, they have to identify the best practices and train the workforce. The HR policies and programmes have to be framed in such a manner that they reinforce and promote the 'brand behavior' and people think themselves as a 'brand'. This need is to be followed by each employee of the organisation. However, the most important promotional piece is the HR department itself, where they can achieve success through their own example. In addition, the HR also has to use PR as a major skill to make its brand visibility. Besides, communicating it in board meetings, organisation's newsletter and intranets, the HR team also has to devise different employee-friendly schemes. To gauge the real experience

of the employees and make an impact of being there, the intranet acts as a great tool. In HP, individuals can log in their complaint or request on the intranet, which is solved in a short span of time.

INEXPENSIVE WAYS TO MAKE A COMPANY FAMOUS

Companies on a shoestring budget can build brand identification using a variety of no-cost and low-cost measures. Before doing so, firms should be wary of things that can go wrong should they emerge as an employer of choice. A company's human resources brand is the image it has among employees and job candidates. It's a long-term strategy—the sum total of all of the experiences employees and candidates have when they come in contact with the company.

LOW-COST BRANDING TOOLS

The companies have a little money to spend on human resources branding. Here are some low-cost things to do. Re-energize your existing employee referral program and set "targets" for referrals from each department. Include participation as part of the normal performance appraisal process. Provide employees with cards listing the top ten reasons why it's great to work for your company. Participate in community clean-up programs; get your organization named on "clean-up" highway signs. Develop an alumni club for ex-employees and retirees. Involve these former employees in the process of spreading the word. Distribute logo book bags, T-shirts, and other similar items to children; sponsor school events. Work with the advertising department to place ads that occasionally highlights your great people and management practices as well as your products. Train and reward managers for excellent people-management performance. Conduct surveys of college students, business writers, academics, executive recruiters, and influential business leaders as well as your employees to assess your perceived strengths, weaknesses, corporate

culture and image. Revise recruiting practices to include “wow” elements to make a lasting impression. Continually review your recruitment strategy and team capabilities. Have the CEO or human resource vice president write a book about the organization’s people-management practices.

LOW COST THINGS TO BUILD HUMAN RESOURCES BRAND

Here are a variety of no-cost things organisations can do to begin building your employment brand. Assess your organization’s current management practices, benefits, culture, etc., to identify what you “have to sell” and what you need to improve. Do a quick survey or assessment of your current employment “image” among employees, applicants and general public using surveys and focus groups. Develop a catchy slogan that highlights your very best “great place to work” feature(s). Rename some of your successful people programs with “catchy” names that grab people’s attention. Do a side-by-side comparison of your benefits and people programs against those of your talent competitors. Identify areas where you are clearly superior. Identify and assess your competitors’ employment “brand” against which you’ll be competing. Develop a branding strategy that highlights the differences between you and your competitor. Compose one or two-paragraph profiles of individual employee “success stories” for use in articles and on the Web site. Work with the sales department to identify public sales events and trade shows where materials highlighting your great people practices can be displayed. Get managers to give talks at community meetings and at the local Chamber of Commerce that highlight your people practices. Invite family and friends of employees on site to see “what it is like to work here” and the importance of employees’ work so that they will help spread the word on what a great place your organization is to work. Ask the union, if you have

one, to help spread the word about what a great place to work you are. Encourage local college professors to visit and write “case studies” and articles about the company’s people practices. Participate in industry-wide benchmarking studies to help build your visibility. Include marketing and branding experience in the criteria you use to hire additional recruiters. Create a process to measure and evaluate the program’s effectiveness, monitor its progress, and improve it.

CONCLUSION

Branding is not just about a label, logo, name, environment or color. More to the point a service brand HR is about people. It is all about how those people act, talk and treat others. A good balance between task and people-orientation, responsiveness to employee issues and concerns, coaching and training people managers to take responsibility of people-related issues can help in establishing a good brand. Human resource branding is a tool to attract, hire and retain the right fit it also has an impact on shareholders’ value, creating positive human capital practices, contribute to bottom line. Companies on a shoestring budget can also build brand identification using a variety of no-cost and low-cost measures. A company’s human resources brand is the image it has among employees and job candidates. It’s a long-term strategy—the sum total of all of the experiences employees and candidates have when they come in contact with the company.

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