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**HR MARKETING AND BRAND BUILDING**

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**Abstract**

HR marketing is an integral function of the HRM Function. Without **HR Marketing, HRM function** is not visible on the market and the customers will get unsatisfied as they lack the information about the latest development in the area of Human Resources.

The **HR Marketing** needs a different skill sets from the HR Employees. The traditional HR Employees were more focused on the results and objectives delivery and there was lack of awareness about the promotion of the results. The past few years have seen dramatic changes in the perception or outlook of HR 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 organization. In a sense, HR is the first face of an organization that a new prospective employee sees.

It is absolutely necessary in today's times for the HR Department of an organization to establish itself as a brand & no doubt increasing number of companies are focusing on creating a unique 'HR brand'.

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### **What is HR marketing?**

HR marketing is a new company position that focuses on positive company branding, current employee satisfaction and recruiting new talent. An HR Marketing position can entail employee awareness activities, community relations and communication efforts. Employee recruitment has changed. This makes an HR marketing position the new must-have function for competitive organizations.

### **Brief Description of the role**

- The HR marketing professional will need to successfully brand the company both internally and externally on behalf of the organization in order to retain employees and attract new talent. HR marketing identifies potential employee recruitment markets, creates clear communication messages and recommends ways to retain employees. HR marketing develops and maintains employee and prospect relationships in order to obtain and retain the best talent for the organization. HR marketing works with cross-functional teams within the organization in order to increase company awareness and creates a consistent, positive organizational profile and boosts profitability.

## **Knowledge**

- HR marketing knowledge should include recruitment and employee satisfaction methods using effective communication techniques. Knowledge will also include processes such as needs assessments and satisfaction evaluations. General business and human resource allocation knowledge is a must.

## **Skills and Abilities**

- Skills include the ability to actively listen, use logic to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. In addition, branding skills and strong written, verbal and presentation communication expertise are required.

HR marketing abilities comprise oral and written comprehension and expression. The ability to speak and write clearly, in order to effectively communicate, is essential.

### **“Employer branding is a central concept in HR marketing”**

In an era of dwindling demographics, companies and organizations are trying to attract people and to convince them to become employees. They tend to use many Human Resources Marketing techniques to do so.

It usually answers one basic question "**Why should anyone join the company instead of another company?**"

It defines the personality of a company as a preferred employer.

It provides potential employees with information on business, culture and benefits of working for this company.

Not only it is used to steer the recruiting effort, but it is also leading in generating strategies for retention and motivation.

The branding during the recruitment period needs to be confirmed once the candidate becomes an employee.

Traditionally viewed as a powerful marketing tool to manage customer perception, ‘branding’ is being increasingly used by HR departments as a tool to recruit new people & establish its position in the organization. This is a reflection of the changing role of HR- from a recruiting entity to a business partner, internal consultant, operational as well as an administrative expert.

A good brand delivers the following at all points of contact:

- a clear message about why your business is unique
- makes you look/sound credible
- brings out a (positive!) emotional reaction
- motivates the person to buy your product or service
- makes them feel loyal to your business

To establish a good brand it is therefore required to have a good balance between task & people-orientation, responsiveness to employee issues and concerns, coaching and training people managers to take responsibility of people-related issues.

### **What is HR Branding?**

Branding is defined as “the process of building a favorable image for a product or company that differentiates it, in the minds of prospects and end users, from other competitors” - *garyeverhart*. Branding creates a positive image of the subject in the minds of the people, thus drawing them towards it. HR branding which has a similar intention like the normal branding is a new development that has sprung up as a result of the need to survive and flourish in the business.

HR branding is important for the company as well as for the HR function of the firm. With intense competition prevailing in the market, the companies prefer to outsource the HR function with the intention of minimizing the cost of production. The HR function needs to step up to the expectations of the clients and the employees to ensure its survival as a function within the organization.

With HR branding playing a vital role in today’s business, the human resource department has to advertise its activities and create a brand image in a way identical to the marketing of a product. For branding the HR is to perceive and acknowledge the needs of its employees. The task of the HR is well above the normal recruitment function. The changes in the market scenario bring about changes in the employee perceptions. It is the task of the HR to recognize the needs and formulate the policies of the company well before in advance. The HR is to conduct the surveys of employees to realize the kind of image they have regarding the human resource department. The next step is to augment the brand image by adding values to their services. The HR strategy must be formulated with great attention as these decisions have a direct impact on the employees who are the driving force of the

organization. A highly satisfied work force creates the best brand image for the HR. For HR branding, the HR is to identify the customer needs and perceptions regarding the functioning of the human resources and work for a better relationship. If there are differences in the employee and customer perceptions the HR is to take measures to nullify or minimize them to avoid the loss of business.

The brand image must be spread well beyond the walls of the organization. By publishing papers or participating in the external seminars, the HR can propagate its brand image across the borders of the business entity. Its achievements, perceptions, mission, etc must be advertised to the employees as well as to the customers. Participation in the surveys conducted by Hewitt, Data Quest, etc highlights the presence of the company amongst its competitors. The success of HR branding is reflected by the presence of a highly motivated and contented workforce. This draws the customers and prospective employees to the organization. Companies who have bagged the “Best company to work for” award enjoy a high brand image. Their reputation as a good employer provides the opportunity of selecting new recruits with exemplary talents and retain the outstanding employees within the organization. Prompt response from the HR to the needs of the employees has the ability to create a highly energized workforce within the business entity leading to the enhancement of its goodwill. HR branding, therefore, is a powerful tool for business development.

### **The Need of HR Branding**

A brand is a product, service or concept that is publicly distinguished from other products, services or concepts, so that it can be easily communicated and helps in establishing a unique identity. It is a promise to the customers that a specific level of value, quality and service will be received. The most important point to be noted is that ‘building a brand’ is a corporate strategic issue and not a short-term tactical activity.

The manufacturing industry being people-oriented, what differentiates the best from the rest is the “quality of human capital” in every organization. While there is plenty of talent available, the difficulty comes in finding the talent with the “best fit” to the organization. Potential employees would like to associate themselves with companies which have a “brand” of success, leadership, people development initiatives and also instill a deep sense of pride and commitment.

In case of HR, 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 organization. In a sense, HR is the first face of an organization that a new prospective employee sees.” Investing in brand-creation for HR is of paramount importance for an organization. Market research has shown us many times over that strong brands do contribute to strong competitive presence. In the present times, the role of HR manager is more of public relations skills combined with strong problem-solving skills.

A good balance between task & 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.

Not much effort has been made by the organizations to improve their corporate image internally. However, with increasing global competition and a more mature work environment, Indian companies have also started looking at this facet of branding.

### **HR branding leads to Employer Branding**

Employer branding is all about the company’s value in the market, a timeless process that in today’s scenario has gained even more significance. It is essentially a combination of the reputation of the organization, the career offer and the corporate culture existing in the company.

Typically, there are two types of employer branding exercises. One is for prospective employees and the other for the current set of employees. In case of the former, the employer branding initiatives are targeted at building mindshare in potential recruits about the company as a preferred place to work. This can be in the form of communication through advertisements, third-party endorsements through the media or going to campuses. Internal employees might not know about all the product or solution offerings of the company and it becomes necessary to inform and educate them.

Employer branding has become more critical in today's times, as most professionals are looking at a stable career and establishing a long-term relationship with the company. It is said that an unsatisfied customer tells ten people about his experience while an unsatisfied employee tells a hundred. Employer branding reflects the work culture in an organization. Therefore, it is of much significance. Through right branding, the company can recruit the best talent and reinforce its positioning amongst its employees.

A survey conducted by Hewitt Associates reveals that more companies are now focusing on employer branding to "attract employees" and keep them engaged. There is a direct correlation between an effective employer brand and achieving business success. It helps in retaining current employees, increasing employee satisfaction, attracting job candidates, and motivating employees in their work, which leads to excellent business gains. The purpose is to use the internal brand as the seedbed for aligning their people programmes to deliver significantly improved business results.

Till recently, employment ads were just showing the job description of the vacancy. The focus in the last two-three years has been shifted to create a powerful image for the organization as a "dream place to work". This depends on a whole host of factors like how successful the company is perceived to be; what is the vision and mission; what kind of work culture they have; what type of training programmes, motivational classes & what kind of career growth opportunities they offer. Now organizations are aiming towards not employee satisfaction but employee delight!

Employer branding is not an easy task as it is a long long-term process. It takes tremendous effort and a strategic blend of logic and intuition in the brand-building exercise. The company has to have superior leadership, operational excellence and customer focus, and most importantly people-orientation in a genuine way, for the branding exercise to be successful.

Companies have been focusing on more advertising than taking concentrated efforts in building relationships. According to a survey, the future might be in danger for those

companies who may otherwise invest too much in mass media and little in personal contact programmes. As per the survey, the most believable forms of communication are not the advertisements, literature and websites, but the behaviour of employees and accounts of their own work experience.

Employer branding is a part of overall branding strategy of a company. For this to happen, the HR department should ensure that there is a constant flow of communication within the organization and there is no conflict with respect to internal and external image. Both these factors are very significant. Every single employee should buy into the vision, commitment and ethics of the company and should be a walking advertisement for the company. Doing a major employer branding exercise would be nothing if the company's own employees do not believe what is being said. An organization must adopt a concerted and focused approach to building and maintaining its reputation as a 'Best Workplace' and constantly work towards reinforcing this branding through continuous exercises. A typical branding exercise would involve identifying the USP (unique selling proposition) of the company and articulating the DNA of the company, highlighting the competitive advantages of this DNA and creating a consistent brand language across the organization in all forums to all the constituencies. And the most important part is to act on what you say. Plain words can't get a brand. A brand has to be built on action.

Experts point out that the next couple of years will witness companies engaged in innovative methods to stay ahead in the race. These may include hiring image building experts to enhance the brand value, providing competitive compensation, enabling foreign postings with dollar salaries and stock options, or offering challenging work environment in cutting-edge technology areas.