

8 Signs an employer brand stinks and how to avoid the trap

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Your employer brand impacts your business' reputation as a workplace. As mentioned in our previous article, if we look at companies such as Google, Apple, etc., yes they are known for their great service offering but what sets them apart from the rest is their focus on the importance of their employer brand and investment in the happiness and well-being of their employees. Your employer brand is essentially the face of your company, so if done right it can help recruit better candidates, improve productivity and retain stellar employees. But if not done correctly, a bad employee brand can potentially sink a thriving organisation.

You typically notice signs that your business has a reputable employer brand. But, can you see the warning signs that your employer brand could be in trouble? The following are signs that can help you see if your brand stinks and how you can avoid them:

1. Employee Engagement Levels Down:

Decreased employee engagement is one sign your employee brand stinks. According to Forbes (2019), your business should receive regular feedback from workers about their positions and workplace experiences, whether it is through employee reviews, surveys, or informal discussions. Negative changes in engagement or remarks (e.g., lower scores or bad feedback about the business on evaluations) could be a roadblock for your employer brand. How your employees feel about their jobs and work culture directly impacts your employer brand. Just like customer feedback, employee feedback is equally crucial to the business. When employees bad mouth your brand, it is similar to bad publicity. When employees have negative perspectives towards their employer they are likely to influence potential hires or newcomers in the organisation leading to hiring or retention challenges. In order to have a strong employer brand, it is best to have your employees spread positive feedback about the organisation. Conduct employee engagement surveys or feedback sessions, these allow you to gather employee feedback towards the employer brand. Consider finding ways to improve your employee experience, where possible making the necessary changes that can improve your employee experience. Engaged employees work with passion and feel proud to be associated with their employer.

1. Fear of Change and lack of flexibility...

As businesses expand, your employer brand and marketing efforts must evolve as well. But, you can't improve your employer brand if you are too afraid to make a change. If you find yourself avoiding different ideas and changes, you may have a problem (Forbes, 2019). Some employers try to avoid change when trying to grow their business, in turn, employees sense this fear and as a result, start to fear change too. Fear of change and taking risks can inhibit creativity from your employees and your business from innovations, influencing its employer branding and overall reputation. Observe other players within your sector and see what changes they are implementing and also take into consideration

global players that have big employer brand and see what lessons your organisation can draw how they are growing their brand.

Instead of being afraid of change, organisations should encourage it and ask for new ideas in the workplace. Creating a strong culture that is open to innovation allows for a better employee brand. And, receiving recommendations from employees allows for a variety of thoughts and input.

1. Troubles with retaining and recruiting employees

According to LinkedIn's Employer Brand Statistics Report, 75% of job seekers consider an employer's brand before even applying for a job. Candidates are attracted to appealing employer brands. How often do you try to replace employees in the company? Do you know why they resign every month or even every week? Retaining difficulties or increased employee focus on pay and perks are warning signs that something is wrong with your employer brand. The sudden concern for pay increases, increased perks, or a competitor having a better benefits package might be a sign your brand no longer communicates values resonating with employees. How much you invest in your employer brand can be reflected in your employee retention. According to research employee turnover can be reduced by approximately 28% by investing in your employer brand. Employees may leave for a range of reasons, including low pay, lack of respect, or a little reward for hard work. Conduct research that can help pinpoint why your employee retention has decreased. Fix any issues that come out from your research to help retain employees. Organisations must aim to have employees that are proud and happy to work for the business.

Are you finding fewer people responding to your job posts? This could be another sign that your employer brand stinks. Candidates are attracted to appealing employer brands. Create an employer brand that stands out to future jobholders.

1. Lack of authenticity

As an organisation are you transparent with your employees especially regarding issues that affect them? If your efforts aren't authentic, they may be hurting your employer brand. As an organisation embrace who you really are and go with it. Do not try to be like other businesses and copy their ideas and cultures. Potential candidates must be able to see what sets you apart from the rest. Make use of social media in showcasing the uniqueness of your organisation. This allows candidates to visually see who your organisation is and the people that make your organisation. Take a moment to look at your website, does it resonate with your organisations' values and culture. Some websites either have outdated information or pictures or pictures taken from the internet which shows no authenticity about the organisation. Your website and social media pages much contain real pictures of people within your organisation and real testimonials about your organisation. Information sharing with employees, on the other hand, should be open especially on issues that affect them, employees should never have to hear for example of a retrenchment exercise taking place in their organisation through social media or the press.

1. Management failing to walk the talk

It is one thing to have a great employer brand it is another thing for management to embrace it and learn to walk the talk. If your management team fails to uphold the ideals of the brand, new hires are going to notice and either follow suit or leave the organisation, sending you back to square one of trying to hire again.

In this case, it is important for management to commit to the employer brand and exhibit it in their daily interactions with employees and when interviewing new candidates. Management has to be on board with the message being conveyed by your employer brand.

1. Not caring about departing employees

If employees choose to leave the organisation, they may have some strong emotions about their experience which if not shared or given a chance to voice could be voiced on other platforms that could potentially damage the employer brand. An example is given of a lawsuit that Uber faced after women that had left the organisation alleged a hostile work environment or sexual harassment. This issue raised the importance of considering what an exiting employee would say about your company. Hence it is important to conduct exit interviews or gather information from those departing your organisation on their experience working with the organisation. Such feedback could help in fixing issues that could potentially turn away new hires or cause you to lose your top talent.

Departing employees must be treated with respect and their feedback must be taken seriously. Choosing to ignore their feedback could have long-ranging consequences on the organisation.

1. Key Stakeholders aren't on board

Employer brand building is cross-functional, it does not involve one department alone. It touches on Human Resources, Corporate Communications, Marketing, etc. In some organisations, HR instead of partnering with other departments in building the brand it tries to build the brand on its own which it fails to do effectively. Employer branding consists of marketing, so it is only wise that HR involves the Marketing department in its bid to build the employer brand.

1. The brand execution lacks consistency

Successful brands require consistency. Without consistency the brand creates confusion but with consistency it creates trust. A successful brand must be aligned with the business and talent strategies of the organisation. Employer brand strategies fail when the employer brand becomes inconsistent. Your branding strategy must speak to realities on the ground in your organisation for example, you can preach about your organisation having a collaborative culture when in reality people work in silos. That is inconsistent and inauthentic. Such inconsistency is likely to push away new hires and lead to bad publicity.

With any business strategy, there is the possibility of failure or things failing to go exactly as planned. By avoiding the issues mentioned above, an organisation can avert the possibility of failing. According to Shannon Smedstad, Engagement Director and Senior Employer Brand Strategist for Exaqueo, it is

also important to make sure the organisation has the right team in place starting from the CEO, that can help steer the employer brand strategy. Finding and keeping people who will thrive inside your organisation takes knowing who you are and what you stand for as a company.

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