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Employer branding budgets 'wasted' on recruitment: experts

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Companies' efforts to influence their employer branding are becoming increasingly "futile" as social media platforms make brands more transparent, according to internal recruitment expert Trevor Vas.

Employer branding is now a culmination of the recruitment and employee experience; spending big money to communicate that experience through traditional media has a negligible impact, says Vas, the CEO of internal staffing advisory HCMS.

Employer review sites and social media platforms are the future of a company's employer brand, he adds.

"When your employer branding is consistent with your value proposition, then it's a case of transmitting that message through both the recruitment and employment experience," he says.

"But do companies need to formally communicate it with people, given that social media conveys it anyway?"

"If I was given a budget of say, \$1 million, and told, 'I want you to improve our employer branding', I'd be focusing on stuff I could control or in my circle of influence. I'm not sure how much of a company's work culture is in a talent manager's circle of influence."

"Can you really impact your value proposition? I'm not certain; it's quite deep-seated and takes a long time. Are you better to understand the market, and where you stand in relation to the market, and pick the most important thing you want to change from a long-term cultural perspective, which impacts your value proposition?"

Mike Beeley, CEO of ReAgent and employer branding specialist, argues however that social media's worth is overblown, and employer branding is a cumulative effect of all media channels coming together.

"Anything that happens on social media tends to have a 'to the power of three' effect attached to it. Some people think social media is *the* world. However, it's one of the most isolated groups of media users we know," he says.

"We're going through this delusional, amorous love-affair with social media, because we think it's more important than it is. Sure, it's important, but it's not as important as some of the more traditional media channels that people take more seriously."

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"For example, if you read something in a blog about an employer, would you take it as seriously as if you read it on page two of the Fin Review?"

"No media channel replaces another. They're cumulative. TV didn't kill radio, because you can't watch TV in your car. It makes our job harder because we have to decipher where our audience is going to be."

Good employer branding "automates" recruitment

Employer branding, when used effectively, increases retention of existing employees and "automates" the hiring process by ensuring ongoing attraction of the right candidates, Beeley says.

"Using recruitment consultants is a short-term activity that is brought about by a lack of planning or expertise. Using job boards is opportunistic because it's easy and cheap at the moment. Underneath all that, as people jump from one shiny thing to another, is the tectonic plates of employer branding which is happening all the time.

"It's not just about attracting people to your business, it's more about making the people who do work for you feel good about it.

"There is no dollar value put on retention. A brand isn't just a selling tool, it's also there to make stakeholders feel better and more comfortable about an organisation.

"Employer branding shouldn't be a recruitment tool, it should be a 100% retention tool. Once it's established, you can use your employee referral program to do your advertising for you.

"If you don't know what your brand is, you face a lottery of hiring off resumes, which is a mug's game. Any decent recruiter will tell you that you don't hire from a resume."