

What do you stand for?

I have a friend who will only drive a certain brand and type of car. He drives this car and he believes that it is superior in certain areas, and sets him apart from others. He believes the car says something about him. He can personally share the same brand attributes of the car. He is also happy to argue that his favourite car brand is better than others. I myself, enjoy using a particular brand of electronic goods, wear particular brands of clothes, drink a particular brands drinks, etc. I'm sure you do too. I'm sure you've been in conversation standing up for a product, defending it against another product that you believe is not as good.

Marketing theory would tell us that as consumers, we become loyal to brands, committed in fact to buying them again and again regardless if there are better options available. To achieve this level of commitment to a brand is every marketer's dream, something they spend a lot of time working on. So much so, that a brand is like a relationship.

This concept is no longer only focused on products or services we buy, but also an important aspect of managing the people within our businesses. We want commitment from our staff don't we? We want them to wear the company shirt with pride yeah? We want our staff to be committed to the business, put in the effort required, treat the business as their own, and want to be working within the business? Of course we do.

As we all know, the employment market is in a state where there are skills shortages and with very few people with good quality skills and experience available to take roles. As a result, it has become more and more important that when trying to attract or retain staff, that your company brand is viewed as valuable and a great place to work and that we can get loyal commitment from staff.

For example, within our recruitment business it is possible to advertise two identical roles, in similar locations, working on properties of similar size, with similar enterprises, remuneration and benefits. The question that potential future employees want to know is **What sets you apart from the employer next door? Why will I want to work with your business? Why should I be committed to having a relationship with your business?** The answer to these questions is your employer brand (reputation). If you do not know the answers, that's OK, but let's be committed to identifying them, and working to keep your employer brand strong. To have a healthy relationship, you should know first who you are and what you stand for.

If you cannot identify an employer brand that sets you apart for your neighbour, consider if any of the following best represents you: family focused, production focused, fun work place, innovative, etc.

Unfortunately, that's the easy bit. A company's employer brand is reflected in the actions and behaviours of the leaders and is affected by company policies, procedures, and practices. You can't say "we are family focused", then not give employees time off to watch their children play sport. You can't say "We have an inclusive work place" while staff are too scared to share their opinion on any work related issues. You now must make sure you back up the claim through actions.

Getting your employer brand right, both on paper and in practice is challenging, but the rewards should be seen in committed staff who are passionate about the business and are not keeping eyes focused on the Positions Vacant section of the paper.

Still not sure of what you stand for? Ask your employees!

MS&A is excited to offer a new comprehensive service called **Your External HR Manager**. Working closely with the owner/manager, MS&A put together an annual program that assists with recruitment, performance appraisals and most importantly assisting with the employer branding process. The over all aim is to promote your business's reputation, improve staff retention and improve overall productivity. To find out more about this new service, contact Ben Reeve on 03 5341 6100 or hrmanager@msaemployment.com.au

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