

activating a global



employer
brand locally.

how to activate a global employer brand strategy through local efforts.



Like any marketing initiative, nurturing your employer brand requires rigorous attention and extensive labor market insights in order to be successful. This means your company needs to be on point with a compelling value proposition directed at the right audience. And that's not as simple as it seems.

Employers often undertake an employer branding campaign as a grand corporate initiative that dictates the tone and approach for the entire organization. Whether it's to raise awareness about the company's overall employer brand, to recruit for a particular project or to build a sustainable talent pool, a top-down methodology is typically how many companies carry out their efforts.

While some strategic activities need to be executed at the corporate level – clarifying your mission statement and values, establishing your overall employee value proposition, creating a global career portal, for instance – other tactical work should be locally administered to ensure a high degree of relevance for your target markets. Cultural and societal differences, language nuances and even geographical considerations should all be factored into the development of a comprehensive and effective strategy that resonates at all levels within relevant target audiences.



That's the lesson that consumer product giant [Unilever](#) learned when it rebuilt its [EVP](#), according to Anuradha Razdan, the company's former VP of HR, Home Care and head of global talent attraction and employer brand. She said the company followed the playbook of its consumer brands and determined that focusing on the needs of talent in each market was key to the company's recruitment success.

That's why the most successful employer brand strategies always involve activation on both a global and local basis, ensuring consistency of voice and messaging across the entire enterprise, while also differentiating key value propositions for each distinct market. After all, your EVP may resonate differently for job seekers in one market, than for those located somewhere else, and it's critical to understand how these nuances will affect talent attraction for your business.

For example, global consumer products giant Nestlé understands the importance of observing local laws, customs and value propositions to ensure they have a strong talent attraction strategy. James McFadzean, who leads Nestlé's recruitment marketing and employer branding efforts in the Middle East and Africa, explained last year in [an article](#) that it's highly complex to give their 330,000 employees the same experience across the world. To enable local activation of its employer brand, the company restructured internally and now has four global hubs to provide direction on its employer brand promise.



“With an organisation that has so much international mobility, we need to make sure that there is a spirit and a set of values which is completely visible across all our offices, while still being able to deal with the local challenges,” he told the Drum.

Activation is simply the process of bringing your employer brand to life by tangibly demonstrating how your EVP affects your permanent and contingent workforce. There are a series of tasks you should undertake to make this happen – some very strategic and many that are tactical and localized.

But how do you distinguish what is strategic from tactical? How do you ensure tasks that need to be conducted on a global level are undertaken by your corporate team, while those that are more regional in nature are carried out by local resources? And how do you promote collaboration across the organization to optimize employer brand activation to have a quantifiable impact on recruitment and retention?

Like many business initiatives, activating your employer brand should start with establishing your stated goals, creating a plan for achieving these, gaining stakeholder buy-in, monitoring progress and focusing on future enhancements. Central to all of this is data – obtained through measuring internal and external engagement. The insights generated by this will inform your ongoing campaigns. Only through a rigorous and disciplined approach can you determine if your employer brand-enhancing efforts are effective and justifiable.





This is the approach that analytics firm SAS took, according to its employer brand leaders in a recent post. After an exhaustive effort to engage with its stakeholders, the company activated its employer brand in conjunction with refreshing the corporate brand. As part of the activation, the employer branding team leveraged local storytellers to serve as company ambassadors. Employees from Singapore, Peru, Ireland and elsewhere around the world shared their journey at the company and localized the company's EVP for their particular region. More importantly, all of the stories tie into the company's overall EB strategy to attract and retain the best talent in different regions around the world.

Getting these priorities right is critical to successful activation because your long-term strategy depends on it. Ensuring you have alignment, internal awareness and a strong EVP serves as the roadmap you need to activate your brand. If the map points you in the wrong destination, then achieving your talent attraction goals is nearly impossible. The metrics you'll collect later on will confirm this. Before getting started on an activation plan, make sure you have clearly established these first steps through an audit and input from key stakeholders.



With your roadmap in place, there are a few other steps to consider before you can begin the activation process, and many of these will need to be managed locally. One of the most important is centered around establishing goals for your campaigns. In all instances, you want to achieve a measurable impact on the employer brand, whether that's building awareness among specific groups (or the population in general) or to drive up traffic for your career site(s). Remember that your objectives should be clear to your brand-building teams in every market and that key performance indicators are agreed upon from the outset. Your goals will also vary by location and business needs, so make sure to have a contextual mindset when establishing your metrics.





what to measure.

So how do you determine what to measure as part of your activation efforts? There are many ways to gauge the effectiveness of your campaigns, and you should work with local teams to understand the needs of their business. For many organizations, the ultimate goal of a successful employer brand should be to attract the best talent and increase workplace engagement among employees. These metrics can be as simple as the number of applications submitted through your career portal, the number of hires made or the gains in time and cost to hire.

Changing these outputs through employer brand activation, however, can be a long process. The steps you take today to make your company more attractive often won't be felt for some time, so if you want more immediate indicators of effectiveness, consider alternatives. For instance, the candidate experience can have a significant impact on your employer brand, but many companies fail to survey how job seekers feel after applying. Compiling Net Promoter Scores (NPS) could help you better steer your candidate experience and drive referrals.



Similarly, examining the number of visits to your career site can help determine whether a campaign is having the effect you intended, but upon closer inspection, does the number of completed applications also indicate an issue with your submission process? If your application process is too cumbersome, you will likely see this revealed in the number of incomplete submissions. By digging deeper into candidate behavior, you can leverage metrics in unique and important ways.

The importance of social media on your employer brand can't be overstated in today's hyper-connected society. Measuring your activation success using likes, shares and comments is useful, but these shouldn't be the only metrics that matter. Getting attention on social media is great for brand building, but as another goal of your employer brand is to spur actions, you should track indicators such as the number of job applications garnered from Facebook, LinkedIn and other channels. Make sure to create tracking codes that provide this important detail.

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With your team assembled, metrics established and goals in hand, you have the essential elements to start activation. Your campaign can be as expansive or as limited as you see fit, but keep in mind that an employer brand needs constant attention and nurturing, so make sure your work is ongoing. Regularly monitor social media and other channels, leveraging the data you collect to make improvements. Surveying internal and external customers should become part of the rigor. It's important to capture impartial opinions to gain helpful insights.

When it comes to activating your employer brand, create a compelling story about your organization, its culture and people and the enticing roles you offer. In fact, storytelling (in long and short forms) helps you to create an emotional connection with talent and spurs them to find out more about your organization. To find out how storytelling is helping some of the most successful brands around the world, download our [2019 Standing Out report](#). To create a sound strategy for story-telling, use a content map to ensure job seekers and others have access to information about your company. You can also develop a library to continually serve content to your audience, which will help with engagement and interest in your organization. Be sensitive, however, to the language needs of different constituents.





After you've created your stories and messaging, identify the channels that your audience frequent most often – social media, YouTube, job boards, industry association websites, educational institutions, your career portal, etc. You will need to customize your messaging for each channel. Tone of voice and content for Facebook will be different from LinkedIn. Video content on YouTube typically requires more budgeting and production time than a blog, for example. However you plan to share and publish, be aware of the investments needed to be effective.





Paint and coating giant **Akzo Nobel** literally made its activation efforts colorful when it launched its “Let’s Colour” global campaign, which involved 12,000 volunteers contributing to 2,300 projects. One project resulted in repainting the entire town of Kuşadası in Turkey in a range of vivid hues. The company also created the “Paint the Future” competition, which encourages innovators to create new solutions to environmental and other challenges.

“Paint gives us a wonderful opportunity to project ourselves and support communities in an artistic and life-affirming way,” Marcin Skarbon, global head of talent and development at the paints and coatings group, AkzoNobel, told Randstad in our 2019 Standing Out report.

A highly powerful resource for activating your brand are your employees. **As brand ambassadors**, employees are effective at telling their personal story within your organization. Avoid dictating what they should and should not say about – you won’t be able to anyway, given today’s highly transparent workplace and an abundance of employee-review sites – but offer them resources to share and promote within their network. You can energize your workforce by involving them in the activation efforts. And, as always, make sure the ambassadors you nurture are promoting specifically to the region or business they are involved in to ensure authenticity.





Other constituents – business partners, former employees, suppliers, consultants and media – can also promote your employer brand. All of these resources can amplify the messaging about your company and workplace. You'll need to approach them with a plan to leverage their network in a way that is mutually beneficial.

A final consideration around activation is the selection of **enabling technologies**. There are many tools in today's rich technological environment. **PostBeyond**, **Sprout Social**, **Smarp** and others will help you better reach and manage your audience. The size of your budget for technology investments will also help determine which platform is right for you in the regions you are working in.

As the skills gap widens around the world, you can no longer tend to your employer brand in an ad hoc fashion. More than ever, you must adopt greater rigor and develop an ongoing plan. Furthermore, you must always be mindful of the differing needs of various constituents and build a strategy that accounts for their unique differences. Only when you account for regional and local needs will your brand have its greatest appeal and help you attract the best talent to your organization.



are you interested in your organizations' employer brand or your sector's employer branding?

Randstad has done extensive research over the past 20 years on employer branding in the annual Randstad Employer Branding Reports, both locally and globally. For further information and local contact details, please visit [our website](#).



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