

## HR Voice

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### » Organizational Development

## Employer Branding as a Recruitment and Retention Tool

*Phaedra Burke*

When someone is walking down the street and you see them wearing clothing that has the lululemon or Nike logo you know what that company is just from the brand identity. You know what products they sell, what their values are, what their image is and whether or not you would shop for their products. Two questions: do you know what it is like to work there? Wouldn't it be cool if people saw the employer brand for your company and automatically knew what it is like to work there?

### What is Employer Branding?

Why do organizations brand themselves? The reasons include creating a recognizable look in their marketing, distinguishing themselves amongst their competitors in the marketplace, identifying their uniqueness, and communicating an idea that represents the organizations' philosophy towards their customers.

According to Christine Johnson, Director of Employee Communications from Shaker ". . . an employer brand is about capturing the essence of a company in a way that engages employees. It is who you are as an employer. It conveys your 'value proposition' – the totality of your culture, systems, attitudes, and employee relationship. And it encourages your people to embrace and further shared goals – success, productivity and satisfaction – on personal and professional levels."

A brand is a promise that captures and engages the intended customer. When it comes to attracting and retaining employees, the candidates/employees are your customer. So, why would a company go through all the work to create a brand only to do it again for recruitment and retention?

### Why do We Need It?

"Employers must first examine their corporate identity and culture. Employees want to be part of organizations that embrace the same core values as them," says Lisa Mattam of management and consulting firm The Mattam Group.

Let's consider the workforce. Either you are, you know of someone who is or you have read about industries that are experiencing an employee attraction and retention dilemma. That means that employers have to mentally shift from candidates seeking them out to a sales approach where companies are seeking out candidates. On the customer side we are selling services or products, on the employee side we are selling a career in our organization. Is your customer and employee target market the same? Of course your employees have to buy into your overall philosophy but they don't necessarily have to buy your product or service. The needs that a customer is coming to your organization to fulfill are different from those of an employee. That requires a different assessment and messaging.

Beyond recruitment, employer brands also influences employee retention. If your employer brand truly reflects your culture, work environment and employee connection then those that work for you will reflect those characteristics amongst their peer group. If there is truly a talent shortage then the recruitment team cannot necessarily source every possible candidate. Mobilizing your workforce to engage perspective candidates is a great advantage but only possible if they experience what your brand describes. This requires your employer brand to be communicated internally as well as externally both in your employee materials and events you hold for employees. Most importantly your brand has to reflect the retention

initiatives/culture you have in your organization so that when a new employee comes on board they see the connection between what they were sold and what exists.

### **How Does It Work?**

In his book, *Living Brands*, Raymond A. Nadeau identifies the secret to brand success as "Becoming a legitimate part of people's lives is the new minimum price of brand entry and is the only method for a brand's sustained longevity."

The process for building a brand includes assessing the culture, identifying your target market, incorporating the vision and values of your organization, creating the brand itself and the materials that go with that and deciding how to implement and assess the brand. Building a brand is something that organizations can do in house provided they have the time and expertise. Some organizations choose to use template designs that are available online. The challenge with this option is that when trying to establish an organizations' uniqueness there could be an inconsistency when using the same design as others. Finally there are organizations that specialize in assessing, establishing and creating a brand for an organization to use in their recruitment and employee communication strategies.

**Phaedra Burke is presenting an *Employer Branding: Energizing Your Uniqueness* workshop on October 11th in Victoria and on October 17th in Vancouver. To learn more about either session, please visit [BC HRMA's website](#).**

### ***About the Author:***



*Phaedra Burke, MA, CHRP, has worked within the Human Resources function for 13 years in areas such as Training & Development, Recruitment, Generalist and Retention. Her work has exposed her to initiatives in private, public and not for profit organizations involving employees and leaders alike. Phaedra now has her own company, Joule Consulting, that focuses on attraction and retention. They have been working with small businesses to create their customer brands and now have merged their HR and branding expertise to create employer brands. See [www.jouleconsulting.ca](http://www.jouleconsulting.ca) for further information.*

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