

EMPLOYER BRANDING IN THE CONTEXT OF TELEWORK – A CHALLENGE TO CONTEMPORANEITY

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Abstract

The current global situation has brought many changes in the daily coexistence, one of which is related to the isolation of people so as not to be exposed to infection with the Covid-19 virus. Employer branding represents the strategic initiative of a diverse set of marketing activities that an organization develops in order to attract and retain talented employees. Telework is the use of information and communication technologies so that work is performed outside the employer's premises. This should take place through a voluntary agreement between the employee and the employer. The purpose of this paper is to present the role of employer branding in the context of telework as a challenge to contemporaneity. The research results show that this situation triggers a very obvious and significant change in the society, one that we call telework. In order to keep employees motivated the organization must implement telework in a proper way.

Keywords: Covid-19, Challenges, Employer branding Telework.

1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus epidemic has spread to all countries of the world with catastrophic consequences of deaths and incalculable losses.

Human resource managers discussed telework more than a decade ago, when they referred to changing the organizational structures, making them flatter, more flexible, horizontal and modular. Also, talent leaders envisioned modern organizations with new work practices, such as: emotional salary, people-oriented corporate social responsibility, concealing work and personal life, etc. These processes lead organizations to seek a balance and functionality between work and the expectations of new employees, combining their spaces for life, sports, academic development and quality time.

Telework facilitates flexibility and a strong work-life balance, while reducing the impact of mobility on the environment. Although it has

many benefits, the implementation of telework practices takes place in a more uncertain way than we had expected. The economic crisis in one of the reasons for this delay, although telework was originally attributed to the oil crisis of the 1970s.

In this context, teleworking has suddenly returned as a result of measures to protect people from to the Covid-19 virus. In early 2020, several governments recommended that organizations facilitate telework in order to avoid having many employees in the same place.

2. EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer branding represents the strategic initiative of a diverse set of marketing activities that an organization develops in order to attract and retain talented employees (MOSLEY, 2007). This process differs from building the employer brand, creating the differentiated and competitive value proposition, to the specific and necessary actions to attract, select and retain employees, by involving all departments of the organization (SUTHERLAND & KARG, 2002). In this process, commitment is seen as a key indicator of the relationship between the employee and the employer brand, thus becoming an objective to be met (GAVILAN & FERNANDEZ-LORES, 2013).

Also, the concept of employer branding can be included in the classic internal marketing activities. Internal marketing is the development process through which organizations align, motivate and empower employees to provide positive customer experiences, thus helping to meet organizational objectives (ASIF & SARGEANT, (2000). In other words, internal marketing must be used as a strategic tool in order to help the organization achieve its business

objectives. However, this concept does not incorporate the concept of branding.

Therefore, employer branding is based on the application of internal marketing concepts in order to highlight the positioning of an organization as an employer. Its intention is the same as that of a commercial brand: it attracts new customers and preserves current customers, as they represent current and/or potential employees. Also, like a consumer brand, the employer brand emphasizes the emotional and rational benefits offered by the employer (BARROW & MOSLEY, 2005).

Therefore, focusing on the prior-mentioned aspects regarding employer branding, the following three key elements emerge:

- Reflecting the brand values towards consumers due to the commitment of employees;
- Achieving the transmission of the brand promise to the internal and external public of the organization;
- The need to apply employer branding strategies at all levels of the organization to achieve the alignment of the behaviours and values of management and staff.

It is important to emphasize that employer branding must be compatible with the other brands of the organization with which it shares common points, but also maintains two key differences: firstly, it is specific and characteristic of the workplace, highlighting the identity of the organization as employer and, secondly, targets the internal and external audiences of the organization, while the corporate and product branding efforts are mainly addressed to the external public (BACKHAUS & TIKOO, 2004).

The benefits of the employer brand to organizations are obvious. Firstly, it is one of the few long-term solutions to the "talent shortage" problem. Given that most employment strategies are short-term, creating an employer brand is a long-term proactive solution, designed to provide a steady stream of applicants.

Therefore, the employer brand offers the organization a competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate, because it is an effective tool for attracting and retaining talented employees.

3. TELEWORK IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Of all the changes and transformations brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, redefining work patterns such as the place and conditions in which we work are some of the consequences that have materialized the fastest.

Telework represents the use of information and communication technologies so that work is performed outside the employer's premises. This should take place through a voluntary agreement between the employee and the employer. In addition to determining the location of the work, several aspects need to be clarified, such as: work schedule, communication tools to be used, tasks to be performed, supervisory mechanisms and how to report the work undertaken (ILO, 2020).

The International Labour Organization defines telework as a new scheme of work, in a place far from the headquarters of the organization by separating the worker from having a personal contact with his colleagues. Thus, telework integrated with technology makes this separation possible by facilitating communication at the different levels of the organization (UBIETO, 2020).

According to the analysis of human resources managers, various tasks that are performed in an office do not require the presence of employees at work, and can be performed remotely through technology and communication systems. Planning is included in the telework scheme (WASHINGTON, 2020).

4. THE ADVANTAGES OF TELEWORK

It is an inevitable reality that employees in the feasible positions of teleworkers will specialize emotionally and technologically for this new way of working. Digital connection systems, continuous improvements in communications, changing the mentality of many organizations and managers who are beginning to look at telework as a favorable scheme to minimize infrastructure costs and optimize working time are some of the factors that highlight the improvement of this way of working.

Benefits of teleworking for employees (WASHINGTON, 2020):

- Freedom to plan, organize tasks, manage working time on your own and therefore be able to reconcile work and family;
 - The opportunity to combine family space with daily tasks;
 - Traffic in big cities can take several hours a day to get to work. Thus, teleworking allows the employee to save significant time that can be allocated for the benefit of himself and of his family;
 - It allows the integration of teleworkers who have special abilities or physical difficulties to be transported to traditional jobs.
- Benefits of teleworking for organizations (WASHINGTON, 2020):
- Reduces work problems and conflicts between employees;
 - Increase the productivity and profitability of the business by pursuing a work system based on the achievement of clearly set objectives;
 - Reduces the cost of production with an intelligent system of work shifts and taking advantage of labor flexibility in time and space;
 - Less need for resources such as: machinery, equipment, real estate, ensuring the industrial security of employees, etc.;
 - Possibility to hire high-level professionals with other technological skills for the respective positions;
 - Improving the deadlines for meeting work objectives;
 - Possibility to change working hours flexible and by mutual agreement;
 - Elimination of absenteeism from work;
 - Implementation of new information technologies or digital platforms. These costs will always be lower than those of physical infrastructure and other current expenses;
 - Cost reduction;
 - Ease of geographical expansion;
 - Growth without essential changes in organizational structures and the career plan of employees will be different from the traditional one;
 - Better use of jobs that can be shared with other workers in flexible shifts.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The main question that most managers ask themselves is how teleworking can affect the commitment and motivation of employees in the medium and long term. The answer lies in the idea that if the organization does not carry out remote work properly, it can create discomfort among employees and, ultimately, a disconnection from employees.

Properly implemented, teleworking provides an excellent employment opportunity that allows the organization to keep employees motivated, while generating positive connections between the staff and the organization. For this to happen, organizations need to consider the following key elements:

- Two-way communication – being willing to have an open conversation is essential to really know how the company’s employees feel. Certain surveys can be conducted at different times of the year in order to find out the opinion of employees on the measures implemented by the organization and to understand how employees can be supported in the medium and long term. In this mode of communication it is important for managers to practice empathy and close communication. Developing emotional intelligence can develop the best talent in the organization.
- Flexibility – it is essential to implement flexibility mechanisms that promote the conciliation and competitiveness of the organization. This means looking for alternatives that adapt to the needs of employees at all levels. It is important to adopt an objective-based work plan; the key is to reward the employee’s effort and valuable contribution.
- Diverse and inclusive vision – it is necessary to form multidisciplinary work teams. Top companies are looking for managers who have the ability to train, motivate and increase employee talent. In order to achieve the common objectives, it is necessary to implement specific dynamics.
- Common work environments including remote – many employees want to be able to share a coffee in the morning with their co-workers. Having a moment of connection is the key to

developing interpersonal relationships. This requires the organization to create common work environments despite the distance. There are various collaboration platforms that generate virtual environments in which several people can connect at the same time and work simultaneously on the same task.

- Gamified experiences - due to digitalization, gamification is becoming a key trend in employee recruitment and motivation strategies. This technique consists in applying games in different activities of the organization. This tool helps the organization to awaken the competitive spirit of the employees, strengthen the sense of belonging and improve the work environment.
- Training and development - training is an excellent tool to encourage motivation among employees.
- Health and well-being - in the end, the basis of all actions is the guarantee of the well-being and integral health of employees. Thus, it is necessary for the organization to implement welfare programs focused on improving the well-being of employees inside and outside the digital work environment.

For most organizations, teleworking has brought many challenges, but it is important to broaden the vision of this way of working in order to discover the full benefits of this organization when it is implemented correctly.

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