

2010 OUTLOOK

THE HR INDUSTRY

EMPLOYER BRANDING MATTERS!



By Alicia Teo

In an emerging economy driven by information and services, value creation is primarily about people. In this environment effective linkage of human resources strategy to organizational strategy followed by effective implementation become critical to organizational success. Human Resource practitioners can play a key role, yet Human Resource is frequently viewed as a cost rather than a key strategic resource. This interview with Ms Annie Yap of AYP Associates, a veteran Human Resource Practitioner seeks to explore steps Human Resource practitioners can take to establish their function as a key resource and their role as primary contributors to the creation of value and what it takes to achieve success in this economic upswing.

HR Practitioners need to quantify the linkage between workforce contribution and value created by the organisation. If this linkage is not established the workforce and the Human Resource

function will be viewed as disposable costs, not strategic value contributors. Our challenge is to demonstrate tangible value from investing in the intangible asset of workforce capability and increase productivity. And there is good, solid evidence that speaks to the benefits.

According to Annie, the economy is robust and growth looks good. The Singapore Government has been very successful in attracting investments from abroad. Singapore is well positioned and strong. As she is focusing more on mid to high end managerial, the sluggish economic climate has not had dire effect on her newly set up business. Owing to the petitions of the local workforce the Ministry of Manpower has clamped down on employing foreign workers. Other than these sectors, employment scene has been good.

Employment Branding

Annie advised all employers to focus on

employment branding in order to attract good talents both locally and from abroad. Employers should not neglect employer branding because employees are your assets and they play a vital role in helping you retain market share. Both HR and marketing departments should be in constant communication to ensure talent retention. Employees will go the extra mile to satisfy your customers if you treat them well. High turnover of employees is costly and may result in loss of customers.

Cutting Edge: Strategies for effective employer branding

Employer branding is not just a corporate buzz anymore; it's an integral element of every HR professional's repertoire. With the foreseeable battle for attraction and retention of talent looming large on the business horizon, every employer is striving hard and positioning itself to stand out as an 'employer of choice'. A recent survey by specialist recruitment network Vedio Asia Pacific showed that in Singapore, most companies (76%) believe their employer brand is successful in attracting and retaining employees although there is still a 79% who felt that there are still rooms to improve their employer branding strategy.

Attracting talent will be the biggest human capital challenge for Singapore organizations with retaining talent a close second. As Singapore's population continues to age and the economy continuously growing, there is intense pressure in the labour market. Hence, employers need to create a unique career in order to attract and retain their talents. However, this process will take time.

But what is employer branding?

Employer branding is the development and communication of a company's culture and values as an employer in the marketplace. "It is really a framework for defining, managing and communicating the relationship both with current and prospective

employees," as quoted by Derek Berry, Mercer's Business Leader of Human Capital, ASEAN and "it works as a filter in terms of having the right people coming in, and in terms of retaining people."

To attract talent, the organisation need to promote and substantiate a commitment to a well defined set of values. This way, employees will be more motivated, more productive, more loyal to the organisation. Demand has outweighed supply of talents and therefore it is important for employer to create a culture in the company to attract the best talent. If you have a great employer brand, more talents will be attracted because everyone will want to join a winning team or an organisation with good image.

Corporate brand and employer brand need to be aligned

Communication plays a vital role in branding. Employers must always understand the perceptions and beliefs of prospective and current employees about their organisation's culture and brand promise. I believe internal branding is a prelude to corporate branding. The art of listening is very important. This is very lacking in most organizations. We need to keep listening to both current and prospective employees and changing where necessary. While there are some significant values like meritocracy and diversity that don't change, employees' mobility is a more recent development reflecting the need of

today's younger generation. In developing employer branding, organizations need to align this with their business objectives so that managers from all departments are involved in every development process. Once the employer brand has been defined and implemented, consistency and delivery is key, professionals say. Employer brand must deliver the organisation's promise. One will not know your employer branding if there is no awareness and this could be done through winning awards and accolades and communication through word of mouth.

Employer branding is the development and communication of a company's culture and values as an employer in the marketplace.

Management has a very important role to play in defining the company's employer branding as well as communicating it. Labour is going to get tougher and therefore it is important for organizations to make room for a budget for employer branding.



Communication! communion! communication!

This is vital. Communication must be made between all levels. Like corporate branding, communication is important for employer branding. Employer branding needs to be in brochures, websites, advertising program and HR programs etc. HR must continuously remind employees to keep the company's culture and values alive, through activities, training, newsletters or simple email or any kind of communication. HR must lead by example.

Your employee is your company's ambassador and therefore who you choose is important. Employees contribute to the financial success of your company so it is important to

nurture and train them and treat them well so that a good message is brought across to your customers. Create unforgettable moments for your guests and employees. I used to work as General Manager of a leading bedding company and their annual dinner involves not only their staff alone but the customers are also invited to the dinner. This has created a bonding between employee and customer and thus they were able to maintain their top market share continuously. Three times a year they were to have a celebration together in the office. This, I would consider strong employer branding.

Today with the advance of internet, especially with the banking sector it is almost impossible to speak face to face

with the banker on your needs.

With closer communication, we can find out why employees want to work with us and what will make them stay. This helps us define our employer brand. Our employer brand must match the expectation in the market especially so when you are trying to get the younger generation talents to work with you. HR is the most important stakeholder in employer branding. A company is considered to have a great employer branding if you can see their employees go all the way out to make it a memorable experience for visitors.

Why Employer branding?

A good employer branding can win hearts. Statistics has shown that it is a vital criteria to attract talents. To be effective, employer branding must span the entire business and be implemented at all levels. It must have endorsement and commitment at CEO and board level and filter through the entire organisation. It is far more than a public relations exercise. It must be a genuine commitment to a particular way of operation, and must be consistent and stand up to challenge.



A company is considered to have a great employer branding if you can see their employees go all the way out to make it a memorable experience for visitors.

In a downturn, a strong employer brand can improve morale and help keep top people on board. By aligning employee, supervisor and management behaviours, it can also ultimately translate into more efficient processes, better customer service and a more complete and consistent application of the consumer brand. If your organisation can subscribe to a more well defined set of values, the exercise of attracting talents will be more successful. Employees will definitely be more motivated, productive and loyal.