



DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE EMPLOYER BRANDING STRATEGY AT ABC LIGHTING COMPANY FOR EARLY CAREERS THROUGH EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is written to carry out the required company research for Amelia Martia Rachman's final graduation project in International Business at Diponegoro University, Indonesia and at Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands. This research paper focuses on assessing and developing the employer branding strategy for early career talents at ABC Lighting Company in order to develop an efficient plan as the company is currently looking for an appropriate approach to strengthen its brand awareness within potential early career talents. Desk research, including newspapers, articles, records of data, and a survey of 24 respondents regarding ABC Lighting Company's employer branding efforts were conducted to obtain the data for this research.

The findings of this study will be used to help the company develop a plan to improve its employer branding strategy to attract young professionals as well as to boost the intern-turnover rate into full-time employees. It will give a further insight into the key elements of an effective employer branding strategy, dimensions of employer branding, candidate journey funnel, effective employer branding channels for Generation Z, the characteristics and work values of Generation Z, as well as the potential challenges and opportunities for Generation Z-focused employer branding.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Employee Advocacy, Generation Z

INTRODUCTION

ABC Lighting Company, a global leader in energy-saving lighting solutions, has been in operation for over 130 years. Previously known as Philips Lighting N.V., the company has a presence in 74 countries and over 34,600 employees. Its mission is to unlock the potential of light for brighter lives and a better world. ABC Lighting Company's growth is

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driven by trends like linked lighting, food security, and climate action. In 2022, the company's installed base of connected light points grew by 18 million to 114 million. The company's strategic frontiers include being a customer-centric organization, offering unique lighting options, driving sustainability growth, digitalizing, and being a great place to work. Despite a disruptive external environment, ABC Lighting Company has made significant progress in 2022 by establishing a customer-focused, localized operating model and driving better process excellence. The company operates through subsidiaries, affiliates, and branch offices, with centralized-shared services supporting divisions and market clusters.

In today's competitive global market, recruiters must coordinate marketing and recruiting operations to secure a competitive edge. Recruitment marketing has emerged as an innovative means of talent acquisition, requiring organizations to create a recruitment marketing plan and solidify their reputation as desirable places to work (Alashmawy & Yazdanifard, 2019). A strong employer brand and positive company image are crucial for attracting outstanding employees in a competitive global market (Cappelli, 2001). Employer branding improves both the company's image as an employer and its appeal as a place to work (Sivertzen et al., 2013). It looks outside the company walls for places where recruitable talent can be found and enticed to join (Foster et al., 2010).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Branding the company as an attractive place to work helps companies find and hire outstanding employees and ensures the company delivers on its promises to customers (Lindholm, 2018). The pace of change in the modern labour market is also unprecedented, with more individuals switching occupations and careers worldwide (ILO, 2022). Hence, recruiting and sustaining talented employees has become a top priority for companies due to digitization, globalization, and demographic shifts (Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009).

In order to formulate an effective employer branding strategy, this research will analyse the internal and external factors regarding ABC Lighting Company's employer branding strategy for early careers. This research is focused on early careers as the target group due to the rising generation of workers entering the workforce now and in the near future belong to Generation Z's age group as well as ABC Lighting Company's current focus on boosting the intern-turnover rate into full-time employees. Individuals from

Generation Z are in their early 20s, were born after 1995, and have recently graduated from or will soon graduate from college (Lanier, 2017). Creating a pool of young talent ensures good health of the business and provides sustenance in the following years (Briganti & Samson, 2019).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to develop an effective employer branding strategy for early career professionals, with a particular emphasis on the arising group of individuals entering the labour market. The research will specifically address ABC Lighting Company's efforts to enhance the conversion rate of interns into full-time employees, with a focus on Generation Z.

This strategic approach is motivated by the recognition that cultivating a pool of young talent is crucial for the long-term viability and sustainability of the organisation (Briganti & Samson, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will concentrate on the behaviours encountered in a certain social phenomenon through the subjective experiences of the participants, hence the qualitative technique will be employed to acquire more insight into the study (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). Qualitative studies use a wide variety of methods and take an interpretive, naturalistic approach to their subjects. In order to make sense of or interpret occurrences in terms of the meanings individuals bring to them, qualitative researchers investigate objects in their natural contexts. Case studies, personal experiences, introspective narratives, life stories, interviews, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts are all examples of empirical materials used and collected in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Field and desk research will provide the majority of the data for this study since they provide a better knowledge of the nature of the workplace's daily experience and provide insight into its dynamics. Together with the information gathered through interviews and observations, previous research on related topics as well as surveys and focus group discussion results from the previous batch will also be used to support the research data. The collected data will be tested for accuracy using the CRAAP test.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employer Branding

Employer branding was pioneered by Ambler and Barrow in the early 1990s in Europe. According to their definition, it consists of “the functional, economic, and psychological benefits that are provided by employment and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Employer branding helps businesses stand out in a competitive job market, attracting candidates who share many of the same values as the company itself (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The concepts of employer branding and employer brand are distinct, with employer branding encompassing the activities involved in establishing and sustaining a company’s employer brand.

On the other hand, employer brand pertains to the reputation and desirability of a company as perceived by prospective employees, and encompasses the values and benefits that the company offers to its workforce (Hovorka, 2017). Given that it comprises a company’s goal, values, culture, and personality, an employer brand is an integral aspect of the employee value proposition, which will be explained further in characteristics of successful employer branding on research analysis. Employer brand also represents what the company conveys as its identity to existing and prospective employees.

Generation Z

People born after 1995 make up Generation Z, and this group is often referred to as the first true “digital native” generation because they have grown up in a digital and technological environment, are adept at using technology and social networks from an early age, and are sometimes even viewed as addicted to these mediums (Lanier, 2017). This generation appears to be driven by the pursuit of their ideal job and the chance to develop their skills (Magano et al., 2020). As a result, it is expected that they will switch jobs more often than previous generations and will be willing to make a swift transition if they are unhappy with their current position (Csiszárík-Kocsr & Garia-Fodor, 2018).

Early Careers

Early-career talents are people who are just starting out in their chosen field. Those with less than five years of professional experience are considered "early careers" (Handshake, 2023). This comprises students who are about to graduate from college, recent grads, and those who are enhancing their skills at bootcamps, via certificates, or through other means. Early career talents, whether due to age or inexperience, may make up for their lack of

years of professional experience with attributes like adaptability, curiosity, and a willingness to try new things. People with exceptional potential who are just starting their professions may also be more proficient with modern technologies than their more experienced counterparts (Cohen, 2022).

Employee Advocacy

According to Men and Tsai (2017), employee advocacy occurs when current or former employees actively promote their employer to external stakeholders through the use of their own personal networks and social influence. Public relations, corporate management, and business studies are among the many fields that have long recognised the value of employee feedback. Employees' external voices significantly impact organisation's public relations and business image since they are the key internal stakeholders who link organisations with the wider public (Kim and Rhee, 2011; Men, 2014; Men and Stacks, 2014). Natarajan et al. (2016) demonstrated that a favourable employee brand (i.e. the employer brand as seen by workers) leads to more enthusiastic brand support from the workforce.

CONCLUSIONS

To effectively target Generation Z early career individuals, companies must assess and cater to their preferences and needs in creating an early career-targeted strategy. Gen Z seeks a company that supports professional growth, work-life balance, and technology advancement. Due to their short attention span on social media, companies should create digestible content that easily reaches the target group.

Gen Z primarily gathers information about potential employers through social media, with Instagram being their most-used platform. They also seek a company that supports career growth opportunities with an inclusive and supportive company culture. Social media campaigns and employee posts are the most effective employee advocacy channels for reaching early careers, with content focusing on career growth opportunities, realistic views of working at the company, and the company's culture.

According to Handshake (2023), one of the keys to effective employer branding for millennials is emphasising the importance of personal connections and showing Gen Z that there are individuals in the workplace who will help them succeed. Potential employees might be attracted to the company by emphasising the variety of opportunities available for

professional growth and by integrating the company's values into the candidate journey. When creating social media content targeted at early career individuals, it is important to provide valuable and engaging information that resonates with their interests and needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen brand recognition, an early careers-focused campaign on LinkedIn and Instagram can be launched, with ambassadors acting as pioneers. Creating an ambassador program for interns and early careers would give a further insight into the company's culture for prospective employees. The campaign can be promoted through reposting on LinkedIn and social walls, and tracking can be simplified using a campaign hashtag. Posting early careers-targeted content tailored to Generation Z's preferences can also entice potential employees. Leveraging social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels can help reach the targeted group. Providing valuable and engaging information that resonates with their interests and needs is crucial for creating successful social media content. The recommendations would entail the following topics:

1. Leveraging current employees to increase brand awareness and social media presence

The employer branding activities of the organisation may benefit greatly from employees' input as a young professional ambassador. In their capacity as a brand ambassador for the company, employees could incorporate key elements of employer branding in employee advocacy:

- a. Authenticity in Personal Storytelling
- b. Showcase Development Opportunities
- c. Demonstrate a Positive Work Culture
- d. Seek Feedback and Share Insights
- e. Stay Current and Engage in Continuous Learning

In order to successfully recruit and engage early career talent, as well as promote the organisation's overall employer brand, employees should take into account the following employer branding components in their work as an early career ambassador.

2. Posting digestible early careers-targeted campaign

a. Planning Stage

Before implementing the strategy based on the employer branding funnel, there are a few preparation that needs to be taken:

1	Making a hashtag specified for the campaign
	<p>Details: Having a tagline for the campaign would make it easy for target group to follow through the campaign and for the company to track the impact of the campaign. #StarttoShine hashtag could also be used for the campaign as long as the campaign could be tracked.</p>
	<p>Tagline Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - #DefineYourFuture - #BeginYourJourney - #DiscoverYourPath - #LaunchYourCareer
	<p>Person in Charge: An employee from Employer Branding & Recruitment Marketing team</p>
2	Raising awareness of the campaign through employee portal
	<p>Details: Encouraging employees to join the campaign through employee portal would amplify the impact of the campaign by periodically sending the campaign details through Teams, Viva Engage, as well as email-blasting.</p> <p>An EB&RM employee would need to be in charge of posting the campaign information on employee portal with an asset prepared for the campaign.</p>
	<p>Platforms: Teams, Email-blasting, and Viva Engage</p>
	<p>Person in Charge: An employee from Employer Branding & Recruitment Marketing team</p>

b. Awareness Stage

During the awareness stage of employer branding, the company’s social media content should aim to raise brand recognition and interest in the company as a prospective employer of recruitment by targeting individuals in the early stages of their professional life:

1	Company Culture & Values Highlights
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasise the aspects of the company’s culture, values, and employee perks that will appeal to recent graduates and other entry-level employees. - Convey success stories, publish images, or make videos that highlight teamwork and employee effort.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlight any innovative initiatives, such as diversity and inclusion programmes or employee resource groups, that have contributed to a positive work environment.
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company’s social media accounts - Employees’ social media accounts (Sprinklr Extend)
2	Networking and Community Building
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivate people in their early professional lives to network and interact through social media platforms. - Make use of online groups or hashtags to facilitate the exchange of information and the resolution of problems. - Hold online meetups or chats specifically for young professionals to help them get to know one another.
	<p>Platforms: Employees’ social media accounts with a hashtag</p>
3	Brand Heart Storytelling
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring attention to the company’s sustainability, DE&I, and T&I initiatives, as well as any others that speak to the brand’s values. - Promote an inclusive and sustainable work environment by disseminating material and stories that highlight workers’ diverse life experiences.
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company’s social media accounts - Employees’ social media accounts (Sprinklr Extend)
6	Employee Referral Program
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocate employee referral programs to increase participation. - Motivate current employees to spread the word about job openings and the advantages of working for the organisation is an effective way to reach a larger audience and perhaps attract prospects who are already linked to the employees.
	<p>Platforms: Employees’ social media accounts</p>
7	User-Generated Content
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivate individuals to make and share posts about the organisation and its brand heart. - Host competitions, challenges, or giveaways in which participants contribute material; then, share the best submissions and award the participants. - Using user-generated content may increase interaction and broaden audience using this tactic.
	<p>Platforms: Employees’ social media accounts with a hashtag</p>

c. Consideration Stage

In the consideration phase of employer branding, the purpose of employee advocacy is to give useful information and engage prospective applicants who truly are contemplating making an application to the company. Here are some recommendations made for the consideration phase:

1	Department Takeovers
	<p>Details: Allow departments to take over the company’s social media for a day or a week. They may talk about what they do on the job and why they like working for the organisation. This gives prospective employees an honest and in-depth look at the company.</p>
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company’s social media accounts - Employees’ social media accounts (Sprinklr Extend)
2	Behind-the-Scenes and Day-in-the-Life Content
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce young professionals to the values and atmosphere of the company. - Showcase teamwork, events, and staff activities with images, videos, and narratives. - Provides a channel for young employees to talk about what they have accomplished so far in their careers.
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company’s social media accounts - Employees’ social media accounts (Sprinklr Extend)
3	Career Development Opportunities
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Underline opportunities for professional growth including training, conferences, and tuition assistance. - Highlight the ways in which the organisation encourages and facilitates professional development.
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company’s social media accounts - Employees’ social media accounts (Sprinklr Extend)
4	Q&A Sessions
	<p>Details: Hold Q&A sessions with individuals who have achieved great success in their roles within the company. This opens the door for prospective employees to ask detailed questions regarding training and advancement opportunities.</p>
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company’s social media accounts

	- Employees' social media accounts (Sprinklr Extend)
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d. Conversion Stage

The purpose of social media material created during the conversion phase of employer branding is to attract, engage, and convert interested prospects into actual applications or leads. Here are some suggestions for material that might help with the conversion stage:

1	Job Postings
	<p>Details: Post visually pleasing and engaging job ads on social media accounts. Describe the position's most important duties, required skills, and perks. To entice and motivate applicants, use captivating language and visually appealing images.</p>
	<p>Platforms: Employees' social media accounts</p>
2	Employee Testimonials
	<p>Details: Recruit current employees to share their good experiences working with the organisation. Describe their impact, their development potential, and their accomplishments. Trust may be established and social evidence provided to applicants via the sharing of genuine employee tales.</p>
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company's social media accounts - Employees' social media accounts (Sprinklr Extend)
3	Career Tips
	<p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give useful advice and suggestions for completing the application. - Provide practical advice on how to improve their resumes, how to ace their interviews, and how to land jobs. - Share knowledge on the topics of personal branding, making connections, and advancing one's career. - Give advice about making the most of an internship or first job out of university.
	<p>Platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company's social media accounts - Employees' social media accounts

3. Increasing university exposure by attending more campus fairs

The presented analysis indicates that, compared to other global companies operating in the Netherlands, the company's brand recognition is low. Because of this, the organisation has to step up its offline efforts related to employer branding

by increasing its presence at career fairs in order to attract qualified candidates, particularly those at the beginning of their professional careers. Because of the company's strong message on sustainability, innovation, learning and development, and diversity, equality, and inclusion, it is in a good position to recruit Generation Z employees. The organisation might increase its visibility to potential employees by spreading its message at career fairs.

4. Making a career page on Instagram

To enhance the company's reputation as a desirable workplace, it is recommended to establish a career page that provides information about working conditions and the company's internal community. This account can also feature content created by employees. Although it may take time to establish a presence, investing in an employer-branding account can provide valuable insights into the company's culture. The page should be visually appealing, featuring photos, videos, and infographics, and adding personality through employee testimonials, quotes, or videos. Maintaining an updated site is crucial for attracting top talent and promoting transparency about the organization. By creating engaging and informative content for the career page, the company can attract top talent, set itself apart as an employer of choice, and attract top talent.

Impacts on IB Domains

1. Supply Chain and Operations

Employer branding strategies can lead to positive outcomes such as top talent recruitment, increased engagement, productivity, and innovation. A company's reputation is crucial for hiring and retaining top talent. The same values and objectives benefit supply chain and operations teams, as employees are more likely to provide suggestions, enhance procedures, and drive continuous improvement when the employer brand is seen positively.

2. Marketing and Sales

Employees' alignment with a brand's values and culture is crucial for genuine customer interactions. Maintaining uniformity in marketing and sales is essential for trust and long-lasting relationships. A solid brand makes workers feel proud and enthusiastic, leading to increased productivity and innovation. Companies with

solid employer brands are more appealing to consumers as they appear reliable, ethical, and committed to delivering high-quality goods and services.

3. Organisation and People

A strong employer brand can significantly improve a company's efficiency, output, and profitability by attracting skilled and well-fit employees who demonstrate the company's core principles in their daily work. A positive employer brand also raises the company's reputation, making it more attractive to job seekers who value the company's values. An effective employer branding improves employee involvement and retention, creates a pleasant work environment, encourages belonging, and boosts loyalty.

4. Finance and Accounting

To foster trust as an employer, financial and accounting procedures should adhere to laws and industry standards. Hiring top-tier professionals can boost productivity, improve financial reporting accuracy, and reduce turnover costs. An employer branding strategy that addresses accountants' concerns and emphasizes honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct can also benefit the company. A culture of trust among investors, clients, and regulators is crucial for maintaining the company's reputation and bottom line.

Possible Ethical Issues on Employer Branding Strategy

1. Authenticity and Transparency

The information that the employee advocates publish should fairly represent both the employee experience and the company's core values by avoid making any false claims or embellishments that can mislead applicants. Building trust with the audience requires being open and honest with them.

2. Employee Privacy

Getting employees' permission before using them in company promotional materials needs to be done out of respect for their privacy to ensure that they understand what will happen if they choose not to participate and that they would not be penalised if they reject.

3. Employee Empowerment

Motivating employees to take action without resorting to pressure or intimidation is the appropriate approach by the company. Employees should believe they have the freedom to engage willingly and that doing it will not have any adverse effects on their current position or future advancement prospects.

4. Social Media Guidelines

The company needs to clearly outline what is and is not acceptable material, language, and behaviour on social media for employee advocates. Fostering online activity that reflects well on the company's culture and values helps to build a strong reputation as an employer.

5. Confidential Information

Advocates should get training on how to handle and protect sensitive data from employees to make sure they are aware of the limits of revealing confidential business or customer information by communicating exactly what can and cannot be said in public.

6. Inclusivity and Equal Opportunities

The company needs to ensure that employees' attempts to advocate for change do not unintentionally leave out any groups or reinforce any existing prejudices by reflecting on how the material will affect marginalised groups and making an attempt to increase their visibility and participation.

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