

How to craft an employer branding strategy

Employer branding specialist, Celeste Sirin, of Employer Branding SA, speaks to Bizcommunity.com on how to craft a successful employer branding strategy and why strong ties to the marketing and communications department within an organisation, is important. Employer Branding SA aims to develop employer branding best practice in South Africa by educating leaders.



Celeste Sirin

■ What are the key attributes for a successful employer branding strategy?

1. Foremost, employer branding needs to be viewed as a strategic, integrated approach as opposed to companies assuming that it rests solely with human resources (HR) and/or marketing. It is driven from the top by the [CEO](#) and the management team; and dedicated buy-in and participation is required from every stakeholder within every functional/operational division of the business.
2. A defined objective, whether it be a long-term or tactical (campaign based) approach, needs to be agreed upon, with clearly defined deliverables, time-frames, measurables and more importantly, how it ties in with meeting company's holistic business objectives and bottom line profitability.
3. A dedicated employer branding leader/champion needs to be assigned to a company's employer branding strategic portfolio (intent), else it won't get the attention it requires. If employer branding is to be listed as a KPI line item to be met within the talent team, it will definitely fall along the wayside.
4. One of the biggest advantage points to ensuring the success of an employer branding strategy is to ensure that HR has strong ties with marketing and communications. Each brand custodian cannot underestimate the power behind promoting a unified corporate brand. There has been a gradual shift in mindset towards businesses realising this globally, with 36% of companies within the LinkedIn [Global Recruiting Trends Report 2017](#) confirming that recruiting is collaborating with marketing and communications.
5. Companies with a clearly well-defined and authentic Employer Value Proposition have a solid foundation from which

to build both their internal (retention) and external (attraction) employer brand.

6. Companies that are capitalising on utilising social media recruitment channels to position their employer brand presence are at the forefront of winning best-in-class talent.
7. [Demonstrable measurable](#) and proven Return on Investment is the ultimate key to a winning Employer Branding Strategy, especially when it comes to receiving ongoing recognition and buy-in from your CEO and C-Suite. Insights confirm this as being one of the biggest challenges when it comes to the implementation of one's employer branding strategy.

■ How does South Africa rank with employer branding efforts globally?

The awareness of employer branding is still growing within South Africa if we compare it to our more advanced counterparts, i.e., UK, USA, Australia, Middle East, Asia, Europe, etc. The main difference between countries abroad versus South Africa, is that with the majority of multinationals being spread over numerous countries, their approach has had to be extremely strategic and long-term. Here in South Africa, there are pockets of companies that have executed on numerous standalone and tactical employer branding initiatives, but these have been pretty reactive to addressing employee engagement, talent attraction strategies, learning and development, organisational development and the like.

There is a big disconnect between SA's massive unemployment rate versus the calling for critical skill set requirements within, for example, information technology, telecommunications, engineering - the high demand skills which are in fact being experienced globally. The only difference is that, for example, in America there is an overabundance of positions with fewer qualified candidates to fill these roles. The common ground on which we tread is that of having to implement a strong employer branding strategy in order to retain and attract such talent.

For South Africa to start aligning itself with the more advanced countries, SA talent leaders need to:

- Demand a seat at the EXCO table and start aggressively promoting the necessity/advantages of this being a pivotal business requirement, together with aligning leadership behaviours accordingly.
- Our economic climate has led to companies becoming more self-sufficient when it comes to nurturing and attracting talent. Sadly, the ignorance of employer branding as a tool is being sorely underutilised by SA companies. View: [The New Era Recruiter](#).
- [53% of global companies](#) acknowledge that if budget wasn't a constraint, they would definitely look towards investing in branding and tools. Likewise, certain South African companies recognise the need and share the same sentiments, thus the tactical implementation of small pockets of employer branding initiatives.
- Whilst social media channels are continuing to attract the greatest increases in employer brand and recruitment marketing investments globally, there is still a resistance and/or lack of ignorance on the part of SA as to the power behind these channels in focusing on the positioning of their employer brand, with them utilising them more for reactive recruitment.
- [41% of the \(WMAE\) World's Most Attractive Employers](#) cited employee referrals as their primary employer brand objective compared to 30% last year. This is evident within the SA market as well where [52% of companies](#) rely on staff for internal referrals with 46% of companies having implemented internal referral reward programmes.

■ What is your prediction for the biggest trend in employer branding, going forward?

- Social media recruitment is on the increase, especially with the limitation of professional job boards like LinkedIn on which to position/showcase your employer brand and value proposition. Companies will start recognising these channels as a perfect means to start promoting their employer brands and value proposition, underpinned by an increased focus towards utilising their employees as credible brand ambassadors.
- Companies are presently focusing on internal 'housekeeping' by way of engaging their workforce and becoming increasingly aware that personalised attention need be provided towards the entire employee lifecycle/journey. Retaining critical skills is pivotal, both locally and globally.
- Companies human resources departments need to dig deep into their pockets and require a strong motivation towards venturing externally for their talent requirements. With this being said, they will need to pay serious attention to implementing compelling employer branding strategies, both inside and out. Companies will begin and/or continue to redefine their internal employee engagement strategies, paying closer attention to the manner in which candidates are being engaged and nurtured from onboarding, to their exiting of the company. Commonly known as the employee experience journey.
- There is already recognition towards the need to create newly crafted employer branding specialist roles, i.e., the Talent Experience Manager, Employer Branding Manager, within the talent space and I believe that this trend will

continue to grow as human resources starts moving more and more towards the centre stage of companies realising that the people they employ are their differentiators.

■ What is the fundamental change in the marketplace today that is impacting on employer branding strategies?

- The role for recruitment has changed to that of marketing with social media, recruitment marketing advertising and employer branding becoming necessary KPI's which recruiters need to deliver on.
- As mentioned previously, whilst one cannot overlook our high unemployment rate, there is still a need to position and upsell your EVP to those passive work seekers who are equipped with the critical skill sets that companies want to attract.
- Social Media and mobile technology provides fantastic platforms through which companies can educate, position their employer brand content and promote their reputation. The companies that have embraced such technologies are already at the forefront of securing passive work seekers.
- Companies are inviting employees to become their brand ambassadors, utilising them more and more to provide storytelling and content which will resonate with attracting talent.
- With talent acquisition teams having to tighten their belts, they are being increasingly looked upon to provide insights, statistics, case studies and measurable to justify any form of employer branding initiatives, whilst this topic is still being viewed as a non-priority.

■ What is the cornerstone of your employer branding success?

Our Employer Branding Masterclasses have provided corporates of all sizes across various industry sectors the opportunity to venture, network and share knowledge on this topical and emerging trend, with some of them already making great inroads in implementing their employer branding strategies.

My intention is to continue driving and spreading the word of employer branding across South Africa with a view to eventually witnessing the growth of this emerging trend down the line.

■ Please provide any additional comment, relevant stats or facts to show current trends.

There are a number of credible global employer branding online courses which talent leaders can upskill themselves on: <http://www.employerbrandingcollege.com/> and <https://www.employerbrandingacademy.com/en>.

To experience global insights first hand and to really submerge yourself into the global playground of employer branding, Employer Branding International holds its annual World Employer Branding Day in Europe in April <https://www.employerbrandinternational.com/>.

Sources:

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