

9 Employer Branding through Preference Matching

Stephan Erlenkaemper¹, Tom Hinzdorf², Katrin Priemuth³, and Christian von Thaden⁴

¹Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt, Germany

²BBDO Consulting Munich

³Sophus Consulting Ingolstadt

⁴BBDO Consulting Düsseldorf

Summary

Efficient employer branding requires innovative methods of personnel market research to control and target the employer attractiveness of consultancies. Preference matching can be used to determine the specifications potential applicants have for attractive employers and to define the selection and decision-making process of applicants as realistically as possible. The information gained from this matching process is then turned into precise recommendations for the successful employer branding of consultancies and other companies.

9.1 Objectives and Prerequisites for Successful Employer Branding

Employer branding is the marketing-oriented positioning of the employer as a brand, the exact determination of the relevant target group and the correspondingly tuned mix of measures to be taken. Where this target group is potential applicants, employer branding for the company has the task of making the company as attractive as possible to applicants. One result of this process is an increase in attractiveness as an employer.

For this purpose, employer branding has to close an information gap. By developing an image as an employer, top consultancies in particular tend to attract certain applicants without influencing whether these are the applicants the company actually wants to address. The fundamental question concerning employer branding for this industry is therefore: How should staff managers present their consultancy as an employer brand to animate - as far as possible - only those applicants who suit the company and its culture to submit their applications? Efficient employer branding must answer this question, as it is ultimately not just a matter of

increasing the attractiveness of consultancies but to make sure that the right applicants apply to the right consultancies. Only thus can a win-win situation be established.

9.2 Controlling Information through Preference Matching

For the personnel marketing departments of consulting companies, the question at this point is what exactly brochures, flyers, trade fairs, internet, job interviews and advertisements should communicate in order to be as attractive as possible in the race for the best graduates. Such information is generally gained via personnel market research and the use of questionnaires. In these questionnaires graduates are asked directly about their preferences for certain company features such as image, salary, responsibility or location of the company. In addition, graduates are asked about the attractiveness of the company. Beside the fact that experience from market research has shown that direct questioning does not necessarily fulfill the criterion of validity, this method is also not realistic as it does not portray the decision-making process of potential applicants in their selection of attractive consultancies. This usually takes the form of a classic trade-off situation. This means that in their selection of an employer applicants must weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the various consulting firms. For example, someone who wants to earn a high salary will usually also accept a higher workload and be flexible about the field they are assigned to work in.

To gain as realistic a picture as possible of the decision-making behavior of graduates and thereby gain valid recommendations for employer branding, a method from consumer market research has been transferred to human resources: choice modeling (Thaden 2001) (see Figure 9.1.). In this method, the graduate being questioned has to rate fictive but realistic company profiles of consultancies according to their attractiveness. They are therefore forced to choose between the different companies presented.

The attractiveness of the rated companies is the sum of the quality of the following features:

- Team,
- company image,
- starting position in the company,
- management style,
- activity,
- working conditions,
- focus of the company / degree of internationalization,
- location,
- salary and social security contributions.