



## **External Employer Branding Guide for SMEs**

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## Abstract

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<p>The set objective of this product-based thesis was the creation of an external employer branding guide for small to medium-sized enterprises that have little to no experience in the topic globally.</p> <p>There were four project tasks chosen to tackle the main objective. These tasks were: 1. Preparing the theoretical framework, 2. Investigating prior international and external topic studies, practices, and competition, 3. Creating the end product, and 4. Evaluating project management and outcomes.</p> <p>The literature review of this thesis was reached with the help of theoretical books and professionals surrounding employer branding throughout time. The empirical part was realized through a desktop study that included investigation and analysis of prior research and reviews, trends, and recent best employers. The investigation of top exemplary employers, which were based on ranking awards, was accomplished through a digital examination of activities on social media platforms and company websites in the years 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>The end product became a detailed and instructive guide in the form of a presentation. Through the creation of the guide, the most effort was put into strengthening the reader's comprehension of employer branding. Additionally, the guide has been filled with current and ongoing relevant practices and suggestions based on this paper's research results. The distinctive process presented in the guide came to be by the combination of a traditional and modern frameworks. This was deemed the most practicable in global activities.</p> <p>This paper achieved the set objective through the compression of the literature review and empirical part, as well as the decisions to make the guide a step-by-step instructive presentation that includes this paper as a supporting element providing in-depth information to the reader when implementing the guide.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Employer branding, external employer branding, employee value proposition, human resource management, human resources, HR.

**Dedicated to my parents, Ukshin Vllasa & Vranina Kelmendi Kacija.**

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Topic Background .....	1
1.2	Project Objectives and Project Tasks.....	2
1.3	Project Scope and Thesis Structure.....	4
1.4	International Aspect.....	5
1.5	Benefits to Stakeholders .....	5
1.6	Key Concepts and Abbreviations .....	6
2	Employer Branding .....	7
2.1	Definitions of Employer Branding .....	8
2.2	An Employer Branding Model and Components .....	12
2.3	Employer's Brand Strength .....	13
2.3.1	Employee Value Proposition (EVP) .....	14
2.3.2	Employee Experience .....	16
2.4	Employer Brand Process and Communication.....	17
2.5	Employer Image and Reputation.....	19
3	Modern Practices.....	22
3.1	Research Structure .....	22
3.2	Research Method .....	23
3.3	Results .....	24
3.3.1	Online Trends.....	24
3.3.2	Content Trends .....	29
3.3.3	Exemplary Companies .....	31
4	The External Employer Branding Guide .....	39
4.1	Process and Methods Used to Develop the Guide .....	39
4.2	The Product.....	40
4.2.1	Create a Team .....	41
4.2.2	Research and Align.....	42
4.2.3	Create an EB Statement .....	43
4.2.4	Communicate .....	46
4.2.5	Measure and Manage .....	48
4.3	Key Outcomes.....	49
5	Conclusion .....	51
5.1	Outcomes .....	51
5.2	Evaluation.....	52
5.3	Recommendations .....	53
5.4	Reflection on Learning .....	54
	References.....	55
	Attachments .....	62
	Attachment 1. The External Employer Branding Guide (End Product).....	62

# 1 Introduction

This is a bachelor's product type thesis for the Degree Programme in International Business taught at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. This thesis is specifically for the major in Human Resource Management.

This chapter begins the thesis by introducing the background of this project, the objective and its related tasks. The project background will be first presented. After that comes the main project objective, in which the project tasks are also defined. In the middle of the introduction, the project's scope and the thesis structure are presented. These are explained conveniently to make the understanding process of the reader easier. In the latter part of this chapter, the international aspect and this project's benefits are presented. Lastly, the key concepts and abbreviations are defined.

## 1.1 Topic Background

For a growing small to mid-sized business, captivating and hiring the most talented people is crucial in securing future success. Building a credible employer reputation and showcasing how great of a place the business is to work at is essential for small to mid-sized businesses in the current competitive employment market. (Sullivan 2004.) The human factor is as important as capital, equipment, and plants when creating a competitive advantage in businesses. This is why the effect of employer branding is a key to advancing the business through the human factor. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502). Employer branding operates with the intention to grow the business through proper human assets. Additionally, employer branding is a big part of enhancing the performance of a business through human asset development and investment. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503.)

Harvard Business Review has reported that employers globally experienced talent shortages, which made over three-quarters of CEOs around the world concerned about talent availability (Hall 2014). It is common knowledge that employers always require expertise. Sullivan (2004) claims that this need is growing more with time because of technological advancements.

In another notion, the continuous increase in job mobility has made filling out positions and retention challenging with each new generation because high performers tend to leave their employers more and more frequently in today's environment. (Mosley 2015.) Mosley (2015) speculates that the new generation's ideology of avoiding workplaces that push employees to live pay-check to pay-check is the reason this generation's challenges. The belief is that the new generation employees look past the financial lens of

employment (Mosley 2015). Mosley (2015) claims that the old way of only searching for the highest paying employer has been changed into the need to find an employer that provides a fitting working culture proposition, as well as experience and development opportunities.

So, how can employers attract talent effectively in the current environment? According to experts, the strongest answer is an investment into employer brand because it has become a winning factor for businesses. It is also a key element in business practices and strategic plans if done properly. (Mosley 2015.) The concept of employer branding is becoming more commonly known in businesses since its early concept introduction by Amler and Barrow a couple of decades ago (1996, 186).

## **1.2 Project Objectives and Project Tasks**

The reason behind this product type thesis is to provide applicable knowledge relating to employer branding in a simplified, compact, and efficient manner to businesses internationally. There is a large pool of information relating to the topic that lacks simplification. Many of the topic sources are unattractive to businesses because of their lengths, even if they are looking for business development opportunities. Throughout my studies and working life, I have yet to see an all-in-one paper or presentation that can provide employer branding knowledge and help a business integrate the concept into the business strategy in an efficient manner.

The main objective of this thesis is to create an external employer branding guide for global small to medium-sized enterprises. The guide includes general instructions on how to create an external employer branding process. The reason behind generalisation of the guide is the large target group of the guide. Thus, to make the guide more suitable for companies globally that have little to no experience in the topic of employer branding around the world. There are four project tasks that are introduced in an orderly manner below. These are then followed by a visualization of everything presented (Table 1).

### **PROJECT TASK 1: Preparing the theoretical framework**

The first task provides a base theoretical knowledge on employer branding through deep explanations of the theme's terminology to the reader. Additionally, this task will be the supporting backbone in understanding the end product of this project.

### **PROJECT TASK 2: Investigating prior international and external topic studies, practices, and competition**

The second task will include external employer brand studies and exemplary enterprise practices. This task happens through a desktop study, in which an investigation, research, and analytical tools are taken advantage of. The outcome of this task is finding out the current implemented processes and norms of employer branding in today's business environment around the USA and Europe. The result of this task will support the end guide with applicable examples and provides the reader with a realistic and applicable understanding of the theme's trends and methodology.

### **PROJECT TASK 3: Creating the end product**

The third task will be a combination of the first and second tasks. The outcome of this task is the creation of the guide, which is based on the compiled knowledge and information from prior tasks. In this step, a special step-by-step process for companies is created for the end product and presented visually.

### **PROJECT TASK 4: Evaluating project management and outcomes**

The last task provides the summary and evaluation of the project. Here, a reflection on learning will be discussed. As the last part, a recapitulation of the whole thesis will be presented. The last task and whole of the project end with the presentation of challenges and further study suggestions.

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

<b>Project Task</b>	<b>Knowledge Base</b>	<b>Project management methods</b>	<b>Task outcomes</b>
Project Task 1: Preparing the theoretical framework for the project	Theories from books and articles on the theme	Literature review and desktop studies	Knowledge and reasoning
Project Task 2: Investigating prior international and external topic studies, practices, and competition	Studies, exemplary enterprises, and specialist research/reviews	Qualitative research, observing and measuring: - SWOT - TOWS - attribute and characteristics analysis	Information on the current state of the topic and its norms
Project Task 3: Creating the end product (external employer branding guide for global SMEs)	Task outcomes of project task 1+2	PowerPoint as the presentation format and Presentation GO for creating figures and structure.	External EB development guide
Project Task 4: Evaluating project management and outcomes	The project task outcomes	Project management evaluation and review	Thesis summary

### 1.3 Project Scope and Thesis Structure

Providing a guide on how to externally attract talent is the project scope of this paper. This means that internal employer branding practices, such as recruitment, engagement, and retention of employees will not be included in the final guide. However, this thesis will include the definition and limitation of internal employer branding. The project considers the end product suitable for small to medium-sized enterprises that have little to no prior experience on the topic. However, the guide is also relevant for businesses that are looking to develop their practices.

European Commission's definition of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is used as the basis. In the EU's (2021) definition: The staff headcount and either turnover or balance sheet total factors determine whether an enterprise is an SME. Small businesses have less than 50 employees and medium-sized ones have less than 250 (EU 2021). This is further showcased in Table 2 below.

Table 2. European Commission's SME defining table (EU 2021).

<b>Company category</b>	<b>Staff headcount</b>	<b>Turnover</b>		<b>Balance sheet total</b>
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m	<b>or</b>	≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

This is a human resource management thesis, which is why the main focus will therefore be on HR topics. Specifically, this thesis revolves around the external part of employer branding. Additionally, some of the marketing basic concepts included in this paper are introduced briefly and broadly in the theoretical framework, to support similarities with the main topic. This is most prevalent in content creation and the social media environment activity. The thesis focuses on the U.S.A and European business environments. Thus, the steps of the employer branding process in the guide cannot specifically fit every business. However, this is managed through the notion of specific research suggestions companies need to make further in their environment. Another reason for the guide being general and broad, which can be hard to fit with every business, is the variety of elements every company has and the different future circumstances each implementing company has. However, the paper and end-product offer applicable recommendations and broad well-proven working suggestions that are proven to work and suitable for the majority of businesses.

The thesis is split up into four parts, which come in the following order: employer branding, best practices in employer branding, and the development of the employer branding guide. The central content is covered in the following three chapters. Chapter two introduces the prior definitions, models, components, and everything important revolving around the topic of employer branding. Chapter three presents the current environments

why, what, and how revolving the employer branding topic. This happens through re-search of trends and exemplary companies. The end product is presented in chapter four, which is the result of combining the prior two chapters' attained information compactly. Each phase of the process is divided into a specific sub-section in the chapter and is presented similarly to the product as a step-by-step presentation of the process. The traditional manual method of presenting in the guide and the fourth chapter is indented to support the reader's understanding and referencing. The sections are titled by the phase and include definitions, reasoning, and advantages, as well as application and fulfilment methods in a more in-depth manner to support the end product. The end of the chapter of this paper captures and evaluates the whole project in a reflecting manner. This is further continued by a discussion on suggestions and a statement on why further studies and re-search are needed. The final product is in attachment 1.

#### **1.4 International Aspect**

The thesis topic fulfils the Bachelor's Degree thesis topic requirement in International Business because the project theme revolves around international companies. The knowledge source and research specifically revolve around European and Northern America. Additionally, the end product is specifically made for international audiences that operate from Western countries.

#### **1.5 Benefits to Stakeholders**

The completed guideline provides the holder necessary information and tools to create and develop employer branding in a business. The end product and knowledge can support business growth through reputation growth and fortifying their business strategy. Additionally, the guide lessens the excessive number of resources spent in employer brand implementation if used for the development of current practices in new and early staged enterprises. The proper implementation of the guide can also result in an increased attraction of the right candidates and quality applications for the open positions companies require filling. Utilizing the end product properly can also result in higher brand awareness as a good and professional employer, because prospective employees will be given insight into the company's working culture, offered benefits, and employer's principles through the process.

This thesis benefits the author in terms of specializing and attaining further proof of knowledge in the human resources field. With the help of this thesis as proof of knowledge and representation of the required skillset fulfilment, career development opportunities will be more open in the field of HR and project management. The guidebook can also be utilized in future positions that are acquired after graduation.

## 1.6 Key Concepts and Abbreviations

Sullivan (2004) defines **employer branding** as a long-term strategy of managing current and potential future employees' perceptions and awareness. This paper uses the abbreviation "EB", instead of repeating employer branding in writing.

According to Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 15), the **employee value proposition (EVP)** is the concession or privilege that employers offer to their employees in employment. The most common offering traditionally are benefits such as money, recognition, advancement opportunities, and certifications in return for the employees' valuable knowledge, skills, capabilities, and creativity (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 15).

**Content marketing** is a strategic approach focused on the creation and distribution of consistent valuable content to attract and retain a target audience or their attention through values, which can result in rising profits. This form of marketing is centred on the creation, publication, and distribution of content that is largely presented online currently. (Pulizzi & Barrett 2009, 98-100.)

Abbreviations:

- Ad = Advertisement
- EB = Employer Branding
- EVP = Employee Value Proposition
- HR = Human Resources
- HRD = Human Resources Development
- HRM = Human Resources Management
- PR = Public Relation
- R&D = Research and Development
- SME = Small to Medium-sized Enterprise
- SM = Social Media

## 2 Employer Branding

This chapter focuses on project task 1 and explains the definitions of EB across from prior literature and research. This theoretical framework includes an in-depth concentration on the external aspects of the topic, with supporting information on the internal aspects when needed.

The subchapters are divided conventionally to help the reader get an insight into the fundamental knowledge of EB. This chapter also explains and simplifies important terminology commonly used in HR and the topic area, to help the reader understand the end product of this project: External Employer Branding Guide for SMEs.

The variety of definitions throughout time from various professionals are first presented. This is then followed by the presentation of a model and description of its components. At the middle of this chapter, important factors of the topic are described to further fortify the knowledge of the reader. Lastly, the methodology of EB and two important definitions needed to understand the topic are presented. The whole theoretical framework of this chapter is illustrated below (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The theoretical framework

## 2.1 Definitions of Employer Branding

Many definitions have been given to employer branding in the past two decades. The first definition was offered by Ambler and Barrow (1996, 187) in the *Journal of Brand Management*. This definition goes as follows: "A packaged benefit that identifies the employing company and is provided in employment." This package includes economic, psychological, and functional benefits. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 187.)

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, 504) in turn defined EB as the foundation of an employer identity. This concept revolves around the policies, actions, and values of businesses. These all are factors in seizing, engaging, and maintaining talented employees. The same professionals also more elaborated definition of EB, in which the process is explained as building an identifiable and unique employer identity. This is furthered by the notion that every business has distinct characteristics to differentiate businesses from competitors, such as discipline and dependability or responsibility of an employer to their employees. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 504-505.)

Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 8) define EB in two phases. The first phase is internal branding and is described as building a desirable place to work. *Great Place to Work (2021)* define a desirable workplace as a place where there is mutual trust between an employer and employee. Additionally, in this workplace employees enjoy the environment and are proud of their work and employer (GPW 2021). Through this first phase, a company-specific culture is built alongside the tangible components, such as ideas and symbols and material objects or artifacts. On the other hand, phase two is described as external branding, in which the organization promotes the culture to the desired potential talented employees, who can contribute to the organization's goals. The primary goal of EB, in this definition, is stated to be the attraction of employees who have the talent a business needs to meet the set goals and objectives. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 8 & 63-64.)

The definition also furthers into the external EB, in which it is stated that there are different actions taken to persuade the targeted people to work for the employer and retain their employment. These actions revolve mainly around marketing and content strategies. They also introduce talent acquisition, which refers to the process of obtaining skilled employees to meet the business' needs through identifying, acquiring, assessing, and hiring candidates. The ideal strategy is to tie recruiting, marketing, and employer brand with the business initiatives. By aligning talent acquisition to the mission of the company, the marketing and HR branding can coexist and work together in achieving the needs of the business. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 64-65.)

Doctor Sullivan (2004) introduces EB as a strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of targeted employees, current or future, and related stakeholders on the company. This long-term strategy aims to drive talent attraction, employee recruitment, retention, and management productivity. This strategy works by consistently putting forth an attractive image of the company as an employer, accompanied by the company's good business practices. (Sullivan 2004.)

From these different definitions, it is notable that there are similarities in EB's process of promoting the employer's image externally and internally. Other similarities can be found in the need to communicate the employer's values, rewards, and meaningfulness of the work. (Winn 2013, 20.) Sullivan (2004) claims that the more EB awareness grows, the more action-specific will the definitions become. Sullivan (2004) further asserts that EB refers to a business strategy that is targeted and long-term. According to Sullivan (2004), this strategy aims to increase and control the recognition of the company from the viewpoint of current and future employees as well as stakeholders. This strategy thrives when driving recruitment, retention, and productivity management (Sullivan 2004).

The most simplified definition of EB comes from Barrow and Mosley (2005). This definition goes as follows: "Employer brand is the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company" (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 40). Ambler and Barrow (1996) also have noted that instrumental benefits of salaries are connected to functional and economic benefits. They also define symbolic employment benefits as the identification-related aspects of consumption, in which employees understand it from the appearance of the employer's expression (Ambler and Barrow 1996). Lievens, Van Hove and Anseel (2007, 48) affirm that company offerings of instrumental benefits have become competitive throughout the years. Specifically, the competition of these instrumental benefits can be seen through the effort put into differentiation and promotion of symbolic employment and instrumental benefits (Lievens, Van Hove & Anseel 2007, 48).

It is also notable that McLeod and Waldman (2011, 20) claim that even starting companies have an EB from the very beginning but are unaware of it. There are institutes also that believe the same (CIPD 2020, 1-2). According to these claims, EB exists by itself and is independent without it needing a creation stage. By this definition, companies can only manage and strengthen their EB through perception and image influencing. (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 20-21; CIPD 2020, 2-3.) The strengthening and influence happen through enterprises communication of EB elements: culture, values, mission and purpose, benefits & perks, work environment, learning & development, diversity and inclusion, advancement and opportunities, management and organization, innovation, and technology. (McLeod &

Waldman 2011, 20-21; CIPD 2020, 4.) All of these are better visualized below in figure 2. These are communicated through content. Just like in marketing, the content helps employers build relationships with talented candidates just like marketers create relationships between the brand and targeted customers. (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 20-21; CIPD 4-5.)

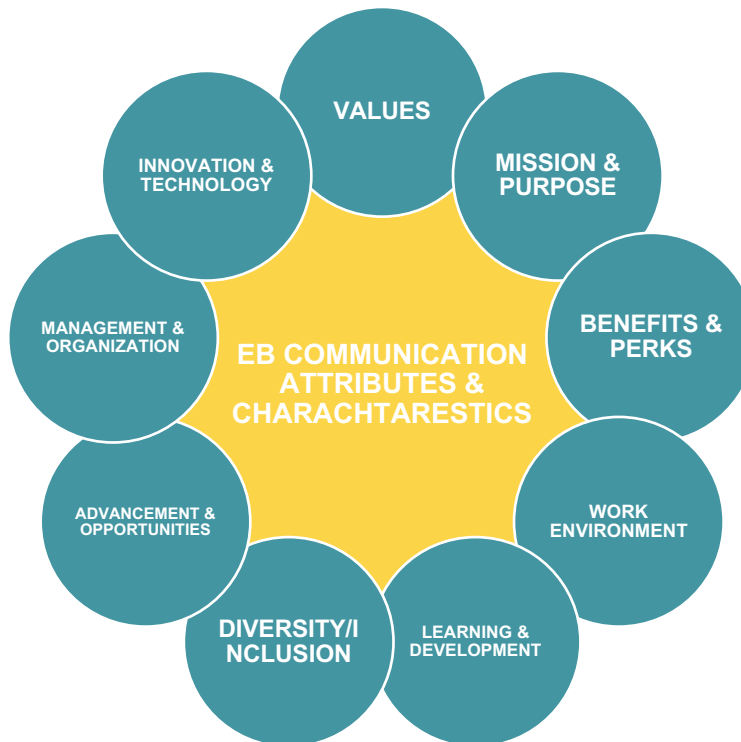


Figure 2. EB communication attributes and characteristics (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 20-21; CIPD 2020, 4.)

Throughout the theories, theorists agree on many functions and parts of EB, such as attracting talent, retention, employee turnover, employee engagement, and profitability, culture. The stronger the link between these, the more successful delivery of EB is. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 54; Dyhre & Parment 2009, 13-14; Hubschmid 2012, 46 & 204; McLeod & Waldman 2011, 6 & 15-16.)

Through my work experience in the HR field, I can certainly say that EB is one of the key success factors for businesses seeking to grow further. Moreover, I agree with the notion that every business has a form of EB from the moment a business is created. However, I believe that the use of the word "creation" when introducing the topic to interested people is a misleading simplification. This is noticeable in definitions, which use creation as a way of presenting exemplary elements that can be taken advantage which in hand affect the company's EB.

I have also noticed a commonality around the world, in which businesses either choose to neglect EB or are unaware of it altogether until the business grows into a middle-sized

business. I can confidently say that the negligence can be partially reasoned by the “unattractive” long-term investment that is needed to be done on all parts of EB (Figure 3). The unattractiveness directly correlates with expenses, effort and amount of time needed to be spent in the management of EB (Sullivan 2004). All of the parts of EB will be introduced, and either touched upon or further explained in the following sub-chapters.

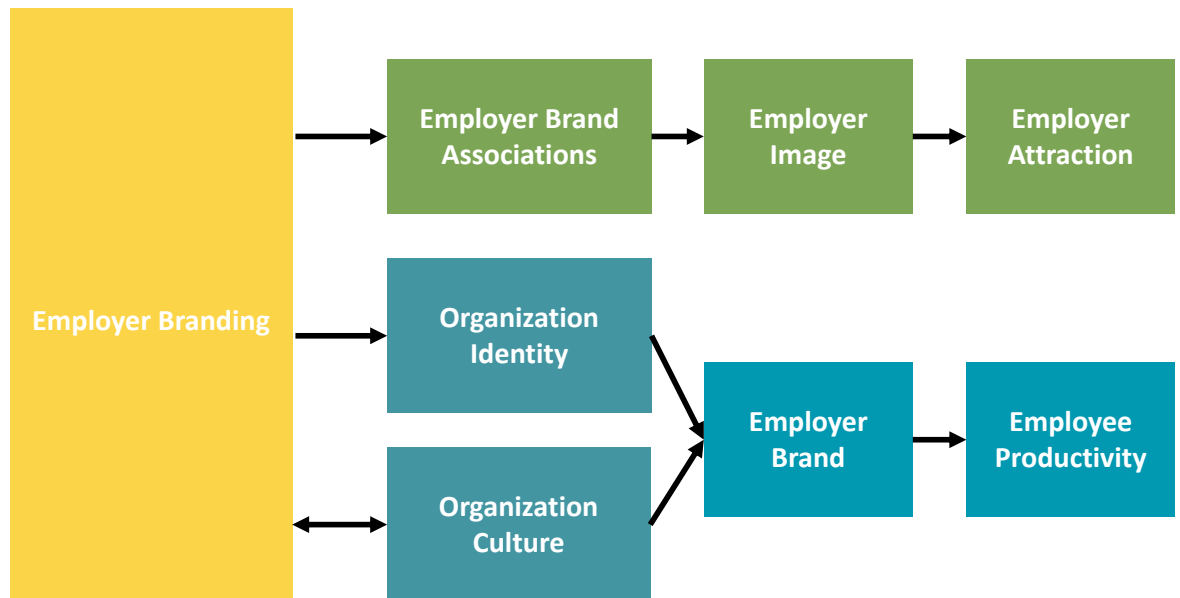


Figure 3. Employer branding framework (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.)

So, why do so many companies still implement EB into their business’s strategy?

An enterprise can attain the “enticing employer” label through EB. (Sullivan 2004). This title means that the business can attract talented individuals easier and in larger quantities which are specifically suitable to the set needs. This all happens through positive EB development, which happens externally by managing reputation. (Sullivan 2004; Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 8.) Management of reputation is further explained later in the chapter.

EB drives engagement by building a meaningful internal working environment and prideful employee culture. Consequently, the higher the levels of engagement, the higher the levels of productivity. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 510.) Backhaus & Tikoo (2004, 511) claim that businesses with the most investment on EB have noticeable engaged levels with large amounts of talented employees. Engagement and talent then in hand loop back into strengthening external EB. This means that the more people view the invested company as a good place to work at, the further will the company’s business be fortified through newly acquired talent and risen engagement levels. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 510).

LinkedIn’s research (2021) on the benefits of EB reported that companies that implement it to their business strategy have smaller attrition rates and over a quarter reduction in organization’s turnover from implementation. Additionally, the number of qualified applicants

grows by 50% and the time to hire becomes one to two times faster. This research also questions many recruiting leaders, from which the overwhelming majority agrees with the notion that EB has a remarkable effect on hiring. (LinkedIn 2021.) Another LinkedIn (2012) research shows that most of the responding employers agree that a strong EB is crucial in attracting passive candidates. Passive candidates tend to be more enticed by challenging and impactful opportunities since they are not actively looking for work. Additionally, these types of employees are not enticed by monetary incentives nor other similar benefits. Instead, these prime candidates value company culture and have a strong sense of loyalty once employed. (Rashmi 2010.)

## **2.2 An Employer Branding Model and Components**

An EB model is composed of a systematic course of actions and incorporates brand propositions through focused content. Propositions are mainly brand content, which include visual design elements and messages. Closely similar to a marketing model, the EB framework includes elements such as slogans, logos, colours and a company face to differentiate the company brand from competition. Additionally, both the marketing and HR's models have consistency as the key to a strong brand. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 83.)

To implement an efficient and strong employer branding, the EB framework should align with customer and corporate branding. To avoid misinterpretation between the customers and employees, it is important to specify the relation between employer, corporate and customer -brands. For this, communication is the key. The communication in EB will be introduced and further explained in depth in the next chapter. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 12.)

Barrow and Mosley (2005, 150) have produced the employer brand mix, which is helpful in assessing the EB of companies. The components of the employee lifecycle in the mix, as showcased below in figure 4, are the following: recruitment and induction, team management, performance appraisal, reward and recognition, values and corporate social responsibility of the company, internal communication, and lastly the external reputation. Employee expectations and experiences can be easily swayed by EB at every stage of the employment lifecycle. These effects can be both negative and positive, from attraction all the way to retention. Even long after the employment has run its course, the influence and effect of EB can be seen for example through instances of willingness of past employee recommendations and sharing of experiences. (Hubschmid, 2012; Barrow & Mosley 2005, 149-151.)



Figure 4. Employer brand mix (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 150)

### 2.3 Employer's Brand Strength

The reinforcing strength of an employer brand is directly affected by the employee value proposition (EVP) and each stage or cycle of employee experience. (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 9). The EVP and employee experience concepts will be further elaborated in later sub-chapters. Figure 5 visualizes the relation between these introduced terms. As indicated a bit in the beginning, employer brand strength is the result of a constant unison of EVP and employee experience. The expectation and external viewpoint of the company as an employer is affected through an internal representation of employee experiences. And the internal viewpoint is fortified through EVP. Though employee value proposition and employee experiences are separate, the employee experience is affected by EVP. Through the EB initiative involvement of employees, across different roles and levels in the company, a genuine and authentic branding is made possible. (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 9 & 14.) These all will be further elaborated in depth in later subsections of this Sub-chapter, starting by EVP.



Figure 5. The combination of individual EVP and employer experiences corresponding to employer's brand strength (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 9).

### 2.3.1 Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Hubschmid (2012) asserts that employee value proposition, otherwise known as EVP, is a central concept of EB. A value proposition by its very definition is a form of a pledge, guarantee, or promise from the delivering party to a targeted party. This involves an exchange of values linked to usage (Figure 6). In the case of the topic, when an employee invests all of their time and effort for an employer, the employee does so with the expectation this value-in-exchange results in value-in-use that is similar to the value-in-exchange. (Lusch, Vargo & O'Brien 2007, 5-18.) People searching for a working place pay specific attention to employer-offered values, similarly to customers and consumers in a shopping process, because the EVP is the promise and employment experience is the delivery of the promise. (Hubschmid 2012, 52; Marriott 2001, 165.)



Figure 6. The exchange of values in EVP based on Lusch, Vargo & O'Brien's (2007, 5-18) EVP elaboration.

EVP is the proposal of the key benefits employees will obtain from establishing a working relationship with an employer. The EVP is a combination of advantages, opportunities, resources, and benefits provided by the employer in employment. Such examples are knowledge, skills, recognition, career advancement, capabilities, creativity, goals,

healthcare, financial gains, working environment, and objectives. (Rosethorn 2016, 21; Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 15.)

The EVP can be shaped by the employee positive experiences and received goods, such as natural satisfaction of the work given, healthy or good environment and co-workers, as well as compensation, management, and more during the employment relationship. Since a compelling EVP can send a clear message to a company's prospective employees, it should be regarded as one of the most important aspects that the company possesses. EVP disclosure and conveyance tend to be connected to current employees of an employer because of the personal encountered employment experience. (Hubschmid 2012, 52 & 122). These, and earlier mentioned set attributes of EVP that employees and the labour market value in employment, are further visualized below (Figure 7).

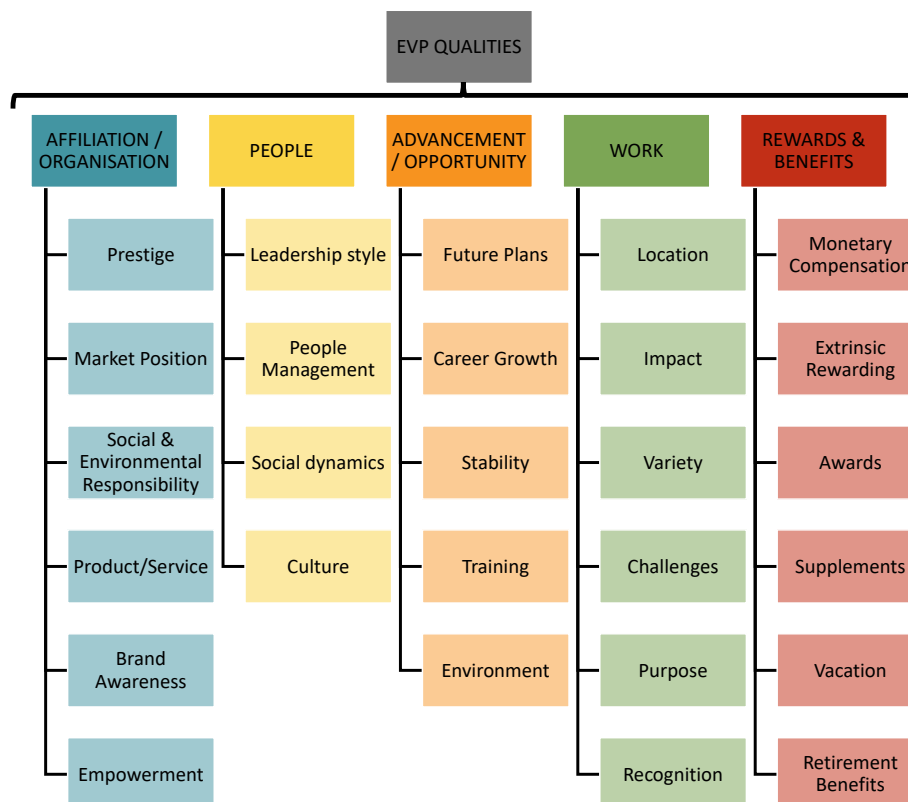


Figure 7. Employee Value Proposition Model (Hubschmid 2012, 52 & 122; Rosethorn 2016, 21; Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 15; Ginter-Lyght 2018).

There is also a noteworthy definition for EVP provided by Barrow and Mosley (2005, 126). According to them, EVP is an employer's mission to obtain talented people and to nourishes that talent. This definition concluded by implying that this "mission" can be viewed as an opportunity for companies to attain new competencies and a sort of challenge to advance in their career or hone their abilities and skills. Barrow and Mosley (2005, 126).

I think that the biggest challenge of EVP is that people mix it with EB. But, from my experience, when the same people are asked to define value proposition of marketing, they all separate it easily from the brand.

### 2.3.2 Employee Experience

In the previous chapter, the term employment experience is mentioned. This is different from employee experience. There are a variety of views and statements when it comes employee employment and employee experience. The biggest differentiating factor between these two terms is that employment experience is the delivery of EVP's promise. In employee experience, the processes and work environment are planned and executed with the employees in mind, whereas the employment experience is designed around the company's specific needs and requirements. (Hubschmid 2012, 123). Some theorists state that employee experience is a closed or a singular cycle, and others view the experiences in divided and different twelve parts. (Hubschmid 2012, 122; McLeod & Waldman 2011, 10; Barrow & Mosley 2005, 149.)

A well-known statement on employee experience comes from McLeod and Waldman (2011, 10). According to them, the employee lifecycle is composed of five stages in the following order: attraction, integration, performance, retaining, and transition (Figure 8). In this model, the employment experience starts from the individual's attraction to an enterprise, from brand awareness and the recruitment process. Then the integration followed up immediately after accepting the position, which entails integration into the company and its culture, team, tasks, and other similar elements of the workplace. Performance, which tends to be the longest stage, occurs after the employee has fused properly into the company and has acquired the ability to contribute. Exemplary elements included in this stage are interaction, commitment, and learning through progress. Retaining takes place once the proficiency is reached in the position, and the organization tries to maintain the employee in the company through relationship development and benefits. The last stage of transition occurs when an employee changes positions vertically or laterally inside the enterprise or into another company. This usually starts a new but similar cycle from the beginning, unless the transition is done inside the company, which makes the cycle starts from the integration stage. (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 11-14.)



Figure 8. Employee experience stages (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 10).

There is also a much more detailed and feature-rich employee experience model, which has twelve dimensions on organizational and local factors. This model does not have categorizations on the dimensions and in a lifecycle manner. Instead, this model views all dimensions equal in their ability to affect EB. This particular model of employee experience notes that the employee encounters the following elements of recruitment and initiation, management, performance assessment, rewarding and acknowledgment, company principles and corporate social responsibility (CSR), communication, and other similar elements in the cycle. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 162.)

Employee experience models are different depending on the theorists, but the conveyed message stays the same. Although models of employee experience are not identical, the elements they encompass have similarities, such as positive environment, culture, technology, opportunities, leadership, meaningful work. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 162; McLeod & Waldman 2011, 11-14.) These are all visualized below in figure 9.



Figure 9. Elements of employee experience (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 162; McLeod & Waldman 2011, 11-14).

## 2.4 Employer Brand Process and Communication

From the guide published by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (Lepekih 2020, 56), it is notable that companies who have EB implemented in their business strategy are able to enhance and defend their brands. What if the EB has not been communicated? According to Lepekih (2020, 22-25) guidelines, a brand represents a promise made by the company. This promise can be also known as an “employer brand contract”. It consists of employee expectations that are formed by the company’s culture, behaviour,

marketing, reputation, media presence and much more. What makes this contract tricky to manage is its drastic effect on expectations happens far before employment. Which is why here: communication is key. (Lepekih 2020, 54-57).

Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 83-84.) are the most prominent voices when it comes reluctantly informing businesses that corporate brand identity should be reflected in all of the branches of brand communications. The whole company brand, meaning and core of corporate-, employer- and customer brand must be aligned and then communicated to achieve an effective unified brand communications and experiences. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 84.)

Potential candidates use many different sources in their employer research before applying for a job. This is confirmed by corporate websites being considered to be one of the most important sources of recruitment (Pawar 2016, 35-44.)

The job descriptions have a big impact on EBs because of their first impression factor and, in most cases, creates the first employee contact on the earlier mentioned EB contract or brand promise in case companies. In cases when it is not the first impression, interested readers get to further their understanding and image of the company as an employer. (Kununu 2018.) The job description must avoid boring, commonly used, and long job descriptions for achieving a positive impression. Differentiating is the key here. Effective and positive job listing elements are unique wording and descriptions, third party viewpoints, visualization of how it is to work in the company. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 30; Sullivan 2004.)

Corporate core values, mission, and culture are of great importance to people looking for work and these should always be included in the communication of EVP. Companies with proper communication of their EVP in career pages, throughout different social media platforms and acknowledged company review sites have the tendency to be more successful and have a more secure future business wise and talent supply wise. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 14, 32.) Discouraging or even forbidding employees to recognize or encourages employment branding through sharing the company's practices externally only leaves firms behind in the competitive landscape through obscurity. Thus, the most important element is the company culture, in which the management team has constant encouraging, measures, and rewards or benefits for the development and sharing of best practices. (Sullivan 2004.)

## 2.5 Employer Image and Reputation

Employer image is a newly developed topic that revolves around EB. There still is no solid definition devised for employer image. Although, it is notable that the most commonly mentioned description is “the perception of a company as an employer” (Hubschmid 2012, 53). It is also notable that there are new papers, in which the interpretation of EB and employer image are mixed depending on which theorist’s definition the EB term is based. (Cable & Turban 2001, 127) McLeod and Waldman (2011, 4) are the example. Where they describe EB with a large similarity to employer image in the following manner: “The perception of an organization as a great place to work in the eye of the current employees, prospective employees and people external to the organization.”

According to Cable and Turban (2001, 118), there are three employer image categories are important to job seekers. These categories are the employer, job, and people information. (Cable & Turban 2001, 111-119.) The category of employer information is the objective side of a firm incorporating factual and historical characteristics, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), culture, and values. Other included in this category are information about company procedures and policies. (Cable & Turban 2001, 122-125.) The job information category contains position details, job description, earning figures, and information about opportunities or development direction. (Cable & Turban 2001, 126-128.) The people's information category comprises of individuals and workers that make up the enterprise. (Cable & Turban 2001, 1130-132.)

Susanna Rantanen (2019) describes employer image as the views of a wider audience on the company, which are based on anything they have experienced, heard from or heard about the company. She furthers this by implying that managing only employer image is not enough to attract the ideal talent audiences. (Rantanen 2019.)

Cable and Turban (2001, 127) assert that many mix employer image with employer reputation, more than what they do with EB. Thus, I have created a figure based on similarities from different authors’ definitions on employer perception and employer image, which can be found below (Figure 10). Employer reputation is most commonly defined as the beliefs of the job seekers about the public’s assessment of the organization. (Cable & Turban 2001, 117-118.) Thus, the statement furthers that employer image is a person’s own beliefs about the enterprise, while employer reputation is a person’s belief of how others evaluate the enterprise. Therefore, Cable and Turban (2001, 117) use the term employer knowledge instead of employer image. Cable and Turban (2001, 132) define employer knowledge as the individual’s belief on the potential employers, through memories and associations of the company that relate to employer image.

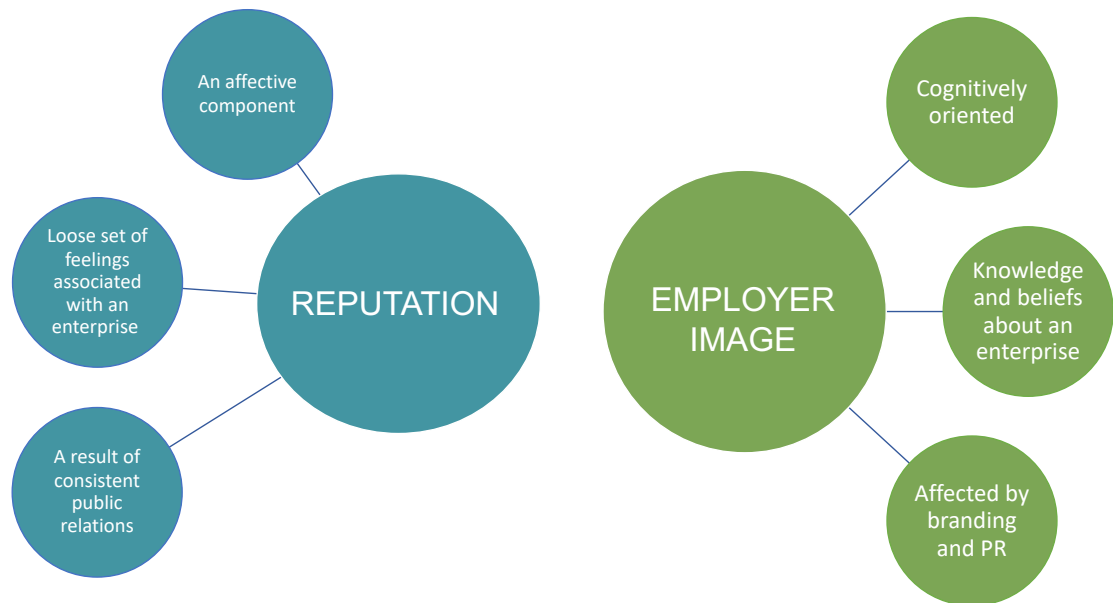


Figure 10. Differences of employer image and employer reputation (Cable & Turban 2001, 127; Hubschmid 2012, 53; Rantanen 2019).

Corporate Responsibility magazine's research, publicized in Staffing Industry Analysts site (2012), has found that over three quarters of unemployed candidates are not willing to work for an employer with a bad reputation. In contradiction, only a small amount of the candidates in the research claim that they would not support a company with poor reputation. Almost all of the same candidates do not care about a businesses' bad public image when it comes to employment. There is also a noteworthy result from the magazine's research, in which only a tenth of the people would not consider another job opportunity from an excellent reputation as an employer. (SIA 2012.) Similarly, Burgess (2016) raises these research results and fortifies the claim that employees value employer reputation more than employer image in a Harvard Business Review.

As Barrow and Mosley (2005, 149-151) have stated that: "There is often a close relationship between the employer brand image of a company and the reputation of its goods and services." This closeness is further showcased in the dynamic relationships of EB components and business components themselves revolving around image and reputation (Figure 11).

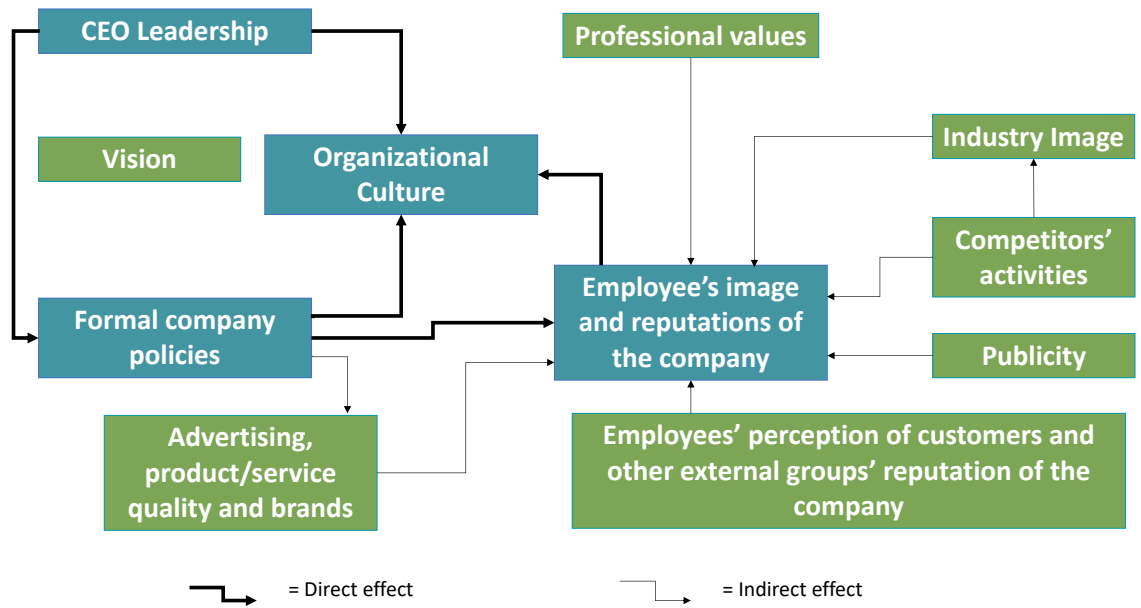


Figure 11. The dynamic relationships of factors and components themselves that affect an employee's perception of the company's employer image and employer reputation (Am- bler & Barrow 1996,191).

### 3 Modern Practices

This chapter focuses on project task 2, which is the investigation of prior international and external employer branding studies, practices, competitive competencies, and trends of current branding topics. The purpose of this chapter is to showcase the necessity of a simple and international employer branding guide through business cases and attain concrete material to put into the product of this paper. Additionally, this chapter further introduces the topic to the reader through exemplary cases of common and efficient EB strategies.

The research design and methods of this project with its sources are presented at first. Additionally, a clarification is given to the structure, data collection approach and the process. After these, the results of the research are presented in key points with in-depth information through subsections. These categorized subsections are based on the collected data's collective theme. The collected data and data analysis results are presented at the end of the chapter.

#### 3.1 Research Structure

The research has three phases, as well as a set desktop study and observation in this empirical part (Figure 12). The data focus areas are business appearances, alignment of EB with customer and corporate brand, employer branding and communication platforms, EB content and other material, as well as engagement levels in the employee market.

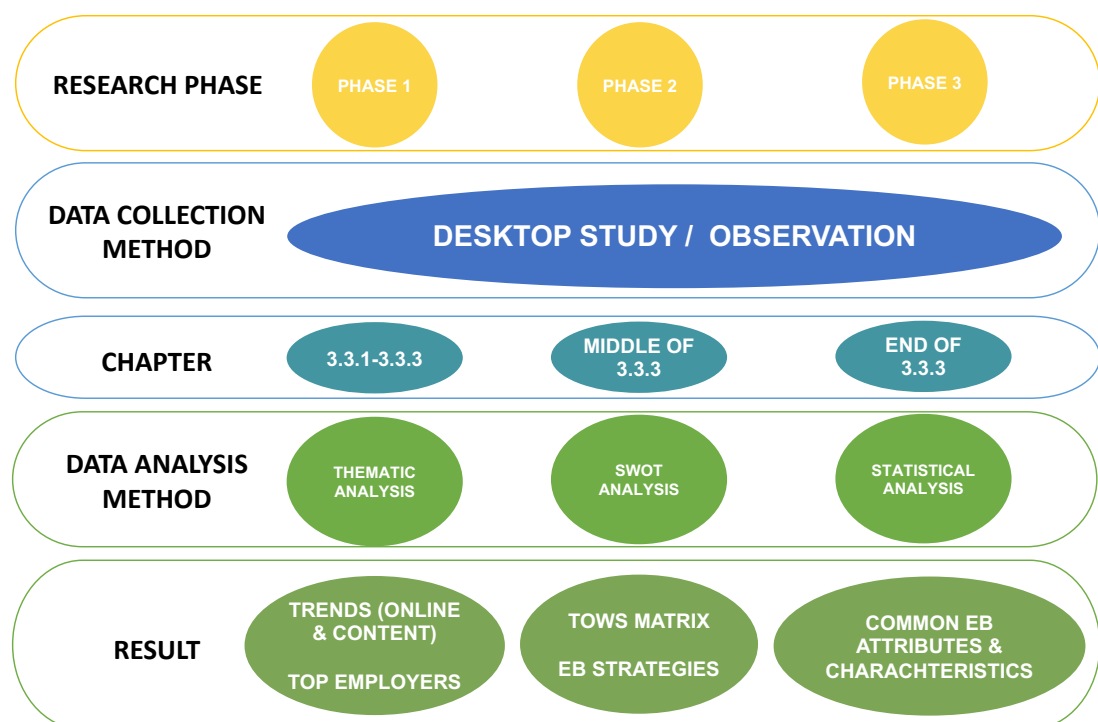


Figure 12. The research framework

The specific division and focus of the research results are based on employer branding's prosperity opportunities in today's digital world, analysed exemplary management methods and branding content opportunities.

### **3.2 Research Method**

The necessary information collected through the desktop research comes from recent studies, publicized research, prior reviews, as well as analysing exemplary enterprises based on the collected data. The largest portion of the data collection happens in publicized review paper analysis, from sources such as Harvard Business Review, Business LinkedIn, and Lyft. Other studies referenced in this papers data collection are Womply, CareerArc, and Marketing Charts.

The publicized research papers used in this research data collection come from employer ranking and reviewing companies. The chosen ranking companies are Universum, Great Place to Work and Glassdoor. These companies, which are well-respected by the employer market, specialize in researching different employers and award them based on their research results publicly. The employer reviewing companies used in this research are Radstad, Comparably, Kununu and Glassdoor. These companies are well known and respected in the international employee market.

The method of analysing exemplary companies is managed through a remix SWOT analysis measurement tool. The SWOT framework measurement tool was developed by Albert Humphrey in Stanford Research Institute between the 1960s and 1970s (Flaherty 2020). SWOT analysis is used as a tool to analyse strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. With the help of this tool the well-done factors can be highlighted, deficiencies can be addressed, risks become clearer, and the success factors or advantages are more utilized. The remix in this paper's SWOT analysis can be seen in the targeted concentration, that is organizations' employer branding. (Flaherty 2020.)

Afterwards, TOWS matrix is used to present efficient EB strategies based on the SWOT analyses collected data. Heinz Wehrich (1982, 2) developed the TOWS analysis method as an extension of SWOT. This method utilizes the results of the SWOT matrix, by combining the strengths with opportunities and threats with weaknesses, to solve problems and formulate an efficient strategy (Wehrich 1982, 2-3.).

At the end of this chapter, an EB attribute and characteristics communication analysis will be done on exemplary employers. This happens through a presentation of common attributes and characteristics taken from the theoretical chapter of this paper. The intention of

this analysis is to reveal how many exemplary companies communicate effective EB attributes and characteristics as a favoured employer in the employee market on company websites and social media.

### 3.3 Results

The research results are divided into three key categories based on theme similarities. These named categories are online trends, content trends, and exemplary employers. This theme-by-theme basis subsection division comes based on the thematic analysis result's trend similarities and based on data sources. (Figure 13.)

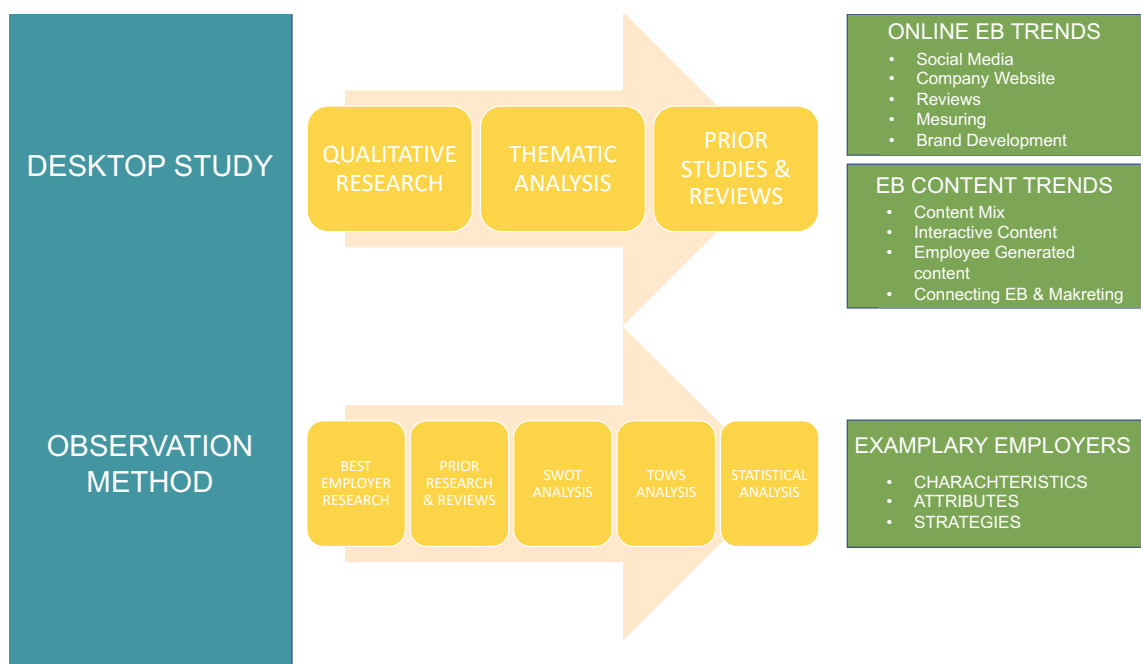


Figure 13. Overview of the results

#### 3.3.1 Online Trends

##### Social Media

Social media (SM) is an excellent starting point for any business's employer branding. (Willow 2020.) According to LinkedIn's (2014) social media recruitment stats: majority un-employed people research open positions through other online platforms and social media channels over company websites. This further fortifies the common belief that social media is important in every part of the business communication strategy. The most common trends of EB revolve around SM mainly for exposure and attracting talent. (Zojceska 2018; Müller 2020.)

There are different social media networks that can be used for Employer Branding. Reliable international ones are Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. It is important to

note that there are also other country specific platforms that can have more attraction in a border specific employee market. (Müller 2020.) Even with so many platforms, businesses do not need to utilize all platforms in EB. Nor is it practical to implement a company's EB communication too wide because of the financial and managerial challenges it brings forth. (Zojceska 2018; Willow 2020.) The choice of platform is based on the candidate persona, which is a detailed ideal candidate's profile. Businesses need to invest on platforms that the target audiences prefer and choose to use. (Reiners 2021.)

The keys to implementing SM efficiently into the EB strategy are utilizing EVP and having a close relationship with the marketing strategy. This relationship happens easier for smaller companies because branding from HR and marketing are closer, which makes combination easier. (Willow 2020.) The result of combining these two in a business strategy results into more direct and fluent communication and targeting online. The reasons behind the result are the similarities between obtaining targeted customers and candidates, the communication method and connection with the targeted audience. (Reiners 2021.) This all is why, in both combined and closely connected HR and marketing, SM has a key role in presenting the business brand as attractive from the viewpoint of the product or service and as an employer. (Müller 2020; Willow 2020.)

According to Kununu (2018), more than half of candidates learn about employers through social media at least once a month, which showcases the growing importance of company social media in the employer brand topic and proves that social media platforms can be utilized in a more diverse matter than just marketing. Thus, assimilation of the company's internal culture into that outward social media activity is a great competitive advantage in the attention of potential candidates and talent attraction. (Kununu 2018; Sullivan 2004.) Industry, regional, social awards, and achievements also help in the creation of a positive employer image, which in hand strengthens the employer brand (Stroller 2020).

The most common key points of effective utilization of SM in EB is as follows (Lyft 2018; Müller 2020.):

- Creating a communication style
- Consistent and captivating content
- Responsiveness and engagement
- Choosing the right platforms

To effectively communicate with the targeted talent audience and employees, establishing consistency and a tone to the EB is a must. Most companies find out their candidates' persona first, and then match their communication way specifically towards the target's persona. (Reiners 2021; Zojceska 2018.) The most common method of SM communication is content that varies throughout genuineness, approachability, differentiation, and

consistency. (Willow 2020.) Content also has the additional advantage of making EB personal and easier to envision for people through SM and online. (Müller 2020)

Many companies forget responding and engagement elements in their EB communication. Even though responding has been made easier than ever before in this digital era, it still is a challenge for companies because of the time-consuming factor in it. (Zojceska 2018.) Engaged dialogue creation can happen through conversation starters, questions, and establishing time for liking and commenting on people's reaction to showcase appreciation, creating personalization and encouragement. (Willow 2020; Müller 2020.)

### **Company Website**

Similarly, to the importance of social media actives in EB, the company website is a top recruitment and EB avenue. Alongside the earlier mentioned candidate investigation of SM, the same people tend to also investigate company websites and the EB of the company presented there. (Business LinkedIn2014.) The most common place on company websites, where EB is communicated, is a page that is named "careers". Employers tend to post vacancies and host job application on this careers page, as well as redirect their open positions in other online platforms to this page. (Müller 2020.) In this careers page, top employers include information and EB content that makes the choosing process self-sufficient for candidates and sets up the recruitment of talents to become higher. (Lievens & al. 2007).

The strengthening of online EB happens successfully in their website if the company provides accessible and effective information. (Willow 2020). Additionally, integrating business social media platforms into the company website supports the growth and reach of these outlets and makes it easier to share content or activities between all communication platforms. (Zojceska 2018.) It is also important to take proper advantage of the natural attention connected platforms through constant updates in the form of content and reaching out to target groups, friendly user usability on the website, coherent candidate experience, and properly communicated EB. (Kununu 2018; Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 23-30; Costa 2019.)

### **Measuring**

Many companies that implement EB in their strategies tend to forget about measurements. Measuring and tracking engagement is important and can become a competitive advantage depending on the management method. Common measurements are analyses of review percentages, content effectiveness and awareness fluctuation. Common measurement tools are total number of reaches, annual basis exposure numbers comparison, overall sharing rates, retention of content, and the correlation of these. (Willow 2020.) The

most used tool are surveys, that are both internal and external. (Willow 2020; Leppla 2015.) External reviewing and analysis are also becoming a growing method, which specifically happens on employer review sites such as Kununu, LinkedIn, Glassdoor. (Lyft 2018).

A good and common indicator of an efficient EB, if measurements are not integrated into the strategy yet, is the shift of application quality. Better applications indicate proper employer branding communication and effective strategy that makes candidates self-select. (Burgess 2016.)

It is important to investigate activities and the impact of implemented strategies (Willow 2020). Measurement can happen on a variety of sources. Such examples are contents of different SM platforms, company websites, employee and employer centric platforms, and other similar online platforms. Exemplary factors that need to be analysed and measured are follower growth, impressions count, engagement of content, and click-through rate. (Zojceska 2018; Müller 2020.)

### **Reviews**

One of the biggest EB trends currently is the management of online reviews. Reviews have a high effect on how candidates rank employers. To the point that people, who are looking for work, abandon application because of negative employer and company reviews online. (Womply 2020; CareerArc 2017.) Majority of candidates and talents seek a 4-star or higher rating employers and look at reviews of the employers online. The same group also highly considers the engagement employers provide in reviews and the quality of interactions. There are cases where skilled candidates consider lower rated employer if the business responds and interacts with reviews (Stroller 2020.)

The target group of businesses have a high possibility of changing perceptions on their brand just by replies and interactions done on review. Furthermore, businesses that manage their communication efficiently are more at advantage when compared to competitors, even by just answering in a short manner. (LinkedIn 2021.) Considering all the efforts in negative reviews only is not the right solution, because negative reviews are only few when in comparison to all of the reviews, and this would discourage positive feedback and reputation building through opportunities. Candidates and employees are more invested when EB communication is loud and clear but are alarmed of employers that have little to no negative reviews. (Donaker, Kim, & Luca 2019; Marketing Charts 2013.)

Current EB topics mainly are about digitalization and online opportunities. These specificity revolve around reviews. (LinkedIn 2021; Burgess 2016; Kununu 2018; Donaker & al. 2019.) Reviews tend to be self-generating, the more a company and the employee

amount grows. But there are common options such as encouragement of past and current employees to express themselves freely on social media and sharing their experiences. (Burgess 2016.) Another commonly known method is surveys. Surveys have become easier to execute than ever before, and through the effortless filling out of forms, people are more willing to answer short surveys through phones and computers. This, in hand, has brought up self-generating content for employer branding in the digital era. consumers have left a review for a local business after being asked to do so. (LinkedIn 2021.) The reviews, in comments and ratings, are showcased in every other company webpage from the customer and employee point of view. This kind of method of generating transparent content also grows the brand reputation and strengthens the trust in the company as an employer, because of the peer created reviews. (Donaker & al. 2019; Kununu 2018.) Because companies are afraid of creating irrelevant or negatively affecting content, employee experiences are the safest bet when it comes to branding content (Burgess 2016; Donaker & al. 2019).

LinkedIn's past and latest research showcases that the biggest barrier candidates encounter still is lacking information or misinformation on what it is like working in the open position's environment in a specific business. This part of the research also concludes by noting that candidates trust current and past employees provided information more than the employees own communication. (LinkedIn 2021; Leppla 2015; Gultekin 2011; LinkedIn 2012.) But even so, over three quarters of the surveyed job seekers say that they consider employer's brand before even applying for a job. Half of the surveyed candidates that look at the reviews and reputation of an employer also seek out information through the company's sites and social media. (LinkedIn 2021.) Here, a well implemented external EB accomplishes to tear down these barriers (Leppla 2015).

### **Brand Development**

Values, responsibility, and reputation are key factors in online branding. The positive brand development, with the aforementioned factors as a driving force, is a major theme in employer brand topics currently. Businesses have the tendency to develop, test and execute EB mainly on social media and company websites. (Burgess 2016.) This notion is further fortified in a LinkedIn report where Small and mid-size businesses utilize social media and professional networks in their employer brand efficiently but focus mainly on company websites when it comes to positive development of their brand (Leppla 2015).

### 3.3.2 Content Trends

#### Content Mix

Some of the most effective contents come in forms of photos and videos. These visual must include the brand distinctive elements such as brand colours and logo. The effectiveness of visual content depends on how many things are showed in them in a captivating manner. Candidates and job seekers tend to be interested in content related to company employees, workspace, events, projects, awards and recognition, additional benefits. (Lyft 2018; Leppla 2015; Burgess 2016.)

LinkedIn's (2014) study results showcase the most effective content mix on captivating talented candidates' attention. This content mix includes the following: leadership and industry news (40%), talent brand (25%), company news (20%), event promotions (10%), and positive, fun, and joyful content (5%). (LinkedIn 2014). This mix is showcased in figure 14. It is also common to plan a content calendar that helps the organization of EB content and frequency of posts. With this method, an employer can plan content sharing ahead by creating a systematic status update schedule for different platforms with different occasions and themes that support the EB of the business. This makes executing and sharing content much easier long term, because everything is planned out in phases and steps. Another way to counter the lack of content is reposting the same content from one outlet to every outlet and platform. (Sundberg 2021a; Business LinkedIn 2014.)

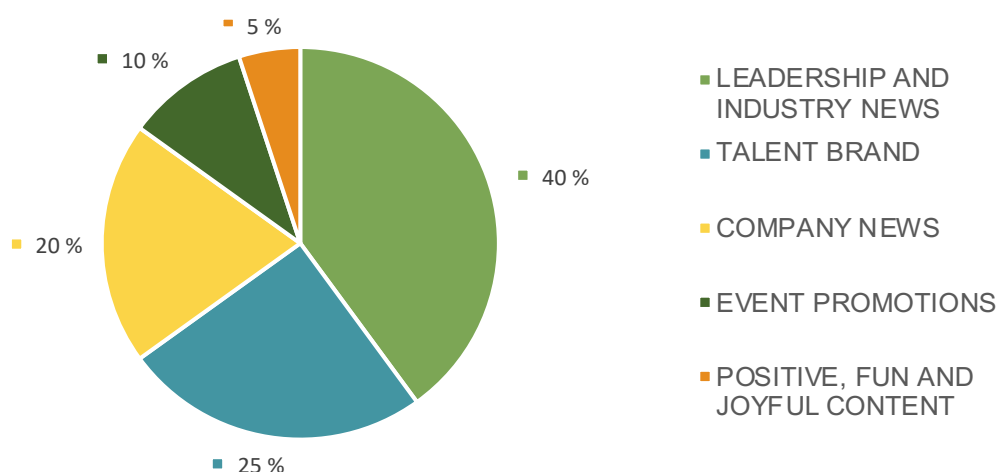


Figure 14. EB effective content mix (Business LinkedIn 2014.)

#### Interactive Content

A strong EVP and employee participation are important when it comes to developing of content that relates to the recruitment strategy. The main intention of the content is to entice talented people. For this, businesses must research current trends and interest because information is key in creating effective content. Such exemplary information is the

targeted candidate's priorities to fuel the hiring initiatives. For this to be achieved, the content must engage and build excitement in an easily accessible manner so that the target audience provides the necessary information. Additionally, the same content should have an internal and external effect. (Hall 2014.)

The intention of interactive content is simply put to effect employees and candidates emotionally and change their perceptions whilst providing some information to the employer. These emotions can vary from pridefulness to excitement. Examples of interactive content are ones that teach new things about the employer through questionnaires, showcasing employee experiences authentically, informing about advantages of the business and competitive benefits that the employer offers through a trivia. (Hall 2014.)

When creating content that catches attention, it is notable to remember the marketing key methods of keeping the text concise, utilizing eye catching colours and including intriguing figures. The second step is to make the content consumable, which can vary between videos, pictures, or writing. Depending on the platform where the content is shared, there are also new ways such as live podcasts, blogging, stories, and vlogs. (Hall 2014.)

### **Employee Generated Content**

In the self-generated employee review method, employers can leverage their employees to generate content also. Here, encouragement of employees to share ideas and participate is key. Another way, depending on the size of the company and trust, is giving access to different platform's accounts to employees, so that they can share content. These methods create realistic content, which is more enticing to the current digital era. Other additional hidden benefits are the empowerment of employees and growing engagement. (Hall 2014.)

### **Connecting EB with Marketing**

One notable issue HR department has with EB content is the lack of sharing and interaction on social media. Common reasons for this are the lack of content and time investment needed to content creation. The answer to this is that the content does not have to be extravagant nor need to sell anything. The core of the content must add value to the targeted candidates and employees. This can happen in simple subtle shares of employee or trendy topics, information about events, and short positive content, that blends on the chosen platform's daily streams, such a picture or a short clip of employees working on a project or of the uplifting work environment. Small and little invested content that includes some part of the culture is always better than an off-brand content which takes a lot of resources and has no effect at all. (Sundberg 2021a.)

### 3.3.3 Exemplary Companies

According to Universum (2020), the most attractive international employer brands to students are Google, Microsoft and Apple. Universum is an Employer Branding Research institution (Universum 2021). The Great Place to Work® study (2020), also known as GPW, ranks the best employers based on employees, students and unemployed people as respondents. The top three employers of Europe are Salesforce, Cisco, and Hilton (GWP 2020). The best SMEs to work at in the United States are Life.Church, Crew Carwash, and Ike (Glassdoor 2021a). Glassdoor is an employer review website in the international employee market. (Glassdoor 2021b). The top-ranking companies are visualized below (Table 3: Figure 15).

Table 3. Employer Branding Rankings (Universum 2020; GPW 2020; Glassdoor 2021a.)

EB Ranking	Universum (Global)	GPW (Europe)	Glassdoor (USA)
1 <sup>st</sup>	Google	Salesforce	Life.Church
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Apple	Cisco	Crew Carwash
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Microsoft	Hilton	Ike

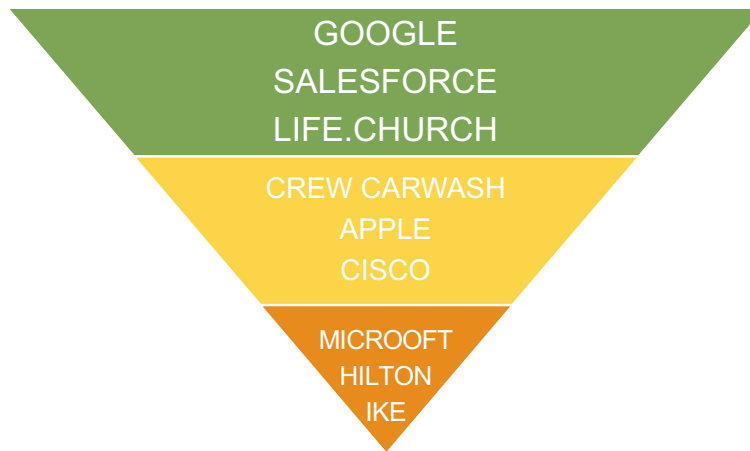


Figure 15. Employer rating triangle based on Universum (2020), GPW (2020), and Glassdoor’s (2021a) latest rankings.

### SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT matrix on the will be used on all the first ranking companies’ their employer branding are presented after every company specific analysis (Figure 16; Figure 17; Figure 18). This method of employer brand evaluation is conducted to attain the most effective employer attributes, methods and other factors from well executed EBs. The analysis will be conducted on company websites, social media branding and studies made on these companies. Even though Google doesn’t count as an SME, it has exemplary elements that can be used by companies looking to develop their EB. A SWOT matrix will be visualized in the end of each company’s SWOT mix analysis presentation. After the

SWOT analysis, the obtained information will be filtered into a TOWS matrix, which then will be used to create efficient strategies that can be suggested generally to every business globally.

### **SWOT 1 – GOOGLE**

Google implements an enormous amount of strengthening factors in their EB (Figure 16). The user-friendly career page includes rich information that is communicated in slogans, videos, pictures, diagrams, reviews and comments from employees. The communication in the career page, as well as in other channels and social media, is descriptive and specific for everything: positions, needs, future, offering and proposition, news/updates, employee experiences, environment, and promotion of fulfilment. Google's EB content is colourful and always includes visuals. The job listing application has been made efficient through calendars, emails, referral options and external online platform integration.

Google's out of the norm large number of benefits offering are communicated in their website, social media and in review sites of the company. Google is known as an employer that has special interviews, which include behavioural and hypothetical assessment structure. Google also is proud of constant management practice development, periodical annual research they do internally and measurement results, which they implement in their EB content often. (Google 2021; Radstad 2020; Comparably 2021a.)

Even with the big profile, reputation appeal, strong culture, values and mission that Google has, the "people first" image is not properly communicated through their EB contents. The content showcased are far reaching and too general from the targeted candidate groups. Additionally, the company's long application procedures are their biggest weakness. This issue is the result of each application being reviewed by an employee physically without the help of technology and with repetitive and partial personal interaction. This is further lengthened by the noncentralized decision making in the HR departments of the company. (Google 2021; Radstad 2020; Comparably 2021a.)

For the moment, Google's EB strategy's opportunity is further investing and developing current methods of branding instead of focusing on innovating the recruitment process, which is efficient and one of the best already, and has a risk of becoming too complicated without necessity. This could happen though implementing technology in the communication. The newest communication method is chat bots and artificial intelligence, by making interaction with candidates that visit the career website. In the interaction, the chat bot and AI informs and showcases content directly to the person in a personalized manner. Another opportunity can be found in greater competitive compensation. (Google 2021; Radstad 2020; Comparably 2021a.)

The threats of the company's EB are low and easily improved. The further generalization, personalization and unrealistic communication through content may lead to lessening interest. Among these, the long and complex interview and assessment structures may discourage candidates. The general investment on one too many communication platform and methods, without full investment in one can also become challenging to change if it continues further. Other general threats are negative news on the company's work and raising concerns of concentration only on competition. (Google 2021; Radstad 2020; Comparably 2021a.)



Figure 16. Google's employer branding SWOT analysis (Google 2021; Radstad 2020; Comparably 2021a.)

## SWOT 2 – SALESFORCE

Salesforce has a simple and effective EB strategy, with many effective EB elements (Figure 17). The company communicates in a clear and specific omnichannel method through the largest SM platforms and their website. The company goal, EVP and culture are showcased in various content formats in all the currently biggest communication platforms. The company has also invested a lot on their website and career site. This can be seen in the company website and careers page, where EB elements are described and visualized a lot. Salesforce's executed EB personal and employee advocating content revolve around recognition and rewarding, meaningful work, culture. (Salesforce 2021.) Salesforce is mainly known for their passionate leadership team image and having culture as a company priority (Comparably 2021b). Another factor that the company is proud of in their EB is their innovative measurements and being a trend setter as an employer. Such examples are candidate experience initiatives and people-created trend engagement. (Salesforce 2021; Sunberg 2021b.)

Even though Salesforce has a strong EB strategy, the company still has issues with applications. The inflow of applications still too high in the company, which makes it harder for

them to drive away the untargeted group's applications. (Sunberg 2021b.) Because of this, another weakness has been brought into the table as of late. This weakness is only having two sources for applications: employee referrals and recruiter reaching out to passive talent. This complicates their business strategy, especially with their small number of employees with defined positions and non-all-rounder skillsets in the HR departments. (Salesforce 2021.) Lastly, Salesforce has implemented an ineffective referral bonus strategy (Sunberg 2021b).

Salesforce can find opportunities in utilizing third-party platforms to communicate their EB and share open positions once again if the open positions are described as well as they are in the career page. Additionally, if the third-party platforms could refer to the career page of the company and send applicant directly to the webpage of the company, candidates would be more informed, and the targeted talent group would be filtered better. Another big opportunity is interacting with review sites by verifying these platforms and using them in the company websites and EB communication. Similarly, utilizing the gained awards in content to create loyalty and pridefulness in employees is an effective way for the future strategies. (Salesforce 2021; Comparably 2021b.)

Salesforce has a small amount of EB threats. On the other hand, the company has company widespread and HR threats that could affect EB. Such threats are the rapid growth the company is going through becoming hard to control and manage, continuous massive inbound flow of "not right applicants", and high risk from lack of authenticity because of competitor similarities in employer branding. (Sunberg 2021b; Comparably 2021b.)



Figure 17. Salesforce's employer branding SWOT analysis

### SWOT 3 – LIFE.CHURCH

Life.Church (2017) has by far the largest employee engagement when compared to the other employers being analysed and the research resulted in engagement attributes mainly. (Figure 18) Life.Church (2021) claims to have one of the proudest and invested employees because the company provides personal and professional support. This seems to be true based on the support they get from employees as a return to the company's consistent investments and concentration on culture and EB/HR strategies such as program, time, innovation, and competitive compensation. (Comparably 2021c; Glassdoor 2019.) With an uplifting employer image, the company communicates their commitment to employee personal and professional growth and development daily through storytelling. The company is invested in fostering great relationships with employees, candidates and people alike, whilst encouraging open and honest feedback. (Glassdoor 2019; Comparably 2021c.) Life.Church (2021) is descriptive about their systematic surveys and measurements, with results alike periodically. Though their reports, it can be. Life.Church (2021) has a clear understanding of their EB and is conscious on it's worth and value in the business. Their webpage communicates their EVP and EB strategy as well as company values and a company mission for employees comprehensibly on their website. (Life.Church 2021.) As an employer, Life.Church as a strong and distinctive EVP strategy, in which is EVP is separate for every candidate and employee group. (Glassdoor 2019; Comparably 2021c; Life.Church 2021.)

The lacking part of EB in the company would sound really bad in a HR professionals' ear, but Life.Church seems to be doing fine even with their weaknesses and threats. Life.Church (2021) has little to no EB communication and activity on their social media platforms. Another big issue can be found in the company's non-user-friendly career site, where the site is filled mainly visuals with little descriptions and separated EB content between different locations in the company website and a hard-to-find employment application. (Life.Church 2021).

Life.Church (2021) can find opportunities in elaborating the company's competitive perk packages in their separate EVP as well as communicating how the company improves employees' life physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially. Additionally, instead of only holding physical events and gatherings, carrying out these in an online environment would bring more attention to the EB and the company overall. Another threat is the continuous lack of investment on other EB elements and only investing into EVP and culture. This method could result into employing people mainly based on values and not skillsets, as well as long EB strategy planning and execution processes. (Comparably 2021c; Life.Church 2021.)



Figure 18. Life.Church’s employer branding SWOT analysis

**TOWS**

Many EB strategies can be found through the top-ranking company EB SWOTs. Through General and efficient EB strategies, based on the combination of attained information of every presented SWOT matrix and utilization of the TOWS analysis, can be found below. (Table 4).

Table 4. TOWS matrix for EB strategies

TOWS MATRIX		EXTERNAL FACTORS	
		OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
INTERNAL FACTORS	STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Employees first” content</li> <li>- Multichannel (3-4) communication</li> <li>- Connecting employer, corporate and customer brands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defining the EB / message (EB Audit)</li> <li>- Working around brand perception and image</li> <li>- In depth communication</li> </ul>
	WEAKNESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investment on culture and environment</li> <li>- Embracing transparency and encouraging engagement</li> <li>- asking for/ acting on feedback</li> <li>- Embracing technology: employment automation, AI &amp; ChatBots)</li> <li>- Investing time on refining the careers page and job descriptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building brand advocacy</li> <li>- HRMS connection automation</li> <li>- Treating candidate and customers alike</li> <li>- Creating an EB team</li> <li>- Employers, leaders and employees alike can advocate</li> <li>- Consistency</li> <li>- Online Review and candidate experience management</li> <li>- Measuring EB</li> </ul>

The most common and working EB strategy is the creation of “employee first” content through a multiple channel communication method. Similarly, top employers should connect their employer, corporate and customer brands for a more efficient communication, fortified image and perception.

To avoid threats, these top employers have all properly defined EBs and their message is clear. The same is suggested for any business, with additional in-depth information for further strengthening communication. For this to happen, an employer brand audit is a must. In the audit, competitors' EB are investigated to identify gaps and opportunities, as well as evaluate messages. Another strategy is working around current brand perception and image, because changing these can take a lot of resources.

Every top employer has invested the most into their culture. As an addition, investing also into the environments brings more benefits in employer branding. Similarly, transparency and encouragement between employer and employees/candidates is one of key opportunities to stow away weaknesses. This can happen through Asking for feedback and then acting on the received information. Many strategies and EB phases, such as feedback, can be simplified and made more efficient through taking advantage of technology. Examples of such are online communication, chatbot implementation on the company website, AI implementation on candidate evaluations and content creation programs. Even amongst the top employers, there were issues with job descriptions and careers pages, which could be easily fixed through investment of refining time to make them clearer and rich with information. Because lacking information negates the benefits of a user-friendly and attractive page.

Through the weaknesses and threats obtained in the SWOT analyses, the most common EB strategy was having a team for EB management. A team can concentrate in communication consistency and periodical measurements. Additionally, HRMS connection automation and building brand advocacy from top to bottom are useful strategies medium sized companies. A big key strategy for every sized company is implementing online review sites in the EB engagement strategy and managing candidate experiences in the online environment also.

### **ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS**

From the EB attribute and characteristics communication analysis (Figure 19), the most common attributes shown in the first ranking employers are (Salesforce 2021; Life.Church 2021; Google 2021.):

- Culture
- Values
- Mission & purpose
- Benefits & perks
- Work environment

Learning and development, diversity and inclusion, advancement and opportunities, as well as management and organization are communicated only in two out of the 3 case

companies analysed. Innovation and technology were only communicated in one of the employers' EB. (Figure 19)

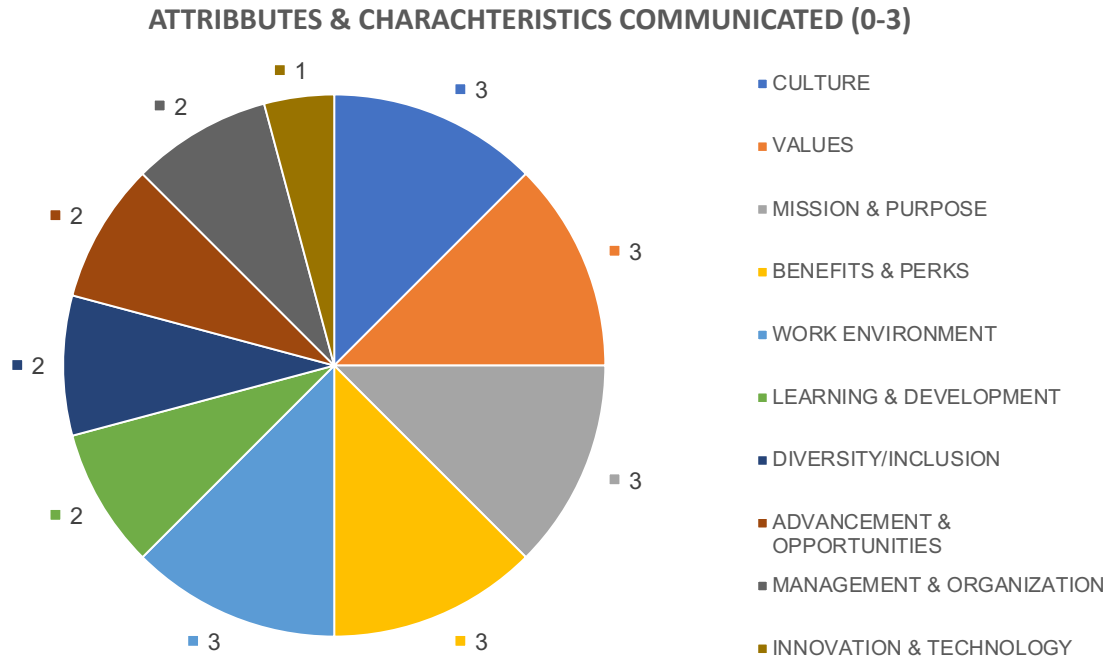


Figure 19. Qualities and characteristics communicated by three top employers

## 4 The External Employer Branding Guide

This chapter's focus is project task 3, which is the creation of the external employer brand guide for global SME. The full end product is at the end of this paper (Attachment 1). In this chapter, the process and methods used to develop the guide, the product and the key outcomes with a conclusion presented (Figure 20).

The decisions made to create the end product are presented first. This is then followed by the presentation of the contents included in the guide, which are presented in subsections and named as the title of each step of the process. These steps include in-depth supporting information to the compressed information presented in the end product. These subsections include preface explanation and reasoning for the contents of the product. Lastly, this chapter ends with the presentation of key outcomes.

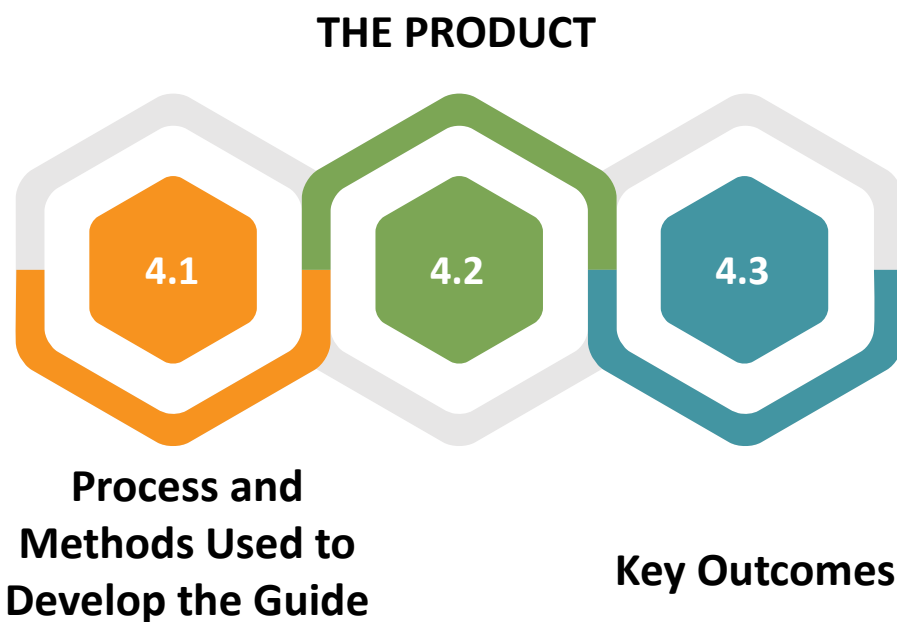


Figure 20. The structure of Chapter 4

### 4.1 Process and Methods Used to Develop the Guide

The end product's outline is based on the results of project tasks 1 and 2. This external EB guide will also include additional information from other literature and prior studies that are not presented on Chapters 2 and 3. The reason behind this is to gather more relevant information based on these task results.

The guide is intended to be as visual and easy to understand as possible, which is why the design programs are PowerPoint and Presentation Go. The guide also takes into consideration the fact that a company using it might start from the very beginning of the external employer branding process. There is no assumption on the implementing company's

resources and goals when writing the guide because that would necessitate a larger scale project. The guide and its content are neutral, as well as centred on development and leading notions towards efficient strategy planning.

## 4.2 The Product

This project's end product, which is a guideline, presents the main parts of Chapters 2 and 3 in a summarized manner. The guideline starts with the title page and table of contents. The table of contents' chapter numbering begins from the process steps onwards. This means that the introduction does not include a number, and only the following chapters which present the steps of the process do (Table 5). The reason behind this is the simplification of the product. By numbering the steps of the process only, the digestion of information provided becomes much clearer to the reader from the very beginning.

Table 5. The guidelines table of contents

	Introduction	3
1	Create a team	7
2	Research and align	10
3	Develop EVP	15
4	Communicate	24
5	Measure and manage	32

The guideline starts with an introduction, where the reasoning and value behind the guide are presented. Then, EB and its benefits are presented in a compact manner, which is then followed by the presentation of top employers and distinctive EB elements. The introduction ends with the visualisation of the modified employer branding process targeted at global SMEs (Figure 21). The process presented in the product is based on a combination of a traditional and digital EB framework (Pawar 2016, 35; Cobuzz 2021).

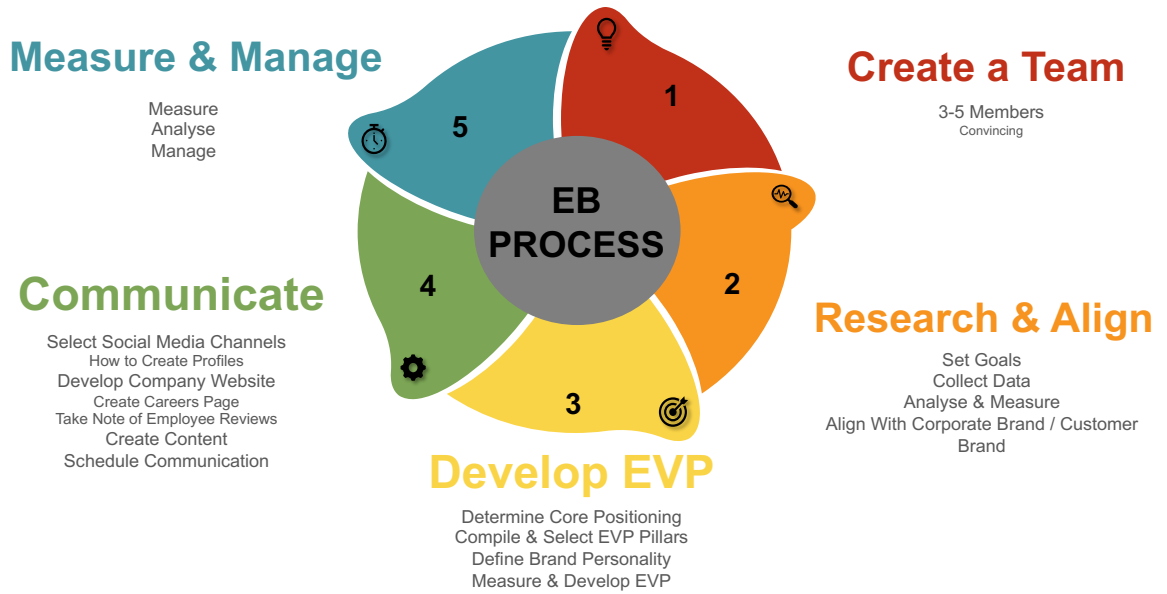


Figure 21. The external employer branding process presented in the guide

The guide's steps include concepts, examples, and tools that need to be digested and made into actions so that EB can be integrated into the business strategy. These steps are presented in a leading manner with the notion that companies can pick and choose to implement all or certain parts of each step into their own strategy depending on their current needs and ability to manage their EB strategy. Unless the company has already an EB strategy and is only looking development, the phases are suggested to be followed from the beginning to the end.

#### 4.2.1 Create a Team

It is important to acknowledge that employer branding is complex and hard to manage for an individual. Which is why creating a team full of creative, intelligent, driven, and highly qualified individuals, is one of the key factors to attain effective EB. (Sunberg 2021a.) A common EB team includes senior management, marketing and communication leaders, HR, line management and the head of the company depending on the size of the company. It is common for HR to take the leading role in the EB process, but it is important to integrate managers and supervisors from different sections into the EB team to ensure resources for EB and efficiency. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 10.) It is important for every company's leadership to be knowledgeable on EB, as well as know its relevance in sustainable success in a business. A well-formed team supports EB elements, especially internal ones such as employee encouragement and collaboration, becomes easier. Additionally, employee generated content and brand advocacy can be taken advantage of and can be executed in an efficient manner. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 10-13; Sunberg 2021a.)

The approval of all team members is key in planning and executing EB. The team creation process may come across challenges such as uninterest and language barriers in terminology or strategies. Resistance is common depending on the workload of the company. The solution in both cases is communication. The efficiency of the team's work comes by finding common ground in the language and strategy barriers as well as excluding distractions. This happens through convincing and concentrating on the benefits that EB brings to the team members, as well as the overall business. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 38-40.)

#### **4.2.2 Research and Align**

Before developing an EB strategy, it is recommended that companies with no prior knowledge or experience set forth goals for EB. Common goals are talent attraction, presence creation, reducing cost and time of hiring, as well as more efficient branding across the business. (Barrow and Mosley 2005.)

As it is common and important for every business strategy, especially long-term operations, information needs to be continuously collected and measured over time (Sullivan 2004). This applies to EB research. Thus, comprehensive research must be done in the beginning of the EB strategy, and this happens by taking note of current characteristics and behaviour of the company as an employer (Dyhre and Parment 2009, 63). Research, separately from the first time it is done when creating the EB strategy, must be also done periodically for further development. (Sunberg 2021a).

An employee market research helps companies to understand the current reputation, perception and attractiveness as an employer, which then can help to create a company specific strategy based on their needs. EB research data can reveal indicators relating to brand attitude, popularity, wage position, and many more elements of EB that need attention in strategy planning. (Dyhre and Parment 2009, 63.) Sullivan (2004) claims that the most common lacking factors of EB are communication and content reach. Thus, these are good to take note of in the research results (Sullivan 2004). The gathered data is usually the result of desktop studies and external surveys targeted at students and the employee market. The collection of data can also be done through a variety of outlets, such from online platforms and sites, through a third-party research company, as well as through insights of stakeholder views. (Dyhre and Parment 2009, 64.)

External data gives a broader view on where the company is positioned as an employer and where to start from and helps in defining the target audience. Companies can also determine the importance of EB in current business strategy through observing factors of the company that drive employee commitment and engagement. Such drivers can be culture,

consistency across divisional/geographical borders, differentiating elements as an employer and propositions to employees. (Barrow & Mosley 2005.) Additionally, another advantage of the collected data is that companies can develop the organizational and HR's purpose and values further (Sabel 2018).

According to EB experts, companies must find out the company's current employer image, attractiveness, perception, and distinctive attributes as an employer in their auditing (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 45). Though these, it is easier to understand preferences of the audience and make a comparison with the competition. In the comparison, it is important to identify and include differentiators and opportunities. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 46). The result of EB research can help companies see their potential and gaps as an employer. Additionally, the candidacy and favourability in comparison to other employers in the employee market can be clarified. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017 47).

Alignment depends on the business strategy, which is why the senior management decides upon this matter. It is suggested that employer brand is aligned with both corporate and customer brands, or at least with one of these. When alignment is made with only one, the choice must be based on the most relevant option towards business goals and the overall strategy. If the company has a corporate brand with many customer brands, then it must be taken into consideration that employer brand must be aligned with each customer brand. Most commonly, the decision relies on the brand prospective employees are familiar with.

#### **4.2.3 Create an EB Statement**

EB statement, which is better known as EVP is the foundation to a successful EB. This happens through the development of EVP (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 17, 71-73 & 77-78):

1. Determine core positioning
2. Compile and select pillars
3. Define brand personality
4. Measure and develop

##### **Determine Core Positioning**

This step's intent is to make the reader take note that the company will have choose a single characteristic that they want to be associate with the most as an employer. Core positioning underlines and highlights a characteristic that the company wants to be best known as an employer in a comprehensive manner (Smarp 2020). Defining the core position depends on the organizational context. A suitable core positioning can be explored by shortlisting options and observing all the chosen pillars throughout the creation and development of EVP. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 77-78.)

### **Compile and Select Pillars**

The first step is finding out key differentiating and supporting qualities as an employer (Smarp 2020). These qualities are also known as “pillars”. Such qualities are ones that stand out as key points that make the company’s work environment enticing and good option as an employer. Additionally, these pillars are commonly presented as competitive advantages distinct to companies in the competitive employee market. It is important that as many of these qualities are gather at first and made into expressions that signals the benefits and advantages when working for an employer. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 71.)

An efficient method of presenting EVP is through a clear and concise employment statement. This statement explains employee duties, such as expected jobs and typically a long-term goal of the employee in the company. It is notable that many mix employment statement with a job description, because of its complexity and similar elements. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 63-64; Smarp 2020.)

It is recommended that companies have three to five “pillars” that are supporting qualities of the company’s offering and define the core proposition of EVP further with priorities (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 64). Most commonly, these pillars in the statement are communicated in short sentences, slogans or one-word terms that are easy to understand and attractive to the employee market (Smarp 2020).

The brand statement must express the whole employment deal or point at the presiding component of the deal at the least. In short, the statement’s message has to be the company’s brand essence. This essence is what the company wants to be seen as an employer. Additionally, once the EVP and employment statement are set off, the company must stick to them with consistency to achieve effective communication and branding. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 65.) The EVP structure presented in the guide, with editable components, is illustrated in figure 22 below.

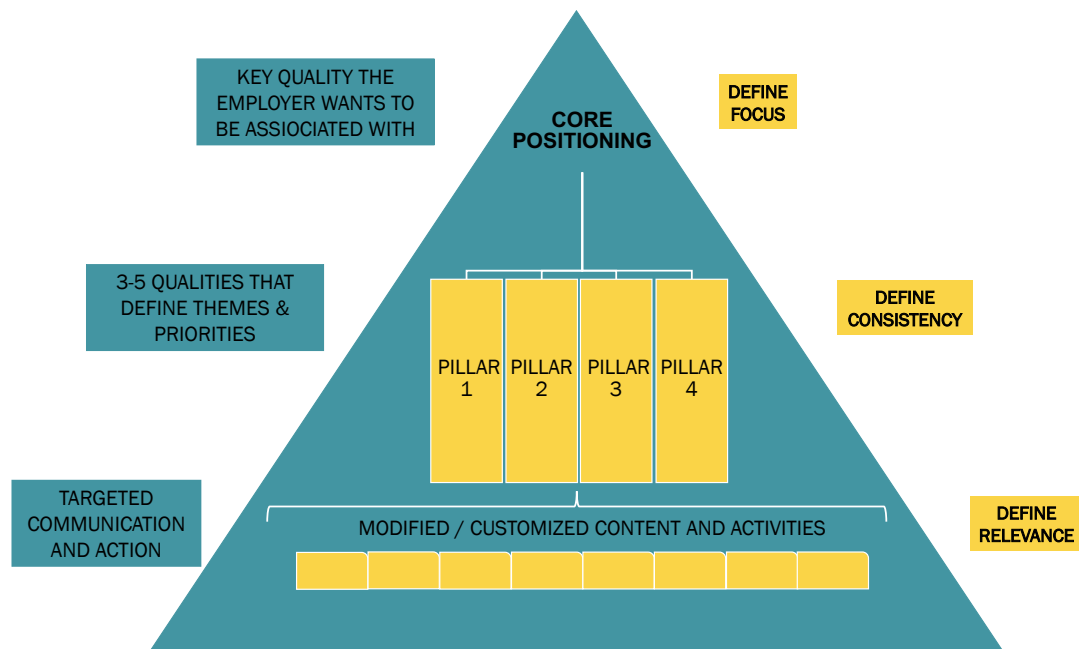


Figure 22. EVP structure presented in the guide (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 64)

### Define Brand Personality

The brand personality delivers the message of EVP pillars. To maintain a consistent communication delivery throughout the company, the company must align EB at least with corporate or customer brand. Moreover, emotion plays an important part in delivering the message. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 64; Smarp 2020.)

Companies must clearly define their needs and what they offer for that to employees in an authentic manner. Authentic offering, in this context, is meant as other than financial compensation. Such examples are a promise for development opportunities and distinct experiences. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 72; Smarp 2020.)

### Measure and Develop EVP

EVP requires development from the first presentation onwards, because EVP will change many times until proper authenticity and differentiation is achieved. Common evaluations for EVP are related attractiveness, reliability, relevancy and addons of the pillar and core positioning's attractiveness. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 80; Smarp 2020)

A survey, targeted at employees, is the most efficient method to assess and refine EVP. This survey must include ratings, yes and no questions, as well as an open-end question to achieve the best data. These three question methods are implemented so that the assessment and refining of EVP is done in a quantitative and qualitative manner. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 81; Smarp 2020.) An exemplary survey presented in the guide, that includes all the questioning methods, can be visualized below (Table 6).

Table 6. Exemplary survey questions for EVP development

How attractive is each pillar to people?	1	2	3	4	5
How attractive is the core positioning to people?	1	2	3	4	5
How important/relevant is (pillar x)?	1	2	3	4	5
How reliable is (pillar x) in describing the current employment experience?	1	2	3	4	5
Do the pillars need further description?	Yes / No				
What is missing in the EVP in your opinion?					

#### 4.2.4 Communicate

The first part of the communication steps relates to choosing the right social media channels for the company's need. This part includes common platforms and step-by-step visualization on how to create profiles. The second part concentrates on development of the company website and management of employee reviews. On the third part, content creation options with their execution are presented. Lastly, the fourth part presents the execution of communication.

##### Choose Social Media Channels

There is a variety of social media channels. The choice to focus on a certain or couple platforms depends on the company's strategy and goals of the company (Müller 2020). The options on the guide are Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. These are presented based on prior LinkedIn research, which have ranked these as the most relevant international communication platforms for businesses. (LinkedIn 2012; LinkedIn 2014; LinkedIn 2020; Leppla 2015.) Additionally, implementing all the platforms into EB is not necessary, because consistency and focus are keys in brand communication (Müller 2020). It is important to link the company website with every chosen social media platform, to make it easier for people to visit and find more information (Willow 2020). This drives more attention to the company and effect the search engine ranking through optimization. Optimization happens when the ranking of suggested sites gets higher, and this is achieved through high traffic on the website and career page. Website Setup 2021; Willow 2020.)

##### Develop the Company Website

The website of the company is one of the most important places to communicate EB/EVP. The key is making the whole of the website user-friendly. As it was mentioned earlier, the website must be connected to the used social media platforms to drive more traffic and provides familiarity to people through overall consistency in the used social network

services (Website Setup 2021.) Additionally, every employer's webpage needs to include a career page to post vacancies and host job applications. Here, the company must provide thorough information and make sure that the page is user-friendly. (Costa 2019.)

### **Take Advantage of Employee Reviews**

In today's job market, transparency of internal employer practices is a new norm (Kununu 2018, Mosley and Schmidt 2017, 38). Potential employees and candidates tend to go through company review sites to search for inside information on inner practices and experiences. Which is why claiming and verifying review sites is important. Additionally, constant and proper communication by responding to reviews gives a caring employer image and encourages further active conversation. Another benefit from keeping track of reviews over time and being proactive through the gained access to information that would not be visible inside the company. (Mosley and Schmidt 2017, 38; Sullivan 2004.)

Every company can expect negative and positive feedback. What's critical with these reviews is responding and the context of the response. Silent treatment and no responsiveness give others the idea that the company simply doesn't care, or that the employee's criticism was accurate. An authentic, transparent response to an unfavourable review can actually change perceptions of your company from negative to positive. On the other hand, a response to positive feedback encourages more similar employee feedback in the future. Every word influences the company's reputation in responses. Which is why objective, fair, empathetic but never defensive, personal, and subjective answers are key. Additionally, every response should be respectful and express gratitude to those who wrote a review. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 141; Minchington 2006.103-104; Indeed 2018.)

Asking for reviews or encouraging reviews isn't always the right choice depending on the situation a company is in. Thus, setting certain times to send review requests is an effective strategy. Such times can be positive employee milestones, key company moments, orientation, training, special events or anniversaries, or in promotions. This encourages and creates a healthy way for employees to make reviews. (Minchington 2006, 103.)

### **Create Content**

Full control of the public's perception is not possible, because of external independent factors such as news. This does not mean that brand protection and preparation for the future is futile. Action such as active positive content creation and publication through social media, website, blog, and other places online, or making constructive responses in review sites to all reviews. Through the constant building of a good and real image, as well as addressing people and news directly with full preparations brings stability with less or no losses in resources. Obtaining public recognition brings benefits of exposure such as an

increase of credibility, reinforcement of the target audiences' mindset, being mentioned in the list of "best place to work at" of news agencies, periodicals, and industry magazines. (Sullivan 2004.)

Implementing employee reviews in the company's future and content is one of the most efficient ways of strengthening employer branding, by analysing and identifying real pros and cons. Almost every review presents a great opportunity for companies to learn something new about the company. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 223-225.)

Including company reviews as well as sharing employee experiences of the company on the career page and recruiting materials is an easy way of displaying a positive image and differentiating factors as an employer. These reviews act as proof and testimonials to the reader in their research and assessment process because average employees are a credible source and more trustworthy in the eyes of the candidates. By encouraging and giving employees the outlet to review, be involved, and advocate in the employer brand through social media and reviews, as well as featuring employees in the company's marketing content and posts has positive effects on the overall employer brand and especially employee experiences. (Mosley and Schmidt 2017, 38-40; Sullivan 2004.)

#### **4.2.5 Measure and Manage**

Through measuring and evaluating, the created EB practices can be developed. The development can be achieved only after the EB process steps are analysed, which then provides the opportunity for adjustment and concentration of efforts. The short- and long-term measurements must be done individually from each other. (Entrepreneur Europe 2018.) The EB metrics provided in the guide in an action like steps are candidate quality, cost per hire, brand awareness source of hire, number of applicants, offer acceptance rate and employee experience. Other important presented metrics that are not specific to EB are engagement, return on investment, and connection of business performance. (Harver 2019.) All of these measurements are visualized in figure 23. Additionally, the guide includes suggestions on how to leverage results on many of the measurements after execution. The presented metrics, with their results, are usually provided automatically by online platforms and websites. Such examples are digital advertisement (Ad), campaign data on social media, and website page visitor or interaction data on the site domain. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 21.)



Figure 23. The metrics presented in the guide (Harver 2019.)

It is common to have undesirable results when executing EB for the first time. Here, it is important to remember that trial and error is key to refining the strategy of the business and to find differentiation opportunities. (Crowley 2020.) Additionally, even if the results may be undesirable all together, it is important to measure in a realistic manner. This can happen through smaller data groups, which showcase more specific failure or success. Such of an example is measuring target groups individually. (Lepekih 2020, 59; Crowley 2020.)

The cost of measuring is carried by the on company's EB goals. It is common to outsource measurements for large scale measurements related to a similarly sized goal, because of the substantial costs made and specialization needed to achieve proper execution of this step. In exchange for outsourcing, realistic success can be clarified through the quality of results. (Lepekih 2020, 61.)

### 4.3 Key Outcomes

The set objective of the guide is achieved through the compression of the literature review and empirical part, the step-by-step instructive presentation format, introduction of current and ongoing relevant practices and suggestions, as well as the special process that is the combination of traditional and modern EB frameworks.

The guide is written on a general level, which has helped in the compression of information such as definitions, actions, and examples. The steps of the process are made into simple actions, to achieve the most efficient implementation of external employer branding into any business.

Even though the guide is meant to strengthen the reader's comprehension of EB branding, it cannot do so alone for an unknowledgeable person who is introduced to the topic for the first time. Therefore, this paper is intended as a supporting factor that provides in-depth information to the reader when implementing the guide. The generalization and simplification can become challenging for the reader if this paper is not read before or after the guide. Even for well knowledge readers, it is suggested to read this paper along with

the guide when implementing end product into the business strategy. On the other hand, companies that are introduced or have knowledge on the topic may want to have more tips. Such tips could be how to specifically create content and manage EB in the online environment. Here, it is also important that the reader takes this paper as a supporting part for the presentation because of the in-depth information provided here.

The guide's presentation is clarified through a well-structured setting, visualization, colouring, and a briefing of each concept.

The challenges of the end product are time and visualization of steps. One year is a small amount of time when it comes to the creation of such a large target group. The result of only one year is noticeable on how the guide suggests and guides, instead of telling the reader what to do next. The guide intended to be as visual as possible and achieving little to no text. This was unreasonable because certain steps such as the research and measuring made it impractical for the reader to understand. In these steps, it is important to acknowledge that the information provided cannot be described better in any other way than through text. Therefore, it is deemed feasible to use a table-like structure with bullet points at the end, which can be seen in the last couple of pages in attachment 1.

## 5 Conclusion

This last chapter concentrates on project task 4, which is evaluating the paper. The outcomes of the thesis in a summarized manner are discussed at first, by briefing it fully and recognizing the achievements. This is then followed by a presentation of the writing process and future recommendations for the project. This chapter ends with the learning outcomes of this thesis.

To repeat the goals of the thesis: This is a product-based thesis is aimed at creating an external employer branding guide suitable for global SMEs. The guide intends to help companies, who have no prior knowledge on the topic, achieve business strategy development and attract higher quality employees. An additional purpose is to provide development opportunities for companies that are currently executing EB.

The reason behind this whole project is the lack of generalized and simplified all-around EB material, even though EB can strengthen the business's competitive position in the employee market and is one of the key factors in achieving business growth.

This paper includes literature from specialists, prior topic-related studies and reviews, as well as research relating to different aspects of EB are reviewed. To further the information gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic situation between 2020-2021, the research is realized through a desktop study. A desktop study also reassures that the guide is modern and relates to the current digital era as much as possible.

### 5.1 Outcomes

HR is not the most important department in SMEs because they can manage the low employee count through the management only. Once an HR department is constructed into the company, there many more important aspects of the business strategy that need to be managed before EB comes into the table. Additionally, the fact that a long-term strategy such as EB unattractive to every business that wants to be cost-efficient. But for companies, that have resources, must invest into EB because it helps the business execute employer promotion to raise the number of talented candidates. This then furthers the business more in the long term. The advancement is paved by an overall improvement of the business's industry positioning, cost reduction, and improved performance level.

The process created specifically for the guide is a combination of traditional and modern digital era EB frameworks. It starts with proving the importance of building a team specifically EB. Because EB is a strategic plan, employees that fit in the positions of

departmental and senior managers, as well as HR and marketing are important to be included in the team. The challenges in this step are persuasion and the language barrier between the HRM and marketing departments. The second step of the process is research, in which the team analyses the attractiveness and reputation of an employer from the viewpoint of the targeted employee and overall employee market. The third step is the development of the EB statement, which is better known as the employee value proposition. This step lays the foundation for a well-executed EB. The statement is delivered in the form of a promise of what the employee experience is like. This is then followed by the step of communication, in which the message's outlet is chosen and developed. Followed by promotion method and options. The process ends with the measuring, evaluation, and adjustment. This step is targeted at all the steps of the process.

It is clear, through the different steps of the long process, that there is a need for financial, personnel, and time resources mainly. The guide luckily made with the notion to lessen the financial resources needed to implement EB into the business strategy. But for the process to be implemented and executed properly, fortitude and dedication are important because of the long-term consistency needed. The most valuable finding for the guide and in this paper are top international employers and the elements they have in EB, which showcase how to properly implement EB in any business. The essentiality of EVP is showcased in the guide through the large concentration and length of its step.

## **5.2 Evaluation**

This thesis started in the middle of 2020. But, because of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, first two drafts of this paper were changed completely. The following drafts were developed slowly in the following six months until the project was finalized in the middle of 2021.

This product-based thesis has been an intriguing experience from the very beginning because it required a lot of information collection. Every step of the journey brought fulfilment through new HR, EB, and EVP knowledge, with additional modern digital marketing basics.

Combining the pieces of information and structuring everything were the biggest challenges in the thesis and guide, but this was manageable with the help of thesis advisors. Most of the time was spent in planning the content that needs to be included in the thesis and guide. From the contents, the visualization was specifically the most time-consuming. The second-largest time consumption happened through reading papers relating to the topic, picking the most relevant and suitable parts for the project. The information and

structure of this thesis are clear. Even with the inclusion and selection of the most important information, there is still a large amount of in-depth knowledge relating to the topic left that could not be included because of circumstances such as the length of the thesis, time, and circumstantial obstacles because of the pandemic. With time, the paper was formed through monthly selection of information that included also taking certain information apart. The decision was to present informative and basic knowledge to the readers to maintain a general level without specification, with only explanation and examples included. This was done this way because otherwise, it would go beyond the thesis project scope.

For the guide, the selection of information gathered in this thesis was more challenging than the selection that happened for this paper. The intention was to include and create content that is straight to the point in a compressed manner. This was achieved. The guide can be read and presented in a short time because of its structure and visualization. Because this guide is targeted at a large group, there are no industry-specific recommendations and elements. Even with the large target group, the guide achieves the suggestion of applicable information.

From the macro perspective, this thesis includes a fortified literature review of external EB, with discussions on the internal aspects and related marketing. The empirical part was achieved with a strong desktop study. The lack of further in-depth research was not possible because of the circumstances created by COVID-19. Lastly, the end product has been perceived with positive feedback and the value is easily noticeable from the perspective of people who have read it already.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The end product, which is a guide, presents the process that includes steps to creating and implementing an external EB into the company. Nevertheless, the guide would benefit from including the success factors and further specification on implementation steps with examples in research and measuring. This could also be a double-edged sword because it would only make the length of the overall picture of the process longer.

The main action, that a company looking to only develop their business strategy, is to start the research step in the guide's process first. The key is taking advantage of past collections of information and immediately conducting new surveys that can help in analysing the current state of the company as an employer. Accordingly, for bigger businesses, it is suggested to outsource these steps because the guide is lacking in advising large-scale

research and measuring. Such lacking parts can be seen from the non-inclusion of monitoring and detail analytics.

Lastly, it is important to research further if the guide is being applied to the business strategy much later than its release date because this digital era we currently live in evolves continuously. This means that time is an undeniable challenge that will present issues when trends change and new more efficient EB methods come in the future.

#### **5.4 Reflection on Learning**

The whole time spent working on this product-based thesis has enabled the author to a lot of new information when it comes to HR and EB, which has widened the scope of theoretical and research knowledge attained throughout the studies. The author has also acquired sharp evaluation and multitasking abilities through processing large amounts of information, working with different tools, and working on a large-scale project. Other soft skills, such as planning, orderliness, consistency, and self-discipline have been acquired.

Current plans after graduation are finding a higher position relating to the topic of this thesis, such as project management or brand development positions. The end product of this thesis can bring a big advantage in employment opportunities. Additionally, the idea is to implement the guide into the employer's business strategy after acquiring a workplace.

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## Attachments

Attachment 1. The External Employer Branding Guide (End Product)



# EMPLOYER BRANDING GUIDE FOR SMEs

by Shkodran Kacija

# Table of Contents

	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Create a Team</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Research &amp; Align</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Create / Develop EVP</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Communicate</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Measure &amp; Manage</b>	<b>34</b>



# Introduction

For a growing **small to mid-sized enterprise (SME)**, captivating and hiring the most talented people is crucial in ascending and securing future success.

So, how can employers effectively attract talents?

By investing into employer branding. **Employer branding** has become a **winning factor** for businesses, as well as a key-element in business practices and strategic plans.

The presented external employer branding guideline, with step-by-step processes, is targeted at SMEs globally. This guide is applicable in businesses that have little to no practices on the topic.

Already practicing enterprises can attain development opportunities from the guide's steps.

## **In order to better apply this guide:**

The company implementing must have an established work culture internally.

## **Unless the company has already an EB strategy and is only looking development:**

The phases are suggested to be followed from the beginning to the end.



# Employer Branding (EB)

A long-term strategy raising awareness and managing perceptions of potential and existing employees, as well as other related stakeholders.

## INTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING

The process of building a desirable place to work at.

## EXTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING

Advertising the working culture and benefits to desirable potential employees.

## BENEFITS:

- Positive Reputation
- Low Staff Turnover
- Higher Levels of Retention
- Cost Saving
- Engagement Driving
- Talent Attraction



EB IS A MARKETING  
CONCEPT & CONSTRUCT  
(JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER BRAND)

THE BIGGEST COST ELEMENT  
=  
RESEARCH

EB TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES ARE  
SUBSTANTIALLY SIMILAR TO CONSUMER AND  
CORPORATE BRANDING

EB CAN SUPPORT CORPORATE AND  
CUSTOMER BRANDS.  
VICE VERSA.

THE SHORTEST REALISTIC TIME TO DEVELOP A  
BRAND IS 6-8 WEEKS.

ONE OF THE KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL  
BRAND = THE ALIGNMENT OF  
EXPECTATION WITH REALITY OF  
WORKING FOR YOU

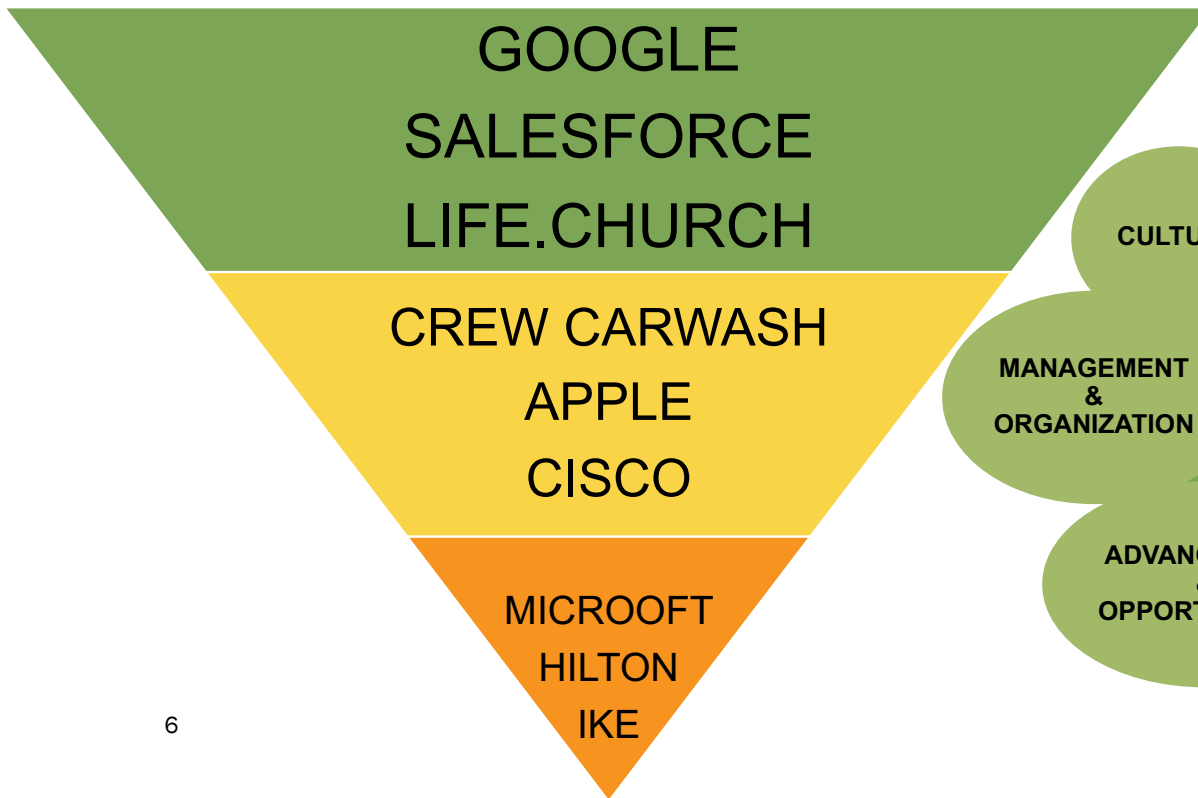
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL  
AND MODERN TALENT ATTRACTION IS THE  
INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH.

EB IS ABOUT RECRUITMENT,  
RETENTION & ENGAGEMENT

THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL  
BRANDING WORK HAND IN HAND

EVERY BUSINESS HAS AN EB BECAUSE OF REPUTATION  
-  
IT JUST MAY NOT BE THE BRAND YOU WANT OR DESERVE

# Top Employer Branding Enterprises



# The External Employer Branding Process

## Measure & Manage

Measure  
Analyse  
Manage

## Create a Team

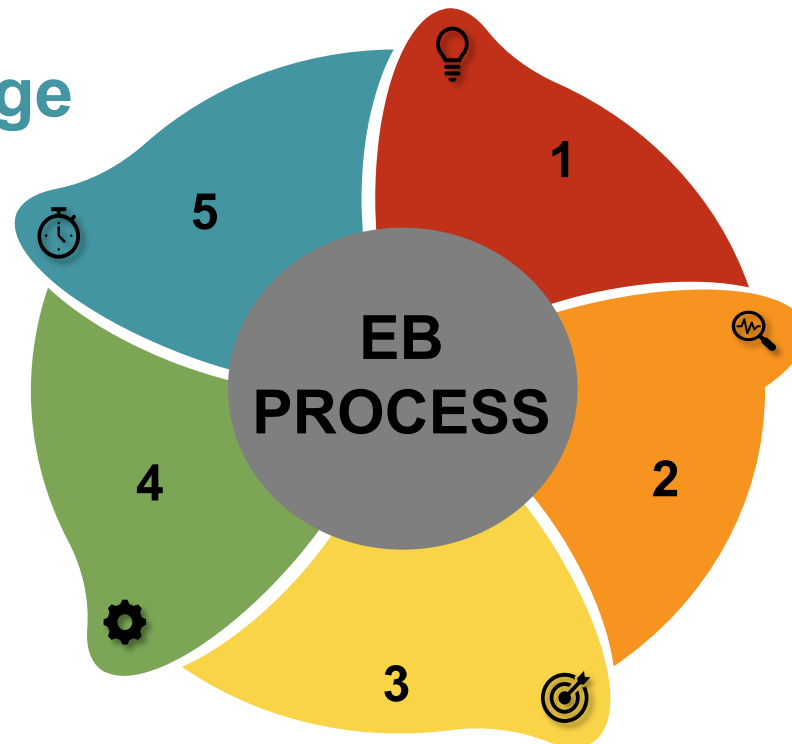
3-5 Members  
Convincing

## Communicate

Select Social Media Channels  
How to Create Profiles  
Develop Company Website  
Create Careers Page  
Take Note of Employee Reviews  
Create Content  
Schedule Communication

## Research & Align

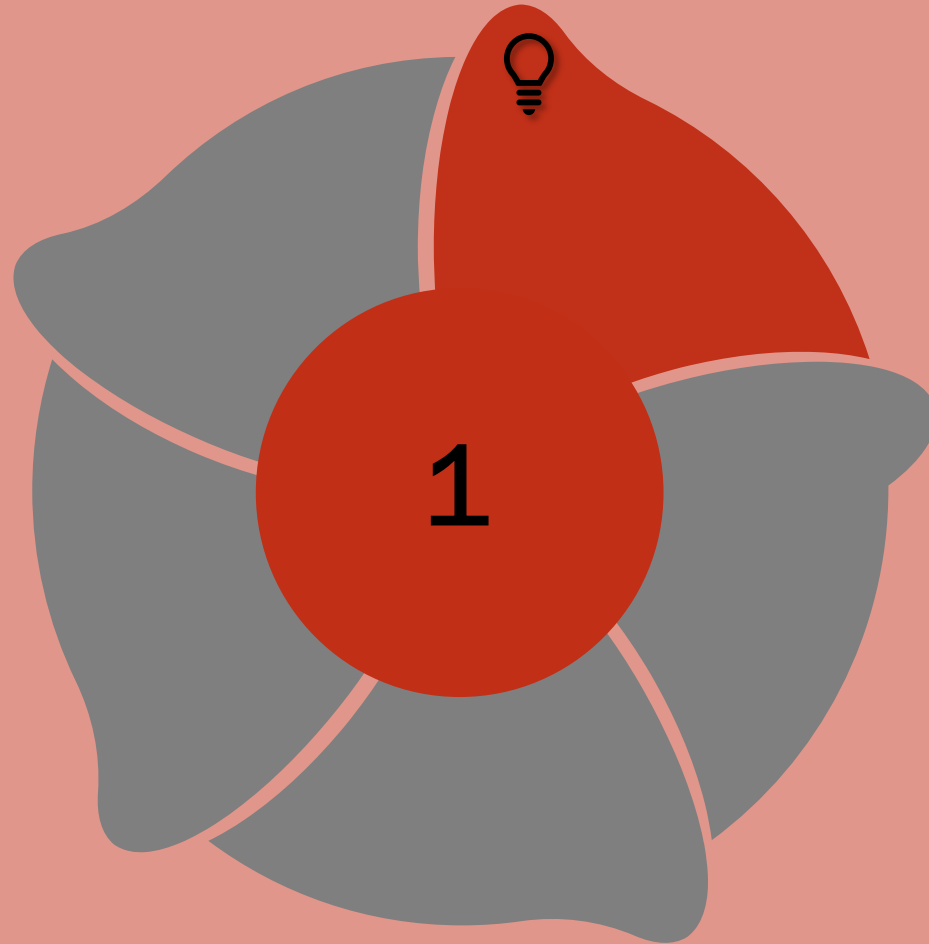
Set Goals  
Collect Data  
Analyse & Measure  
Align With Corporate Brand / Customer Brand



## Develop EVP

Determine Core Positioning  
Compile & Select EVP Pillars  
Define Brand Personality  
Measure & Develop EVP

# CREATE A TEAM



# Team Members

## HUMAN RERSOURCE LEADERS

Has the leading role.

Own the best  
knowledge in  
recruitment and talent  
management.

Research and execute  
the strategy.

9

## SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Brings higher levels of  
certainty.

Acknowledges process  
development and  
implementation.

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATION LEADERS

Key role in promotion.

Possess knowledge  
and skills on online  
marketing and external  
communication.

Measure and engage.

## LINE MANAGEMENT

Acts as a bridge  
between the team and  
employees.

Execute internal  
communication.

Encourage brand  
advocacy and  
engagement with  
branding.

## HEAD OF THE COMPANY

The face of  
employer / brand.

Plays a big part in  
external  
communication.

Not needed until the  
end parts of the  
process.

# Convincing

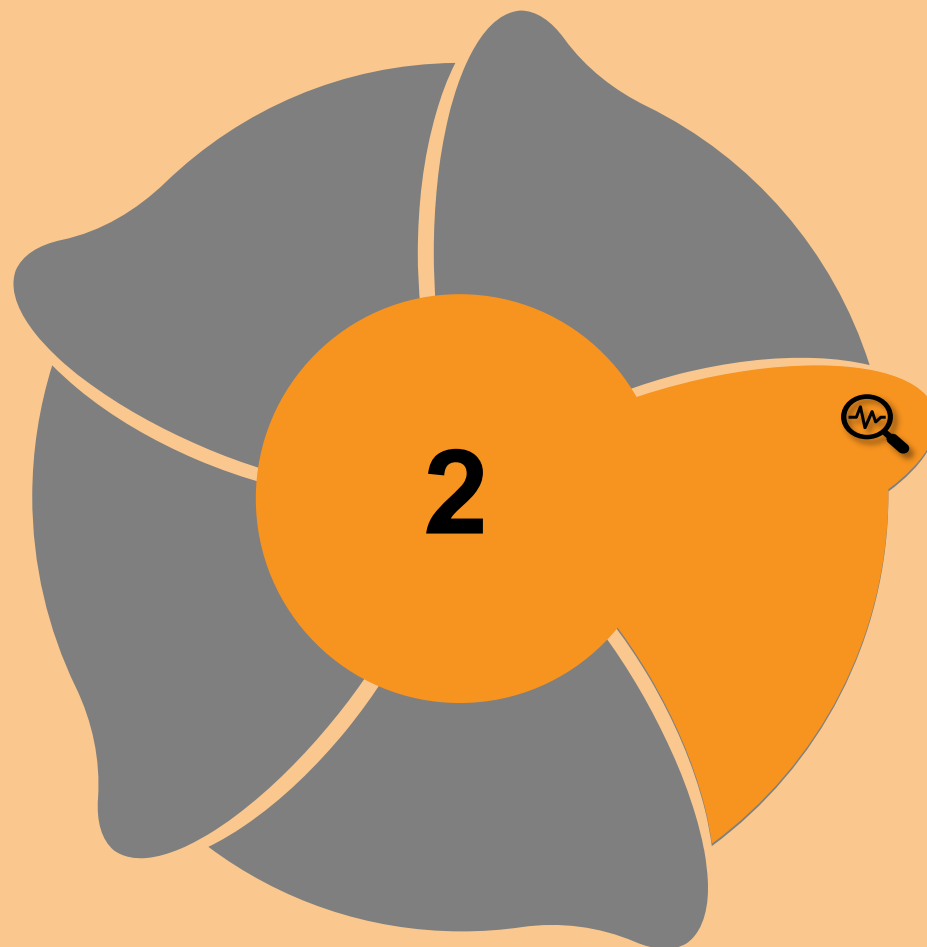
## Common Challenges

- Encountering resistance and doubt is common at first.
- Terminology and language barrier

The key in these situations is **clarification / presentation** of the benefits that employer branding brings to each subject.



# RESEARCH & ALIGN



# Set Employer Branding Goals First

## Conduct:

- **Market Research**

- **Surveys**

- Review possibilities on prior
  - Internal surveys of the company
  - External country reports/surveys & student surveys

- **Auditing & Evaluating**

- **Observation & Desktop Study**

- Trends, employee market information, competition, etc.

- Understand the current **reputation, employer perception, attractiveness** to the target audiences to create a company specific strategy based on their needs.
- External data can reveal indicators on **brand attitude, popularity, wage position**.
- Auditing helps in clearing the current **image, attractiveness, perception, and distinctive attributes** as an employer.
- Observing preferences of the employee market is an important part of the research.

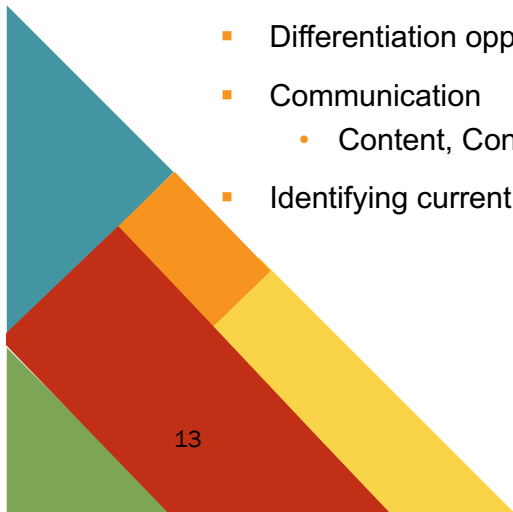
# Important in the Research Steps

## Find out current:

- Employer image, attractiveness & perception
- The target group
  - Their preferences
  - Competitors targeting them
- Potential employer candidacy & favorability
  - In comparison to other employers
- Company attributes & characteristics
  - That candidates can consider
- Differentiation opportunities
- Communication
  - Content, Consistency, Tone, Channels
- Identifying current branding gaps

## Before developing an EB strategy:

- Determine the importance of EB in current business strategy
- Find out what EB strategy supports the leaderships agenda
- Observing factors of the company that drive employee commitment and engagement
- Current culture and its consistency across divisional/geographical borders
- The differentiating elements of the company as an employer
- Defining organizational / human resource's purpose and values properly
- Taking note of current characteristics and behaviour of the company
  - From a raw perspective on best to worst
- Finding out distinctive employee fulfilments and needs
- Company's most effective channels of employee communication
  - Both top-down and bottom-up
- Determine most valued and needed employees
  - Now and in the future



# EXAMPLORY EMPLOYER BRAND IMAGE MEASUREMENT

Generally considered important attributes of employers / What employees associate as attractive (Universum 2020).

CORPORATE IMAGE ATTRIBUTES	PEOPLE AND CULTURE	JOB CHARACTERISTICS	REMUNERATION & ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
<input type="checkbox"/> Enticing Products / Services <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Transparency <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical standards <input type="checkbox"/> Fast-growing <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Market success	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative Work Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic Work Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly Work Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Enabling Integration of Employees Interest <input type="checkbox"/> Interaction with International Clients & Colleagues <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Employee Performance Recognition <input type="checkbox"/> Company Respects its People <input type="checkbox"/> Support for Gender Equality	<input type="checkbox"/> Challenging work <input type="checkbox"/> Customer focus <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible working conditions <input type="checkbox"/> High level of responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> High performance focus <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for internal travel/relocation <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Training <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/> Secure Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Team-Oriented work	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear Advancement Path <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive Salary <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive Benefits Package <input type="checkbox"/> Good Reference in Future Career <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Overtime Compensation <input type="checkbox"/> Performance-Related bonus <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid Promotion




# ALIGN WITH CORPORATE AND/OR CUSTOMER BRAND

Choose the most relevant option(s) to business goals and strategy.

The suggestion is to align employer brand with both corporate and customer brands.

If the company has a corporate brand with many customer brands, align with either one.



Depends on the business strategy.  
Senior management's decision.

Large distinction between  
different customer brands?



Separate employer brand  
for each customer brand.

The decision can rely on  
the brand prospective  
employees are familiar  
with.

# CREATE EVP

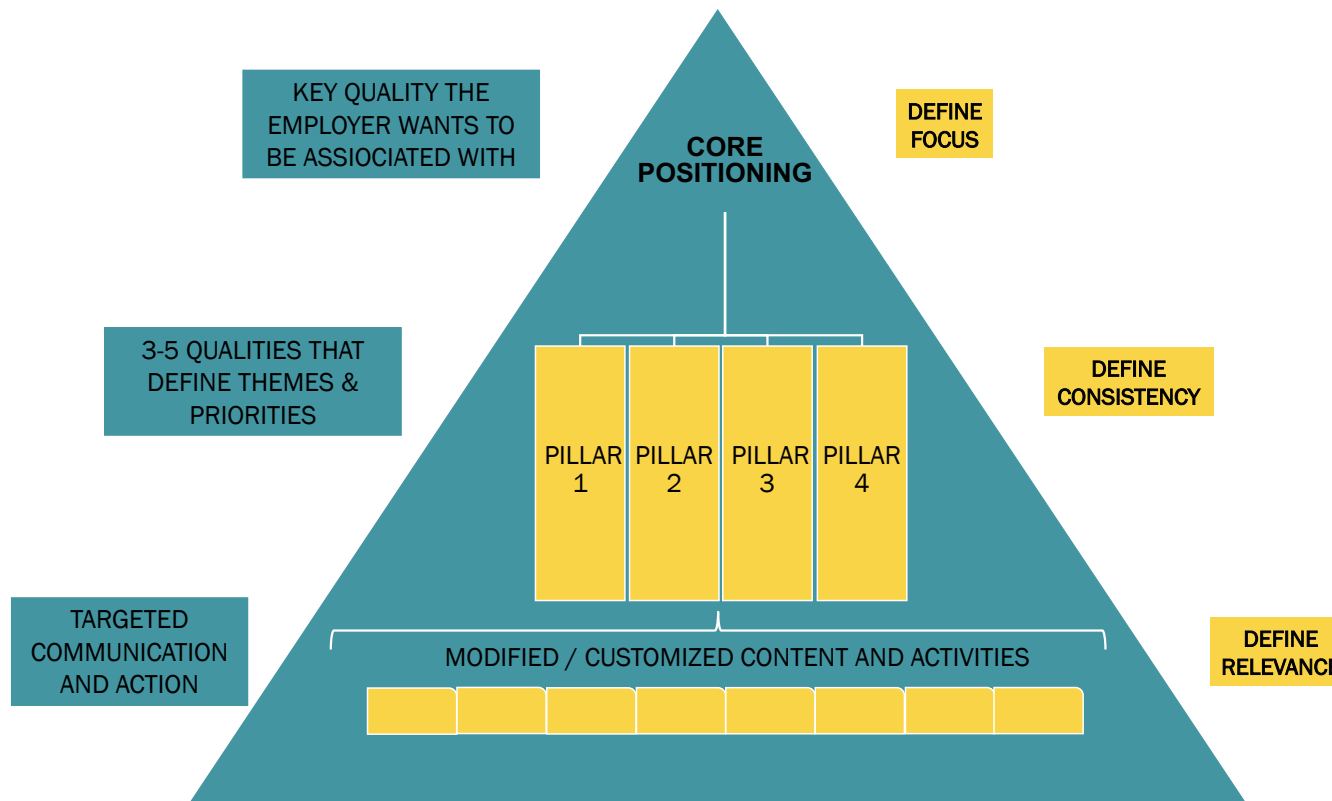


# EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION (EVP)

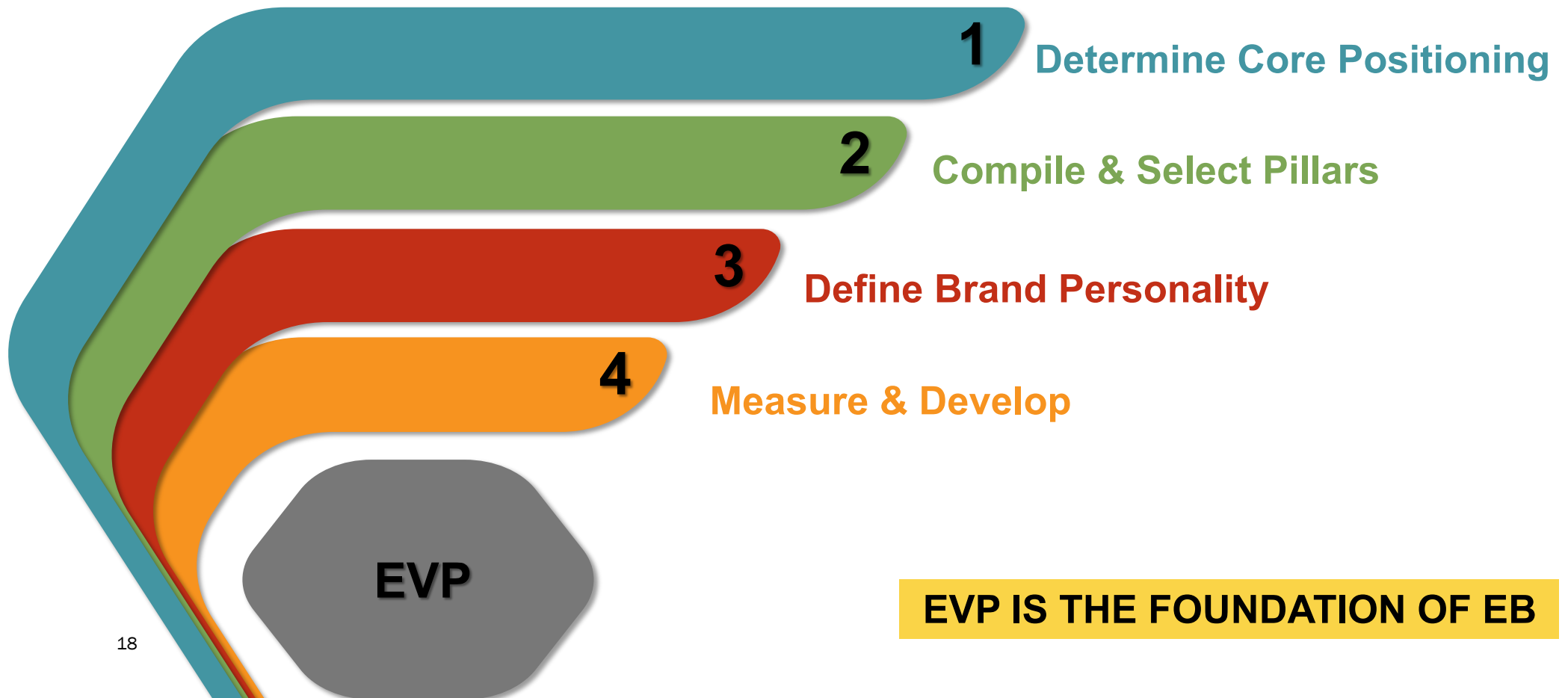
EVP is presented through a employment statement in a clear and concise way. This statement delivers the employment deal/promise or emphasize a factor of that deal.

The statement explains employee duties, expected jobs and the long-term goal of the employee in the company.  
**Do not mix this with a job description.**

THE  
EVP  
STRUCTURE  
17

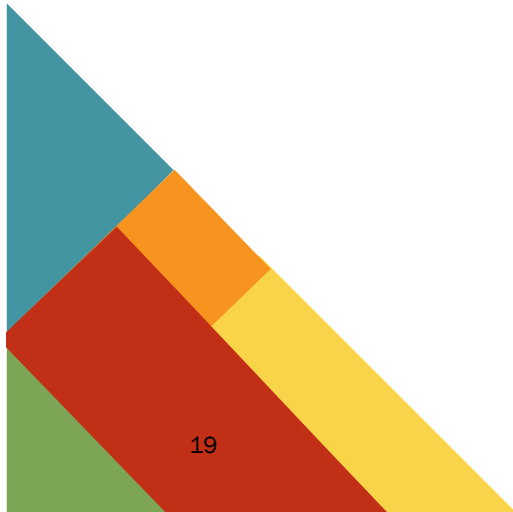


# THE STEPS TO CREATING EVP



# 1. Determine Core Positioning

Choose a single characteristic that the enterprise wants to be associated with the most as an employer.



19

Deciding on one core positioning can be hard.  
This step will take time, with many trials and errors.

Best chosen throughout the EVP development process.

There are cases where an enterprise has an EVP without a core positioning. The bad side of this is lacking employer's strength.

## 2. Compile & Select Pillars

EVP pillars represent attractive qualities that differentiate the employer from the competition in the employee market.

Compile qualities

Remember the  
differentiating ones

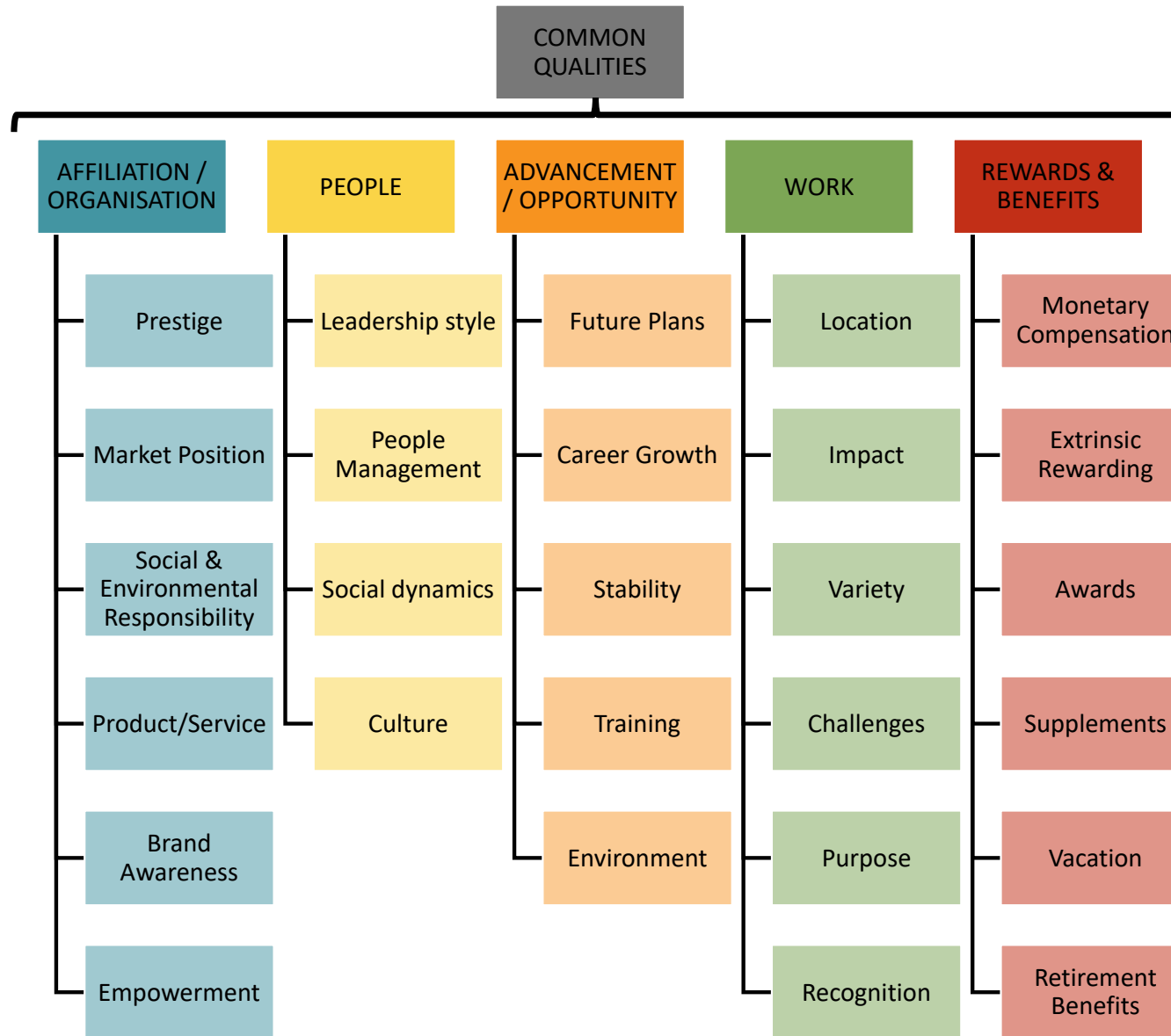
Make them into  
expressions that signal the  
benefits and advantages  
as an employee.

short sentence/slogan/  
one-word term

Select 2-5 qualities  
that support best the  
company's offering.

Make sure that pillars clearly describe the  
following:

- The give and get of the employment deal
- The differentiating employer strengths
- The sensible ambition can experience
- The unique experience of the company



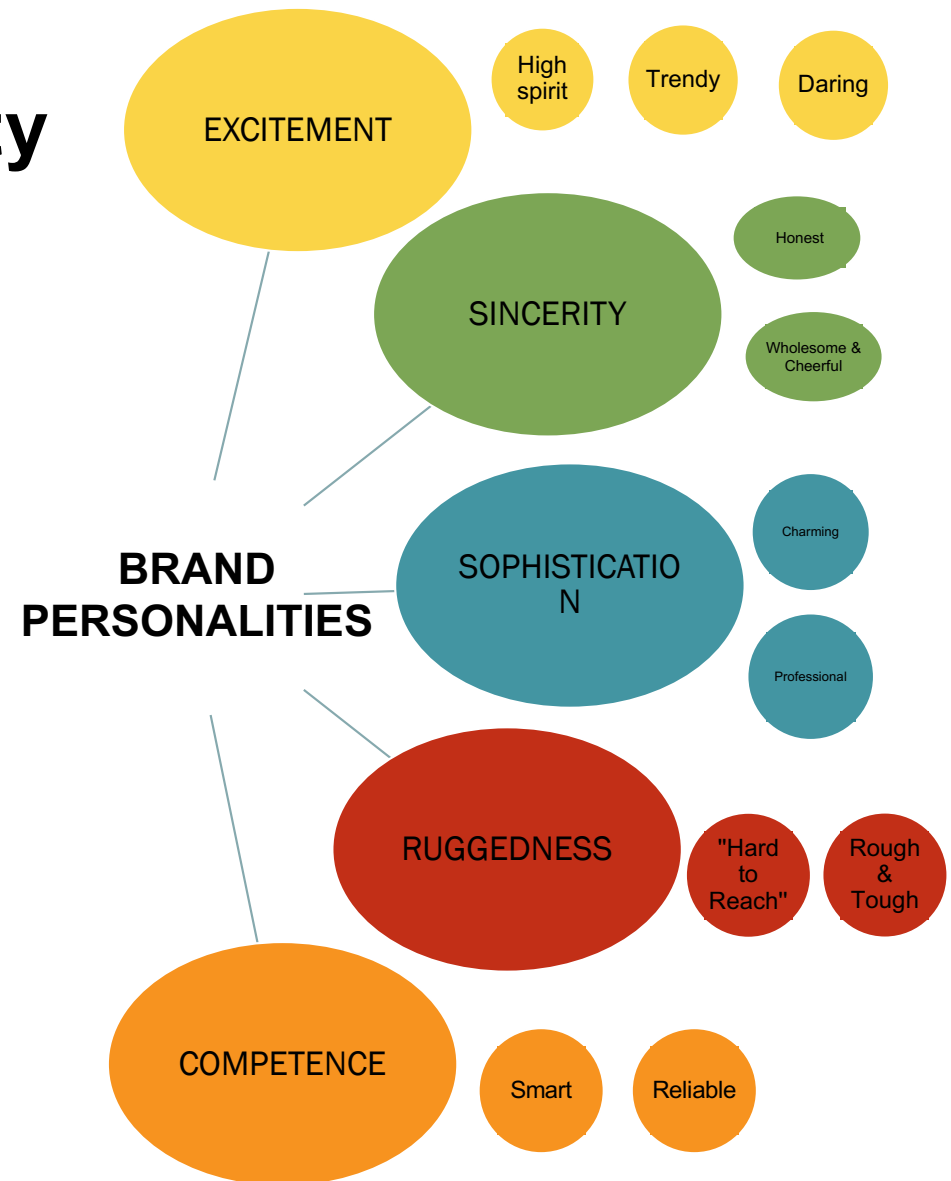
### 3. Define Brand Personality

Choose a suitable communication tone for the messages to create a sense of employer personality.

The chosen personality similar to customer brand personality, to maintain consistency in the overall brand personality.

**REMEMBER TONE CONSISTENCY**

**Try to not change it!**

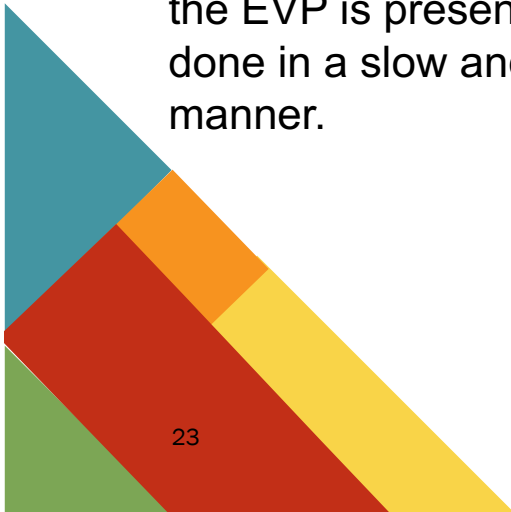


## 4. Measure & Develop

Development is always needed. Especially during the first stage of introducing EVP.

Large changes are suggested to only be made before coming to the final EVP that speaks to the organization.

The following changes that are made after the EVP is presented to employees must be done in a slow and (small) piece by piece manner.



### What needs to be evaluated?

Attractiveness of each EVP pillar & the core positioning.

Relevancy / Importance of each EVP pillar to the targeted group.

Reliability of each EVP pillar.  
(Do they describe the current employment experience offering?)

Any addons / Changes needed to further describe the organization more precisely.

# EVP Development Checklist

Question both current and new employees from every level, and even outside of the organization:

- Reasons they like working for the company?
- What was the first thing they remember of their experience?
- What comes to mind first when it comes to working in the company?

Ask the same questions later as a follow up, so see possible opinion changes through time.

Analyse EVP authenticity through a true reflection of the employment experience promise.

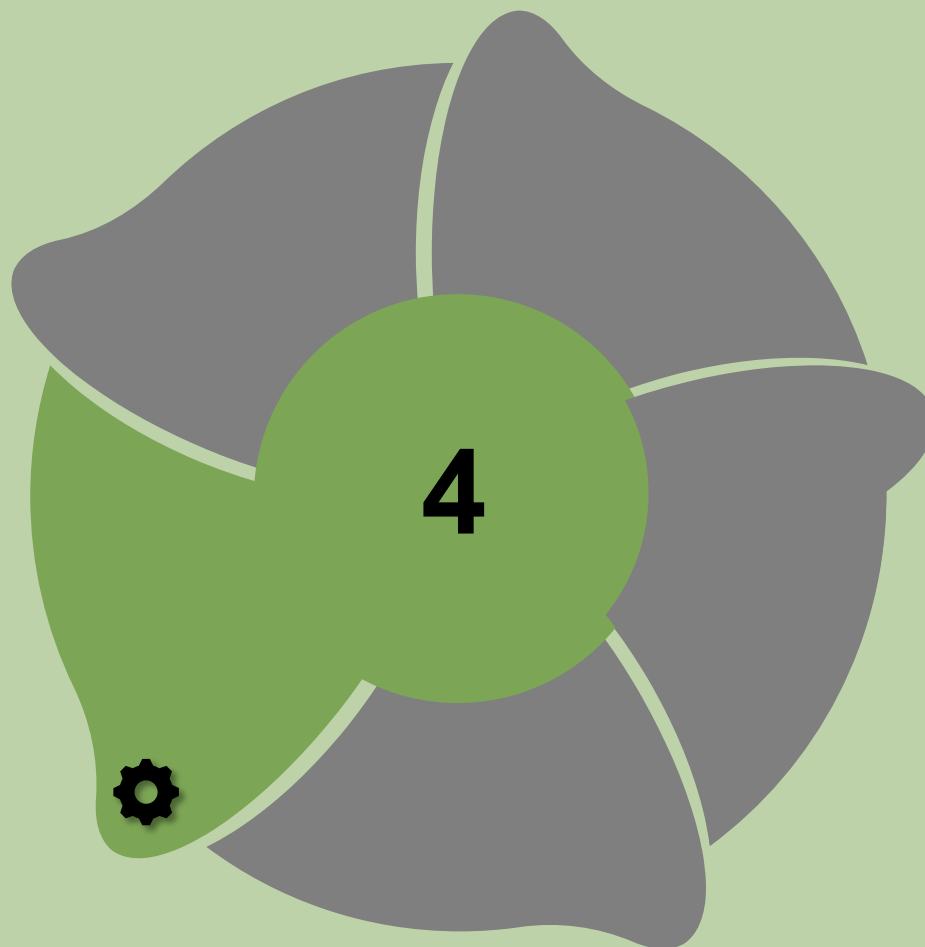
The larger the viewpoints and feedback pool, the better development opportunities.

In development: include the EB team members, employees from different levels, and even external stakeholders in the measurements.

# An Exemplary Survey

How attractive is each pillar to people?	1	2	3	4	5
How attractive is the core positioning to people?	1	2	3	4	5
How important/relevant is (pillar x)?	1	2	3	4	5
How reliable is (pillar x) in describing the current employment experience?	1	2	3	4	5
Do the pillars need further description?	Yes	No			
What is missing in the EVP in your opinion?					

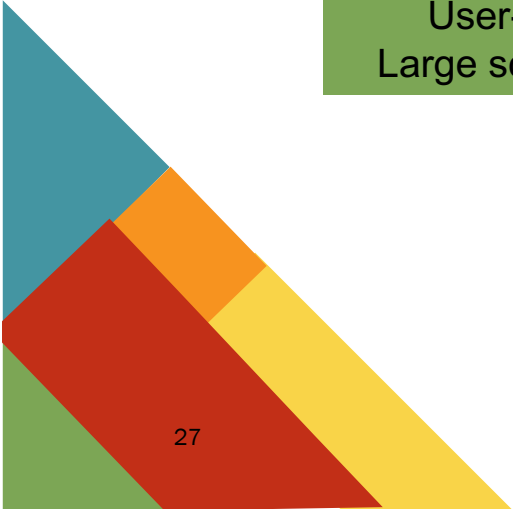
# COMMUNICATE



# Choose Social Media Channels

Social media is the best out of the top 3 channels when it comes to approaching targeted potential employee groups in the current digital era.

**Reasons:**  
Cost efficiency  
User-friendliness  
Large scale availability

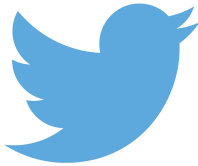


27

## Top Platforms



Instagram



Twitter



LinkedIn



Facebook

# How to Create Profiles



## Develop the Company Website

- The company website is one of the top 3 avenues for
  - Recruitment
  - Employer Branding
- In the company website, create a career page
  - Post vacancies and host job application on this careers page
  - Communicate EB/EVP
- Make the website, especially careers page, user-friendly.
- Provides accessible and effective information
- Integrates all currently used social media platforms into the website
- Constantly update the coherency of the website and candidate experience in the careers page.

## Take Advantage of Employee Reviews

- Manage and interact with employee generated reviews
- Reviews have a high effect on how candidates rank employers.
- Strive for high ranking as an employer in review sites.
- Encourage current, past and new employees to review. employers and look at reviews of the employers online.
- Provide quality of interactions in both negative and positive interactions.
- Thrive to change perceptions in an authentic, loud and clear way.
- Take advantage of internal surveys by showcasing them in social media and in the website.

Even short answers can take reviews far  
External and internal reviews matter

## Review Sites

kununu

glassdoor™

COMPARABLY

LinkedIn

# Create Content

## Photos & Videos

- Visual content that is clear, colourful and eye-catching.
- Capture attention capturing occasions and elements: culture, environment, excursions, events, internal activities, employees, etc.
- Visualisation does more than what plain text can ever do in content.
- Videos must be short (under a minute).
- Used to prove EVP.

## Facts & Figures

- Provide open and bold data/information, that is unique to the business, to drive attention
  - Data example: employee experience
- Use infographics
- Employee reviews and survey results
- News and press releases related to the employee market

## Employee Profiles

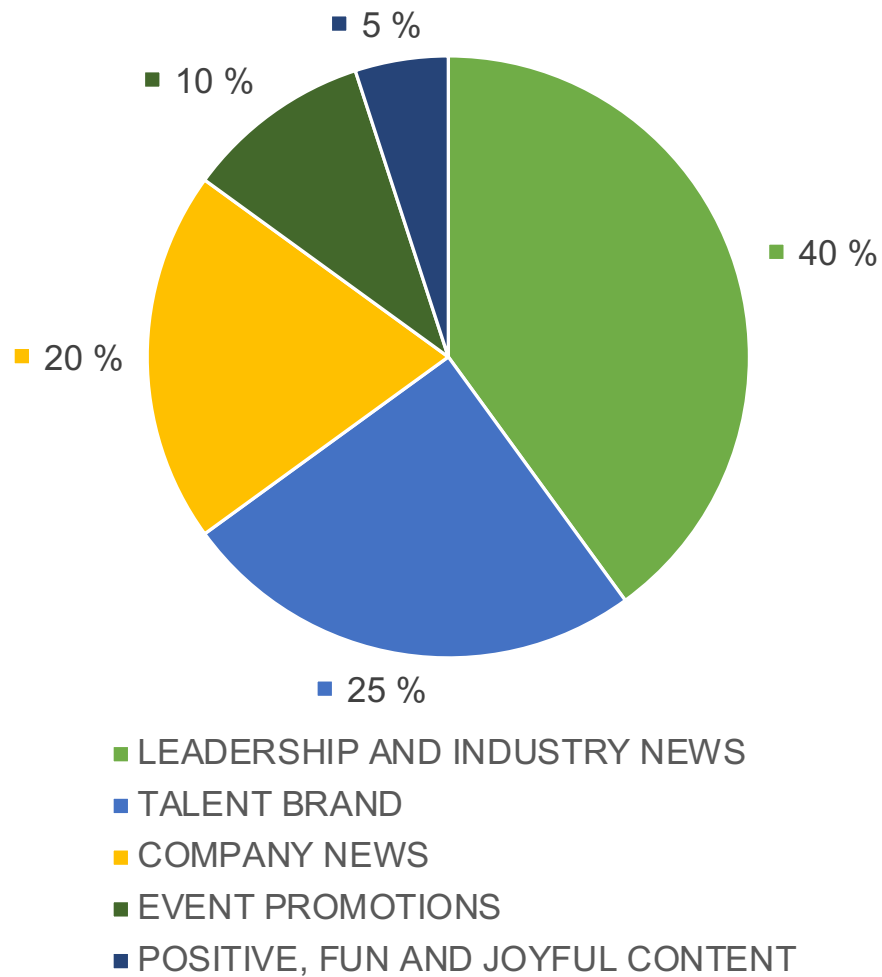
- Share stories and insight of the business / employee every day life.
  - Employee passion: How passion connects people with work
  - Collaborative team efforts
- Employee's perspective of the work (Day In Life)
- Putting faces and providing descriptions to every position
- Showcasing attitudes, values, behaviours at work.

## Games

- Create fun challenges, competitions, giveaways, quizzes and other interactive content
- Encourages engagement and longer attention spans with the target group.

Remember to actively share content through out all the chosen communication platforms.

### Use this Content Mix



### Content Trends



# Choose the Communication Tone

## BOLD

Flippant and reckless content that risks the image.  
Content can be conversational.  
Viral and Impactful content.

## HONESTY

Emphasize authenticity.  
Draw the real picture of the working culture and environment.  
Expectations = Reality

## FUN & SIMPLE

Entertaining content that constructs friendly, open and engaging connections with the targeted group.  
Informal language

## CONSISTENCY

Consistent messaging throughout different chosen platform and content.  
Builds trust.  
Mold's the reputation:  
Responsible / Transparent



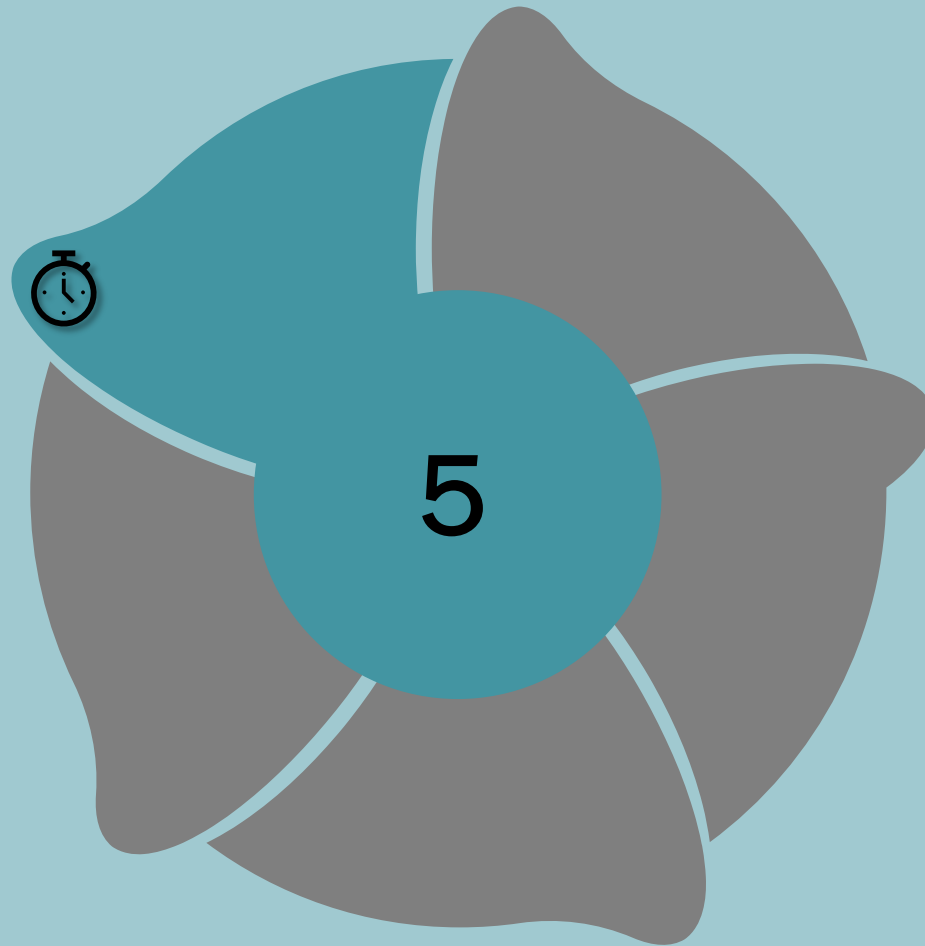
# Create a Communication Schedule (EXAMPLE)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Status Update	Informative announcement / Sharing news / New data	"New job opportunity!"	What it is like inside the company this week.  Tips for employers and employees.	Holding a presentation at University...	FRIDAY STANDS FOR FUN: Jouful content of work inthe company
Content Type	Press Release, Research, News	Job Post Link (to careers page)	Day In Life Story & Blog Post	Event promotion	Image/Video
Target Audience	Entire Employee Market	Specific Group In The Employee Market E.g. Designers	The Employee Market	Students	The Employee Market
Platform	LinkedIn, Facebook	LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook	LinkedIn, Twitter	LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook	Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook

33

**All content are also posted/reposted on the company website.**

# MEASURE & MANAGE



## Metrics

## How to measure

### Employer Branding

Candidate Quality	<p>Calculate the percentage of applicants to interviews. Results of pre-employment assessments are used to screen and evaluate applicants.</p> <p>If applicants-to-interview ratio is above 12%, that means that attraction is at a good quality. If it is less than that, candidate quality must be improved upon.</p>
Cost Per Hire	Fees for recruiting, pre-employment assessments, advertising, and etc.
Brand Awareness	<p>Abstract employer branding metric.</p> <p>Set a goal number to how many should know you as an employer. Then measure by social investigation. Monitor social media mentions and interactions to understand the current brand awareness and sentiment.</p>
Source of Hire	<p>Determine where the bulk of your hires come from. Then evaluate whether the allocation of resources is effective.</p> <p>Recognize low cost-effective sources of hire and either take those options off the strategy or strategize on how to increase results.</p>
Number of Open Applicants	Study the applicant amount to gain an understanding on employer visibility.
Offer Acceptance Rate	<p>Meant for tracking successful hiring efforts.</p> <p>Calculate the offer acceptance rate and complement it by researching the reasons for rejection. (feedback is key in this measurement).</p>

Metrics	How to measure
<b>Communication</b>	
Employee Experience	<p>There's no formula for calculating employee experience.</p> <p>Determine/compare how well the employee experience matches up to the employee value proposition.</p> <p>Analyse insights gleaned from employee surveys and exit interviews to attain an overall view of the real employee experience.</p>
Social Engagement	<p>Measure the health of social media presence (action) by keeping track of followers, impressions, likes, and shares over time (in a monthly basis).</p> <p>After tracking, comes the observation of changes and calculating the result of actions/changes. (Paid and earned impressions are calculated.)</p>
ROI	<p>Staff surveys enable assessment of how the message plays internally and metrics used by HR around recruitment costs, candidate pool and talent pipeline will aid the determination of ROI.</p> <p>Observe the data of: reduced hiring costs, candidate quality, employee engagement, and brand awareness.</p>
Hiring Manager Stisfaction	<p>Measure and analyse the satisfaction rate of the candidate selection.</p>