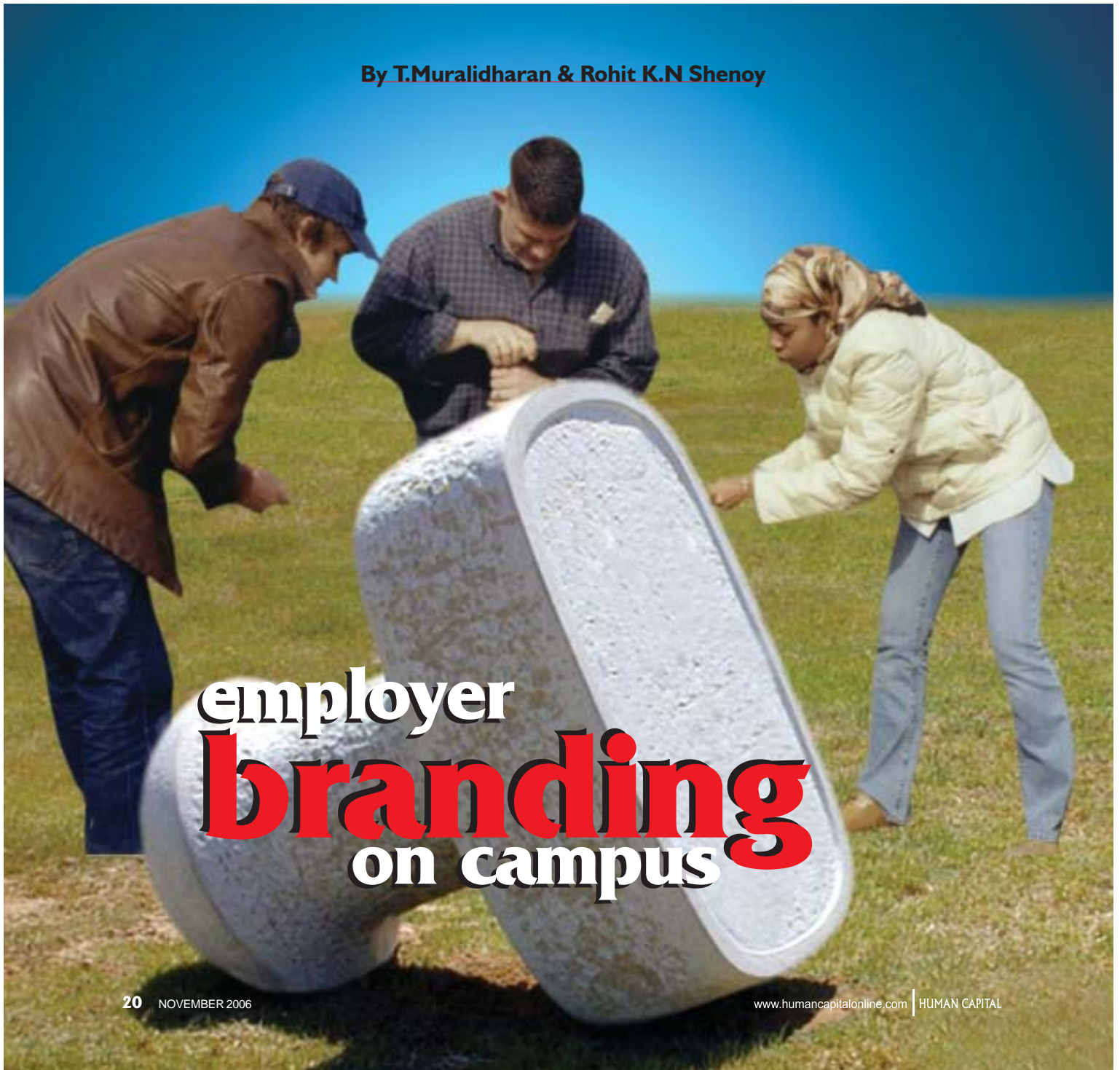


*Campus branding is a relatively new field and requires intricate understanding of the branding principles, the principles of GEP, as well as a great understanding of the campus environment. A comprehensive understanding of these three aspects along with a strategic approach to integrate them to achieve the best results is the key to effective branding on campus.*

By T.Muralidharan & Rohit K.N Shenoy



employer  
**branding**  
on campus

Since the dawn of globalization and the subsequent boom in business, not only have Indian companies expanded their range of operations across countries and cultures but multinationals too have penetrated the Indian market to a great extent. With the increase in operations comes the increase in need for skilled labour.

The war for talent has reached new heights with HR managers and strategists alike, devising innovative and exhaustive approaches to attract talent. But do we have the infrastructure in place to supply the talent that meets the growing demand? Here are some statistics:

In essence, India has more than twice as many graduates as the population of Australia. But still, HR professionals are always speaking of skill shortage on the one hand and barely 10% of corporate India is said to use formal executive search on the other. So where do companies recruit employees from and how do they recruit? Campus recruitment is one major source.

### The cream concept

The graduates who form the cream of the talent pool (graduates from the IIT's, the IIM's etc) always prefer to work for the best of the organizations.

Similarly, all organizations too want to employ preferably the top 20% of the talent pool. Given the fact that the cream of graduates are spoilt on choice when it comes to choosing an organization to work with, HR professionals and strategists have been expending enormous amounts of time, energy and financial resources to earn the 'employer of choice' tag for their respective organizations in the face of low unemployment and skill shortages. This is where employer branding comes into the picture.

### Employer brand

Employer branding in the literal sense of the word is creating or promoting an organizations' 'brand identity'. An employer brand is the emotional connection between the employer and the employee - one that extends itself to the other stakeholders, the community at large and more importantly, to the potential employees.

Employer branding takes shape on the same lines as traditional product branding. While a Unique Selling Proposition or the USP is driven through traditional branding, the 'Good Employer Positioning' or GEP is driven through employer branding.

Similarly, while traditional branding puts forth the 'why buy me' proposition, employer branding puts forth the 'why work with me' proposition. And finally, while traditional branding aims at product positioning, employer branding aims at employer positioning.

What's common between some of the most popular brands like IBM, Nike, Pepsi, Reebok and Microsoft for example, is the fact that they are not just great brands but: people respect them, people want to associate with them and people want to work with them. Great consumer and financial brands do not automatically mean great 'employer brands'. These brands have evolved through years of employer branding.

### The framework for employer branding

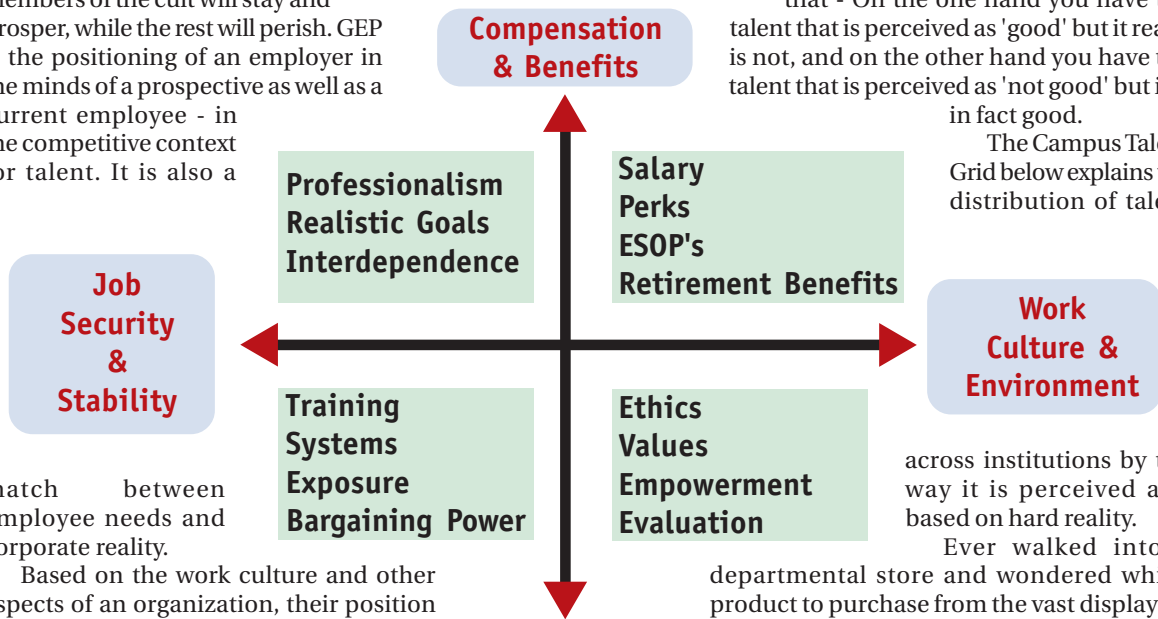
One of the effective frameworks that can be employed for effective employer branding is the 'Good Employee Positioning' or the 'GEP' framework. 'GEP' is a proprietary term coined by TMI Network, one of India's largest talent management companies.

The GEP philosophy is that successful organizations are not 'good employers' to everyone. It emphasizes

Engineering in India	113 Universities, 2,088 colleges (as on EOY 2004)
MBA in India	953 institutions (as on EOY 2005)
Number of engineers produced in India, in a year	401,791(as on EOY 2005) Compared to India, China is the world leader - producing 600,000 engineers a year, the United States produces only 70,000 engineers and the whole of Europe produces only 100,000.
Major contributors	69% - Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala
Number of graduates in India	48.7 million (as on EOY 2004)
Technical jobs created in India in 2005	125,000 (as on EOY 2005)
Technical jobs likely to be created in India in 2006	217,000 (as on Feb 2006)

the fact that every organization has a 'cult' culture and only members of the cult will stay and prosper, while the rest will perish. GEP is the positioning of an employer in the minds of a prospective as well as a current employee - in the competitive context for talent. It is also a

### GEP Framework



dominant trend. What is not helping the cause of skill shortage is the fact that - On the one hand you have the talent that is perceived as 'good' but it really is not, and on the other hand you have the talent that is perceived as 'not good' but it is in fact good.

The Campus Talent Grid below explains the distribution of talent

match between employee needs and corporate reality.

Based on the work culture and other aspects of an organization, their position on the various axes of the GEP framework varies. For example, in a start up company that pays really well and has an excellent work culture but has a low exit value and does not guarantee job security, the GEP graph may look something like the one below.

The underlying principle of employer branding is that the best employers deserve the best talent and vice versa. The critical questions that an organizations needs to ask themselves are: What kinds of people succeed within the organization? How do we attract such people? Why should or would such people work for us? It is in answering these questions that the employer branding process takes seed. The GEP framework helps achieve this goal.

GEP gives a relevant, factual and unique method to assess an organization inside out. With the organization and the prospective employee as the point of reference, the GEP approach maps the external attributes like physique and projected image as well as the internal attributes like the personality and culture of the organization.

### Why employer branding?

Employer branding directly increases the bottom line profitability of an organization by reducing attrition, increasing employee loyalty, reducing cost of hire and mapping the right fit. In the war for talent, with each organization vying for the top 20% or so of the intellectual capital, and having no alternative sourcing strategy, pedigree based hiring is becoming the

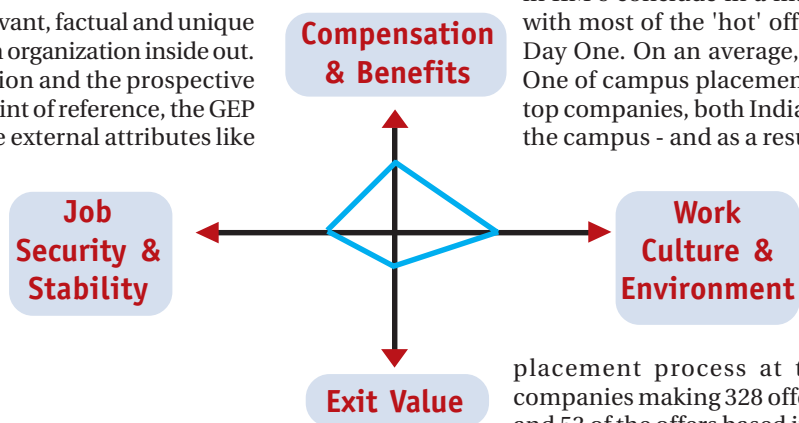
across institutions by the way it is perceived and based on hard reality.

Ever walked into a departmental store and wondered which product to purchase from the vast display on the shelf? With scores of manufacturers promising niche and differentiation from the already existing plethora, the consumer is now left to sort the maze based on his or her own knowledge and perception of the commodity. Gone are the days when one would go to the vendor around the street corner and purchase what was available rather than what was needed. Bring in recruitment from the candidates point of view and the scenario is no different.

In the 80's, campus placements in premier institutions like the IIM's was a month long affair - and even at the end of the process, you would find unemployed students. But today, campus placements in IIM's conclude in a maximum of a week, with most of the 'hot' offers being made on Day One. On an average, by the end of Day One of campus placements at IIMA, over 30 top companies, both Indian and foreign, visit the campus - and as a result, it is the student

who chooses the company and not the other way around. The March 2005 campus

placement process at the IIMB saw 78 companies making 328 offers to 190 students, and 53 of the offers based in locations outside India.



### What the MNC's think

In a survey conducted by a leading magazine early this year, it was revealed that most MNC's consider only 25% of the talent pool of graduates employable. Why this huge gap? It is because most organizations aim for

the talent pool from Quadrant 2 of the talent grid where the talent perception as well as reality is great. But these graduates have a mind of their own and cannot be influenced easily. More often than not, it is they who choose the organization they would like to work for and not vice versa. Due to lack of alternative sourcing strategies, if organizations do not get a piece of the 'Quadrant 2' cake, they then run for the talent pool in Quadrant 1. Their perception of only 25% of the talent pool being employable is therefore highly influenced by the fact that:

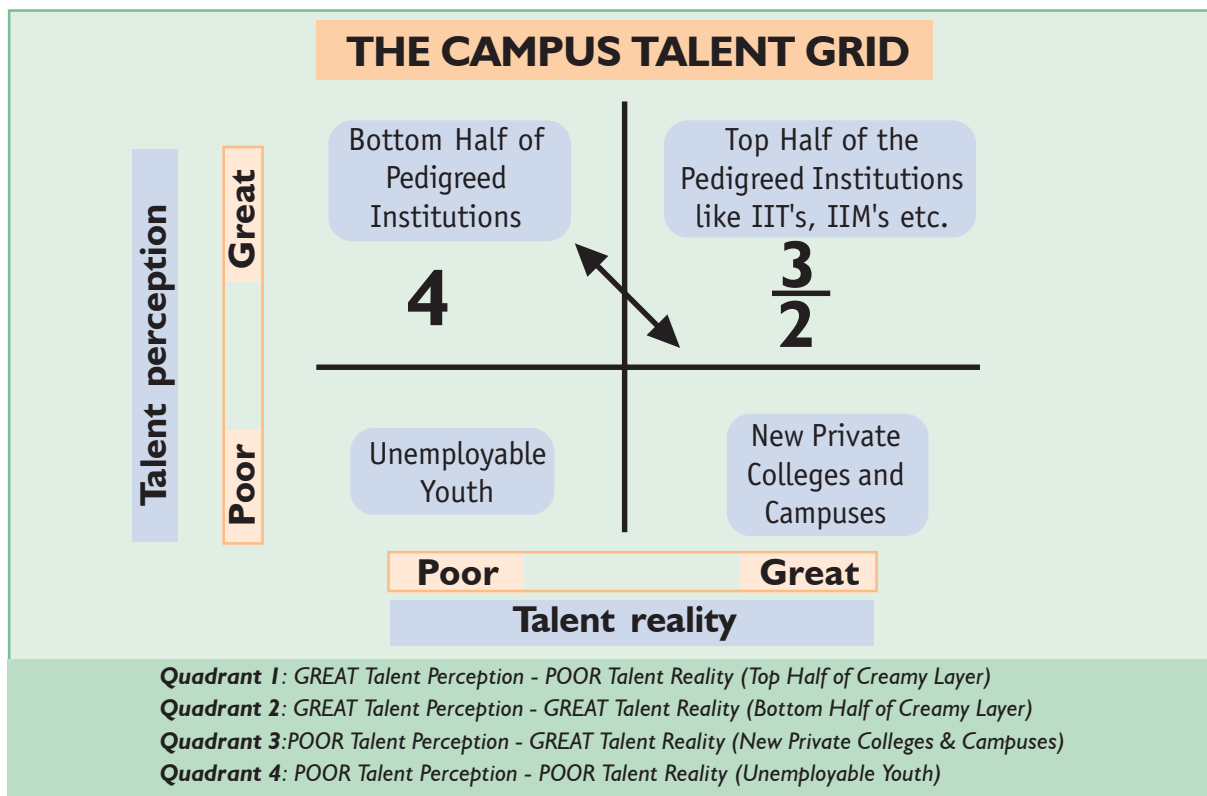
- ▶ They completely overlook Quadrant 3 where the talent perception is low but in reality is great.
- ▶ They look at Quadrant 1 as a contingency and not as a primary source

be met. But how do we attract such talent from Quadrant 3 to work for us? Effective, reflective and proactive employer branding is the key.

Organizations need to understand the reality that there has been a major shift in the landscape in the recruitment industry. They can either choose the best from the available talent or chase the best talent to get them to work for them.

### Lack of employer branding

A small IT firm in Hyderabad, to fill their requirement for 10 fresh engineering graduates, recently approached TMI Network. By the time TMI Network contacted them with a database of prospective candidates sourced by them through various methods, and also suggestions



- ▶ They completely overlook Quadrant 3 more often than not

Therefore, as mentioned earlier, a huge pool of talent, which is perceived as 'Not Good', is missed out even though they are good.

What organizations should be doing however is target 'Quadrant 3' because it is always better to hire the top talent pool from second and third rung institutes than the bottom talent pool of top rung institutes.

### Is campus recruitment a one-stop solution?

For a company like TCS, which recruits over 10,000 students a year at times, as was the case in 2005, campus recruitments can never be a one-stop solution. Even if all the students graduating from IIM's and other premier institutions would be hired, the demand would still not

for other effective sourcing methods, the clients had already hired 4 candidates through job boards.

What does this signify? Has recruitment become a mere number game for the organizations? Don't they have the confidence to attract the right talent? If not, why did they not trust the expertise and the suggestions of one of the most reputed players in the recruitment industry? If they are happy with the kind of talent available through job boards, why contact specialist recruiters at all? Shouldn't organizations ask themselves certain key questions like why should a prospective candidate work for us and then attempt to answer them?

It was obvious from the above incident that - time was the only criteria stressed on by the clients. But in this hurry to recruit, they fail to ask themselves certain key questions like the training that is needed for the

candidates, the compensation that suits the role, the retention strategies to be employed etc. What clients need to be looking at is the 'right talent' for their organization and not the 'best talent' available in the talent pool.

### Best talent vs. right talent

Most organizations prefer to employ only the best talent. What they fail to ask themselves however is if these candidates fit the organization in terms of culture and also whether they can retain such talent over a period of time. What organizations need to ask themselves is: 'What is the right talent that suits my organization and which I can afford to recruit and retain?' The underlying logic here is: The 'best talent' does not necessarily imply the 'right talent' because the best minds might not align with the culture, the structure and the vision of an organization.

The process of getting the 'right talent' is entirely different from the regular recruitment procedures, which happens through job boards and job ads. The ideal solution for the organization mentioned in the

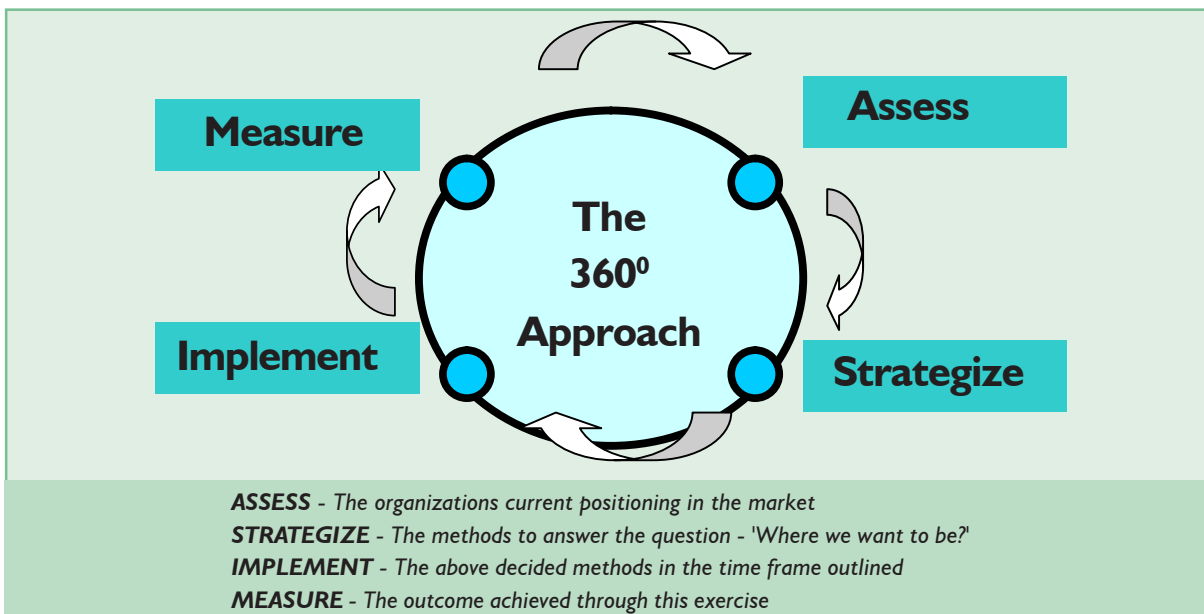
### Best practices in employer branding: ads

'What' is said is more important than 'how' it is said: More often than not, organizations are inclined towards the visual appeal of their brand communication. But in reality, to generate or evoke a response from a stakeholder, the content assumes priority and not the form. What is conveyed should therefore be a culmination of relevant facts and a GEP.

Create well mannered ads - don't clown: There is a fine line of difference between a humorous ad and a clown. People don't like to work for clowns or organizations that don't take themselves seriously. The target audience must be charmed into responding.

Make the ad contemporary: The ad must strike a chord with the target audience and more so if it's the Gen 'X' that's being targeted. The psychology of the target audience has to be understood and incorporated. If the target audience do not relate to the ad, it is highly unlikely that they would respond.

Headline: The headline is the most critical element of the ad. On an average, 5 times as many people read the headlines as they read the body and more often



case study would have been to chalk out a recruitment strategy with the recruitment firm. The emphasis should have been laid on quality and not quantity and these should have been abided by. Due to the lack of awareness of an employer brand and the absence of employer branding, organizations like the one mentioned tend to compromise on quality and that is the first step in the wrong direction.

### How do you brand an organization?

Employer branding is a 360 degree approach involving an in-depth understanding of an organizations work culture, structure, the stakeholders and the branding objectives.

than not, if the headline does not catch their attention, they would not proceed to the body at all.

Employer branding must be consistent across all media, websites as well as all communication - be it internal or external - with the prospects and stakeholders.

### Print advertising

The creative rationale behind an ad for Pradot was of keeping the ad simple, attractive and catchy. The company's positioning in the market was clearly put forth.

### Internal and external posters

An internal referral poster created for Verizon with

simple checks and crosses game was used to emphasize the employee's search for the right candidate. The inference was that it was up to the right candidate to fill in the missing block to complete the game and in essence, the company gets the right candidate.

The campus recruitment poster designed for Convergys highlights the core value of the organization, which is its respect for the individuality of each individual.

### Employer branding recruitment site

The Employer Branding website designed by TMI Network for Mittal Steel served as a dynamic repository of information targeted at new

recruits where candidates could learn all about the organization and its people. About 14 e-learning modules were designed by TMI based on the requirements given by the clients and incorporated into the site. All information on the site is dynamic and can be updated through the admin login. Candidates could register themselves online, create user profiles that suit

their learning needs and take tests that help them analyze their learning curve. The success of this process was the fact that it helped induct new recruits from across the globe.

### Hoardings and kiosks

A hoarding designed for Keane depicts the organization's effective management policies that contribute to its low attrition rate.

### Internal communication kit

A campus brochure designed for ESSAR gave in a snapshot, the essence of the organization's profile, culture, structure and beliefs.

## The employer branding process

### 1. SPOTTING THE CHAMPIONS

Identify champions within the organization, generate willingness and buy-in with these individuals for employer branding and bring these individuals together to form a cohesive group or 'core group'

### 2. BUILDING TEAM SPIRIT

Bring the core team to a common platform, distribute white papers and other relevant documents / information and mutually agree on the development road map

### 3. DEFINING FUTURE COURSE

Understand the recruitment plan in terms of skill profiles, experience profiles, requirement in numbers and the source companies

### 4. BUILDING THE 'GOOD EMPLOYER PROPOSITION'

Having understood the company offerings in the dimensions of the GEP framework and based on discussions with the core team identify the top 5 points that are the employer's strength and also the top 5 points that are a matter of concern.

### 5. CONDUCTING INTERNAL CLIMATE SURVEY

Standard survey methods involving focus groups and questionnaires must be employed to evaluate and analyze the key aspects discussed in the earlier step.

### 6. IDENTIFYING DISSATISFACTIONS

Analyzing the 'exit interview' data for the past 6 months or so and identifying the reasons for the same is the best way forward. Try to be statistically relevant

### 7. DEVELOPING 'PROSPECT IMAGERY'

This is where you try to gauge the image of your organization in the perception of the prospects. Standard survey methods have to be employed here too.

### 8. LEVERAGING ON EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Define past employee experiences through a dipstick survey by selecting about 10 to 20 employees who quit recently. Make a qualitative research by first interviewing these employees to identify the causes for them to be willing to re-join. The 'Will you join back?' question gives a good measure of the prospective stakeholders perception of your organization.

### 9. BENCHMARKING COMPETITION

Identify the competition for recruiting skill-sets, in terms of companies and industries with approval of the core team. Using techniques like visiting the career's website and also analyzing their recruitment ads for the quality & quantity of information shared with the prospects, figure out what the competition has on offer.

### 10. MAPPING YOU AGAINST THE COMPETITION

Plot your positioning vis-à-vis the competition on the 4 dimensions of the GEP framework. Bear in mind that your positioning should be based on current and past employee data.

### 11. DEVELOPING THE 'EMPLOYER BRANDING'

The critical question - 'Where you want to be?' needs to be answered comprehensively and the Employer Branding strategies need to be developed accordingly.

### 12. GAP ANALYSIS

Identify and define the gap between employer branding and prospect imagery and aim to reduce the same.

### 13. DEVELOP THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The first step would be to develop the communication message based on the key verticals and the desired outcome to be achieved from the communication exercise.

### 14. DEVELOP THE COMMUNICATION PACKAGE

Given below, are some of ideal methods of promoting 'employer branding'.

### 15. BUDGETING

The available budget for the Employer Branding exercise gives a fair idea of the methods that can be employed.

### 16. LEVERAGING MEDIA

Define the press relations roles and strategies as well as identify a PR agency for the same

### 17. BLAST OFF

Launch the campaign.

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## Measuring employer branding

One of the most ideal approaches to measuring 'employer branding' or its success is to conduct an annual campus survey. To do this, first identify a set of about 25 or so campuses where you want to conduct the survey. The survey has to be conducted with the passing out batch with a list of about 3 to 5 companies in your respective industry. Ideally, your ranking in these surveys has to go up every year. **HC**

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