

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

THE EMPLOYER BRAND

We associate the word brand with the marketing department, but what about the 'brand' an organization portrays as an employer? This is an interesting concept in human resources, and one many of our local employers should pay closer attention to. The fact is there is open competition in today's employment market for the best talent, not just within the region, but also internationally. As a result, the employer will need to change approach from waiting for candidates to beat a path to their doors or respond to adverts, to proactively marketing themselves as people to work for.

As the business environment becomes ever more hectic, it has become common fact that the way a company recruits, and who they use to recruit (in terms of sub-contracting) says a lot about them as an employer. Recruitment mistakes are becoming ever costlier as senior management no longer have time to invest in training new comers, as they are now expected to 'hit the ground running'. If an agency is used that charges candidates to be placed; does not interview or test professionally; is known to be run by people who are open to racial/tribal/nepotistic tendencies, or does not guarantee confidentiality then for sure the best candidates will not be attracted to interview for positions with the employer. Furthermore, employers must move away from using 'briefcase operators' to using consultants who come from senior management positions themselves, and who are professionally qualified.

One of the most common misconceptions employer branding falls into, is the concept that 'people are your most important asset'. This is not true! The RIGHT people are an employer's best asset. Having people on board for the sake of numbers drives an organization into inefficiency and demotivation- and, unfortunately, we only need to look to many public sector organizations to understand that. I've heard it said by someone who worked in the public sector in Nigeria that 2% of the staff population contributed more than 50% of the work done, and again, that image is a negative employer brand.

Another misconception is that remuneration is the key factor in recruitment. In fact, I constantly 'turn off' from candidates if all they want to know is 'what package is on offer'. Serious candidates will focus more on quality of life issues rather than pure bottom line. Concerns such as employer reputation, organizational professionalism and opportunities for advancement should be bigger 'pulls' for serious candidates.

Lets elaborate on one of those above points: employers reputation: we are constantly told by excellent candidates that "if it is XYZ organization, we are not interested". Employees, past and present, talk about their work places and word soon gets out on which organizations are good employers, and which are bad. I know of employers who have strong consumer brands; names recognized worldwide, but if their EMPLOYER brand is bad, they still will not attract the right candidates. I'm sure you have also heard of organizations who have wonderful products or services but whose bosses are little dictators that send their employees fleeing before them!

So what can employers do to ensure their brand is strong and only good things are said about them? One strong pull will always be development. Companies need to share responsibility with their staff, gain credibility by developing candidates' careers through mentoring, training and development programmes. People want to work for organizations that will eventually make them more employable, and want work that will update their skills on a constant basis.

Positions need to be challenging, less tedious and more independent if the best candidates are to stay put and enjoy their work. Candidates want to work for organizations that encourage social and team work, and for organizations that have a good PR face, be it by taking charity work as part of their assessments. Candidates also look to see how employees are treated upon leaving, and if they are treated like traitors who should be hung from the next lamppost that reflects badly against the employer!

So an employer needs to be more creative than just focusing on package to attract, after all, another organization can always match if not beat what you are offering. So the lesson is that pleasant work environments, constant job challenge and constant refreshment of talent all add together to make a powerful employer brand, and no longer can human resource managers leave branding to the marketers alone.

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