The Impact of Employee Branding on Workplace Conflict

AHMED M. ASFAHANI, Ph.D.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Dahban City

University of Business and Technology (UBT)

College of Business and Administration (CBA)

Human Resources Management Department (HRM)

Email: a.asfahani@ubt.edu.sa, ahmed.asfahani2@gmail.com

Tel: +966 - 12 - 215 9044

Abstract

This paper focuses on the practice of employee branding within private sector, that is, the ability private companies and organizations enjoy in order to recruit those employees who are better suited to the environment and psychology of the company. Employee branding will be analyzed specifically in the context of work conflict situations. It aims not just at the quality of the employee, but also at the qualities a good employer should possess. The paper also discusses how, through this branding process, employees come to know where they best fit within the company, enabling them to pursue the position that best suits their abilities. These forms of employee branding are analyzed in relation to varying influential factors from both inside and outside companies, such as economical and functional benefits, chances of advancing from within the hierarchical structure, and the environment and atmosphere within a given company. Motivation of employees by their employers is also discussed. The paper will also present the different dimensions of brand equity, that is, the ability for a company to enhance its marketability, such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality of products; the employer's attractiveness, given their economic incentives and other factors; the employers' attributes, such as empowerment, training and development, corporate culture, career prospect, compensation, and brand name; and finally, other factors that attract a potential employee to a specific company. The method followed is the result of data collected during the past two decades.

Keywords: *Employee Branding, Motivation, Career Prospects, Position Advancement, Company's Atmosphere.*

Introduction

Competition in both domestic and international markets has immensely increased. In order to keep up with the fast pace in these changing and challenging environments, companies tend to do whatever they can to make them stand out as giant competitors. One practice, employee branding in the context of the private sector of organizations is discussed in detail in this paper. Various forms of employee branding are elaborated upon, and the relationship of these types of employee branding forms to the varying and influential factors both inside and outside the company is examined. Employers and their role in motivating the employees is also discussed, leading to some suggested concrete solutions for the conflicts arising in the organizations.

Employee branding is defined as enabling companies and organizations to recruit those employees who are better suited to the environment and psychology of the company (Mossevelde, 2017). This paper only addresses the private sector because most often it is the private sector complaining about needing more suitable employees; the government already has a tough screening phase for potential employees. Some characteristics of good employees that are suitable for many workplaces are also discussed.

Modern markets are rife with uncountable options in every field, and for an employee to retain their position in such a situation is certainly a strenuous task requiring a lot of struggle and exertion. This hard work, if done in a smart way, can reduce the pressure on the workers and is capable of bringing about some really wondrous results. Employee branding is undoubtedly one of the best options available to any company, but it is also important to note that this process has a lot to do with the welfare and benefit of the employees as well (Nigelwright.com, 2017). Through this process the employees come to know where they fit in the company, thus enabling them to pursue the career or the job that best suits them. The theme of less exertion and more output applies to the individuals as well. After having been rejected from a job the individual comes to know exactly what they need to do. This enables them to make his passion his profession, which results in less struggle and bears more fruit.

Things can be different to ideas mentioned above but those only will be exceptions or aberrations. It almost always happens that the employee is not suited to job, since the employee has been assigned without careful eligibility testing and screening. Consequently, the worst results are not confined to that individual but prevail throughout the entire organization, thus drastically affecting the company's efficiency and making it lag behind others.

Literature Review

Employers' Branding Process

This process consists of multiple techniques or strategies that are applied by employers to attract potential employees to their firm (Miles and Mangold, 2008). The process involves using techniques that make potential employees aware of the company while at the same time influencing the potential employee's perceptions of the company in such a way that he/she is attracted to that particular company. An integral part of the employer's branding process is setting apart their particular firm from other companies by specifically identifying and highlighting certain unique features of their company, its environment, and other exclusive perks that can only be accessed at that particular firm.

This a process in which the company has to create an image to market to a particular audience, the audience being prospective employees. This image must not be a false one; rather, it should reflect the actual essence of what it is like to work at the company so that once individuals actually come to the company, they get what they were promised in the first place. For instance, Google is a perfect example of this. Google promises a stimulating and exciting atmosphere for its employees, and that is exactly what it delivers. Similarly, successful companies are those who apply employee branding in an efficient manner in order to ensure that their employees have a positive impression of their firm; and this in turn gives a boost to organizational effectiveness.

Lastly, to sum up the employee branding process, it is basically the benefits that employers give to their employees. These benefits may fall into different domains, for instance economic benefits correspond to better wages, raises and rewards, whereas psychological rewards relate to moral support, cordial relations and respect. Other benefits may include functional benefits that allow the employee to advance their career.

The entire employee branding process should be carefully mapped by including extrinsic as well as intrinsic rewards.

Brand Equity Dimensions

Brand equity is linked to brand marketing; once the idea of brand equity is coupled with the brand, the brand has the ability to substantially enhance its marketability. Brand equity is defined by four dimensions, which are brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality. Each of these dimensions is integral for a brand to be successful. According to Lee and Leh (2011), the importance is each dimension is as follows:

1) **Brand Loyalty**

This is related to how loyal a customer is to a particular brand. This attachment can occur on two distinct levels. The first level of attachment corresponds to the customer buying a particular brand repeatedly. The second level of attachment is preferring a particular brand over the other brands and keeping the particular brand as the customer's first choice regardless of the price. To accomplish this, certain aspects of the branding process should be enhanced so that the brand loyalty can be maximized.

2) **Brand Awareness**

Brand equity is very dependent on brand awareness. It may be defined as the customer's inclination towards a certain brand because of being able to remember and identify the brand. Brand awareness is very important as it is principal factor that actually influences the customer's perception and makes him/her buy a specific brand. It is also closely linked to loyalty, and if a customer has sufficient brand awareness it is very likely that they will also have brand loyalty. Awareness of the brand is imperative, as it is the awareness of a brand that allows the buyer to choose between different brands. Certain elements should be crafted so that the brand could be remembered by triggering only certain stimuli.

3) **Brand Association**

Only after a customer has adequate brand awareness can he/she have some brand association. A customer develops some associations with the brand after using the brand's products over time. These associations could be memories linked to the brand, its products' performance, or any other personal reactions that an individual has linked to the specific brand. For instance, any attachment to a product of a particular brand may be due to the durability of the brand, or other attributes or features of that brand. Some particular aspects of the brand may have nothing to do with the actual performance of the brand but rather to the symbolic representation of the brand. For instance, a customer may buy a particular brand's clothes because wearing that brand signifies a distinct social status.

4) **Perceived Quality**

This is the customer's opinion regarding the quality of product of a specific brand as compared to products from other brands. It is how the customer rates a particular brand; it is this judgment that allows the customer to make a conscious decision while choosing between different brands. In a nutshell, if a brand has very high perceived quality, it is very likely that a customer will buy that brand. Any brand that is perceived as being of high quality will be favored by the customer. This perception must be tackled carefully.

Employer Attractiveness

This may be defined as the possible advantages and perks that a prospective employee sees in working for a specific employer. An employer can be deemed as more attractive if they promise to give enough monetary and non-monetary incentives to their employees. Potential employees may have specific requirements in terms of the features that they may be looking for in a workplace; the employer can only attract talented individuals by catering these individuals' needs in the workplace and by offering them the kind of atmosphere that they desire. For instance, as mentioned before, Google is perfect example of this. Google not only offers employees the freedom to voice their ideas and opinions, but also provides them a place where they can work on projects they feel passionate about, in a friendly, fun environment, while still allowing them to t deal with challenging problems (Berthon, Ewing, and Hah, 2015)

There are different aspects of employer attractiveness. The first aspect is interest value, and this is basically how attractive the work seems to a prospective employee. If a potential employee sees that he/she will have a chance to work in a challenging environment, participate in big projects and be able to use to create novel products, the potential employee's interest in the company will definitely increase. Another aspect is that of the social value. If the potential employee believes that he/she will be respected by managers, co-workers and subordinates and will have cordial relations with everyone, then the company's attractiveness will be augmented.
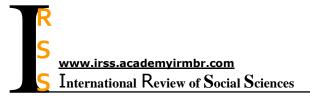
Other aspects of employer attractiveness include economic and development value, where the prospective employee judges whether he/she will be able to grow in his/her career at that particular firm and whether or not he/she will be awarded according his/her work with attractive salaries, bonuses et cetera. All of the above mentioned aspects are part of an employer attractiveness scale, and to attract talented individuals to a firm, an employer must rate well on this scale. (Berthon, Ewing, and Hah, 2015)

Employer Attributes

There are multiple attributes that an employer should possess in order to run their company properly. According to Chhabra and Sharma (2014), these attributes include:

1) Employee Empowerment: This is involves giving the employees a certain amount of authority so they can make some decisions by themselves without supervision.
2) Training and Development: The organization must offer training to new employees in order to get them acquainted with the organization's procedures, policies and systems.
3) Corporate Culture: This relates to the practices used by the company, and the values, beliefs and behaviors of employees and managers that guide them on a day-to-day basis in dealing with each other and the overall business.
4) Career Prospects and Growth: This relates to career development at a particular firm. It is corresponds to how a well a company allows an individual to enhance his/her skills, knowledge, and experience.
5) Brand Name: The brand name carries a symbolic value. It is a representative of the worth of the company, which automatically translates to the worth of the employees of the company as well.
6) Compensation: This is related to how well a company compensates its employees. Compensation includes various benefits that are given to the employee, including, disability benefits, and benefits given in the case of injury or illness on duty.
7) Other Miscellaneous Attributes: These may include various attributes of the employer, such as the employer allowing flexible work schedules, rewarding good performance, and providing various incentives and bonuses to motivate employees.

Attributes' Attractiveness

According to Herzberg's (1959) two factor theory, the motivation that an employee or prospective employee will have to work at a particular company will come from either the job itself, or from the rewards that the job offers. The *hygiene factors* mentioned above correspond to the features of the job itself, for instance salary, supervisor, colleagues, company policies etc. The other type factors are referred to as *motivation factors,* which include recognition, respect, achievement etc. These motivation factors cater to the growth needs of an individual.

Based on this theory, if the employer's attributes are attractive enough, in that both hygiene and motivation factors are catered to, then the individual will be more likely to work for the employer. For instance, if the employee feels that a particular organization will give him/her a certain degree of empowerment, and he/she will have a say in decisions and his/her opinions/ideas will be heard and acknowledged, then he/she is more likely to be inclined to work for that organization. Similarly, if a company has a proper training department, an employee will not be hesitant to apply to such a company, knowing that if he/she has any inadequacy in their skills the training department would assist him/her to obtain the needed skills. So this attribute is certainly an attraction for a prospective employee.

Also, if a company has established a proper corporate culture, individuals who want to become a part of this culture will be motivated to join that company. In other words, if the attributes that a company possesses act as a source of motivation for potential employees, then the company will be attractive enough to make those same individuals accept employment at that specific company (Jones, et al., 2001).

Attractiveness Factors

There are several factors that affect an individual's attraction to work at a particular company (Ahmad, 2012). First, the company's brand name, mentioned before as one the attributes of the company, is a major factor. Potential employees are more likely to work at a well-known company; for instance, an individual is more likely to work for a big name like Apple rather than Dell, even though Dell might be great place to work. Because Apple is such a well-known firm, it will definitely create a bias for the potential employee while making a decision.

Other factors may be personal reasons, and associations with a particular brand or company. For instance, if an individual has friends who have worked at particular company, and those people have good opinions about the company, then it is more likely that the individual will be attracted to that company.

Likewise, while choosing between companies, a prospective employee may prefer a company because it is located close to where the employee lives. This could influence a potential employee's decision and make one company more attractive than others. Other factors may include salary and various other aspects, depending on the individual and the company that the individual might be considering for employment (Ahmad, 2012).

Methodology

Workplace conflict is defined as a state of discord between people working in an organization. It is usually caused by discrepancies in what is expected and the actual values and interests between the working family of an organization or a company. The purpose of this research is to study the impact of employee branding on the workplace conflict. Employee branding is similar to employer branding but it is focused on aligning the behavior of the employees according to the image the company or organization wants to project.

The methodology followed in this research is based on data collected during the past two decades. Data from different companies in the private sector of the region was collected. The two decades of data is a considerable amount, and allows the reviewer (us) to completely analyze the process and ensure that the results obtained at the end of the study are meaningful. After the required data was collected, it was arranged and classified to infer meaningful information. The data was analyzed and the discrepancies were identified so that solutions and the required improvements could be suggested.

Discussion and Analysis

A detailed literature review was carried out to study the existing research on the topic and develop a basic understanding of the various parameters and factors involved in the study. Employee branding has become the single most important factor in getting the best performance out of the employees. Subsequent research has continued to highlight the importance of employee branding. There is considerable literature available, which testifies the importance of employee branding. Employee branding is going to be a significant practice in human resource management techniques (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The significance of employee branding has also been realized by the government sector all across the world (Parkes and Maguire, 2009). Employee branding influences different aspects of an organization, including motivation and productivity (Hong, et al., 1995), competitiveness among workers (Miles and Mangold, 2008) and effects of corporate social performance (Turban & Greening 1997; Albinger & Freeman, 2000).

Spread Positive Emotions

Establishing the perfect brand culture has become very important for companies who want to compete in the international market. In a global and tech savvy world, maintaining perfect standards not only for the customers but also for the employees has gained enormous importance. Employees prefer to work in healthy environments, and therefore if companies want to hire the best possible talent available in the market the recruitment department must be able to present positive aspects of their organization. Employee branding has also gained importance from a marketing point of view. Employee branding is a tactic for displaying a working environment through its employees who not only interact with other employees within the organization but also with external stakeholders. The process of employee branding involves the training of employees, and in the process, they are given considerable attention. This process spreads positive emotions within the working environment. The employees feel self-satisfaction as they are given special attention. They feel entitled and start owning the organization, thus creating a positive impact. According to Maslow's Theory of Needs, self-actualization is one of the primary needs of a working individual which when met has major impacts on not only the individual's behavior but also on the organization itself. This positivity reciprocates and creates a positive atmosphere within the organization. It also creates a positive impact on the national and international market and leads towards socio- and economic development of the organization. According to Maslow's Theory of Needs, a healthy work environment is one of the primary needs of a working individual. Therefore, by spreading emotions the employer can actually benefit from the work of a satisfied and content employee.

Taking New Risks

Within an organization, the best way to move forward is by taking bold decisions involving risks. In any organization, that wants to be competitive, it is necessary to take measures to ensure that every opportunity is exploited and risks are taken that could help their growth. Some people tend to play things safe; they follow the safe standards and procedures established and stick to them, not experimenting with different ideas. Such organizations stagnate at a certain level and do not develop to their full potential. At times, taking risks can prove costly with organizations suffering losses on different scales. Bold decisions and

risks should not just be taken randomly; rather, the structural aspect of the organization should be kept in check and all necessary calculations should be made to justify the decision. For example, a company should not expand the market for its products if it does not have the manufacturing processes and workforce to support it. Making such a decision would inevitably lead to failure. The employee branding process is an example of how companies in the modern day are moving forward not only to attract consumers but also to attract a talented workforce. This has enabled organizations to expand their set-ups and reach out to the global market.

Supportive Learning in the Workplace

A well-structured organization places significant emphasis on learning in the workplace. While employee branding is a modern marketing and development technique, one of its key aspects is learning. Employee branding is an extensive process which ultimately aims to strength the organization's position in the international market while enhancing internal organizational effectiveness. Employee branding programs include regular job training, training in customer service or customer interactions, corporate orientation, and education about the corporate brand. Teaching and training are the core aspects of employee branding programs; they teach the employee to adapt their behavior to represent the organization's policies. Employees should know that to prosper they should be involved in active learning, which is well supported by the organization to which they render their services.

It also teaches employees marketing behaviors, and how to interact and attract employees, all of which can be extremely beneficial to the particular individual as well. Apart from employee branding teaching programs, an organization, in general, should be able to provide a learning platform for its occupants. The environment should be able to support learning and development. Such an atmosphere encourages employees to join a particular organization. The distinctive difference between a national and a multinational company is the existence of such learning programs within an organization. Young employees in particular intend to join companies that offer such opportunities. Such opportunities are necessary should be shaped by the organization so that employees stay motivated and they provide their best energy, aligning well with organizational goals.

Solution

The discord that arises in organizations due to differences in opinions, approaches and methods of completing tasks can lead to conflicts of different scales within an organization. For the healthy growth of the organization, it is pivotal to eradicate all such conflicts. Conflicts hinder organizational productivity and deviate the employees' behavior from actual goals to their own personal needs. Various studies have shown that some percentage of conflict is good for organizations as it leads to positive synergy, but once the conflict level crosses a certain threshold it becomes hazardous for the company. Therefore, it is important that a department is formed within an organization to deal with such conflicts and that the proper means of tackling such issues should be employed in organizations.

It is important to lay the foundation and define the basics so that differences of opinion between employees can only lead to healthy and constructive arguments from which the organization can benefit. Employee branding has had a significant impact on handling conflicts within organizations. Employee branding creates a sense of responsibility among the employees. Employees start owning the organization and develop a sense of giving back to the organization. They respect the policies and the procedures developed by the organization to carry out different tasks in a specified manner. The difference between what the employer expects and what the employer actually gets from the employee diminishes as the employee is trained and branded in such a way as to fulfill all the desired requirements. While trying to avoid conflicts within an organization, it is important for the employer to understand and value the emotions of an

employee. When an employee has an emotional reaction to an organizational dispute, he or she indulges in thinking about the situation and starts to contemplate the possible outcomes. This can take the individual's mind off important things leading to a drop in their overall performance. In a state where there is a possibility or probability for a conflict to develop, the employer or the senior official should display leadership and should try to refrain from indulging in long and pointless debates and arguments. The employer should be flexible in his/her approach and should be able to analyze both sides of the picture before passing judgments. Whenever a conflict arises the best approach is to identify the basic cause of the conflict. Occasionally, a conflict is a manifestation of a deeper issue either at the employee level or the management level. Therefore, it is extremely important to identify the issue and eradicate it completely. One of the best methods of keeping things together in an organization is by using a regular feedback system. The feedback system should developed such a way that each and every individual within the organization should be held accountable for their actions. Even the highest corporate and organizational positions should be held accountable. This develops a sense of responsibility in the employees as well as those holding higher posts to do things in a manner that is most beneficial to the organization. The employee branding process has had a considerable impact on the conflicts within an organization as discussed above; however, the other methods for resolving issues should also be considered equally important.

Conclusion

As much as the best of the employee is needed in the workplace, a similar criterion is needed for the employer. Good employees cannot work as subordinates to an inexperienced or less appealing employer. So the qualities and characteristics of the employer should be those that empower employees, and retain and strongly uphold the corporate culture, along with having positive perspectives for the employees. these are all essential attributes that serve as the competitive advantages of the companies those which have such employers (Chamberlain, 2017).

Moreover, the brand name of the company is a beacon of attraction and appeal for potential employees. A big company means higher privilege. so employees generally leave no stone unturned to get a place in such organizations. Employees do not always find it comfortable in every environment because there are always conflicts when more two or more people work together. Therefore, it has been found through careful surveys that many factors can play a pivotal role in nullifying conflicts in the workplace. Some of these methods include the inculcation of positive emotions in the employees, and enabling them to take new risks. This will lead the employees to discern the undiscovered part of themselves, thus proving beneficial for both the employee and the company (Jonze and George, 2009).

It is absolutely essential to eradicate all sorts of organizational conflicts in order for the goals of companies to be achieved. Leadership needs to play a decisive role when conflicts will arise in an organization. Leadership works as the binding force between all the members of an organization. In order to make the company or organization stay intact it is important to have sound and sensible leadership. Identification of the cause of a problem can also prove immensely helpful.

In short, it is not one or the other part that defines the success and progress of the company; rather, the entire organization and the whole company starting from the employer, including the leadership and ending with the employees needs to remain intact, like one integral unit. That will certainly bring success to the organization. Everything needs to be kept in a delicate balance and order to assure that no hindrance or obstacles block the company from achieving its organizational goals. Employee branding has brought to light the explicit, important and significant perspectives that need to be kept in mind for employers as well as employee.

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