

External Employer Branding Guide to Attract Talents

Case Company: InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences

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<p>The objective of this product-based thesis is to create an external employer branding guide to attract talents for the commissioning party, that is, InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences. The guide is a five-step external employer branding process with detailed instructions mostly suitable for organizations which have little to no experience in the topic. The commissioning company is a 5-star hotel in Vietnam that has never had any external employer branding practices in its business.</p> <p>This thesis has five project tasks to tackle the topic. They are (1) preparing a theoretical employer branding framework, (2) investigating competitors' practices within the same business field for reference purpose, (3) writing a guide for the case company on how to attract talents through external employer branding, (4) obtaining feedback from the case company on the guide and finalizing it, and (5) evaluating the project.</p> <p>The literature review introduces the theoretical framework surrounding employer branding and its aspects. It continues to present the five-step process of external employer branding. A competitor analysis is done by examining five different hotels' employer branding activities on Facebook and LinkedIn to finally draw key findings and suggestion for the case company.</p> <p>This thesis helps to strengthen employer branding knowledge and reviews the current practices of employer branding in the hospitality industry in Vietnam.</p>	
Keywords Employer branding, employee value proposition, attracting talents, human resource management	

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1 Introduction

This chapter explains the why, how, and what regarding the topic of this bachelor's thesis. An introduction to the background is presented. The main project objective and project tasks are defined. Project's scope, as well as thesis structure, are explained in order to help with convenient reading. This chapter also discusses the international aspects and different benefits anticipated in this paperwork. Towards the end of this chapter, key concepts and abbreviations are defined. Lastly, detailed information about the case company and its need for the topic is presented.

1.1 Background: The Talent War

They say talents is what makes a successful business. Businesses that own great products and employees have a better market share than those do not, and these same places are more likely better at attracting talented candidates, engaging and retaining employees to continue their success.

The race for talents is undoubtedly intensified. In 1998, a survey showed that many corporate officers found their companies were "chronically talent-short across the board" or had "insufficient talent sometimes" (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels III 1998, 47). According to Mosley (2015), different surveys done in 2014 report that talent shortages occurred in 36% of employers globally, and 76% of CEOs reported to show their concern about the availability of their key-skilled in a 2015 survey. Companies are definitely in need of employees with more expertise. On the other hand, the increase in job mobility is undeniable. Those who are considered as a high performer in generation X merely leave their employers one or two times in their whole career. (Chambers & al. 1998, 48.) Whereas Generation Y is very much career-oriented nowadays and they do not look for a place just to work so that they can manage to pay their bills, employees are looking for a place to experience, to develop, places that offer working culture fit to them. Hence, the journey seeking for "the one" starts. It could take a person five different companies until he or she sits at an executive level. They are not afraid of leaving a company or even relocating, because they know that there is always a better employer looking for talents out there. The question is left for employers to answer: How to effectively attract talents in this very competitive war? Mosley (2015) advises leaders to invest in building and strengthening their employer brand.

The concept of employer branding is nowhere near new but in fact, as the concept was first introduced in 1996 by Ambler and Barrow, it has received substantial awareness

among to employers all over the world. Back in 2005, the highest level of awareness in the USA is reported to be 42% and 45% in Asia-Pacific (Barrow, Mosley 2005, 15). Employer branding does not simply stop at the level of awareness. In recent years, it has become many companies' winning way and an integrated strategic plan in their business practices. Employer brand is 40% of employers' answers to secure a long-term hiring need and 31% of them also think that it would be essential for a growing reputation worldwide (Mosley 2015).

In Vietnam, the market where this thesis most focuses on, employer branding has existed longer than a decade and is most vivid at big corporates such as Unilever, Nestle, and IBM (Hang, 2017). However, during the time of the author's internship at InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences, one of the world-famous hotels belonged to the IHG group, employer branding practices are such luxury that the HR department could not afford to concern. The hotel was so busy at recruiting and creating recruitment adverts that it almost feels like going in a circle and new recruitment adverts are made every month, sometimes twice a month. Moreover, it also takes a long time before a vacant, sometimes an important vacant is filled. This raises a good interest in the author when seeing a hotel belonged to the top biggest hotel group in the world struggles to attract and recruit skilled employees. Further information on the situation and the company can be found in 1.7.

1.2 Project Objective and Project Tasks

The project objective of this product-based thesis is to create a guide for how to do external employer brand to attract talents for InterContinental Saigon Hotel and Residences. By discussing the theoretical framework, the readers are able to gain a good knowledge of employer branding within this thesis's scoop. A guide to external employer branding should help the responsible party of the case company in the process of creating a strategic employer branding plan. In the purpose of improving the presence as an employer, the guide presents a step-by-step process to attract the right talents and promote working culture in a sustainable and cost savings way.

Project Task 1: Preparing the theoretical Employer Branding framework

This task will help readers grasp a base theoretical knowledge on employer branding and the trending topic circulating it: attracting talents. The task explains different terms will be used in the thesis as well as in the guidebook.

Project Task 2: Investigating competitors' practices within the same business field for reference purpose

The purpose is to present practices on what hotels in Vietnam have been doing to promote their employer brand externally and from there, conclude what can be learned from those cases.

Project Task 3: Writing the guide for the case company on how to attract talents through external employer branding.

This task should successfully present all the knowledge and steps needed when promoting external employer branding based in the form of a guidebook.

Project Task 4: Obtaining feedback from the case company on the guide and finalizing it

To complete the guidebook, the product created in project task 4 will be presented to the case company. This task should obtain the case company's feedback so that the guide is adjusted accordingly and finalized.

Project Task 5: Evaluating the project

This part of the project will recapitulate the whole thesis and the final product. Evaluation of the project as well as a reflection on learning will be discussed in this task. Challenges and suggest for further studies will also be included.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Project Task	Knowledge Base	Project management methods	Task outcomes
Project Task 1: Preparing the theoretical Employer Branding framework	Theories from books and articles discuss employer branding and talents attraction	Literature review, desktop studies	Knowledge about the importance and reasons for employer branding
Project Task 2: Investigating competitors practices in external employer branding	Information acquires from official sources, social media channels	Desktop studies	Information about competitors and fellow hotels practices
Project Task 3: Writing the guide for the case company on how to attract talents through external employer branding	Task outcomes of project task 1 and 2	PowerPoint and applicable design program	Employer Branding Guide
Project Task 4: Obtaining feedback from the case company on the guide and finalizing it	Feedback from the case company	Feedback form, PowerPoint	The complete Employer Branding Guide

Project Task 5: Evaluating the project	Task outcomes of project task 1, 2, 3, and 4	Summarization, evaluation, re- flect and further discussion	Evaluation and Recommendation
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1.3 Project's Scope and Thesis Structure

The scope of the project is to provide an external employer branding guide on how to attract talents for the case company. Therefore, any internal employer branding practices recruiting, engaging and retaining employees will not be included in the final guide. However, the thesis still discusses a few aspects of internal employer branding in terms of definition and limitation. The project considers the case company as a total beginner at the mentioned topic and the guide is probably not relevant for businesses which already have many practices in external employer branding. However, for better suitability, companies should already have a distinctive working culture at a certain level in order to apply to the guide book. Due to the topic under external employer branding, some basics of social media marketing are included cursorily. Because this is not a marketing thesis therefore, marketing theory will not be looked into detail. The thesis focuses mainly under the context of the IHG group, in the hospitality business, specifically in the Vietnam market area. The steps of the employer branding process cannot be planned fully because it requires going deeper into internal employer branding and important decision making that requires a lot of time. There are specific recommendations for the case company where applicable, otherwise, the guide is kept at a general level. The guide will not include a full implementation plan as well as its result, be as circumstances in real life could not be applied indubitably.

The thesis is divided into four main parts: introduction, employer branding's content, methodology and conclusion, and the product. The introduction is presented in chapter 1. It includes a background of the study, objectives and scope of the thesis, mostly used key concepts, the pertinence and practicality of this paper related to the case company's situation. The main content is covered in three chapters with sub-sections in each. The first chapter of the content, chapter 2, introduces the definitions of employer branding, why it is needed in a human resources strategic plan, ideas of the employer branding process which is defined by the employee value proposition and external branding, as of the scope of this thesis. The second chapter of the content, chapter 3, presents the whole employer branding process adopted in the guide in which explains the five steps of employer branding. Each sub-section in this chapter is correlated with one step, they further discuss and explain the idea and related terms in each step accordingly. The third chapter of the content, chapter 4, is a competitor analysis that gives examples of global fellow hotels and

competitors' employer branding in action. Methods used in in thesis are elaborated in chapter 5. The feedback acquired from the case company is presented in chapter 6 and chapter 7 captures, evaluate the whole thesis in short and discuss further studies. Lastly, the final product can be found in attachment 1.

1.4 International Aspect

The case company belongs to one of the world leading hotel group, InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences is under the IHG group globally standardized human resources implementation and policy. The company located in Vietnam but almost all director positions are taken by non-Vietnamese, which means the company applies open-minded and international strategic thinking and planning in its operation. Non-Vietnamese employees comprised of 10% (InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences 2019). Most of the customers of the hotel & residences are foreigners coming for a short conference or short stay for business purposes.

1.5 Benefits to Stakeholders

The completion of this project will give the case company a tailored-made employer branding guide to enhance its brand awareness and attract future talents so that it can reduce the time of finding candidates and receive more quality CVs. The guide is not designed to strictly fit only to the case company, other businesses who are in their very first steps of planning employer brand can also use this guide as a reference document. This thesis benefits the author in terms of specialized knowledge in HR and is a part of her career development in the field.

If the case company utilized the guide for their external employer branding practices, many applicants will come to know about the case company as an employer better. Prospective employees are given insight into the company's working culture, benefit, and principles. Hence, they know if the company is good to work at depending on the individual's preferences. The case company's reputation is increased positively among prospective employees.

1.6 Key Concepts and Abbreviations

Employer branding: "is a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm" (Sullivan 2004).

Employee value proposition: “is the give and get of the employment deal”: employers offer a set of benefits such as money, recognition, opportunities to advance in a career in return for valuable knowledge, skills, capabilities, creativities, and so on from the employees (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 15).

Content marketing: “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action” (Content Marketing Institute, n.d.).

Abbreviations:

Ad = an advertisement

EB = employer branding

EVP = employee value proposition

HR = human resources

HRM = human resources management

IHG = InterContinental Hotels Group

1.7 Case Company

InterContinental Saigon Hotel and Residences inaugurated in 2009 and has been out in the market for 10 years. The five-star luxury hotel located right in Ho Chi Minh City center offering both hotel services and residences to customers. With a wide range of selection from classic and executive rooms to suites, customers can also enjoy different types of cuisine right inside the hotel, from Italian or Chinese food to buffet and bar services. The hotel also features spa and gym services with swimming pool to ensure its customers a wonderful and relaxing stay. In 2018, InterContinental Saigon Hotel was honorably awarded as Vietnam’s Leading Hotel, Vietnam’s Leading Business Hotel, and Vietnam’s Leading Conference Hotel given by the World Travel Awards. (InterContinental 2019.)

As luxurious as it seems, however, the HR department of the hotel still struggles when in time finding new recruits, especially at senior levels. InterContinental Saigon has very little practices in external employer branding, while the internal has been done well so far.

In the last six months, the company has never had any period where it does not have a job advertisement on LinkedIn, IHG group career site, and other Vietnamese recruitment channels. Leave aside the fact that working in restaurants, belonged to the hotel, needs a big number of waiters and waitresses. The job actually has a high employee turnover rate

because no one in Vietnam has actually believed being a waiter could help build a whole career.

Right now the hotel is in big need for chefs in junior and senior positions. Since its establishment, most of the important chef positions (sous chefs and head chefs) in the hotel are undertaken by employees who worked in the company for 8 to 9 years. Recently due to personal reasons, many important and loyal employees stepped down from his position, one brought along two, two brought along three because they were a team and when the leader left, it was very likely that the team members find their way out. Although it is very personal and the company, in fact, has good benefits, perfect and standard employee motivating culture. The company is still struggling to find chefs to fill in the empty positions. Looking deeper into the situation, it is obvious that this is a good environment to work in because people stayed for years before taking another step. Since its opening, the company has never found a need to look for chefs at all because they already got the right person from the start and that person stayed and committed for years. Now when this happens, it cannot attract any talent because it has not promoted itself as a great employer anywhere to anyone. This job line is special in a way that when an employee chooses a place to work, they are very likely to become fastidious because any position at all would contribute big to their career path, and people find a place to stay for years, not for months. InterContinental Saigon needs to promote the good and beneficial working culture it now possesses but people know little about.

The case above is only one example, for the first ever recruitment crisis occurring right now in InterContinental Saigon. Therefore, a good look into the strategic external employer branding plan would for sure bring good and ease for the company in the long future ahead. Soon, big companies will adopt this practice in their recruitment plan and InterContinental Saigon should be ready when the trend blooms.

2 Employer Branding: Attracting Talents

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 of this thesis focus on project task 1 that is preparing the theoretical employer branding framework. This chapter defines employer branding as a concept through time as a start. It further explains the benefits of investing in employer brand. The process of employer branding is also reviewed through various pieces of literature. From the steps that these processes held in common, the author identifies employee value proposition and external branding as relevant to employee attraction. Each element is looked into for further understanding. Lastly, the tailor-made employer branding process is presented. Figure 1 below presents the whole theoretical framework.

2.1 Definition of Employer Branding Through Time

When talking about what makes competitive advantages of a business, it is common for people to think of resources such as plant, equipment, and capital first, it has been proven that the human factor plays a just-as-important resource in creating competitive advantages (Priem & Butler 2001 in Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503). Reasons for the practice of employer branding is based on the presumption that the human asset can bring value to the business, and through smart investment on the human asset, the business's performance is enhanced (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503).

More than twenty years ago, Ambler and Barrow (1996, 187) gave an often-mentioned definition of employer branding, they called it the benefit of "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company." Later in 2001, the Conference Board presents employer brand as an establishment of a business's identity as an employer. The concept surrounds the business's values, policies and actions in pursuit of attracting, engaging, and retaining potential and current employees (Conference Board 2001 in Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502). In Backhaus and Tikoo's paper published in 2004 (502), employer branding is a process of building an employer identity that is identifiable and unique, these characteristics help differentiate a business from its competitors. All of these definitions express that employer branding is a process of external and internal promotion of a unique and attractive employer image. However, abstraction still lies in these definitions.

In the study of Lievens and Highhouse (2003, 75), they examine what potential and existing employees look for in their employer by looking into the instrumental-symbolic framework in marketing. The instrumental benefits (e.g. salary) can be interpreted as functional and economic benefits in referred to the definition given by Ambler and Barrow (1996). On

the other hand, symbolic benefits (e.g. reputation) refer to psychological attributes. Lievens and colleagues (2007, 48) make an argument on the relevance of talent attraction, instrumental and symbolic attributes. They suggest that since the acknowledgment of instrumental benefits, companies' offers are becoming competitive and similar, hence, with regard to differentiation, companies need to promote symbolic employment benefits in addition to the instrumental ones.

As the recognition for employer brand practice grows bigger, definitions on the subject become more action-specific. In 2004, Sullivan's article states that employer branding implies a targeted and long-term strategy of a certain company aiming to raise and manage awareness and perceptions in potential, existing employees and other related stakeholders. The strategy is meant to be in tune with exertion to drive recruitment, retention, and productivity management (Sullivan 2004). In a more recent publication, employer branding is defined in two phases, the first phase is to build a distinctively great place to work, interpreted as internal branding. Once the working culture is built, phase two, interpreted as external branding, is then promoting the culture to potential employees who possess skills and knowledge desired by the organization; these personal resources should be able to contribute to the organization's goals and objectives. (Mosley, Schmidt 2017, 8.) Employer brand needs to communicate corporate values, meaning work, rewards clearly (Winn 2013, 20)

2.2 The Advantages of Investing in Employer Brand

The reluctance in employer branding investment in many firms is understandable. As mentioned above, this has to be a long-term strategy because the return on investment is not immediate. While the costs spent on research and creative development are inevitably expensive, not to mention it can be overwhelming to the already heavy workloads in departments. So what is in this for employers in the long run?

By constantly putting forward a positive image of management and business-related practices, employer brand can make your organization appear to be enticing and a "good place to work" (Sullivan 2004). Development of a positive reputation as an employer help organization attract when and where they are in need of talented individuals (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 8). As the reputation increases resulting from a lucrative employer brand management, not only does the business become top choice employers, but also receive a bigger number and better quality of applicants (Sullivan 2004).

It is easy to conclude from the aforementioned benefit; the next good thing employer branding offer is reducing in recruitment cost. Most employers in different industries find the costs of replacing significantly burdening. When the level of staff turnover is low, a company is clearly in advantage of cost base, and a strong employer brand enjoys better levels of retention compared to that of its competitors. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 70.)

As employer branding involves building an internal working environment and culture in which employees find meaning and pride in where their work, it drives engagement. Consequently, the higher the levels of engagement, the higher the levels of productivity. Furthermore, a workplace filled with eminently talented and engaged employees suggests commitment. The stronger the employer brand, the more clarified people are with the organization's culture and working style. It is reported that powerful employer brands enjoy remarkably smaller attrition rates. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 510.)

With all of the above-mentioned benefits, a business can already experience competitive advantages within its industry. To ensure these competitive advantages are sustained, a group of creative, intelligent, driven, and highly qualified individuals is formed. Employer branding helps to further acquire highly talented and outstanding individuals to work in your companies, which put the business in another competitive advantage.

2.3 Social Media and Content Marketing

Doing marketing on social media has long been widely implemented in many business plans. It is the easiest, most convenient way to reach a big number of customers as well as employees. Social media and content marketing are discussed briefly in this sub-chapter as some social media channels will be utilized as a tool for the external employer branding process. The theoretical framework of the employer branding process will be discussed in chapter 2.4.

2.3.1 Social Media

Social media might be born for social reasons at the beginning, however, for some time now, social media has admittedly changed how business delivery messages to its customers and potential employees. Many recent research studies the pervasiveness, advantages, and disadvantages social media has on human resources as a trending practice in recruitment. Standing out from those research is the profit that social media brings to recruitment, branding, acquiring talents and costs. (Gibbs, Macdoner, & Mackey 2015, 171-173)

In marketing, when a company and its brand want to encourage and improve positive engagement with its customers, social media is used to monitor and facilitate customer interaction. Online channels where help to interact with customers are the company's webpage, different social media channels or third-party websites. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 535.) The same principle is applicable to employers and their brand. Social media is a rich and informative source of personal and professional details. If it is used in a prudent manner, it could help to form better hiring strategies, facilitate search tasks and employer branding (Kaur, Sharma, Kaur, Sharma 2015, 8). Using social media has found to be useful for human resource in creating the employer brand (Collins & Stevens 2002; Davison & al 2011 in Kaur & al. 2015, 9).

DeMers (2014) lists down ten benefits of using social media. They are expanding of brand recognition, improvement of brand loyalty, more opportunities to convert, higher conversion rates, higher brand authority, increase in inbound traffic, cost-effective, better Search-Engine rankings, richer customer experience and improvement in customer insights.

As of 2017, the dominant of social media is undoubtedly Facebook with 18% of the market share, owning the interaction of 2 billion users every month (Chaffey 2017). However, LinkedIn has proven to be more useful for businesses. It is reported to be the most used platform by businesses and enabling them to achieve their best at generating leads and revenues, follows up by Facebook (Demand Wave 2017, 16-19). It is best for beginners to stay focus and develop as few social channels as possible, to really measure and adjust the activities closely. Hence, this paper will only discuss and study Facebook and LinkedIn further as suitable and popular platforms.

Facebook obviously owns too many of any business's customers, to begin with. It is reported that Facebook owns 1.3 billion and more than 2 billion active users daily and monthly respectively (Newsroom.fb.com 2017). Users are mostly age from 25 to 34 making up 30% of all active users (Zephoria.com 2017).

Facebook is the friendliest social media to get close to targeted potential talents. In addition, starting a new Facebook page as well as running it costs nothing. Facebook paid ads could help to promote the brand and it could cost something then, however, the service is still considered to be cheap and valuable compared to others, such as TV, radio, newspaper. On top of that, the ad will appear to design targeted audiences only by location, profession, interests, and the same interactions. It is easy to track down performances of a

Facebook page using the analytic function, hence, it keeps an eye on one's own performance as well as its competitor. (Ayres n.d.)

Coming to another social platform, LinkedIn states its mission to be the bridge bringing professionals from all over the world, help them enhance productivity and success. With all most 600 million active professionals, LinkedIn is the best media channel for employer and employees to meet each other. (LinkedIn 2019.) Creating a LinkedIn profile also cost nothing. The analytic tool is also available at no cost, support user in tracking activities. There also additional sponsor services similar to Facebook paid ads. These services are as good as Facebook's with ads can be targeted at geographic locations, focus industry, age, job title. It is very users friendly as there is a learning hub where users can directly access and learn how to use LinkedIn effectively. On the other hand, LinkedIn has long been known for its use as a recruitment channel. Creating content on the employer brand is a leverage for successful recruitment campaigns.

2.3.2 Content Marketing

Content marketing or content creating appears to be one of the key factors in creating valuable messages to define and attract desirable audiences. Poor content will not be able to stimulate interest in audiences; therefore, it is of importance to obtain high-quality content to the right audience.

There are many forms of content. It is text, blog posts on websites, status or image shared on Facebook. Content are words, knowledge, and information. (Jefferson & Tanton 2013, 24.) Content marketing is defined as a strategic approach in marketing. It pays attention to creating and presenting content that is valuable, relevant, and consistent. (Content Marketing Institute n.d.)

Jefferson and Tanton (2013, 38) suggest seven general content creating principles that can be applied to every marketing channels. The first principle is to prioritize customers. Customers are very likely to be less interested in your products or services as you are. Hence, when creating content, keep in mind that the content should satisfy the audiences' needs, and solve their problems. Secondly, it is better to think that what good does this product or service help people instead of trying to sell it. The process of building a relationship with audiences is important because once the brand gains trust in the customers, they are more likely to think of the brand when they need to buy it. Thirdly, the authors believe that giving away knowledge that has value to the audience help tighten the relation-

ship between customers and businesses. In return for the knowledge given away, reputation is increased and so is referrals. The fourth tip is to think niche. Customers like content that is valuable, unique and interesting in a way that it is relevant to them. They can show a certain emotion to the content as it is close to their daily life. Once the content has been decided. The last three things are about how to write it. Telling a good story in a well-written literary style is one. The next is to invest and commit to quality such as simple, daily use words, presentation of the content should look pleasant and logically structured. Lastly, content should be written sincerely, and authentic. Customers are wise, they know what is a content written with genuineness and what is not.

2.4 Foundation of The Employer Branding Process

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, 502), in many collective works of literature, employer branding is described as a process consisted of three steps. It is suggested that first, the “value proposition” is developed, represents the brand. By harnessing facts about the working culture (e.g. management style), current employees’ quality, current employer image, an organization can draw a picture of what specific values their employees are enjoying when working here (Sullivan 2002).

After the development of an employee value proposition (EVP), the organization should then promote the proposition to its desired and targeted candidates, recruiting agencies, and related stakeholders. This process is named as external marketing, enabled to attract targeted potential employees and strengthen the product and/or corporate brands. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502.)

The final step of the process is internal marketing. This step is considered in many pieces of literature to be of great importance. “It carries the brand promise made to recruits into the firm and incorporates it as part of the organizational culture” (Frook 2001 in Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502). Internal marketing, or internal branding, aims to develop personnel that commits to the organizational values and goals (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502). An employer branding is only considered to be successful when it can create, develop, and most importantly, sustain what it claims to offer to potential and current employees.

In another study, Rosethorn (2009, 49) suggests a model describing the employer brand in action. In this model (Figure 1), it is believed that brand strength is created when a deal, underlying EVP, is made between the employer and its employees, the deal needs to be distinctively, compellingly, and relevantly executed throughout the whole lifecycle of the

individual, underlying employee experience (Rosethorn 2009, 49). The employee's lifecycle consists of five phases: attract, integrate, perform, retain, and transition (McLeod & Waldman 2011, 10).



Figure 1. The employer brand in action (Adapted from Rosethorn 2009, 49)

Both of the above-discussed studies on the employer branding process suggest similarities. The creation and development of EVP are affirmed in both studies. While Rosethorn proposes the EVP ought to be delivered throughout each and every employee experience, Backhaus and Tikoo divide the delivery process in two: internally and externally.

External marketing focuses on people who have little experience of the business, whereas internal marketing communicates with employees who know the reality very well as they go to work every day. The two steps could aim at different audiences and through completely different means of channels, it is stressed that the theme of delivered messages should be consistent. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 122.). Figure 2 describes the relationship between internal and external marketing nicely. Both external and internal marketing communication should be accurate and consistent when promoting the employer image (Moroko & Uncles 2008, 165).



Figure 2. The relationship between recruitment marketing and internal engagement. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 122)

One study shows the importance of accurate messages delivered during employer branding. In order to succeed in employer branding, this study analyzed two key dimensions that are attractiveness and accuracy. While attractiveness is constituted of awareness, differentiation, and relevance, accuracy implies how factual and truthful the employer image is portrayed. This emphasizes the consistent messages delivered from the employer brand to the employees' experience, culture, and values of the workplace. (Moroko & Uncles 2008.)

For the scope of this thesis, internal branding will not be discussed further but it is acknowledged that an employer brand plan should never leave out internal branding for its importance.

2.4.1 External Marketing

Over a decade, many leading organizations have prioritized employer branding in their strategic plan. The constitution of the employer brand is how potential and current employees perceive an organization's reputation. (Ottoson & Parment 2015, 157.)

When planning a career path, an increasing number of people would think of whom they want to work with rather than a certain product or an industry. Strong and popular brands have constantly owned a competitive advantage when it comes to the labor market. Generation Y is responsive to brand messages. They grow up in an extremely branded era, to begin with. Brand messages have started to go international and widespread and hence, it is natural for this generation to judge brands from very young ages. In this manner, they are well conscious of images, reliability, and quality in a strong brand. (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 36.) A research in 2014 among final-year management students has found that there is a significant correlation between powerful brand image and the possibility to apply (for a job at the brand) (Leekha Chhabra & Sharma 2014, 48). The general assumption is made: businesses possessing a good external brand image is very likely to be a just as good employer (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 149).

Any effort to build the image of employer brand externally aims to title the business as an employer of choice, and hence allows it to appeal as attractive to highly qualified candidates. It is assumed that a distinctive brand enables the employer to obtain distinctiveness in human capital. In addition, once a recruit has been attracted, he or she tends to initiate

a number of suppositions about the employer and he or she will then bring them to work. As a consequence, it shows that he or she supports the organization's values and affirms his or her commitment to the organization. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503.)

External marketing is designed mainly not only to attract the targeted workforce, but also assist and improve the product or corporate brands. The underlying fundamental of employer branding is to be congruous with each and every branding efforts coming from the same organization (Sullivan 1999 in Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503). While employer brand characterizes an organization as an identity of an employer through external and internal communicating channels, product and corporate brand focus primarily on external ones (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503). Even when product and corporate brand targets at customers and employer brand focuses on talents and commitment in employees, hereunder is a study showed that they are closely interrelated.

Barrow and Mosley discuss an integrated brand model in their book in 2005 (Figure 3). The model shows the interrelationships and how to manage them effectively. It explains that the employer brand, aiming to attract the right employees and engage them in high performance, presents "an important role in building and supporting the customer brand". At the same time, the role of customer brand in attracting the right people to come and work for the organization is just as critical. Employees find pride in the business's external reputation once they are employed. This helps to maintain employees' engagement and give reasons for employees to deliver the brand's promises to its customers without fail. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 111.)

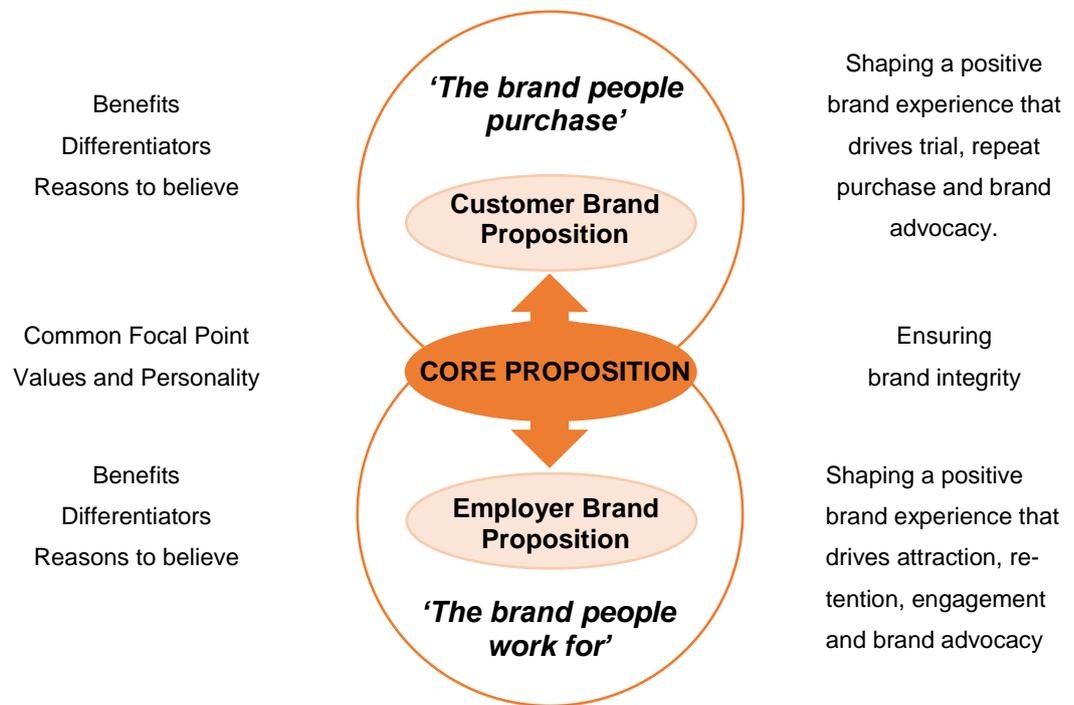


Figure 3. An integrated brand model (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 111)

2.4.2 Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

From the marketing point of view, a value proposition is "a promise the seller makes that value-in-exchange will be linked to value-in-use. When a customer exchanges money with a seller s/he is implicitly assuming the value-in-exchange will at least result in value-in-use that meets or exceeds the value-in-exchange" (Lusch, Vargo & O'Brien 2007, 13). A consumer study points out that it is the consumers and related beneficiaries who judge the reliability, validity, and acceptability of value propositions offered by an organization (Holtinen 2014 in Sengupta, Bamel & Singh 2015, 308). It is suggested that a similar relationship also happens between an organization and its employees. Job seekers have long been paying good attention to what values are offered by employers just as much as consumers have been when shop for a product or service (Marriott 2001, 165).

Rosethorn (2016, 21) comments that many defines EVP only on the advantages employees get. He'd better prefers a definition which includes benefits from both the employer and employees, because employers also get different resources such as knowledge, skills, time from employees in order to achieve its business goals and objectives.

A definition of EVP has been discussed in 2017 by Mosley and Schmidt. They say that the primary goal of the employer brand is to attract employees who have a set of good knowledge and skills a business needs to meet its objectives. External employer branding

consists of different actions taken to convince these people to work for the business. One of those many actions, is the development and delivery of employee value proposition. EVP is the give and get of the employment deal: employers offer a set of benefits such as money, recognition, opportunities to advance in career in return for valuable knowledge, skills, capabilities, creativities, and so on from the employees. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 15.) In the purpose of creating a positive reputation as an employer and positive experience for employees, an EVP proposes the key benefits employees will obtain from the relationship established between them and the employer (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 63).

When developing an EVP, taking the idea of inventing completely new or more values is wrong. It is about ensuring the current purpose and value statements are interpreted into relevant and meaningful messages, action, and implementation for employees' sake, and is aligned with values the business promote externally. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 60.) The elements of consistency, flexibility, and holistic evaluation should be examined and considered carefully in the establishment of an EVP or EVPs.

The persistence of a consistent EVP must exist in the whole employee lifecycle: from the moment an employee decides to begin the relationship with the employer, toward the employment period, to the end. When there is a promise, it is natural that there will be the birth of beliefs and expectations. As long as the promise is acknowledged and kept, a psychological contract made of percept and reciprocity is formed (Rousseau 1995; Robinson 1996 in App, Merk & Büttgen 2012, 270). In addition to the legal employment contract, this contract "is based on implicit or explicit promises (Rousseau 1995; Robinson 1996 in App & al. 2012, 270). Breach of the contract results in withdrawal from the business and weakening of competitive advantage (Rousseau 2001 in App & al. 2012, 270).

When establishing the employee value proposition for potential and current employees, besides from consistent brand messages, businesses also need to consider the flexibility in their proposition so that it appeals to many types of target groups (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 125). A diverse workforce has different needs and expectations in different life and career stages. For instance, needs and expectations in career advancement or work-life balance of a single mother are different from that of a dual-career couple or a single-earner man (Cooke 1994; Robinson 1996; Lievens, Van Hoye & Anseel 2007 in App & al. 2012, 2071). Therefore, the psychological contract needs to be renegotiated frequently for the continuous change in needs and expectations (Rousseau 2001 in App & al. 2012, 2071).

Demographic variables are found to be significant on work values in many research works (Sengupta & al. 2015, 310). Findings from Gursoy and colleagues (2013 in Sengupta & al. 2015, 310) indicate the existence of generational impact on job performance and personal values. It is reported that older generation tends to strive for work centrality and power, they present to be strongly ethical and committed; while the younger ones are more interested in fulfilling personal values, suggesting less commitment than the former (Gursoy Chi & Karadag 2013, Sullivan 2002 in Sengupta & al 2015, 310). A result of a study made in China (Li, Liu & Wan 2008, 875) shows that the age, education, position and gender of employees play important roles in work values. Specifically, older employees recognize high values in work-life balance and self-development; managers find contributing to the work and self-development valuable. For that reason, organizations should take demographic variables into consideration when defining their EVP.

"Values are seen as source of motivation for individual action" (Gursoy, Chi & Karadag 2013, 41). Adams (2015, 237) concludes that an EVP ensures a more efficient and cohesive workplace because it brings motivation to individuals. He states that an organization owns an EVP "are five times more likely to have highly engaged employees and two times more likely to exceed targets". He believes that having an EVP forms a fundamental backbone to an organization's possible change and important decision-making situations.

3 The tailor-made employer branding process

This chapter is a continuance from chapter 2. As one of its definition has said, employer branding is a targeted long-term strategy (Sullivan 2004), therefore, it takes as much time as it does to build a product brand. It is important to remember that this is a long process, and it does not bring instant results. To ensure the consistency in a strong employer brand, an organization need to constantly work on it in a long time (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 46). It is essential to acknowledge that employer branding requires efforts coming from everyone in the organization, especially leadership roles. It cannot be overlooked by thinking the responsibility lies in HR only. It is a strategic business plan and requires a lot of attention.

In the book *Employer Branding for dummies*, Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 9) recommend 8 steps of employer branding process including:

1. Develop a clear understanding of your organization's business objectives and the talents needed to meet those objectives.

2. Evaluate your current employer brand image among potential recruits and the employer brand experience of your current employees.
3. Define your employer value proposition (EVP), the key ingredients that will make your organization a distinctively great place to work.
4. Build your employer brand framework, the creative elements that collectively capture the look and feel you want to convey and the emotion you want to evoke.
5. Generate engaging, story-led content and employee experience that bring your EVP to life in ways that resonate with the talents you're trying to attract.
6. Actively engage with prospects through selected channels, including your organization's career website, social channels, job boards, and programmatic (automated ad placement driven by analytics).
7. Measure your success to determine what's working and what's not, from your overall brand strategy down to individual recruitment marketing activities.
8. Adjust your employer brand strategy and individual recruitment marketing activities, as needed, to improve results.

Universum (2009 in Parment & Dyhre 2009, 58) suggest the five-step employer branding process (Figure 4). The first part of the process aims to examine measurable results in internal and external research to acquire information on how attractive the organization is to different target groups. It then further serves the purpose of goals defining and competitors benchmarking. The next step is to identify the employer value proposition, or employee value proposition. After the research is done and an EVP is approved, the responsible team for EB needs to make decisions on which communication channels are appropriate to promote the value as an employer to suitable target groups of potential and current employees. After a communication strategy is decided, the next step is to prepare the material. This refers to how should an EVP is expressed to employees. What and how messages should be conveyed so that it is consistent with corporate identity and customer brands. Finally, when all things are ready for a successful employer branding strategy, take action on implementing communication strategy and materials to promote the EVP, and monitoring closely to evaluate and adjust suitably for better EB practices. (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 59-80.)

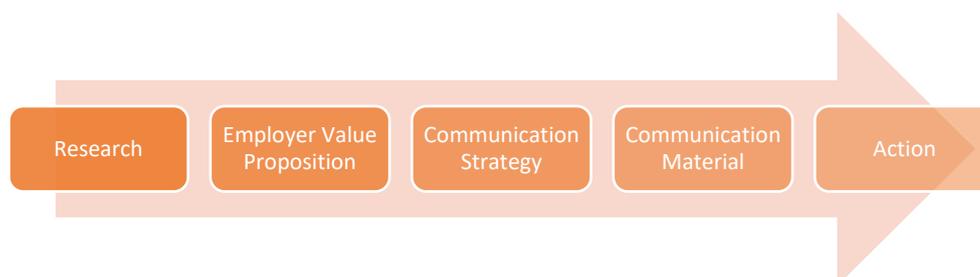


Figure 4. The Employer Branding Process (Adapted from Parment & Dyhre 2009, 58)

Based on the discussion in 2.3, different observation on EVP and external branding marketing, and the two references mentioned above, the author has designed an employer branding process (Figure 5) which each step will be further explained in detail in the following sub-chapters.

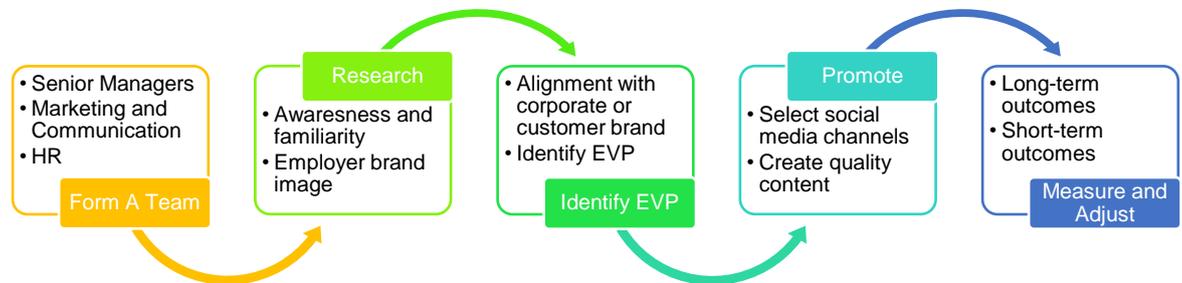


Figure 5. Employer Branding Process designed by the author

3.1 Form A Team

Building the whole employer branding is not a one-man job. Setting up a team may seem to be easy and quick, however, this step is the most important and is one of the keys to successful employer branding. Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 10) claim that executives and managers in different department ought to know the role of employer branding in the company's sustainable success. While HR could take the leadership role in the EB process, departmental managers and directors help to encourage their employees, facilitate collaboration, ensure resources when needed to assist the EB process. HR and marketing departments' insight and expertise play critical roles. On the other hand, employees are ones generating content, and being brand advocates. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 10.)

According to Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 13), the EB dream team needs to include:

- > Senior management: the more important leadership positions involve, the stronger the case of EB becomes. When the CEO or General Manager takes part in the EB process, it shows the acknowledgment and appreciation towards how employer branding can contribute to secure talents and achieve the business' growth ambition.
- > Marketing and communication: Marketing people have a rich knowledge, skills, and resources to serve on many external marketing activities. Having them on board help greatly in promoting campaigns on social media platforms and measuring these channels' performance.

- > HR: it is obvious to have HR involve in the EB process. HR has the best accountability in talent management, recruitment. HR knows what content potential employees look for in an employer. They also know how to appear as an attractive employee. Having HR onboard helps tremendously in creating the EVP and marketing content.
- > Line management: departmental managers help to engage their line employees in the process, provide resources when necessary. Moreover, they are the bridge for communication between the EB team and the employees. As important as the implementation of EB, employees also need to know what good it brings to their interest and act as brand advocates.

The above lists important factors need to be in the EB team. However, the job does not simply stop at giving out an invitation and the next day, they reply saying yes. It is usual to see resilience when introducing something new to the business practice, applied for any circumstance. Therefore, it is the art of convincing to persuade leaders to come on board with the employer brand plan. Hereunder are suggestions on how to pitch the EB idea to different prospects by Mosley and Schmidt.

With **senior management**, the ultimate goal that they mostly care is how EB can contribute to the business' success. There are benefits concerning high-quality employees, employee retention, which leads to cost reduction as the employee attrition level is low. Additionally, the organization's reputation as an employer is enhanced, the better possibility to become the employer of choice within the industry. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 38.)

Marketing and communication people are mostly ones who are hard to convince. People in this department have the tendency to be so protective towards the corporate and customer brand, they are afraid that the existence of a lone employer brand can be a threat to the brand integrity. The idea can be made more approachable by presenting EB as an excellent way to engage current customers, make the brand more appealing to customers who have not considered the brand. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 39.)

- > Pledge full allegiance to the current brand identity. The employer brand will apply rules governing and be aligned with the corporate brand identity. It is important to ensure that nothing will be executed without the approval of all EB team members.

- > Explain the importance of EVP: to best clarify what an EVP is, put it in the context of the corporate brand, emphasize benefits relating to potential and current employees. EVP clarifies how an employer delivers an employee experience that reflects the brand values, aligned with the current promised customer experience.

- > Ask for flexibility within the brand framework: Communication to different audiences for different purposes requires different ways to approach and tone of voice. While it is necessary to swear allegiance to either corporate or customer brand identity, communicating style with potential employees could come out to be distinctive. Since the needs and expectations of customers and employees are not the same, both seek different relationship and interest from the brand, communication style should differ. However, differences does not indicate contradictory.

When it comes to getting **HR people** familiar with brand management, it takes time to interpret and make them comfortable with the language of marketing and brand management including marketing process and terminology. Resistance is normal, because it is always easier that way when a totally new task is introduced, adding to their already heavy workload. Many could refuse to concede the benefits of EB and perceive it as a distraction. EB brings too many good benefits to HR practices and objectives, to begin with. Therefore, it is relevant to address all the concerns and analyze how a strong employer brand help HR tremendously. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 40.)

3.2 Research

Before a product entering a market, there is a need for market research. The same thing goes to employer brand. To fully understand and measure the current reputation, people's perception of the employer, it is necessary to collect external data that explains how attractive the employer is to different target employee groups (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 63). Collecting external data is a head start to position the employer, hence have a suitable strategic plan based on the results.

With the acknowledgment that EB is a long-term process, data needs to be collected and measured constantly over time and target groups remain unchanged. External data can be clarified as brand attitude measures, employer ranking, surveys on salary. These data can be collected from a student or professional's survey, reports and they give insight on how different stakeholder interpret the organization as an employer. (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 63.)

Being expertise in Employer Brand, Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 47) recommend a few questions to ask to learn about the brand's reputation.

- > How well-known you are as an employer?
- > Who are your competitors that are also fighting for your desired talents?
- > What is the degree to which candidates prefer you than your immediate rivals as a potential employer?
- > How appealing your employment attributes are to candidates' consideration and preference, compared to that of your competitor?
- > What attributes candidates associated with you the most as an employer?
- > What is the most appealing factor that shapes your employer brand image (i.e. current employer brand marketing, products and services' image, perceptions of your industry sector)?

3.2.1 Awareness and Familiarity

The first ruler to measure the employer brand reputation is awareness and familiarity. This assesses how many people of the target candidates have heard of the brand and knows what it does. Next, out of those who have awareness of the organization, how many consider the organization as a potential employer. Finally, out of those who have considered working for you, how many belong to your organization target candidates? (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 48)

The first approach to this external data collection could be finding surveys and reports that already exist in recent years. It could save costs later if data is found useful and relevant. This can be found in students or professional surveys. Reports from employer branding consultancy or solutions firm are also reliable and valid. However, the straightforward solution is conducting a survey. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 48)

By creating the organization's own survey, it can answer how many people who responded to job ads are aware of the company and how many are familiar with the company before the job ad. The results can vary due to the way of advertising and where job

vacancies are posted, these elements should be taken into consideration in data analytic process. For instance, any geographical difference between the employees and employers could result in different levels of awareness and familiarity. While surveys take time to collect credible data, the more immediate approach is to ask new hires directly with the same set of questions posted in the survey. This qualitative method suggests the same results of awareness and familiarity among target candidates, and augment the evaluation on employer brand status. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 48)

3.2.2 Employer Brand Image

The second ruler measures the strength of the employer brand image. Image is the ideal people have in minds when they think of an employer. The first ruler has found out how many people consider an organization as an employer. This ruler helps answer the question of why for such decisions.

To address this question, the survey should ask for awareness, consideration, and preference of generally considered important attributes that made up an attractive employer. These attributes included in the survey are ones that targeted candidates associate the organization with. The survey process can be consulted with a service provider in research specialization. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 50)

Below is the standard attribute framework used by Universum to measure employer brand image.

Table 2. Standard attribute framework (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 50)

Corporate image attributes	People and culture
Attractive/ exciting products and services	A creative and dynamic work environment
Corporate social responsibility	A friendly work environment
Corporate transparency	Commitment to diversity and inclusion
Ethical standards	Enabling me to integrate personal interests in my schedule
Fast-growing/entrepreneurial	Interaction with international clients and colleagues
Innovation	Leaders who will support my development
Inspiring leadership	Recognizing performance
Inspiring purpose	Recruiting only the best talent
Market success	
Prestige	

	Respect for its people Support for gender equality
Job characteristics Challenging work Customer focus Flexible working conditions High level of responsibility High performance focus Opportunities for internal travel/relocation Professional training and development Secure employment Team-oriented work Variety of assignments	Remuneration and advancement opportunities Clear path for advancement Competitive base salary Competitive benefits Good reference for future career High future earnings Leadership opportunities Overtime pay/compensation Performance-related bonus Rapid promotion Sponsorship of future education

3.3 Identify EVP

This is one of the most important step of the EB process. To identify an EVP, this sub-chapter presents five steps to discover the organization’s unique and authentic qualities that stand out as an employer. By going through each step, an organization would be able to find its promise to the employee’s experience, making an EVP as one of their employer’s trademark.

3.3.1 Make Decision to Stay Align with Corporate or Customer Brand

When an organization has both a corporate brand and many different customer brands, employer brand marketing needs to be aligned with either of them. Whichever prospect employees are mostly associated with this the better to choose to align to. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 28.) For instance, would an employee more likely to imagine themselves working in InterContinental hotel or the IHG group, which InterContinental belongs to?

This depends a lot on the big strategic business plan of a company. Thus, the matter should be discussed with the senior management team. In case the business strives to focus on building a strong corporate brand, it is better to identify the employer brand closely with it. Otherwise, if there is a distinction in the characteristics of different customer

brands, it is encouraged to create different employer brands accordingly to retain the distinction. There are cases where employee identify strongly with both the customer brand and the corporate one. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 28.)

3.3.2 Build The Employee Value Proposition

Many leading companies in the world favors the EVP concept that presents the employment statement clearly and concisely. The statement has from three to five supporting qualities or pillars. Figure 6 illustrates the components of an EVP nicely. The brand statement can capture the whole employment deal or direct at a certain dominant element of the deal. The message conveyed in this statement shows the brand essence, what you want to be popular for as an employer. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 64.)

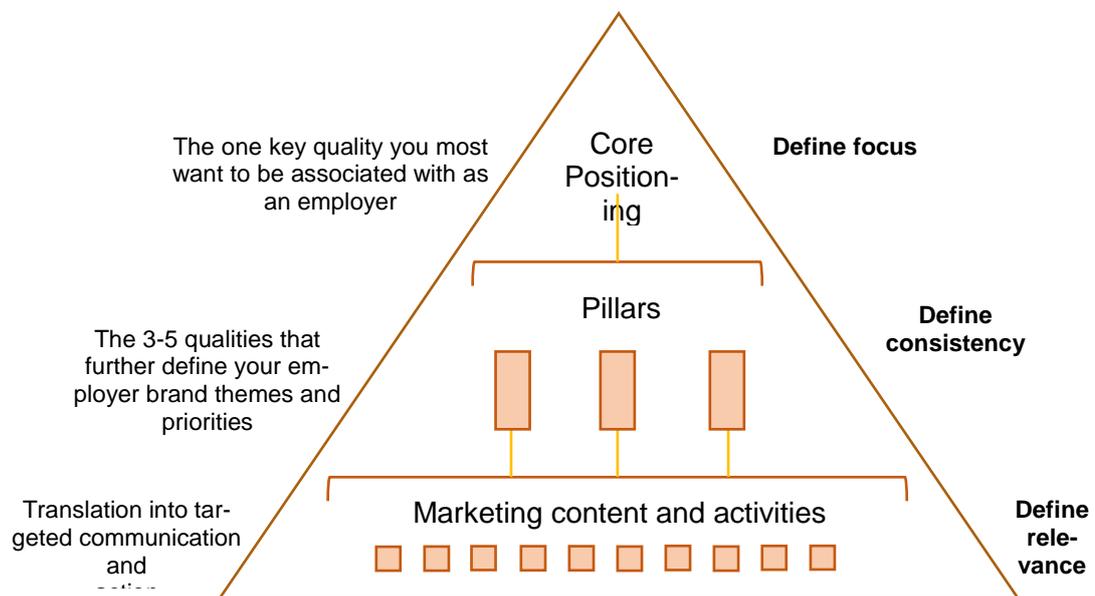


Figure 6. Structuring EVP (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 64)

In this chapter, the step by step how to build a suitable and perfect EVP that presents a brand best will be disclosed. It is especially important to engage everyone in the EB team in this phase as defining an EVP is fundamental to the success of an employer brand.

Step 1: Employee value proposition pillars brainstorming

The first step is to identify key qualities that make an organization stand out as an attractively good place to work. The mission of this step is to establish as many qualities as possible. The qualities should be ones that can describe the current benefits, offers already existed. To facilitate this, the employer brand qualities can be drawn out from a positioning wheel which is included in Appendix 1, page 17. This wheel separate employer brand attributes into nine positioning areas. This helps greatly in brainstorming qualities that are

not obviously generic. This is a good starting point to go from, however, potential options can lie beyond this. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 71)

Step 2: Defining brand personality

While the EVP pillars are what messages an employer wants to deliver, the brand personality is how it is delivered. Base on the decision made on corporate brand or customer brand alignment, it is useful to pick up on the same tone of voice, communication concept. Moreover, emotion also plays an important part in the message delivered. Aaker (1997) suggests a dimension of brand personality to browse and explore from.

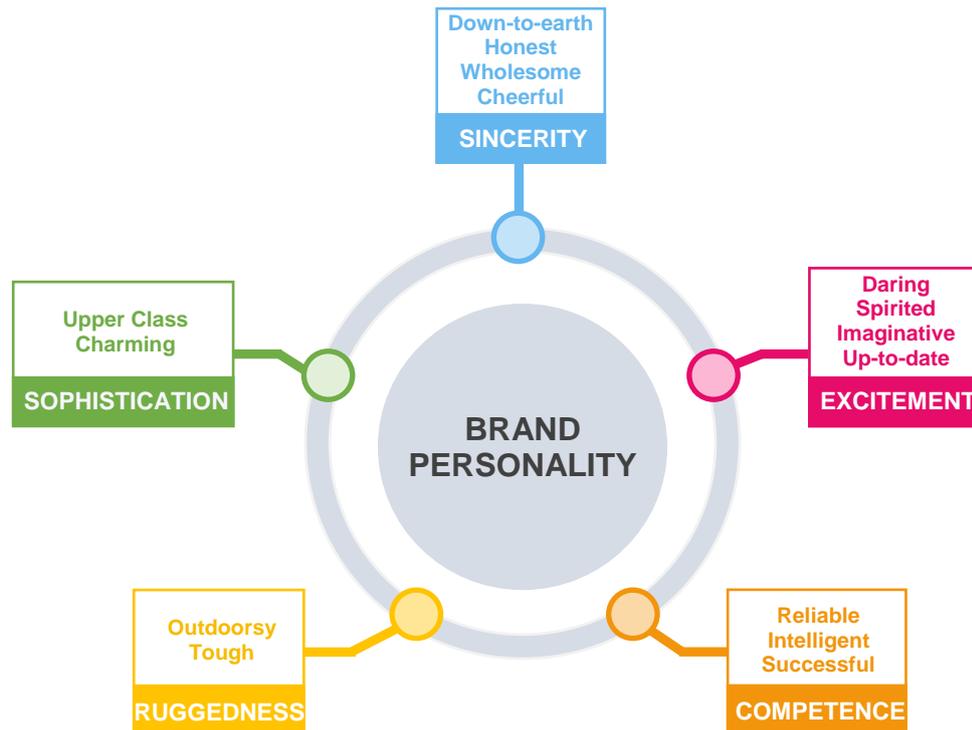


Figure 7. Dimensions of Brand Personality (Adapted from Aaker, 1997)

Step 3: Short-listing EVP qualities

From the list of qualities in step 1, this is where they are narrowed down by the following requirements (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 16; Parment & Dyhre 2009, 63):

- > Clearly define “the give and get of the employment deal” (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 72). To ensure the authenticity of the promise, what are qualities that truly describe what company wants from employees and what it offer back in return, other than financial compensation.
- > Describe the company’s current strengths, which showcase how attractive an employer you are, but also envision prospect ambition sensibly.

- > Stand out from competitors. What qualities can show how different a company is than its competitors? Offering distinctive employee experience is the way.

Step 4: Determine the core positioning

Core positioning highlights a single comprehensive characteristic that an organization desires to be best known as an employer. Defining core position can be easy depending on the organizational context. However, a suitable core positioning can be explored by short-listing to a few options and try alongside with the chosen EVP pillars. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 77-78)

Step 5: Measure the EVP:

During the first stage of introducing the EVP, there is always something to develop further. The EVP could have to change a few times before the subject speaks complete authenticity and differentiation. Mosley & Schmidt (2017, 81) suggest a few questions to further assess and hence, refine the EVP:

- > To what level does each EVP pillar and/or core positioning appear to be attractive to people?
- > How each target group perceive each EVP pillar as relevant or important
- > How reliable these EVP pillars in describing the current employment experience that the organization offers?
- > What, if anything needs to add to further describe the organization precisely?
- > What, if anything is missing?

3.4 Promote

This step includes two tasks. The first is to choose suitable social media channels to communicate with prospective audiences and how to best utilize those channels through the marketing tone of voice and measuring performances. The second is to create valuable and high-quality content that interest targeted audiences.

3.4.1 Social Media Channels

There are various channels to promote the employer brand and the decision making on which to focus on depends greatly on the resources, goals, and strategy of the organization. Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 19-20) suggests a few options to browse from to successfully execute the employer branding strategy to targeted audiences, the options listed under is not complete but the author only choose ones that found most relevant. It is not

necessary to use all of these channels in order to have a good employer brand, the combination or even the focus on one channel may be enough depending on the characteristics of the business.

- > Career website: A career website/ page with job ads is considered to be the minimum at employer branding. This webpage can be a place to one, post job ads, two, submit applications for job ads, three, provide employer and career information.
- > Social media channels: potential employees, or prospects, can be reached through variously different social channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Glassdoor, Twitter, Snapchat, and Pinterest. A career page or user can be established on most of the above-mentioned sites to attract talents. It is only wise to choose ones that the majority of your target audience are active on.
- > Search engines: Search engine optimization (SEO) is a powerful tool to boost the rank on the search engine, therefore, drive more traffic to the career webpage. It is also useful to utilize search engine marketing (SEM) to purchase sponsored ads. An organization's organic search engine rank can be improved by the usage of both SEO and SEM.
- > Internships and visits to college campuses: one of many powerful and effective ways to recruit students, fresh graduates to establish a positive and friendly image as an employer is on campus activities.

From the aforementioned suggestions, two channels that will be examined further are Facebook and LinkedIn as the author see the suitability and applicability of these two channels to the case company. As of 2017, Vietnam is reported to have 64 million active users on Facebook (Ha, 20107), accounts for 66% of the Vietnamese population (World Bank, 2018). On the other hand, LinkedIn is a fast-growing social media platforms used by professionals in Vietnam mainly for the purpose of recruitment or job seeking.

Facebook

There are two ways to acquire a Facebook page for employer branding. The first is to utilize the organization's current Facebook page. Depending on the organization's size, resources used on running the Facebook page, or content's style, it is possible to leverage the current reach and impact the page already have to promote content on employer branding such as job ads and culture at the workplace. This brings a favoring circumstance in set governance, content approach, and, the most valuable, a certain number of

audiences. However, the challenge is when to post employer brand content in the already functional content calendars. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 187-188.)

The second option is to create a brand new Facebook page. It is ideal to create the own Facebook page dedicated only to employer brand provided that there are resources and commitment. This Facebook page can have all the authority over content generating, content sharing, and way of communicating (Mosley, Schmidt 2017, 188). On the other hand, it is important to remember to maintain the choice of aligning with corporate or customer brand when running this independent page. Tips on how to effectively using Facebook will be presented in Attachment 1.

LinkedIn

Rather than investing time and resources in building a whole new website for career page, which has many benefits in visual customization, it is more convenient to create a Company Page on LinkedIn utilizing its already-established thousands of active users. After creating a Company Page, a Career Page can be built by choosing the careers tab. A place where it is possible to showcase the company's information about products or services, and working culture. In addition, LinkedIn has long been well-known for the platform where all professionals, employer, and employees connect with each other. Other than being an excellent place to execute recruitment, it is ideal to promote employer branding to leverage for recruiting practices later on.

In regards to usage ability, customization at a certain level is free of charge. Basic information about the organization such as industry, location, website address, uploading logo, and banner is available. There is every liberal choice of content posting, content type. Moreover, there are analytic and activity tools reporting visitors, followers, likes and comment, shares daily to closely measure the performance of the page. The metrics are valuable to refine content better. Customization of targeted audiences to promote this page is also available at this Career page. It acts very similar to a usual career website where there are different tabs for Jobs, i.e. job ads, Life, i.e. posts, pictures or videos presents how the workplace looks like, People, i.e. statistics of employees and link their personal LinkedIn accounts. Overall, LinkedIn provides a great platform for employer brand where it has already created the frame for companies to base on and there is no limit to creativity as the more options of clickable banners or customizable modules are available when upgrading to the premium package.

Discover the social media marketing tone of voice

Everything done in employer brand requires a distinctive but consistent approach, the same goes to the tone of voice chosen in social media communication. Consistency in different social network services brings to prospects familiar atmosphere (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 179). The employee value proposition could be much further defined by the choice of tone of voice. While it reflects the core components offered as an employer, it should also align with the corporate or customer brand voice. However, they are not necessarily the same. The consistency in employer branding helps improve the relationship with marketing. It is recommended the choice of a lesser formal tone is better to connect with target audiences on social media. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 180.)

Measuring the effectiveness

Even when the content creating job can be outsourced, it is admittedly better and more effective to do the work in the organization, by people who know the organization's culture best. Therefore, it is substantial to be knowledgeable of measuring costs spent as well as audiences' interaction on social media.

There are content development cost and media cost to consider. The formal refers to resources spent in the content creation including personnel, time, copywriting, photography. On the other hand, the latter indicates money pays for sponsored posts to better target desired audiences. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 270.)

On the other hand, in exchange for cost paid, what an account on social media gains are audience exposure and engagement level. Audience exposure is measured by the number of reaches, that is how many people have had possibly saw your content in their newsfeed. This number affects engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, click-through rate, and feedback (Ernout 2014). Consequently, the bigger the number of reach, the higher the rate of engagement. Audience exposure level can be increased if there is a significant number of shares for a post (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 20).

Depending on the goals each organization have towards social media use, the determination on cost is varied. However, the key is to evaluate the value of cost paid in exchange to engagement rate of audiences.

3.4.2 Creating Quality Content

Jefferson and Tanton (2013, 186) affirm that good content takes effort. Readers can easily tell what a quality post is. Hence, it is important to spend enough time to generate good content. The recommendation coming from Bryony Thomas (in Jefferson & Tanton 2013, 186) is to spend half a day every week on writing good content. Furthermore, it is essential to carry a notebook for ideas around because ideas can come suddenly anywhere anytime so you would want to be prepared for that. Depending on each individual's personality or schedule that what time of the day should be suitable for him/her to create content. However, it is recommendable to have a certain time of the day, every day to follow provided that it is the most effective time for the sharp and focus time. (Jefferson & Tanton 2013, 186.)

Normally on employer branding, it is usual to publish more visualize content than a text-long blog post. Suggestions of employer branding content will be presented in the next part of this chapter. One of the contents that would not be mentioned is blog articles. A blog post should limit in 400 words, and it is further justified in three parts: 100-word introduction, 250-word content, 50-word conclusion (Jefferson & Tanton 2013, 186). Finally, an attractive title is needed to make the blog article appealing to audiences. Otherwise, further tips on wording can be found in Attachment 1.

To help assist the content creation further, this part will look into the attractiveness of an employer, what employees look for in an employer when seeking jobs. Berthon and Ewing (2005, 159-162) studies the five factors of employer attractiveness including interest value (e.g. appealing workplace), social value (e.g. enjoyable workplace), economic value (e.g. payroll, compensation), development value (recognition, career growth), and application value (e.g. opportunities to apply one's knowledge to customers and colleagues). Srivastava and Bhatnagar (2010, 31) have another approach to the augment of attractive employers in India. In their research, they identify eight factors namely caring organization (e.g. how employer cares about its employees' welfare), enabling organization (e.g. how employer enable employees to work at their best abilities), career growth (e.g. career advancement), credible and fair (how fair the reward program is), flexible and ethical (e.g. how flexible it is toward working style without compromising ethical matters). The product and service brand image and positive employer image aspect are very much self-explanatory. Lastly, global exposure suggests the opportunities the travel while working for the employer. (Srivastava & Bhatnagar 2010, 31.)

It is important to highlight the factor of consistency during each and every step of content creation and communication to build a trusting, transparent, accountable and responsible culture that is enjoyed by stakeholders (Vatsa 2016, 10).

In regards to writing content for a certain target group, Mosley and Schmidt (2017, 160) give valuable ideas to ensure the quality of the content. First of all, if certain content is written for this particular target group, make sure to consult personnel working in that specific area about content ideas, suggestions, the right choice of words. They can also review the content before posting because nobody knows what appeals to a particular talent group than the employees who belong to the group themselves.

Second of all, it is recommendable to create a variety of content in the purpose of introducing as many departments that have openings as possible. They could be content made for marketing, operation, human resources, engineering, or administration department. Depending on the priority, a focus group can have more content than the others provided that with each recruiting talent group, there is quality content to attract potential employees. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 160.)

The final advice is to have target groups so that the focus is clear. General messages do not give good result in any target group. After key target groups are identified, the EVP, as well as other employer branding content need to be conveyed clearly to prospects.

3.5 Measure and Adjust

This is the final step of the EB process. The evaluation in this decides the quality of the employer branding practices so far, what is good and what is not good has been done. This step is no less important than any other because it analyzes how well employer brand practices are doing and adjust accordingly. It is recommended to be able to measure results in short and long term separately.

When measuring the short-term outcomes, it is suggested to assess the current engaging level on social media platforms, how many and how talented the applicants, what is the total cost-per-hire. Employer branding activities are best followed by a recruitment marketing campaign. Therefore, different analytic tools can be used to evaluate how the employer brand has been the leverage for the success of recruitment marketing activities. In the short term, organizations can already analyze which channels have been attracting the most candidates, in specific, which channels have been able to attract desired talents. As a result, keep boosting the active status on the right channels to enhance the strength

of EB. On the other hand, there is also a case of different target groups show different levels of effectiveness on the same social media channel. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 21). It is more precise to measure the success of employer brand in each target group.

In the long run, external factors that have to be developed gradually are brand awareness, attractiveness as an employer and the employer brand image. It is important to look into the quality of new hires, employee turnover. The internal research of employee performance, engagement, and advocacy. Since EB is strategically important, it should be able to measure the return on investment in talents, which results in business performance: productivity level, sales, and customer satisfaction level. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 22)

4 Competitor Analysis

This chapter focuses on project task 2, that is **investigating competitors' practices**. The investigation will be performed under a competitor analysis. Competitor analysis is clearly defined by Fleisher and Bensoussan (2007 in Hiles 2015, 38) as the assessment of competitors' strengths and weaknesses, in which competitors could be current or potential ones. The purpose of doing this analysis is to support in the process of formulating, implementing, monitoring and adjusting business strategy in an efficient and effective manner. It is acknowledged that organizations use competitor analysis in strategic planning process annually. Furthermore, this kind of analysis is utilized by businesses to further define and understand the industry they are operating in, who are their competitors, their strengths and weaknesses, prediction of rivals' future moves (Porter 1980; Zahra & Chaples 1993 in Hiles 2015, 39).

In this thesis, the competitor analysis mainly focuses on InterContinental Saigon's competitors' use of social media channels. The choice of analysis is justified in sub-chapter 4.1. Sub-chapter 4.2 and 4.3 are the analysis of competitors' activeness on Facebook and LinkedIn accordingly. The final key outcomes, including findings of EVP and social media practices, and recommendation for InterContinental Saigon are discussed in 4.4.

4.1 Benchmarking Process

Benchmarking of competitors' practices is discussed in this chapter. According to Chaffey & Ellis Chadwick (2012, 94), the benchmarking method is the digital analysis of an organization, in the purpose of recognizing threats, identify opportunities and improve its current performance. A benchmarking on current EB strategy other hotels in the same city and country belonged to the same hotel group will help to have a total view on the current stage of employer branding development in the industry, learn from good practices and avoid mistakes.

A few aspects are looked into when choosing the target for the benchmarking process. InterContinental Saigon is a five-star hotel serving luxurious customers and ones who come for the purpose of a business trip. For that reason, examined competitors are also five-star hotel belonged to an international hotel group or chain. The analysis also looks into fellow hotels belonged to the same IHG group as InterContinental Saigon. Moreover, the analysis wants to take geography and culture aspects in consideration when comparing the employer brand practices, hence all participants are hotels located in two of the biggest cities in Vietnam: Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

The analysis looks into the use of social media channels of each hotel, specifically on Facebook and LinkedIn. As they are two different platforms, the analysis for Facebook and LinkedIn will be separated. Nonetheless, both analyses have the same focus area which scrutinizes and presents in the following order:

- > General appearance,
- > Choice to align with corporate or customer brand,
- > The page is used for employer branding only or combined with customer branding,
- > Content,
- > Engagement level.

4.2 Facebook

There are four active Facebook pages examined in this part. Caravelle Careers is a Facebook page belonged to the international five-star Caravelle hotel located strategically in the center of Saigon (Caravelle 2019a). Next, the luxurious Sheraton Saigon owned by Marriott International (Marriott 2019), one of the biggest hotel group in the hospitality industry, has a page dedicated to employer branding named Human Resources – Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers. The same hotel located in Hanoi also has an active Facebook page to share employee moments named Sheraton Hanoi – Exciting Moments. Last but not least, the fellow Holiday Inn hotel under the same IHG group shows the integration of customer and employer marketing on its Facebook page. A closer look is taken into all four hotels for detail assessment.

Caravelle's Facebook page appears in its signature purple of the logo as the profile picture while the cover photo is a picture with employees in purple polo shirts holding a banner on a company outing trip. Caravelle does not belong to any big international hotel group or chain, in fact, it only has one hotel in Saigon. It was built in 1959 by the French in the time Vietnam was still its colonial (Caravelle 2019b). The Facebook page's name, Caravelle Careers, has fairly explained marketing purposes.

Its career page dedicates totally to recruitment and employer branding content. Most of the posts are job ads, looking for interns or full-time positions. Besides that, there was a big campaign promoting its Career Day in which many pictures showed that it was not simply a company introducing or consulting day but the actual recruiting job was done: CV screenings, one-on-one interviews. The page gets audiences to be more involved in the organization by introducing the new director, more exclusively, it shares photos of internal events for employees such as celebrating Women's Day, internal contests between em-

employees. Overall, it spent a lot of effort publishing and promoting the internal event to external audiences, potential employees. The impression of having fun at work and intimate parties do exist when looking at the content created on the page. However, it only posts two content on the average monthly.

Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers does not appear to be as brand-oriented as Caravelle's in its profile picture. The cover photo's content shows Marriott International's career page, which suggests the choice of alignment with the corporate brand. The page's name is Human Resources – Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers (Sheraton HR). This indicates big responsibilities running the page bear by HR people, as a consequence, only employer branding content is available.

Sheraton HR page has the same content ideas as Caravelle Careers but the distribution of content schedule is better interlace. While Caravelle dedicates all of its content in 2019 for recruitment, the Sheraton HR page has a better approach at engaging audiences. The average post per month is four and Sheraton makes sure that-one third of them should be posting about internal employer events such as International Women's day in March, Year End Party in February. The other two third is job ads. To better visualize the content, photos taken shows exciting and fun moments at the events. Moreover, the page also shows the engagement of its current employees as in some of the post, employees commented pictures of them enjoying the party. In addition to that, there is also a pinned video displaying joyful moment employees as well as managers, director celebrating their success at Sheraton. Compared to Caravelle, this page is active and support with more vivid and colorful images of life at Sheraton.

The same practice can be seen at **Sheraton Hanoi**. Its Facebook page is the name of the hotel followed by a description "Exciting Moments" indicating the working culture in the business. Most of the factors discussed at HR Sheraton Saigon is much similar to Sheraton Hanoi. While employee events at Sheraton Saigon are fun, they happen to be organized indoor. Sheraton Hanoi has a few outdoor activities showing that they also spend time outside of work, encourage the work-life balance.

Different than all three aforementioned Facebook pages, **Holiday Inn & Suites** shows another approach to employer branding marketing. Holiday Inn & Suites overall themes and design colors in green, the delegate color of Holiday Inn. The choice of aligning with customer brand is clear. There is only one active Facebook page of Holiday Inn & Suites Saigon Airport, even though the content focuses heavily on employer branding, it can still be concluded that the page is used for both customer marketing and employer branding.

Holiday Inn & Suites has only officially gone active in its business during the first quarter of 2019. Many of the Facebook posts call out for talents to complete the team for its opening. Besides that, since the business is new, not many employee events have been organized or published on the page. Instead, there are a remarkable amount of posts introducing new hires on board. The publication of employee identity and background is not new but not many have done so. Giving the background of Holiday Inn employee is another way of providing information on qualities, competencies ones need to acquire to make successful of a certain role. Additionally, audiences also feel the open mindset in the workplace as internal employee information is published and shared for everyone. On the other hand, Holiday Inn & Suites Saigon has certainly made the impression of following the customer brand. A few videos on the page is IHG's material to promote the hotel group's standard services, promises to everyone, including its customer and employees. Holiday Inn page clearly defines its identity independently, at the same time, it still commits to the overall "true hospitality" purposes of the IHG group it belonged to.

A report of audience growth, message volumes, and page-specific statistics is included in Attachment 2 for reference. This report tracks the activities of all four Facebook pages for the period of three weeks in which audience growth is the number of followers, message volumes refer to the engagement level, and page-specific statistics report details about messages sent and received, post-breakdown, engagements, and engagements per post. The report is done by using a credible online tool called Social Sprout.

4.3 LinkedIn

The approach hotels make on employer branding marketing seems to be similar to each other on LinkedIn. InterContinental Hanoi Landmark 72, and New World Saigon Hotel are all actively engaged on LinkedIn. They are both five-star hotels, in which one belonged to the same hotel group and the other located in the same city as the case company. Both use their hotel's logo to present as profile picture while the cover is a picture capturing the hotel building with landscape. Many hotels on Facebook choose to align with the customer brand as their distinctive approach to the audience. The same choice is made with both of the hotels in LinkedIn. On the other hand, most of the Facebook pages dedicate content to potential and current employees solely. The opposite happens with LinkedIn as InterContinental Hanoi, New World Saigon and Park Hyatt Saigon use one page only for both customer marketing and employer branding.

InterContinental Hanoi Landmark 72 has gained more than 400 followers for its LinkedIn page which is heavily filled with employer branding content. The page usually has 3 posts per month on the average and roughly 20 likes a post. The engagement level on LinkedIn stops at audience give likes, it could rarely find a post with any comment or share. The content ranges from photos or recap videos of community month or internship graduation ceremony to more intimate events such as yearend party or internal meetings. Many posts promote recognition and engagement at the workplace openly.

New World Saigon Hotel has five times more followers than that of InterContinental Hanoi, 2300 followers while the number of posts also ranges from five to six posts monthly, doubles the average of InterContinental Hanoi. The engagement level is better with at least 20 likes per post along with a few comments. In regards to content, it also promotes internal recognition, onboarding programs or volunteer for community days. Since the higher the level of interaction of normal posts, the more engaged the job ads get.

4.4 Key outcomes and conclusion

Based on results in 4.2 and 4.3, recommendations made for InterContinental Saigon are presented in this sub-chapter. There is finding of the EVP. The suggestions in terms of social media channels are made on which social media channel to focus on, alignment with customer brand, who should the chosen channel communicate with, and what content to write

As the employer brand process in chapter 3, the theoretical part, highlights the importance of establishing an EVP, it is reasonable to look into the use of EVP in different hotels. However, it is found that there has not been any EVP statement established by hotels or even hotel groups. As the consequences, there is no comment can be made on the use of EVP. The reasons are left undiscovered for the scope of the thesis. However, the author stills believe that establishing an EVP is an important job and should not be left out of the external employer branding process simply just because no hotel has ever established one.

Concerning the EB marketing work on different social media channels, the choice of social media channels differs among hotels. Most hotels focus solely on either Facebook or LinkedIn page. There is an evident trend that Vietnamese hotels prefer communicating via Facebook page than LinkedIn because Facebook is more commonly used by the Vietnamese. The engagement levels on Facebook is also higher than that of LinkedIn. However, LinkedIn is utilized by professionals and it is convenient for recruitment practices in

the future. The recommendation for InterContinental is to firstly focus on creating content and running the Facebook page. Sheraton hotels in Hanoi and Holiday Inn Saigon has used the Facebook page to post job ads and received high engagement levels, therefore, the Facebook page has proven useful for the hiring process. Depending on the available resources for external employer branding process, InterContinental Saigon can, later on, decide whether to publish a LinkedIn account for a career page.

All of the hotels in the benchmarking process choose to align with the customer brand. It is easy to understand why because all of these are five-star luxurious hotels which customers are more familiar with the name of the hotels than the hotel group that they are belonged to. The choice is obvious for InterContinental Saigon to distinctively identify the customer brand. However, it should also engage the IHG's promise about delivering "true hospitality" services to customers and employees in the marketing content. It shows that even when InterContinental Saigon is a proud five-star hotel, loved by many customers, it still commits to the IHG group business standard just like Holiday Inn does.

Depending on the resources for external employer branding, the social media channel could combine employer branding and customer branding content in one channel or separate. The choice does not make a drastic difference in the engagement level. Sheraton Hanoi and Caravelle have the Facebook page for employer branding only but Sheraton owns more followers and better engagement level. On the other hand, Holiday Inn uses the page for both customer and employer branding but the engagement level and followers are just as many as Sheraton Hanoi's. Detail statistics can be found in Attachment 2. What really brings success to a social media channel are the activeness and content creation.

From all content of six different hotels established on both Facebook and LinkedIn pages, the followings are suggested for the case company:

- > Employee profiles: introduction of new hires, a piece of sharing unique perspectives of an employee about his/her job (responsibilities, opportunities, benefits, and challenges) or the organization (working environment, work-life balance, colleagues). A post about a team working together is also interesting.
- > Photos: individuals, teams, outing days, employee events to give audiences more insight about how working in the organization look like.

- > Videos: recap of employees' activities, working culture highlights, introducing the workplace. The length of the video should be kept under two minutes for a short presentation and quick view.

5 Producing The External Employer Branding Guide

This chapter focuses on project task 3, that is **writing the guide**. The full product of project task 3 can be found in Attachment 1 to this thesis. This chapter explains how the guide is produced and what to expect in the product. The decision on methods and writing of the guide are presented in 5.1, while the structure and content of the product are introduced in 5.2

5.1 Methods

After the discussion with the case company, it is decided that the guide will be the collection of the author's desktop study and competitor analysis as the company is new to the topic. The guide is designed based on results established from project task 2 and 3. Furthermore, the case company provides feedback upon the drafts sent for the guide's completion.

For the company's future use, the guide is designed using PowerPoint. The program is accessible for everyone and easy to use weather later on who the responsible person. PowerPoint is simple but presentable. The guide can be edited or put on a slide show without having to install or learn about any other program. By using PowerPoint, the author also aims to create a visualize guide which can be read and understand easily.

5.2 The Guide's Presentation

Taking into consideration that the case company will start from the very beginning of the external employer branding process, the author makes no assumption about resources, budgets, and goals when writing the guide because this involves going deeper in the company's decision which is beyond the case company's interest. The content of the guide is kept neutral but there are specific applications for InterContinental Saigon in step 3: Identify EVP, step 4: Promote, and step 5: Measure and Adjust. The application can be consulted in Attachment 1. Step 1: Form A Team and step 2: Research requires many resources and important decision-making by the case company therefore, recommendations can be hardly made for these two steps.

There are two parts to the guide. The first part is an introduction which includes the background of the guide, a table of content and a brief explanation of employer branding. The second part is the presentation of the five-step external employer branding process (Fig-

ure 5). It goes deeper in guiding what to do with valuable tips in each step. There is an attachment of a competitor analysis report to the guide, it serves as a reference for the commissioning company in the field of doing marketing on social media channels.

6 Company's Feedback on The Product

This chapter focuses on project task 4 that is **obtaining feedback from the case company** and with that, finalize the external employer branding guide. This chapter reports the process of the author working with the case company, how the feedback was obtained and what suggestion the case company had for the guide.

After the agreement on the scope of the guide, it is set that overall, the guide should be written on a general level. The guide needs to succeed in giving a step by step process of external employer branding, giving helpful tips on steps that are applicable and the presentation is clear and visualized.

As the goals for the project was set, the first draft of the guide was sent via email mainly for the table of content's approval. InterContinental Saigon was happy with the first draft and no change was made. One month and a half later, in May, the author had a small meeting with the case company to present and discuss the guide. This version of the guide was sent to the case company via email before the meeting so that they could review, and make remarks on the draft. Feedback was made in the meeting and the draft was then edited and added on the company's request. The final version was sent to the case company one last time to double check and approve.

In the meeting, the guide received positive feedback from the case company. It was recognized as being able to provide knowledge in terms of external employer branding, and social media activities. The HR manager was pleased that even when the guide was kept on a general level, it still had some good tips and recommendation specifically for the case company. Things that she said the hotel would take into account when planning the external employer branding. The presentation was well-structured with good reading instruction, a brief introduction of each concept and quality content. The design was simple and visualized as much as possible. The HR manager admitted that some parts did appeal to be a little wordy with text but she also acknowledges that there is information that could not be described better but through text. On the other hand, there were some recommendations made for the guide. The case company felt that there could be more tips on how to run a Facebook and LinkedIn page. Moreover, she also wanted some more tips for writing good content on social media. In addition to that, in the version sent to the case company before the meeting, some parts mentioned the existence of competitor analysis. The case company became interested in the analysis and the author offered to attach the competitor analysis and their statistic report on social media as part of the guide. Apart from the above, a few grammars, typos and design mistakes were pointed out.

7 Project Evaluation

This chapter responds to project task 5 that is **evaluating the thesis**. It first discusses the main outcomes of the thesis which summarize briefly the whole thesis and recognize what this thesis has been able to achieve. Then it moves on to evaluate the whole writing process and recommendations for the future. Lastly, it presents the author's learning outcome when doing the thesis.

It might be beneficial to state the goals of the thesis before going into details of the evaluation. This is a product-based thesis aims to create a guide on external employer branding to attract talents for InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences. It goes from the purpose of creating primary knowledge for responsible people to the impact of attracting more talents to the employee team of InterContinental Saigon. As a result, employer branding can strengthen the business's competitive position in the market including high qualities and motivated employees, cost reduction, customer satisfaction, brand's reputation improvement, and overall business growth achievement. In order to write the guide, the literature on different aspects of employer branding was reviewed, it then followed by a five-step process of external employer branding with a detailed guide that can be applied to any business at the beginner level of the topic in general or the case company in specific. To complement to guide better, competitor analysis of hotels in the same industry and country was done.

7.1 Key Outcomes

Human resources traditionally is not the must-have department in any organization, to begin with. Some operate fine without one. When it comes to what HR entails, there are countless of work before anyone would mention employer branding. Left alone the fact that not many businesses can afford to do external employer brand, it is a strategically important job that if an organization have the resources, it should invest doing employer brand. With employer branding, businesses can promote themselves as good employers to reach and attract desired talents. This is a long-term process which results could not be shown in a day or two but in a long run, it helps to reduce costs, improve performance level, and overall improve the business's position within the industry.

The first step of the process is to build a team which needs to involve people from departmental managers, HR and marketing people to senior managers. For employer branding is a strategic plan, the most crucial thing is to convince the board of directors that this

brings benefits to the company's development. The second step has to be able to measure the organization's current attractiveness and reputation perceived by the target group of desired talents. The third step is one of the key jobs that defines the employer branding statement. This statement is called EVP which will be delivered as a promise of the employment experience to prospective employees. After choosing the message, the next step is to promote it through suitable channels that can reach most of the desirable audience with high-quality content. The process is then finished by constant measuring and adjustment to evaluate what has been working good and what has not.

Going through five steps of the employer branding process, it is apparently a long process that needs first of all resources which include personnel, money and time. Second of all, commitment and patience are equally important because the work has to be done consistently in a long time.

As a result of the competitor analysis, it has found out that external employer branding even though has been existing in Vietnam. There are some big companies who are famous and expertise players in the field. However, external employer branding has not become popular because when looking at InterContinental Saigon's competitors, many things could have been done better and there are still things left to do. The most valuable found out is that none of the competitors has an EVP statement in their employer branding practices. The guide strongly suggests that EVP is a key essential component of external employer branding. Even though some business did success employer branding without having one but by identifying an EVP, the message delivered to desired talents is more concise, clearer and it helps the organization stands out.

7.2 Project Evaluation

This project started in January with the very first draft of the plan, it then slowly developed in four months and got finalized in May. Since the beginning, the whole thesis project has been an inspiring topic and the journey was full of new knowledge related to human resources, employer branding, employee value proposition, marketing on social media channels. The project requires a lot of reading and collecting knowledge. Putting things together has never been easy but thanks to the support of thesis advisors as well as quick communication with the case company, the author has managed to complete the thesis in a short amount of time.

From the step of planning what content to include in the thesis to writing the guide, they all require a lot of time spent on reading, sorting out what is suitable for the scope of the thesis and what is interesting enough to include in. The scope of the thesis is clear however it is still wide and contain a good amount of knowledge. Everything has to be selective because the employer branding topic itself is already so wide and has many aspects to it. The knowledge presented to the readers has to be informative, it cannot go in too specific but to be kept at a general level.

What more challenging than all was to find a comprehensive structure for the thesis. There are many different pieces of knowledge and information presented in this thesis, some could together form a cohesive umbrella but some would stand on their own but still relevant to the topic. The structure of the thesis has been changed many times before its final version. It is hard work but day by day, the more suitable and more logical structure is formed and the final result is rewarding.

In regards to the guide, the same task is to be selective is not easy. The case company is a beginner to the topic which the guide has to present in an easy and simple way to understand quickly. The content inside the guide also has to be concise and to the point, because this is a big company, not many people will have time to sit down in an hour just to read the guide. It has to be presented in a way that even when the responsible person only has fifteen minutes to read, the guide is well-structured and informative in a comprehensive manner. Due to the fact that the case company has not had any specific plan on implementing external employer branding in their business operation any time soon, the guide could hardly go deep in company-specific recommendation because many elements of the process need to get involved deeper in getting to know the business goals, which is beyond the scope of the thesis project. However, it tries to have as many suggestions as it can where applicable.

On the whole, the thesis has done a good job in the literature review of employer branding, it is able to discuss all the aspects circulating employer branding external employer branding marketing. The competitor analysis concludes key outcomes and valuable suggestions for the case company. And lastly, the final guide was well-received by the case company containing all you need to know about external employer branding.

7.3 Recommendations

The guide presents five practical steps into external employer branding. However, the guide remains as an overall picture of the process, to actually implementing and success,

there is much more to be done. One of the thing that need to act on as soon as the employer branding plan's confirmation is to do the research, step 2 of the process. Aside from digging into past reports, it is always better to conduct a survey that can to help acquire the perception of people to answer all the questions that InterContinental Saigon has. The survey surely will take time to be done so during the whole survey, careful monitoring and detail analytics are necessary.

Furthermore, the company can look into the reason why no hotel has an EVP statement or is it just that people are not aware of the concept. On the other hand, the guide can be valid for now but as the digital world is evolving fast, it is better to check if the guide could still be applicable by then.

7.4 Reflection on Learning

During four months of working, the whole thesis project has enabled the author to a lot of knowledge about employer branding in various different views. Not only does the author has widened her scope of knowledge but she has shown improvement in research skills. As the amount of information to process is a lot, the author has also sharpened the ability to evaluate valuable material. Additionally, many other soft skills have also been enhanced which are self-discipline and time management. The thesis was able to finish in a short time thanks to the inspiration and determination on working on a meaningful project as this is.

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Attachment

Attachment 1. External Employer Branding Guide



INTERCONTINENTAL.
SAIGON

EMPLOYER BRANDING GUIDEBOOK

*5 Steps to Attract Talent through Building External Employer
Brand*

by Hien Anh Nguyen

TABLE OF CONTENT

01 Introduction

03 The External Employer Branding Process

04 Step 1. Form a Team

07 Step 2. Research

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20 Step 1. Promote

29 Step 1. Measure and Adjust



INTRODUCTION

As the war for top talent is fierce, organization should be able to stand out as an employer of choice which is capable of providing a great place to work. The author believes that one of the great way to do it is to promote employer branding and the best channel to convey messages to prospects is social medial platforms.

This guideline provides the 5-step process to external employer branding for InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences. There are some recommendation made specifically for the said hotel however, the guide is still mostly applicable to organizations which have little to no practices on the topic. In order to better apply this guide, the organization needs to have a certain level of working culture established internally.

WHAT IS EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer branding is a targeted long-term strategy in the pursuit of raising awareness and managing perceptions of potential, existing employees and other related stakeholders.

There are two sides to an employer branding. **Internal employer branding** is the process of building a distinctively great place to work. **External employer branding** advertises that working culture and benefits to desirable potential employees.

4 REASON TO INVEST IN EMPLOYER BRANDING

POSITIVE REPUTATION

By promoting the organization as a good place to work, the organization can receive a bigger number of applications with better quality.

COST SAVING

By having desirable new hires that suits company's working culture and principles, staff turnover level is low, the organization takes advantage of cost saving compared to its competitors. The stronger the employer brand, the higher the level of retention.

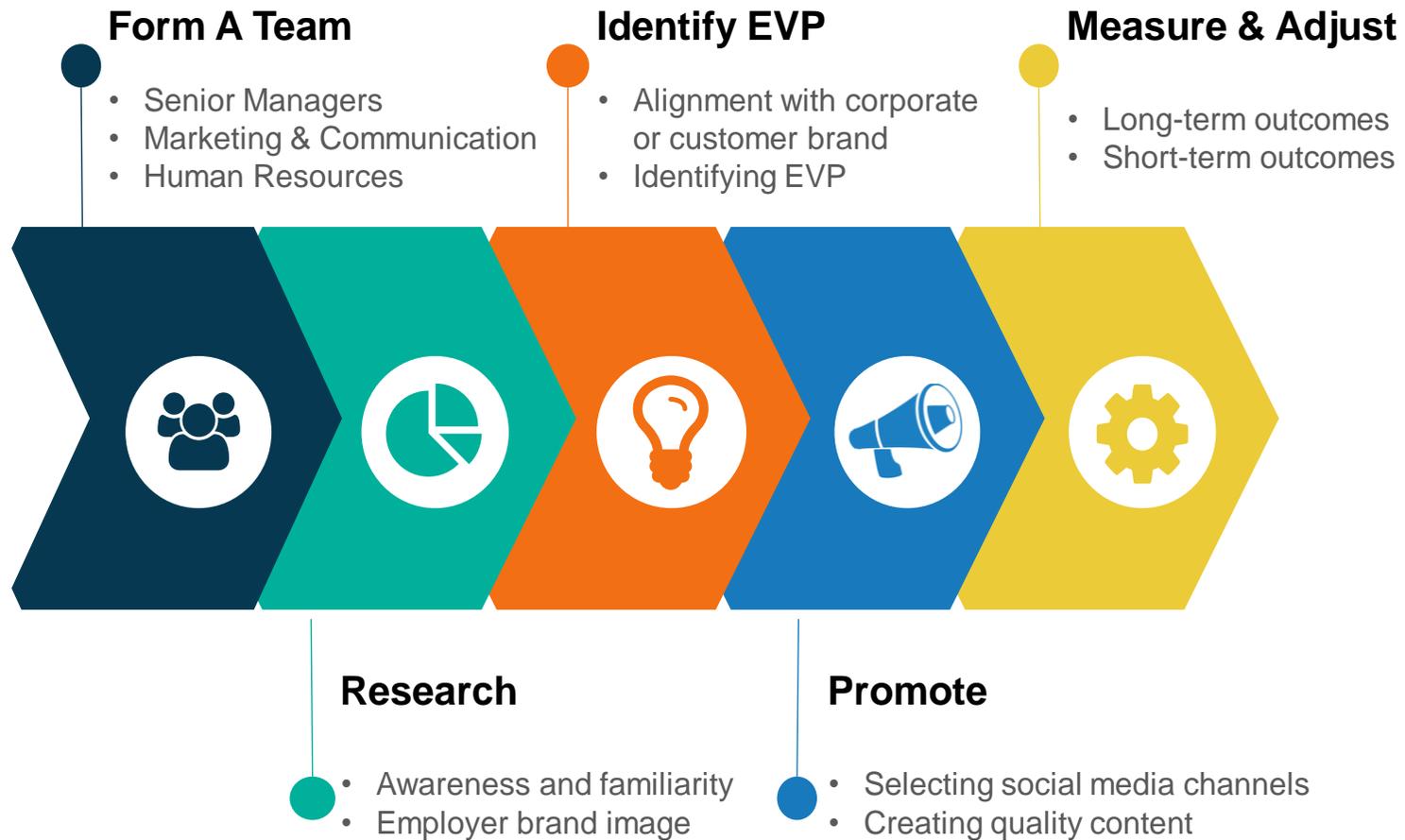
ENGAGEMENT DRIVING

As employees find the meaning and pride in their job, they are more likely to engage to the organization. The more commit they are to the job and the organization, the higher the productivity level.

ATTRACTING TALENT

Employer branding help to attract highly talented and qualified individuals to work in the organization. As the organization is filled with outstanding and driven individuals, it enjoys another competitive advantage.

5-STEP EXTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING PROCESS



01

FORM
A TEAM

WHO TO INVOLVE?

01	02	03	04
<p>Senior Managers <i>General Manager, Hotel Manager</i></p> <p>When senior managers involve in the employer branding process, there is a high level of certainty to the process development and implementation.</p> <p>It implies that the senior managers acknowledge the contribution of employer branding to talent retention and business's growth achievement</p>	<p>Marketing & Communication</p> <p>They possess great knowledge and skills concerning marketing on social media channels as well as measuring the performance and engagement level on these channels. They play an important role during the Promote step.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p> <p>HR people own the best knowledge in recruitment, talent management so it is obvious to have them onboard. Furthermore, they know what employees look for at an employers. HR is necessary for identifying EVP and creating marketing content.</p>	<p>Line Managers <i>Departmental managers and directors</i></p> <p>Departmental managers help the team to involve their line employees in the employer branding process when necessary. Employees also need to know what benefits employer branding brings to them as they represent as brand advocates in many employer branding marketing content. Line managers is the bridge of the communication between the employer branding team and employees.</p>

HOW TO CONVINCING THEM TO GET ON BOARD



Senior Manager

Tell them the employer branding's benefits that contribute to the company success and competitive advantage:

- Higher quality employees
→ lower employee retention
→ lost reduction
- Improve the organization's reputation → employer of choice



It is normal to encounter resistance and doubt. As long as the benefits of employer branding are presented to each subject according to their interest.



Marketing and Communication

Present employer branding as an advantage to corporate and customer brand:

- Attract and engage new and current customers
- Follow and align with the current corporate brand identity → strengthen the brand identity
- Benefits that EVP bring: explains EVP in the context of the corporate brand. An EVP is the promise to deliver and great experience to potential and current employees. It reflects brand values, and is aligned with customer experience.



Human Resources

- Explain that HR benefits the most from employer branding.
- Get HR people familiar with marketing and brand management.
- Make sure to address all concerns
- Spend as much time as needed for HR to familiar with employer branding because they are the main force in this process.

02

RESEARCH

LISTEN TO THE NUMBER

Before any direct employer branding practices should be executed, it is importance to understand deeply and measure exactly the current level of employer's reputation, perception that people have towards the organization as an employer. This can be done by collecting external data constantly over time from unchanged target groups.

Measure awareness and familiarity

This measures how many people belonged to the targeted candidates have heard of the brand and aware of what service/ product it offers. Of those who have some awareness about the organization, how many have considered working for the organization. And out of those who have put the organization into consideration, how many belong to the target group.

Measure employer branding image

This is the measurement of employer branding image's strength. Base on the results of awareness and familiarity in target groups, this further analyses the reasons why people decide to consider working for the organization.

Suggested Approach for Data Collection

Find already existed surveys and report in recent years

- Anphabe Vietnam reports and surveys
- Employee's exit interview
- Student's survey
- Employer branding consultancy or solutions firms' reports

Conduct own survey

- The organization can design specific questions that they are seeking answers for.
- While survey takes time to collect data, it is possible to ask new hire the set same of question to draw the picture of brand awareness, familiarity and image quicker.



The result can vary due to some conditions so take them into consideration during data analytic process

- Way of advertising
- Where the survey is posted
- Geographical differences between the employer and the respondents.

Do consult research specializing firm for this process.

Suggestion for employer brand image measurement process

Generally considered important attributes of employers are what people associate as attractive with.

Universum’s standard attribute framework to measure employer brand image.

Corporate image attributes	People and culture	Job characteristics	Remuneration and advancement opportunities
Attractive/ exciting products and services	A creative and dynamic work environment	Challenging work	Clear path for advancement
Corporate social responsibility	A friendly work environment	Customer focus	Competitive base salary
Corporate transparency	Commitment to diversity and inclusion	Flexible working conditions	Competitive benefits
Ethical standards	Enabling me to integrate personal interests in my schedule	High level of responsibility	Good reference for future career
Fast-growing	Interaction with international clients and colleagues	High performance focus	High future earnings
Innovation	Leaders who will support my development	Opportunities for internal travel/relocation	Leadership opportunities
Inspiring leadership	Recognizing performance	Professional training and development	Overtime pay/compensation
Inspiring purpose	Recruiting only the best talent	Secure employment	Performance-related bonus
Market success	Respect for its people	Team-oriented work	Rapid promotion
	Support for gender equality		

Questions to ask to know more about your brand's reputation

- ✓ How well-known you are as an employer?
- ✓ Who are your competitors that is also fighting for your desired talent?
- ✓ What is the degree to which candidates prefer you than your immediate rivals as a potential employer?
- ✓ How appealing your employment attributes are to candidates' consideration and preference, compared to that of your competitor?
- ✓ What attributes candidates associated with you the most as an employer?
- ✓ What is the most appealing factor that shapes your employer brand image (i.e. current employer brand marketing, products and services' image, perceptions of your industry sector)?

03

**IDENTIFY
EVP**

CHOOSE TO ALIGN WITH CORPORATE OR CUSTOMER BRAND

When an organization has a corporate brand with many customer brands, it is important that employer branding choose to align with one of them.

Choose what is more relevant to the organization's business goals and strategy

Depending on the business strategy that the decision differs, this is where the senior management is needed to make the decision.

When there is a big distinction between different customer brands, it is very likely that there is an employer brand for each customer brand.

The decision could also rely on what brand prospective employees are more likely to be familiar with.



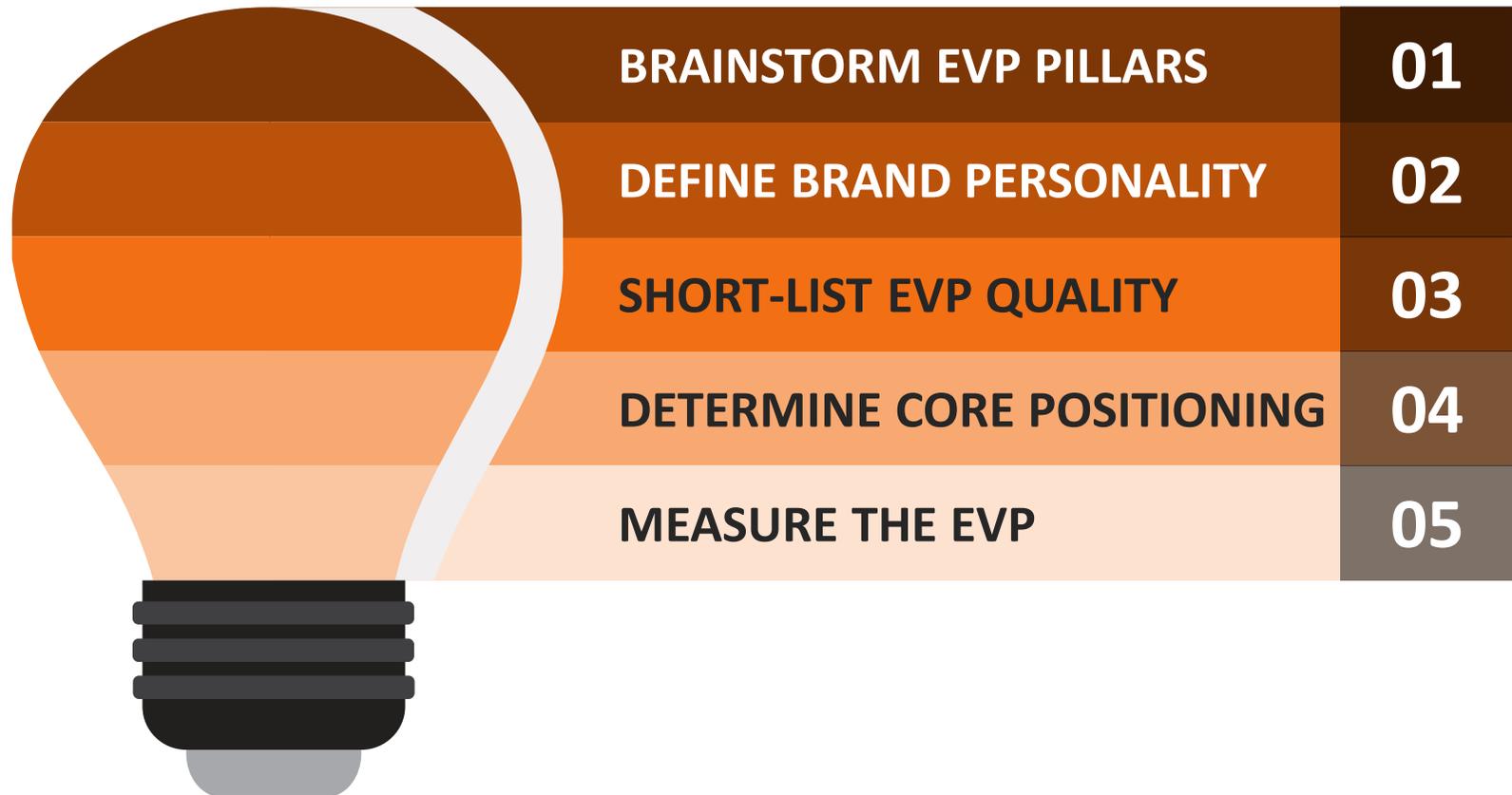
Recommendation for InterContinental Saigon

From the competitor analysis's results, 100% of the competitors and fellow hotels stay align with the customer brand.

Customers as well as prospective and current employees associate with the hotel's identity more than which hotel group it belongs to due to the strong brand identity of 6-star hotels.

By **staying align with the customer brand**, not only the business can strength and emphasize the brand image, but later on in step 4. Promote of the process, the joined resources of marketing and human resources can also communicate to their targeted audience through the same channel. The brand is able to build a consistent concept weather to communicate with customer or potential employees.

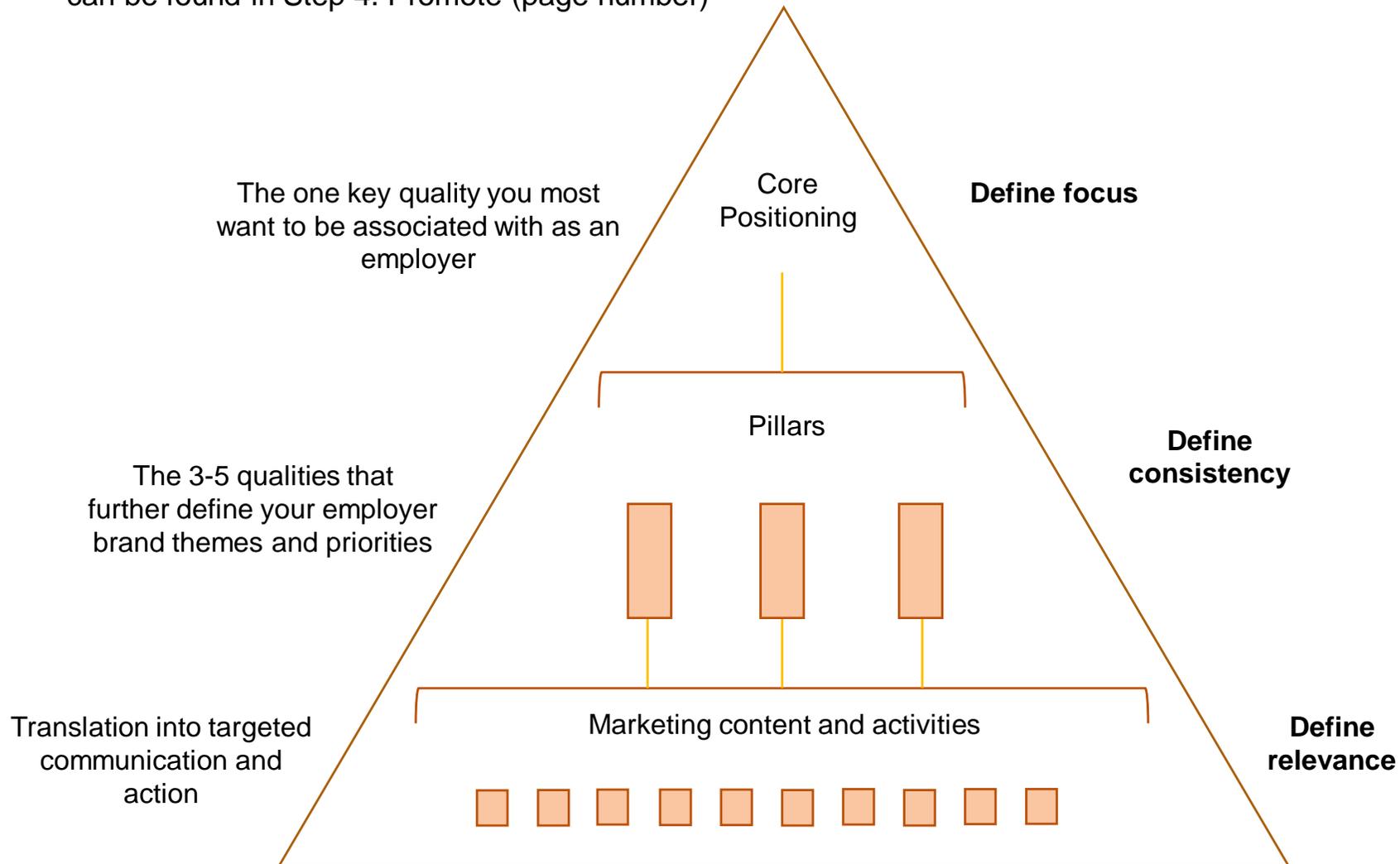
5 STEPS TO IDENTIFY YOUR EVP



Your EVP's structure

An EVP is a clear and precise employment statement that deliver the employment deal or emphasize a factor of that deal.

The figure below shows the whole picture of elements that make up the EVP statement. This step will explain the choice of core positioning and pillars. On the other hand, marketing content and activities can be found in Step 4. Promote (page number)



Step 1: Brainstorm the EVP pillars

The EVP pillars represents main and good qualities that the organization stand out from competitors as an attractive employer.



Find answers to these questions:

- What currently existing benefits does InterContinental Saigon offer that other hotels do not?
- What is it that unique about InterContinental Saigon as an employer?
- What is InterContinental Saigon's working culture?
- What values the hotel promise to employees and those values really exist in every day working life?



For a start, consult the positioning wheel in page to identify as many qualities as possible. However, the right qualities can always be found beyond this wheel



PERFORMANCE

Challenging work
Customer focus
Recruiting only the best talent
Recognizing performance

CAREER

International opportunities
Clear path for advancement
Leadership opportunities
Rapid promotion

LEARNING

Professional training & development
Leaders who support development
Variety of assignments
Future education sponsorship

REWARD

High future earnings
Competitive base salary
Competitive benefits
Performance bonus



INNOVATION

Creative/ dynamic environment
Fast growing business
Innovation

STATUS

Prestige
Good future career reference
Market success
Secure employment
Attractive products & services

PURPOSE

Corporate responsibility
Inspiring management
Ethical standards
Environmental sustainability

TEAMWORK

International interaction
Team-oriented work
Respect for people
Friendly working environment
Gender equality

EMPOWERMENT

High level of responsibility
Flexible working conditions
Control over working hours

Step 2: Define a brand personality

After choosing the message to communicate with the prospects, EVP pillars, the next is to choose a suitable tone of voice to communicate those messages so that the brand own a sense of personality.

The chosen personality should be the one that is close to that of the customer brand so that there is consistent in the overall brand personality.



Step 3: Short-list EVP qualities

Narrow down the EVP qualities listed in step 1 by the following criteria:



Clearly describe the give and get of the employment deal



Describe the organization's strengths which appear as attractive to prospects



Tell the sensible ambition that potential employees can hold when working there



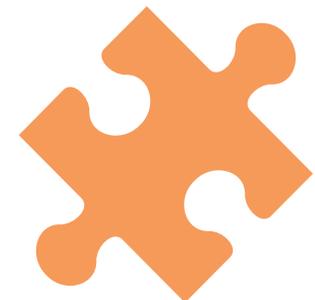
Show differentiation to competitors by offering a unique employee experience

Step 4: Determine Core Positioning

This is the step to choose one single characteristic that the organization wants to be associated with the most as an employer.

If it is too hard to decide one core positioning, try several with the pillars set to see what works the most.

There are cases where an organization has an EVP but doesn't have a core positioning.



Step 5: Measure the EVP

There is always development needed during the first stage of introducing the EVP. Changes will be made before coming to the final EVP that speaks to the organization.

To refine the EVP better through time, take these questions during the evaluation:

- To what level does each EVP pillar and/or core positioning appear to be attractive to people?
- How each target group perceive each EVP pillar as relevant or important
- How reliable these EVP pillars in describing the current employment experience that the organization offers?
- What, if anything needs to add to further describe the organization precisely?
- What, if anything is missing?



Checklist to facilitate the EVP development

- ✓ Ask current employees or alumni the reasons they like working for InterContinental Saigon.
- ✓ Ask the same questions to new hires and follow up if their opinion has changed through time.
- ✓ Express that honest answers are very much appreciate because that is the way to learn more insight about the emotion people connect your organization to.
- ✓ The EVP has to be authentic and true reflection of the employment experience promise.
- ✓ Get many viewpoints and feedback from different and trustful people from inside (the EB team members, employees, stakeholders, etc.) or even outside of the organization.

04

PROMOTE

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Social media is one of many channels to tackle on to approach the target potential employee groups. It is cost effective, user-friendly and it is widely used by many of the Vietnamese prospective employees.

Based on the competitor analysis THAT IS ATTACHED OR APPENDIX, Facebook and LinkedIn are found to be the two most popular channels to promote employer branding.



64 million Vietnamese active users on Facebook
(66% of the Vietnamese population)



Fast growing
Used by professional for recruiting purposes and job seekers.

Facebook

Depending on the size of EB team and available resources, there are two ways to start a Facebook page:

- Use the already existing one for customer marketing
 - Leverage on the current reach and engagement level
 - Enjoy the already set content approach, audiences
- Create a total new page as long as there are resources and commitment
 - Have authority over content creating, sharing and communicating



It is most ideal to have a FB page dedicate its content wholly to Employer Branding. It is more focused, and it is better not to bother the busy customers with content that's very likely beyond their interest.

Promote the FB page internally

Ask employees to follow and share the FB page, and FB posts.

Use Facebook Ads



LinkedIn

Using LinkedIn for employer branding will help greatly for recruitment campaign later on. Start LinkedIn by:

- Creating a Company Page
 - Connect to professionals
- Career Page can be created through the Company Page
 - Connect to job seekers, potential employees
- Utilize analytic and activity tools for daily reports of page performance such as followers, visitors, likes, etc.

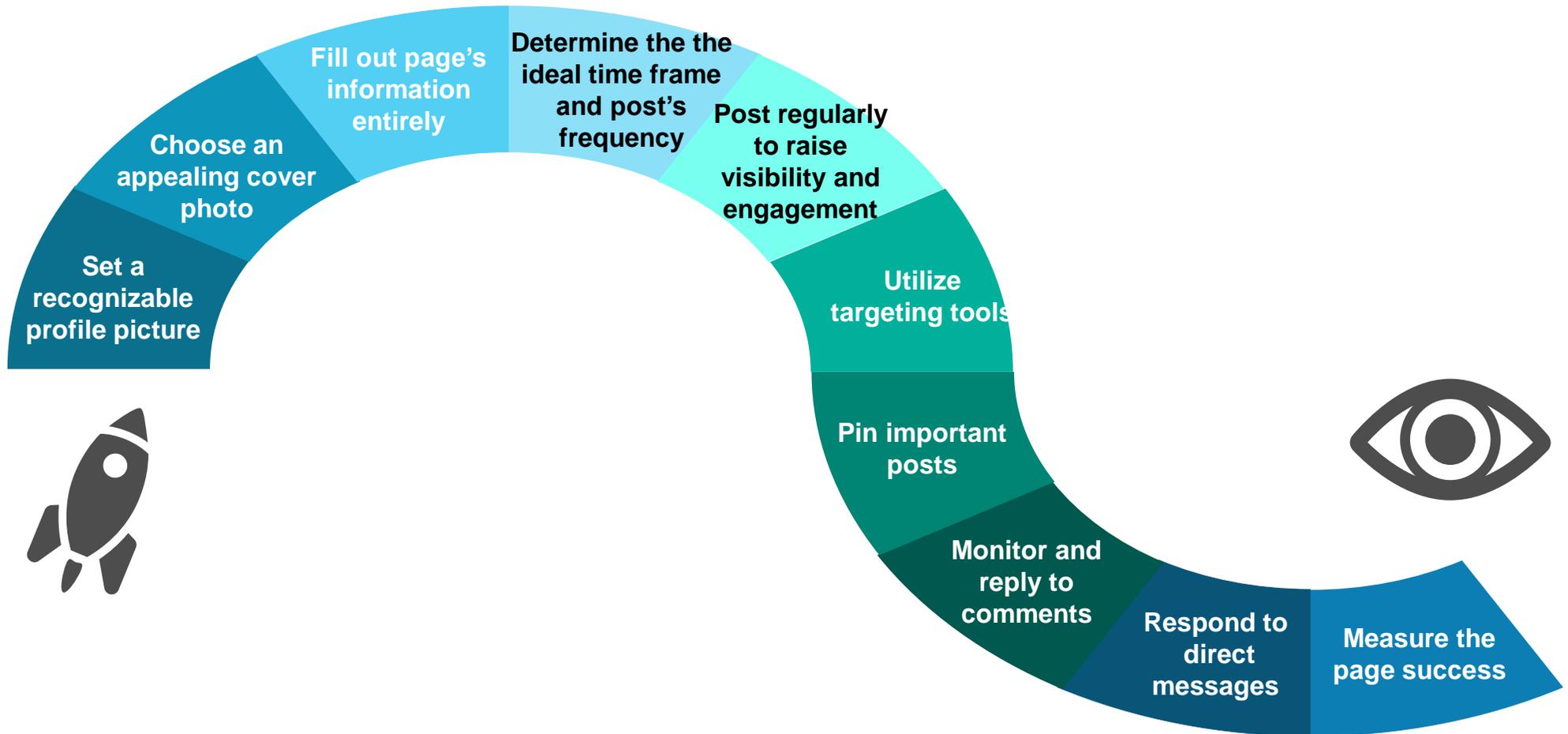


Connect to people to widen the network

Encourage employees to use LinkedIn

Have a marketing plan

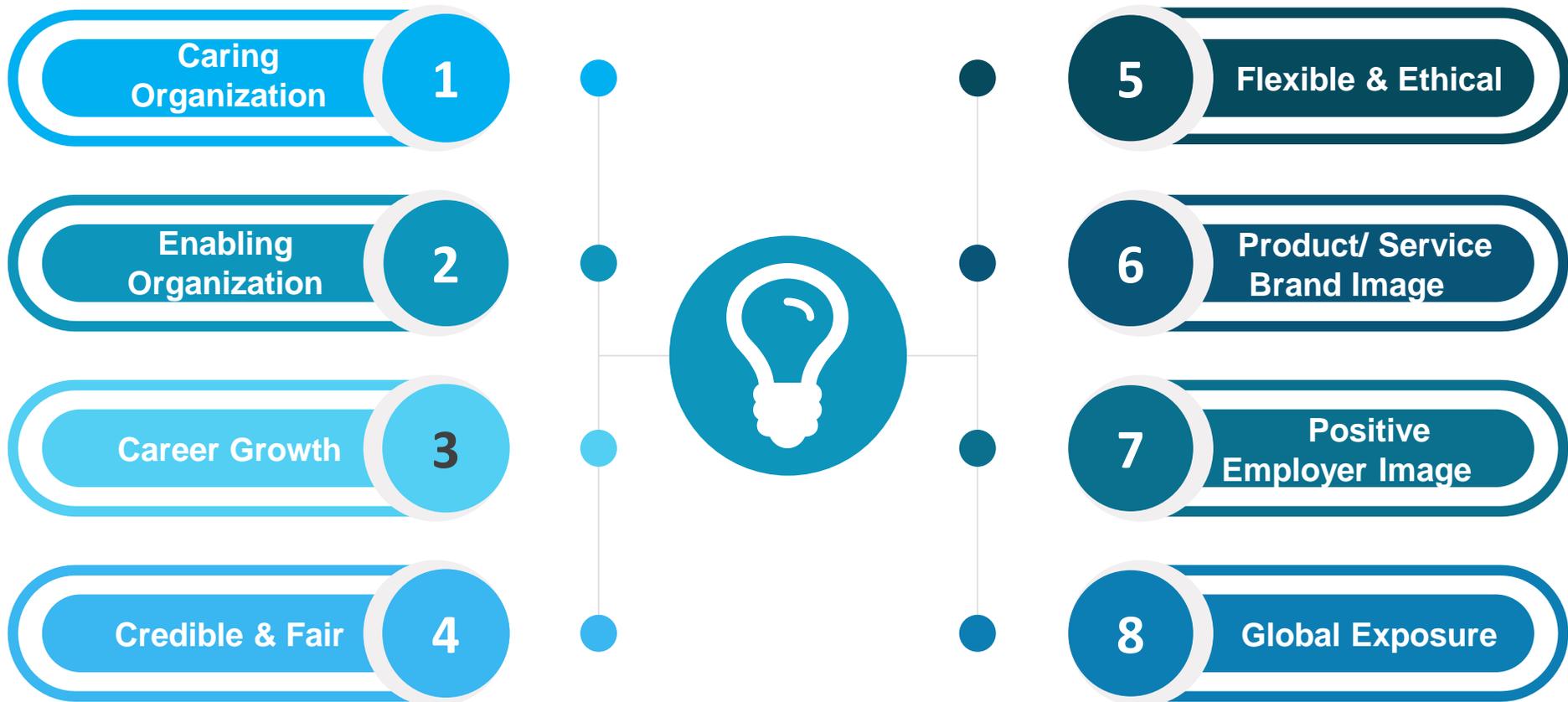
Create a perfect Facebook and LinkedIn page



CREATING QUALITY CONTENT

8 Ideas to promote an attractive employers

What information prospects look for in a good employer



A few trendings topics that can easily attracts talent are work-life balance, equal opportunity and diversity

Content is King

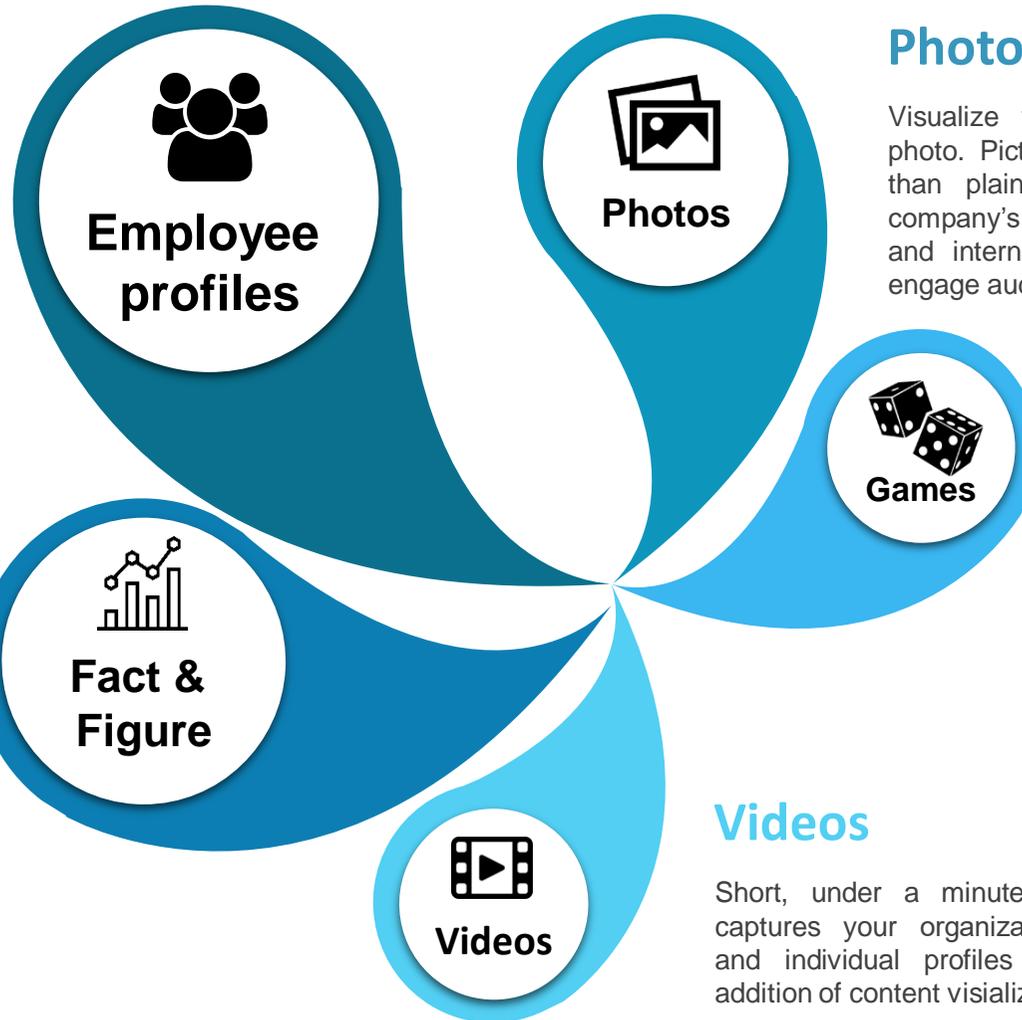
Employee Profiles

Share your organization's stories and insight. It could be:

- an individual's story of the job, what a day in InterContinental looks like.
- Company's culture: attitudes, values, behaviors at work.
- A story of someone's passion and how that passion connect him with his work
- Story of collaborative efforts of a team

Fact & Figure

Be open and bold with your message by giving the audience data and information that can hardly be found anywhere else. It helps to draw attention. The data should relate to the employee experience in the organization. Using infographics is a great way to present this kind of data.



Photos

Visualize your content with lots of photo. Picture proof is always better than plain text. Publish photos of company's outing, employees' events, and internal activities to attract and engage audience

Games

Other than making content, games such as challenges, competitions, giveaway, quizzes could be a fun way to engage your talent.

Videos

Short, under a minute videos that captures your organization's culture and individual profiles are a great addition of content visualization

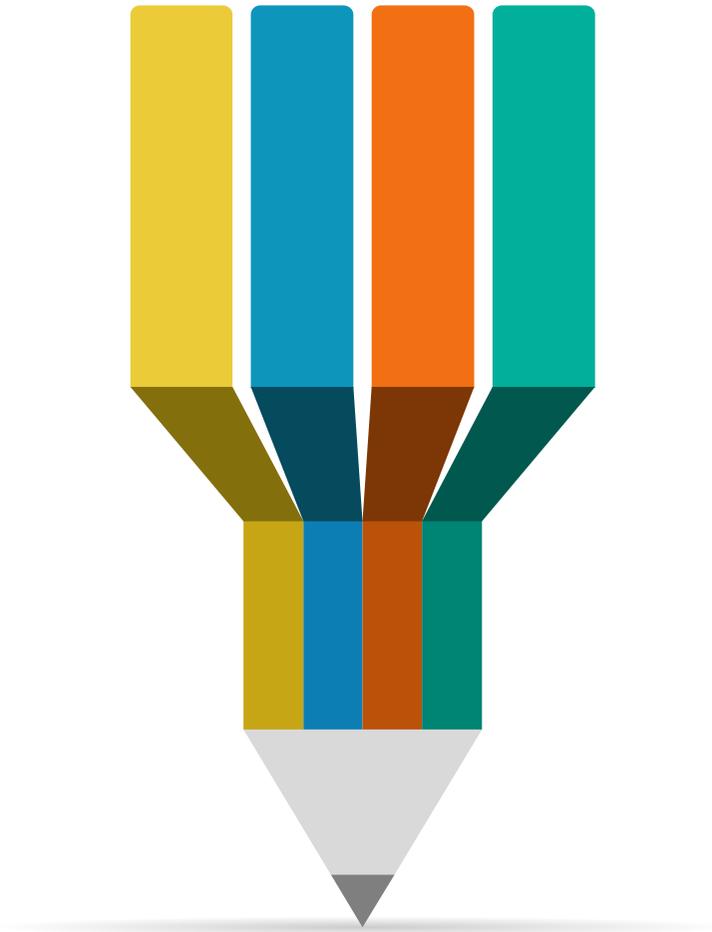
4 Ways to communicate with your prospects

Be Honest

Employer Branding emphasizes authenticity. The job is to draw the real picture of how working at the organization should be like. It is very important to keep the reality meet the expectation.

Be Consistent

Keep the messages consistent throughout every content to gradually build trust, transparency, and responsibility in the relationship between the organization and the audiences.



Be Bold

The more daring and bold the message is, the more impact it makes. EB does not meant to build a serious image of the organization. Take steps further. Create content can go viral.

Keep Things Fun & Simple

Create content that is fun and joyful to create a friendly and open and engaging relationship with the audiences. Therefore, formal language is not preferable. The content can be conversational and entertaining.

Social media schedule template

	Time	Type of Content	Content	Time	Type of Content	Content	Time	Type of Content	Content
WEEK #	MONDAY			TUESDAY			WEDNESDAY		
Facebook	[Orange]								
	[Green]								
	[Red]								
LinkedIn	[Orange]								
	[Green]								
	[Red]								

Number of Reach

Likes

Comments

05

**MEASURE
& ADJUST**

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

01

Engagement Level on Social Media

Reports on growth in reach, audiences, likes, comments, and share.

What content has the most interaction, what has the least.

What is the level of interaction? Are there simply likes or there are also comments?

02

How many more and how talent new applicants

Employer Branding usually comes before a recruitment campaign. Assess on the raise in number of applicants and see if the quality of applicants is improved

03

Which channels work the most

Out of Facebook and LinkedIn, which channels has: The better engagement level Attracting the most talent?

Keep working and focus on the channel that brings positive results

04

Measure the success according to target groups

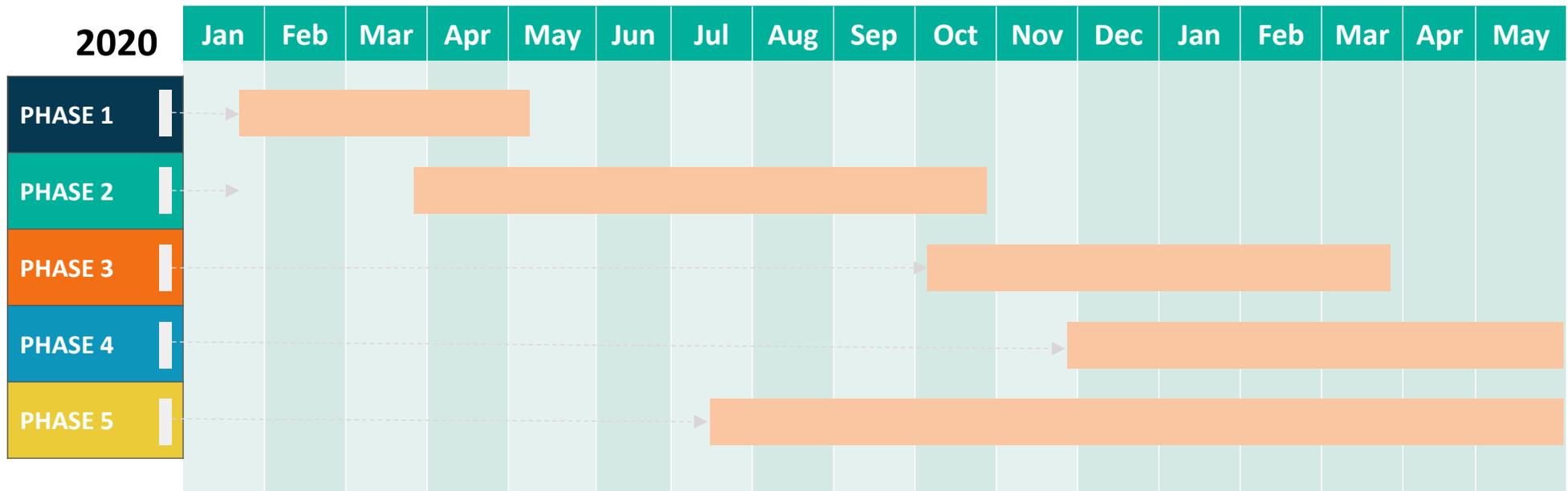
Due to character differences in target groups. It is possible that some content works with one group but does not have a good impact on the others in the same social media channels. Evaluate the success of employer branding according to target groups for precision.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Evaluate on the following external factors that needs to show results:

- ✓ Brand Awareness
- ✓ Brand Attractiveness
- ✓ Employer Brand Image
- ✓ New hires' Quality
- ✓ Employee Turnover
- ✓ Business Performance
(productivity level, sales, customer satisfaction level)

Suggested Project Timeline



**Step 4 and 5 are continuous process*



INTERCONTINENTAL®
SAIGON

Attachment 2. Statistic Report of InterContinental Saigon Hotel & Residences' Competitors

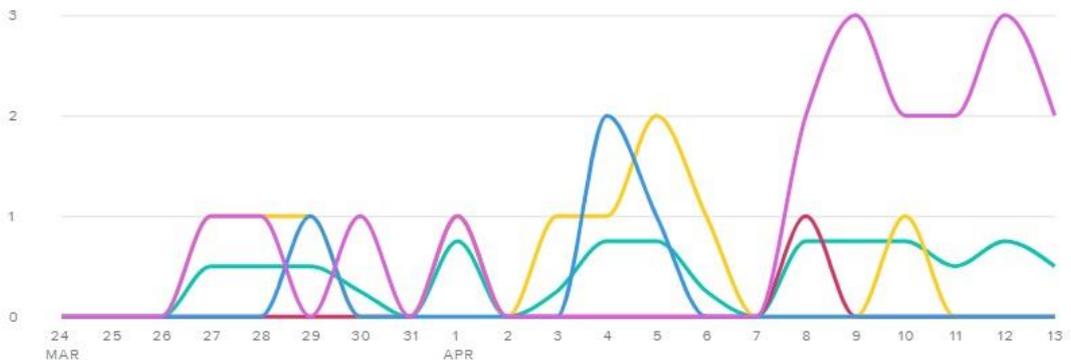
Stats by Page

Facebook Page	Messages Sent	Messages Received	Post Breakdown	Engagements	Engagements per Post
Competitor Average	8.5	0.5	📄 0.3 🖼️ 7.8 🎥 0.5	396.5	44.1
Caravelle Careers	2	0	📄 0 🖼️ 2 🎥 0	35	17.5
Holiday Inn & Suites Saigon Airport	10	0	📄 0 🖼️ 10 🎥 0	435	43.5
Human Resources - Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers	4	0	📄 0 🖼️ 4 🎥 0	127	31.8
Sheraton Hanoi - Exciting Moments	18	2	📄 1 🖼️ 15 🎥 2	989	54.9

Message Volumes

Sent Messages

MESSAGES, BY DAY



Competitor Average

Sheraton Hanoi - Excit...
Business Page

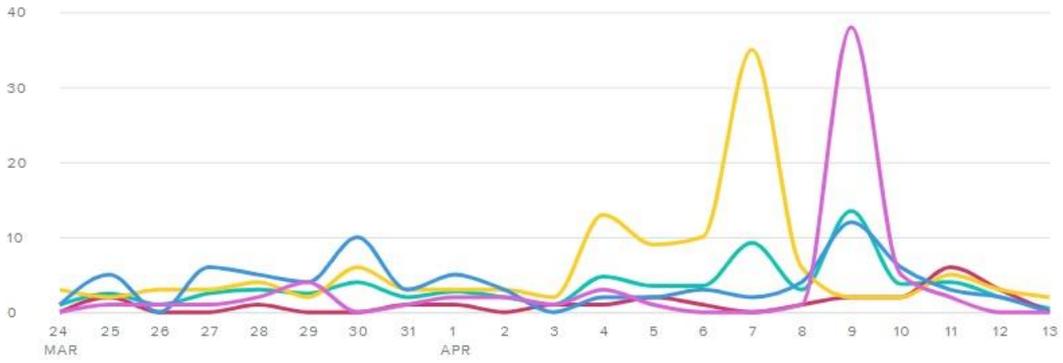
Caravelle Careers
Business Page

Holiday Inn & Suites S...
Business Page

Human Resources - S...
Business Page

Audience Growth

FANS GAINED, BY DAY



Competitor Average

Sheraton Hanoi - Exciting Moments
Business Page

Caravelle Careers
Business Page

Holiday Inn & Suites Saigon Airport
Business Page

Human Resources - Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers
Business Page

Facebook Page	Total Fans	Fans Gained	Fan Growth
Competitor Average	1,430	70	5.11%
Caravelle Careers	467	24	5.42%
Holiday Inn & Suites Saigon Airport	1,250	121	10.72%
Human Resources - Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers	1,282	75	6.21%
Sheraton Hanoi - Exciting Moments	2,722	58	2.18%