

Build your reputation as an employer from the inside-out.

Ask Chief Executives today if they think that the reputation of their organisation is more important than it was five years ago and they'll almost certainly say, "yes". There are many reasons for that. Ethical consumers, generation Y, corporate scandals and many other factors have determined that we all look much more closely at what we are buying, investing in, or who we want to work with.

Reputation is very important to the City. In "Measures that Matter", Low and Seisfeld discovered the top ten attributes valued by city analysts. Number one is the execution of strategy, number two is the capability of management, and at five, is the ability to attract and retain talent.

If you ask Chief Executives what are the most important business objectives that reputation helps achieve, guess what comes out on top – recruiting and retaining employees.*

This century, there has been an increased interest in, and focus on, the employer brand. No bad thing, but mistakenly much of that effort is solely aimed at attracting people. In this sense it is concerned with promotion rather than "product". The "product" in this context is the employment experience – the core of the employer brand.

If the promotion makes "promises" that aren't realised experientially, then it may indeed work for attraction, but not for retention. And retention only adds value if the right people are retained. Companies don't want to keep people who are not performing because they don't add value.

The key metric here is engagement. In other words are your employees aligned with and committed to your objectives?

Consider employees as a dynamic asset. The value of their contribution can go down as well as up. And that will depend on:

- how they are managed;
- their line-of-sight between their job, their team goals, and organisational objectives;
- how they perceive reward and whether they can influence it;
- how they are learning and developing;
- and of course, how they are involved in decisions which might affect them.

Employee satisfaction is not a determinant of performance: it works the other way. Employees who are aligned with, and committed to your objectives perform. They are much more likely to be engaged; channel discretionary effort to your benefit; and given the conditions outlined above, enjoy job satisfaction.

Building a strong employer brand systemically from inside the organisation enables you to build something which is sustainable, flexible and relevant. Through the creation of an aligned and committed workforce you can drive

performance and value. In the process you will be able to attract, engage, and retain talent; and by enabling that talent to be empowered to give of their best you will be able to delight customers and keep shareholders happy. This way you get the employer branding “product” right. Then you can apply the graphic symbolism, nomenclature and strap lines to promote it.

The process never ends. As the business imperatives change, the system has to change to support the new objectives. We must continually take a dispassionate view of the total employment experience so that we may accurately assess whether all of the components and elements are working synergistically to support the overall corporate objectives for performance.

The employer brand may have evolved but it is not a given. Like any other corporate asset, that brand requires evaluation, planning, investment, and careful stewardship. Ultimately you can drive sustainable competitive advantage, and leverage that most precious of corporate assets – reputation. It is a virtuous cycle.

Alan Crozier

Managing Director

Q⁴ consulting limited

alan.crozier@q4consulting.com

www.q4consulting.com

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