

# Management crunch



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**To win talented employees, it's essential to identify clearly and accurately what motivates your organisation and communicate it effectively in recruitment campaigns**

**W**e live in difficult times. The language of 'crisis' has entered our everyday vocabulary to encompass issues relating to culture, food, climate, credit and energy.

We also have a global talent crisis on our hands, at least in the Western world. This war for talent began with low birth rates in the 1980s, followed by the 'baby boomer' generation – now in their 50s and 60s – leaving employment for retirement. A popular perspective predicts that in the West, for every person entering the job market by 2012, four will exit. By 2016, the ratio will be one to six.

So while we're all busy struggling with a credit and confidence crisis, is the talent crisis one of the problems underpinning the current situation? Do we have too few truly skilled people to manage further growth?

To find a way out of the talent crisis, we need to look further than the top of our organisations. We must also

critique the shop floor and our people behind the sales counter. A business should always be asking itself:

- Do we attract the right candidates from around the world at both the executive and elementary levels of the organisation?
- Do we have a corporate culture that finds and fosters the right talent?
- Do we offer sensible and sensitive incentives to let rare talent rise through the ranks?

Companies need to ask themselves whether their employer branding strategy is sending the right signals to stimulate a sustainable business performance. If it is used correctly, employer branding could potentially help to cure the cultural and economic crises.

One good example is the financial services sector. It must readjust its culture and image from being a short-term, product-bundling, profit-hungry, consumer credit-driven sales machine

towards a long-term, performance, planet and people-focused business.

But this will not be helped by its prevalent employer-branding paradigm. You only have to look at the online recruitment practised by financial brands such as AIG, Allianz, AXA and Zürich Insurance. They show a generic, corporate image that I believe shows little imagination in attracting talent, never mind retaining it.

All the four competitors choose to be 'big and blue', rather than projecting an inspirational, individual and company-specific culture profile. I see their websites as little more than dull digital shop windows – impersonal, passive and stuffed with testimonial career stories.

Most employer branding profiles today are, at best, industry-generic. It also seems likely that whatever effort has been made in the past few years in individualising employer branding will now be compromised by the credit crunch.

Look at supermarket Aldi's employer brand promise: 'Share in the success.' This is a great goal and an achievable invite. Aldi is a brand growing in awareness and profits, especially as shoppers turn to cheaper options in a credit crunch. But the reality of working for a value retailer does not match the sunny creative exploration.

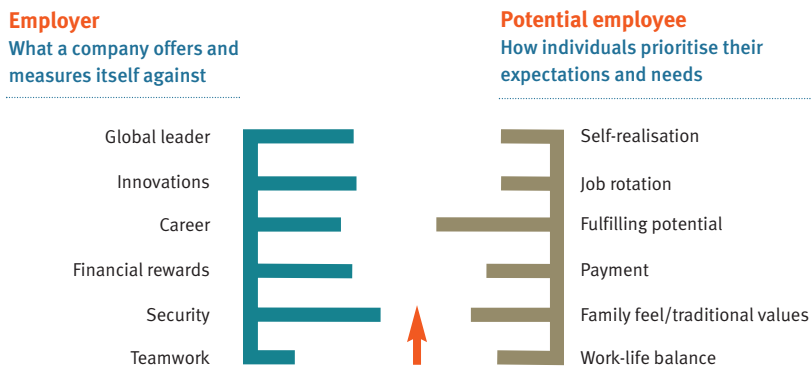
To grow a serious slice of the world grocery market and retain the cream of talent that Aldi asks for in its recruitment advertising, it needs a more gritty approach. Working for Aldi requires clever strategical thinking to move it above other low-cost rivals and take share from more established supermarkets. But its recruitment ads do not touch on this area.

## Misleading message

Burger King has a similar issue. Its 'You're King Material' recruitment campaign is guilty of offering potential restaurant recruits a glittering career when all many of them want is to buy time until they find another job. But it already has the solution within its own history. The more honest 'Have it your way' approach positions Burger King as an employer with flexible working hours that can act as a stopgap that helps people get to where they please.

**FIGURE 1 'WE' VERSUS 'ME'**

EMPLOYER BRANDING NEEDS TO ADDRESS THE 'PERSONAL PROFIT' FOR EMPLOYEES



**FIGURE 2 WHAT DRIVES YOU?**

**ARE YOU DRIVEN BY POWER, SKILL OR SEDUCTION? THE ANSWER IS CRUCIAL**

**POWER (DOMINANCE-DRIVEN ORGANISATIONS)**

Market leadership is the ultimate goal. Employees must like to merge and be big. These companies are keen to exploit market deregulation and fragmentation, seeking growth through acquisition and price strategies. Size offers safety. Example: American Airlines.

**SKILL (TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN ORGANISATIONS)**

Size is secondary. These firms exist because of a unique offer. They are not driven to be big, but to be best. Products and services offer a function that is subject to continuous improvements. Employees are attracted by engineering and excellence. Examples: Lufthansa Airline and Lufthansa Technik.

**SEDUCTION (PEOPLE-DRIVEN ORGANISATIONS)**

These want to be loved for being different. They beat big business by being smart and customer-friendly. They offer an innovative alternative to the market-prevailing logic and the leading employees are aspiring rebels with a cause. Example: Virgin Atlantic airline.

Future employees are looking for truth. They don't just want a job; they want an interesting challenge with international aspects to the career; facts about personal development, perks for peak performance and socially responsible credentials.

The really talented individuals out there are looking for fulfilment. This comes when an individual feels as though they successfully add to the whole. As a result, employer branding needs to be about the individual (me) as well as the corporate (we). This tends not to be conveyed well in corporate employer marketing (see figure 1). The personal 'profit' for employees is never emphasised.

So how should a company make their employer brand work for them? Be careful not to complicate the process or your communications. Think creatively but keep things emotional and human. Obviously, focus on the big picture of what the company does but go in there step-by-step:

**1** Establish a cross-functional 'leadership' steering group within the

organisation. Draw on people from different departments for their perspectives.

**2** Review your current employer-branding approach and dynamics. Are employees:

- Able and knowledgeable about how to push strategies forward?
- Able to identify the needs of the company and its people over the coming years?
- Able to understand how to attract and retain the right talent?
- Really understanding the competition?
- Using a successful strategy that secures recruitment and retention?
- Creating an attractive workplace?
- Understanding the criteria of success and how you measure it?

**3** Articulate the 'future footprint' of your employer branding. Should you be driven by power, skill or your powers of seduction? Each of these demands a different approach (see figure 2).

**4** Compare/agree what gap exists between your employer brand today and tomorrow.

**5** Decide on a design (look and feel) for your employer brand.

**6** Develop communication tools.

How you present yourself on your website – your digital window to the world – is paramount.

**7** Create tools to manage the rollout of your new ideas and strategies.

**8** Pilot test your strategies and new policies in key markets.

**9** Make sure you document the process with new human resources tools and guidelines.

**10** Decentralise the employer branding effort to all employees. This is the responsibility of everyone in the firm.

**Deep commitment**

Feel good and do good are no good for now. The time for cosmetic image exercises is limited. Let's get real. Winning the best talent now is the best way to protect and prepare for the next crisis. Employer branding is about more than just putting cream on top of the corporate credentials. It is a challenge to create and conduct your culture – an exercise that really requires talent. ●



*(From top left) American Airlines, Lufthansa and Virgin Atlantic have very different driving forces; Burger King's 'King material' campaign; Aldi seeks the 'cream'. Do corporate giants such as AIG, Allianz and Zürich (below) lack imagination in terms of corporate image?*

