

Employer Brand and Affective Commitment of Employees

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Abstract. The existing situation on labor market has been characterized by a shortage of highly qualified efficient personnel for many years. Company staff is a unique competitive resource and source of profit in any organization. A strong employer brand is a basic foundation for the strategic success of an organization, as it forms the positive attitude of employees and ensures their affective engagement. More and more Russian and international organizations have to resort to new tools to attract, retain, manage staff loyalty and involvement, and establish their image in the job market. Traditional management methods are no longer effective enough in solving such problems. The study reveals the essence of the employer’s internal brand and its constituent part – the affective commitment of employees. It specifies the tools to ensure the development of affective commitment of staff.

Keywords: employer brand, affective commitment, staff retention, loyalty diagnostics, involvement of the staff, the concept of well-being

1. Introduction

Changes occurring in the labor market over the past few years dictate new conditions for employers to recruit and retain talented and very few specialists. There is an increasing competition for employees every year. The employer’s activities to improve working conditions in their organization involve the systematic research on new approaches to positioning their own company as an attractive workplace. There is a particular focus on the analysis of the activities of direct competitors in the market place with the benchmarking application (Mosley, 2009). Not all employers pay attention to developing their brand, staffing strategy, building a system for selection, adaption, motivation and engagement of employees. The result is a lack of relevant responses to job postings; staff turnover is higher than the level recognized as normal in the company’s field of activity; low employee motivation; low labor results (Petruk, Shashlo, 2020). An organization puts in place measures to improve and form an employer brand based on its scope and available resources. As the company continues to grow, the set of tools applied to promote its own brand also changes.

The purpose of this research project is theoretical justification, development and testing of a set of measures for the formation of an employer brand, contributing to the development of affective commitment of employees. Proceeding from the target goal, it is necessary to perform the following tasks: to study the relationship between employer brand and affective commitment of employees, to develop a methodological basis for the study of employer brand, to offer recommendations for the development of affective commitment of employees.

2. Methodology

Management researchers believe that branding agrees to anything a consumer can choose, including an organization (Corte et al., 2011). Authors of the works dealing with employer brand use the term “employer brand” (Ambler, Barrow, 1996). Russian companies use the term “HR brand” which leads to a flawed understanding of the areas of responsibility for corporate brand making, where the HR department is to carry out the planning of strategic intervention and tools for interaction with potential and active staff members. In fact, the company’s management is responsible for the final result = the strategically correct company promotion, the unity of communications and messages, and HR specialists serve as coordinators and experts. The work to form a positive employer brand aims to increase the level of motivation and engagement of the organization’s employees (Minchington, 2015, Mokina, 2014).

The increased role of intangible assets is reflected in the formation of unique competitive

advantages of modern organizations. Employer brand consists of two components – the internal and external employer brand (Martin et al., 2005, Martin, 2008, Sullivan, 2004). An internal employer brand is a consequence of employees' perception and attitude towards their company. An "Employment value proposition" is being developed for internal clients (Backhaus, Tikoo, 2004, Moroko, Mark, 2008). In the course of reviewing the research on employer brand, various concepts of the term "employer value proposition" have been analyzed and the following definition has been proposed. Employer value proposition is a strategic concept of employer brand implemented by the employer through the use of a set of communication tools to offer the existing functional, emotional and social benefits and attributes of an organization to the target audience (Tsareva, Lisitsa, 2018).

One of the main goals of an employer brand is to create an image of the employer company as an ideal workplace, including economic, psychological and functional benefits for potential job candidates and employees of an organization. Creation of a particular organization culture that contributes to the achievement of goals that are different at each stage of the life cycle of an organization. So, in infancy is the main goal of creating an employer brand – to attract appropriate staff, to announce itself on the labor market (Masilova, 2020). The development and stabilization of all elements of an employer brand is at the stage of organization's growth. The stage of maturity is characterized by the consolidation of an employer brand's position on the labor market; in recession, a developed brand retains staff and forms a sense of unity, company ownership and confidence in the future.

Meyer N., Allen J. developed a three-component model of organizational commitment, consisting of affective commitment, normative commitment and commitment to continuity (Meyer, Allen, 1991). According to them, affective commitment is emotional attachment, normative commitment refers to an assumed obligation to continue working in the organization, and the decision to continue working refers to the estimated costs associated with some staff members' leaving the organization (Allen, Meyer, 1990). Affective commitment covers the basic psychological needs of individuals, which can induce them to restructure their work. Affective commitment fosters employees' sense of attachment, identification with the organization, and belonging to it, which can fuel their motivation for job crafting (Naeem, 2020). Commitment is an integral socio-psychological attitude, formed as a combination of loyalty, engagement and identification (Yakimova, Tsareva, 2019). An emotionally committed employee is respectful towards management, colleagues, accepts and approves their decisions and actions, develops working productive effective relationships with colleagues and management. He or she shapes their own professional development strategy within the existing company strategy. A constituent part of commitment is staff loyalty – the desire to remain an employee of the company and share the values and goals of the company (Demushina, 2015, Karymova, 2017).

With employer branding the goal is achieved – the human resources potential of an organization is developed, which is part of a set of works to increase the economic efficiency of an organization (Titova, Terentyeva, 2020, Varkulevich, Beloglazova, 2018). Under the personnel potential within the framework of studies we understand the capabilities and abilities of the organization's employees to solve current and strategic tasks within their professional practice. Opportunities and abilities mean professional knowledge, experience and competence, innovativeness and personal characteristics of an employee (Arnaut, Mitrofanova, 2018, Klesheva, Petruk, 2013). Talent management involves aligning the capabilities and abilities of employees and the goals of an organization. Sometimes talent is hidden and becomes apparent depending on contributing external and internal factors in the organization (Nedoluzhko et al., 2016). Effective achievement of the organization's strategic goals ensures the development of the company's human resources.

To form a positive employer brand and develop affective commitment, company management applies various tools for effective personnel management. One of them is the concept of well-being as "creating an environment for achieving satisfaction that allows an employee to thrive and reach their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organization" (Rath, Harter, 2010). The complex concept of well-being, which was first defined in 2010, has been significantly expanded and supplemented under the conditions of today (Koren et al., 2020). Well-being takes into account the

individual needs and goals of an employee, focusing on the individual's physical and psychological health, financial well-being, professional growth, a comfortable workplace and developed relationships within the company, including feedback. The psychological health and well-being of an employee is primarily associated with positive emotions and feelings, as well as with constructively built relationships in the team.

3. Results and Discussion

Drawing on the works of the authors who deal, to one degree or another, with the problems of employer brand and affective commitment, and our own theoretical developments in the field of intersection of these subject areas, it is proposed that the formation of internal employer brand is based on affective commitment of the majority of employees and is capable of influencing the organization's human resources capacity in the long term. Assessing the current state of an employer brand and comparing it with the desired state makes it possible to put the HR strategy into the strategic management of the organization's personnel and further promote the internal target audience and control the results obtained, with further adjustment of measures and tools, if necessary. A qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of an employer brand is expressed in a set of factors that affect the business processes in an organization. The employer brand is one of the constituent parts of the human resources management strategy and has a direct impact on the development of the organization's human resources, which guarantees the company's success in the future.

In the course of the study, a questionnaire-based survey was conducted to diagnose staff loyalty as an indicator of the formation of an employer brand. The choice of this method is also due to its advantages, such as a relatively low cost with a high information content of the data obtained, the possibility of using econometric methods for further analysis of the data obtained. Undoubtedly, the questionnaire, like any other method, has certain drawbacks, for example, the impossibility of obtaining broad information from the respondents, the likelihood of socially desirable responses from the respondents. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by L. Porter et al (Mowday et al, 1979) was used. The survey engaged 420 employees of a trading company (sale of auto goods, auto chemicals and auto parts) with a developed branch network, which is 69% of the total number of employees. The data obtained from the OCQ survey are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Loyalty of Company's Staff

№	Points	The number of respondents who gained these points	Percentage of all passed, %	Interpretation
1	0-30	5	1,2	Absolutely disloyal to the company
2	31-45	33	7,9	Loyal in the case when there is a benefit
3	46-60	73	17,4	Employees are generally loyal but there are moments they are not satisfied with in the company
4	61-75	281	66,9	A rather loyal employee who is satisfied with almost everything
5	76-90	24	5,7	A super loyal and devoted employee who is ready to Суперлояльный и преданный сотрудник, готов жертвовать собственными интересами ради успеха компании
6	91-105	4	0,9	False result

Based on the results obtained, we can say that the majority of respondents (72.6%) are loyal to the company. The second position is taken by the employees who are generally loyal but there are moments they are not satisfied with in the company – this proportion is 17.4%. The employees who are absolutely disloyal to the company are 1.2% = this may seem to be a low prevalence rate for a trading company. This result is a consequence of the well-conceived personnel policy of the company. Each employee has an opportunity to get an organizational learning, and as a result –

deepened specialization and increased professionalism, and every staff member has also an opportunity to talk about their ideas, show their professional vision of the situation during discussion and increase their area of responsibility for development of career paths. Under such circumstances, an employee works effectively and becomes self-fulfilled in a comfortable environment, increasing their professionalism and productivity.

Professional training for corporate employees is carried out during trainings with an internal trainer of the company and self-education of employees using an internal corporate distance learning system (DLS). The distance learning system allows employees to develop not only in the workplace, but also in any other place where there is access to the Internet. The company has personnel assessment procedures that allow for monitoring the level of professional knowledge and the availability of certain competencies and recommending certain training courses. Thanks to the DLS, an employee can view the courses that they need to take for personal and professional development, as well as monitor the result and effectiveness of the completed course of training. The company has competitive programs of non-financial motivation for front-office specialists, namely the program *Non-Financial Motivation*. The program involves employees of such positions as Sales Representative, Sales Manager, Client Relation Manager. The main factor in this program is the competition that takes place within the divisions and reveals a leader – the best employee. This program allows you to reward employees for the work done, to increase their involvement in the process of achieving commercial and strategic results. The organization seeks to combine competent human resource management with the maximum use of labor and personal potential by creating favorable conditions and full compliance of an employee with the position held, qualifications and corporate spirit.

Conclusion

Today, the issue of developing an employer brand is becoming more and more important. Employer branding is seen as an integral part of the overall business strategy. The company's attractiveness is confirmed by the engagement of a sufficient number of employees, including talent willing to undertake efforts to increase the company's productivity and innovation. The human resource development has the advantages such as creating an internal talent pool, retaining and developing potentially talented employees, providing staff with new career opportunities, reducing the cost associated with recruiting and adapting new employees due to improving the competencies of active staff members. Companies with a positive employer brand may gain financially from the socio-psychological determinants of employee participation and productivity. Employees are proud to belong to an organization and trust in their employer, which is the key to success in today's economy based on knowledge and a precondition for building an effective organizational culture.

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