

Branding Buzz Flies into HR

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With the continued focus on the labour shortage and the need to attract and retain employees, employers are becoming more and more aware of the need to market their corporate culture. They want to answer the potential employee's question: "Why should I work for you?"



The concept of "branding your corporate culture" is similar to branding products and services. They are simply sophisticated methods of selling your organization as a great place to work. Or is it that simple?

Everywhere we look there are articles on how companies are not only doing things differently, but how they are branding their unique initiatives. An article in a recent issue of *Maclean's* magazine describes the efforts of Dofasco, where "they now spend \$15 million a year on training and development, much of it on revitalized apprenticeship programs." Other organizations focus on the environment and their improved human relations, while others tout that employees are people first, employees second, and are – more importantly – the first customer, the most important customer. Times have certainly changed.

Employee loyalty and engagement are critical factors in organizational success. We are often asked to assist clients in building employee engagement programs. Our response is always the same: Build your compelling purpose first, then recruit individuals whose values align with this purpose. Alternatively or concurrently, communicate the compelling purpose clearly and accurately to your employees and build programs that meaningfully connect them to it.

It is critical to understand why employees are neither engaged in their work nor connected to their employer; only then can intentional programs adequately respond to the issues. Employees need to feel connected to the work that they do, but more importantly they need to feel connected to their employer's vision and purpose.



The 2007 Global Workforce study has provided new insight into why employees leave their employer and what they are looking for from senior leadership. For the past two decades studies have shown that the number one reason employees leave their workplace is their relationship with their immediate supervisor. This new study shows that this is no longer the case. The strongest factors influencing disengagement are connected to organizational development such as available training, senior leadership, and even the reputation of the organization itself.

As you can see, branding corporate culture is only a small piece of the attraction and retention challenge. The new employees out there are not only very savvy, but they know what they want.

When branding our corporate culture, we must ensure that the environment inside the organization accurately reflects our external branding strategy. Consistent with traditional branding strategies, we must provide what we sell. All our efforts to attract the right people can be lost quickly if our branding is not accurate. In fact, our reputation and credibility are at stake when we choose a branding strategy. We must commit to "living" that brand.

Employers should begin by focusing time and resources on building a corporate culture that is worthy of a branding strategy. Once this is achieved, a comprehensive branding strategy is a great way to attract new talent. Branding corporate culture is an effective way to inform people of your corporate initiatives and employee propositions. Your branding should explain the statement: "You should work for us!" ●

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