



Peer Group

Employer Brand Bulletin

Issue 2 | Spring 2009

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Hello and Welcome

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the Employer Brand Bulletin, published by Peer Group Communications.

It's been an interesting few months since the first Bulletin was published. Credit crunch commentators continue to dominate the airwaves, and with the combination of the February snow and the increasingly frequent reports of both real and threatened job losses and salary freezes and potential pay cuts, it's been more than a little chilly for many people.

Despite reports of a further 320,000 job cuts over the next three months, the news is slightly more positive among privately-held businesses of which more than two thirds (68%) are planning to keep staff levels the same or increase them over the coming year, according to a recent survey by Grant Thornton. Parts of the UK retail sector are holding firm too, with the creation of just under 50,000 new jobs announced since January.

While the prospects of recovery don't look good in the short-term, there are some interesting stories of positive action from enlightened employers who are thinking creatively about how to manage difficult issues.

About Peer Group

Part of the ThirtyThree network, Peer Group is an employment research and employer brand consultancy, which works with organisations to help them engage effectively with existing and potential employees.

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Many organisations are exploring redeployment, voluntary sabbaticals and overseas placements in the hope of staving off redundancies, and some, like KPMG are leading the way, implementing schemes which allow staff to consider signing up to the possibility of working a four day week or take sabbatical leave of between one and three months. What's particularly impressive about this use of flexible contractual arrangements is the level of employee consultation involved. This flexible arrangement not only shows commitment to retaining talented people but will place the organisation in a competitively advantageous position for the long-term.

The picture across the rest of the world is similar, although there are notable differences for some economies. The BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) continue to deliver positive GDP growth rates, as our Insight to India article reports.

In fact, the Spring edition of the Bulletin has a distinctly global feel, with articles on India, the European Graduate Market, a report on global employer brand emerging trends and case studies from Merck Serono and Bechtel. We hope you find it interesting reading.

Jo Brickell

Editor

EMERGING TRENDS IN GLOBAL EMPLOYER BRANDING



Brett Minchington MBA is an International Employer Brand Strategist and author of 'Your Employer Brand attract-engage-retain' which was published in 2006 and has since sold in over 32 countries. In his capacity as Chairman of the Employer Brand Institute, Brett is also responsible for the EBI's Employer Branding Global Research Study, due to be launched early in 2009, results of which are available at www.employerbrandinstitute.com

In 2008 Brett delivered keynote addresses at conferences, conducted employer brand educational workshops for senior managers in 12 countries and consulted with corporations on their global employer branding strategies. Peer Group caught up with Brett to ask his views on the trends he sees emerging in employer branding and what advice he would give as a consequence to companies in the UK. In this issue, Brett shares some insights into the future directions of employer branding.

Companies are starting to break down traditional business models

The rise of inter-departmental teams working on the employer brand strategy in collaboration with pockets of excellence across the globe is becoming more commonplace today. Traditional consulting models are being enhanced by virtual consulting models which optimise the benefits that VOIP and global networks provide by bringing corporations closer to accessing global best practice at a fraction of the costs under traditional consulting models.

Companies should investigate how to leverage pockets of excellence in the virtual economy to access global best practice, keep costs down and to contract talent that would otherwise be inaccessible. This could involve engaging a team in India to work on an employer branding solution whilst your employees in UK are asleep.

Talent doesn't always have to be employed inside the company and the global skills shortage is only going to make it more important for companies to 'think outside the square' to access best practice to assist in developing the employer brand strategy.

My company was recently involved in a global employer brand project where the lead agency was based in the USA and our team was able to consult on the project from our offices in Australia using Skype to connect with our global team of associates. We also used teleconferencing technology to conduct market research inside and outside the company in five global regions where they operate. Our virtual model not only resulted in significant cost savings for the client, the project was delivered many months ahead of what would have been possible under a traditional face-to-face consulting model.

Engaged employees are being trained as company ambassadors

Highly engaged employees are now being considered and trained to fulfil employee ambassador roles to promote the company's employer brand.

Word of mouth has always been the most powerful and authentic form of promotion so it pays to research how your employer brand is perceived by employees and by potential hires to ensure the actual employment experience is closely aligned with the employment promise promoted through recruitment communications. Employment value propositions such as, 'Grow your career with us,' just aren't believable anymore.

If you don't know how to locate your potential hires during your research phase then chances are your competitors do and are already building relationships with them.

Companies should increase their internal referral hire rate through ambassador programs which will not only save on recruitment costs, but will result in a new hire that is more aligned with the company's culture.

It's time to invest in your online employer branding initiatives

Our latest global research shows the career website is the main medium companies use to communicate their employer brand to their target audience. Our research on the career websites of the FTSE100 shows that companies still have a long way to go to be truly optimising their career website for competitive advantage. Many still see their career website as a, 'I'll get to that soon,' activity! This is not an advisable strategy given candidates are likely to visit your career website to obtain a better understanding of what it's like to work at your organisation.

Companies should invest in building their online employer brand by reviewing their career website and building profiles on networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook to engage with their target audience. With millions of members these networks are fast becoming a valuable means of engagement with current employees and potential hires for companies. One of the first companies to build a company profile on Facebook, Ernst and Young now has over 23,000 members in the Facebook community, providing a cost-effective, long-term opportunity to promote their employer brand to their target audience.

Resources should be allocated to ensure the company's talent bank is more than a list of names. Talent relationship management is an emerging field and the global skills crisis will force companies to know more about the employment intentions of their target audience than ever before. This will drive companies to invest in relationship building initiatives rather than reactive practices that more often than not do not attract the best person to the role.

Greater understanding of culture diversity in global employer brand strategies

Similar to how we have seen a rationalisation of industries such as home wares, supermarkets, sporting goods and office stationery we will see an increase in the number of global employer brand projects being undertaken to optimise the benefits of a global strategy including a more coherent promotion of the employment promise and cost savings on recruitment, employer marketing, consulting and recruitment advertising.

This will require global brands to have a greater understanding and appreciation of the diversity in the employment experience desired across different cultures. Recruitment advertising that appeals to an employee from the UK does not necessarily resonate with a potential hire from Poland. Companies need to invest to understand what can be customised across the borders and what needs to be reflective of local customs. This must penetrate deeper than simply changing the photos on your career website to reflect the person's country of origin.

Companies are beginning to realise the benefits of building relationships with their target audience

I am amazed but not surprised at the number of companies who join a social network such as Facebook or LinkedIn, build a network of thousands (recruiters are famous for this!) and then never get in touch with them.

It's not the quantity of relationships but the quality of relationships that extols the benefits of global networking. Very few companies actually leverage the power of networking through these online platforms.

When HR technology was first introduced, recruitment agencies were quick to adapt the technology to build databases of contacts in excess of millions. Their business model didn't support segmenting the database and maintaining relationships with candidates based on their talent profile. More clients created more ads which created a larger database. Each step was a billable activity so there was very little motivation to tap the talent that already existed in the agency's database. I have only once been contacted by a recruitment agency in my lifetime and I would have registered with at least 20 databases during the last 20 years!

Unfortunately I see similar strategies being adopted by corporations who end up with nothing more than hundreds of thousands of redundant names in a database. Companies need to invest in talent database initiatives such as targeted marketing programs with those they would like to recruit when the time is right. These initiatives should support off-line initiatives such as talent days where companies invite top potential hires to spend a day at the company to connect with leaders and be briefed on the latest developments.

About the author

Brett Minchington MBA, Chairman/CEO of the Employer Brand Institute is considered one of the world's leading authorities on employer branding and in 2008 delivered keynote addresses at conferences, conducted employer brand educational workshops for senior managers in 12 countries and consulted to corporations on their global employer branding strategies. Brett is the author of 'Your Employer Brand attract-engage-retain' and his new book, 'University means Business' will be published in April 2009. Brett's work has been featured in HR, Marketing and Management publications around the world. Brett may be contacted at brett@employerbrandinstitute.com

Brett Minchington MBA will be chairing the Employer Brand Global Intensive to be held in London on 21 April 2009. The event includes eight International and National Employer Brand Experts.

For more information, visit www.collectivelearningaustralia.com

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Event Chair