

CAHRS Working Group
Group:
Employer Brands,
Employee
Experience and
Attracting Talent
May 3, 2023

Employer Brands, Employee Experience and Attracting Talent

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Key Takeaways:

1. For both employee experience and employer brands, it is critical to think how higher-level elements may be unique across different personas/groups of employees.
2. Where employer brand team sits in the organizational structure is important.
3. It's critical to evaluate how the lived experience of employees matches the desired employee value proposition (EVP) or intended employee experience.

Key Terms

Employer brand, EVP, the employee experience, and employee engagement are different but related concepts, but often we see consultants and some organizations use them synonymously. Thus, we felt it was important to differentiate between them and to talk about how they relate to one another.

Employer Brand:

Overall description of the reputation of the employer as a place to work and the employee value proposition. An employer brand can be assessed both in terms of the intended brand – marketing/branding material description of the organization as an employer and as the internal (current employees) and external (potential employees) perceptions of the company as an employer. The intended brand can be determined from the internal and external messaging, communications, and marketing materials that are intended to shape individuals' perceptions of the organization as a place to work. The actual Employer Brand is determined by the perceptions/beliefs held by prospective employees (external employer brand) and current employees (internal employer brand) about the organization as a place to work.

Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

The elements of the employee experience that the organization has identified the most essential aspects to communicate internally and externally in order to provide clarity and differentiation and enhance current employee engagement and retention and make the company an attractive place to work for potential employees. The EVP is a subset of the Employer Brand that focuses on the most important aspects that differentiate and/or have the strongest impact on attracting and retaining talent.

Employee Experience

This aspect of work relates to the set of feelings and beliefs that

14 attendees from 9 companies:

Accenture
American Express
Hormel
IBM
Manulife
Procter & Gamble
SC Johnson & Son
Shell
Trane Technologies

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employees hold regarding how they experience different aspects of work and the workplace ranging from the physical workspace itself; interactions with peers; interactions and support from leaders and supervisors; the technology and tools needed to perform their jobs; HR activities and practices (e.g., benefits, pay, performance management, learning); organizational policies; and culture. These can be viewed from the lens of organizational strategic intent (the experience the organization is looking to create) or the lived experience (how employees in the company actually experience and feel the different dimensions noted above). The lived employee experience is the key driver of employee engagement.

Employee Engagement

This term describes the emotional attachment that employees feel towards different aspects of the organization (the organization and its mission/purpose/impact on the world, the work itself, peers/colleagues, and leaders). Higher levels of emotional attachment to the four different factors positively impact employee retention, employee effort, and performance.

Where to Start with Building or Reshaping the EVP?

A frequently asked question is where should a company start when they are looking to create or reshape its employer brand or EVP? Participants in the session noted that their organizations were at different stages of creating their first EVP or were in the process of reshaping their EVP. While participants had slightly different approaches, the most frequent best practice in identifying the EVP was to start with data collection and analysis on the lived employee experience to more deeply understand what work factors were most important or influential in driving employee engagement and motivation. From this, companies can hone in on the key elements that are both important to current and potential employees and those elements that seem to differentiate the organization from labor market competitors – these elements should serve as the core of the EVP. By working with internal marketing, branding, or communications teams, the team responsible for developing and shaping the EVP can then create the marketing and messaging and share and communicate the EVP internally and externally.

Is there a Single EVP or Employee Experience Across the Organization?

While discussing the above, another frequently asked question revolved around how to structure the EVP or evaluate the lived employee experience – should this be consistent across all levels, locations, and roles or are there differences across personas? The consensus across participants is that there may be some higher-level philosophies or themes that are consistent across all roles such as key aspects of culture/organizational norms; HR practices (e.g., internal growth opportunities, investment in employee development); or leadership behaviors. These elements may provide an overall anchor

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to the EVP or employee experience. However, most participants agreed that the specifics of how these elements play out are likely to be different across groups of employees (e.g., different generations, corporate offices vs. manufacturing plants, professional roles vs. front-line customer service roles, North America vs. Asia Pacific regions). Further, participants noted that they are looking to build out unique messaging and marketing content to reflect these differences to help effectively communicate how these higher order values are actually experienced across different personas. That is, because the lived experience and expectations for these elements are different across personas, the organization needs to effectively capture and communicate these nuances to various intended audiences.

Role of Technology and key Tools to Measure and get a Pulse of the Lived Employee Experience

Multiple participants raised questions regarding how to effectively measure and keep a pulse on the actual lived employee experience across different employee personas. On a related note, there were also multiple questions regarding the role of technology for sensing tools to understand perceptions of the EVP or employee experience. Multiple participants noted that they have used interactive tools (e.g., design thinking, employee forums, focus groups) to capture the voice of employees in understanding key elements of the employee experience and how their lived experience matches with intended experience. Importantly, technology can play a key role in expanding this planned data collection or for ongoing sensing of the employee experience. Multiple participants noted use of electronic discussion boards or other virtual tools for collecting employee perceptions and experiences. Additionally, participants noted the use of virtual tools to capture employee sentiment or to do sentiment analysis on internal and external social media platforms.

Where Should the Employer Brand Team sit in the Organizational Structure?

Across the last five plus years, many companies have moved the Employer Branding/EVP team out of marketing and moved it somewhere within the HR organization. A number of participants shared that this team sits in their organization's Talent or Talent Acquisition Team, while others noted that it sits in the Organizational Capability Team. It seemed that those that located it within the Talent Organization focused more on the external recruiting aspects of the EVP/Employer Brand, whereas those that had it in the Organizational Capability Team may have rotated more toward the employee experience and internal communications/retention aspects of employer brand. Likely, aspects of this work cross different aspects of HR, marketing, and internal communications, so the team might be best suited by having multiple reporting lines or at least strong relationships across various functions.

This Summary Report was prepared by Chris Collins for participants of the "Employer Brands, Employee Experience and Attracting Talent" Working Group.

The Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) is an international center serving corporate human resources leaders and their companies by providing critical tools for building and leading high performing HR organizations.

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