



HeathBrook

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH BRANDING

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
HR, MARKETING &
INTERNAL COMMUNICATION
PROFESSIONALS

Get ready to work.



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FOREWORD

1.0

This white paper and practical guide has been compiled from in-depth academic research and comprehensive interviews with HR, Marketing, Branding Consultants, as well as Senior Internal Communication Professionals, spread across a diverse range of industries.

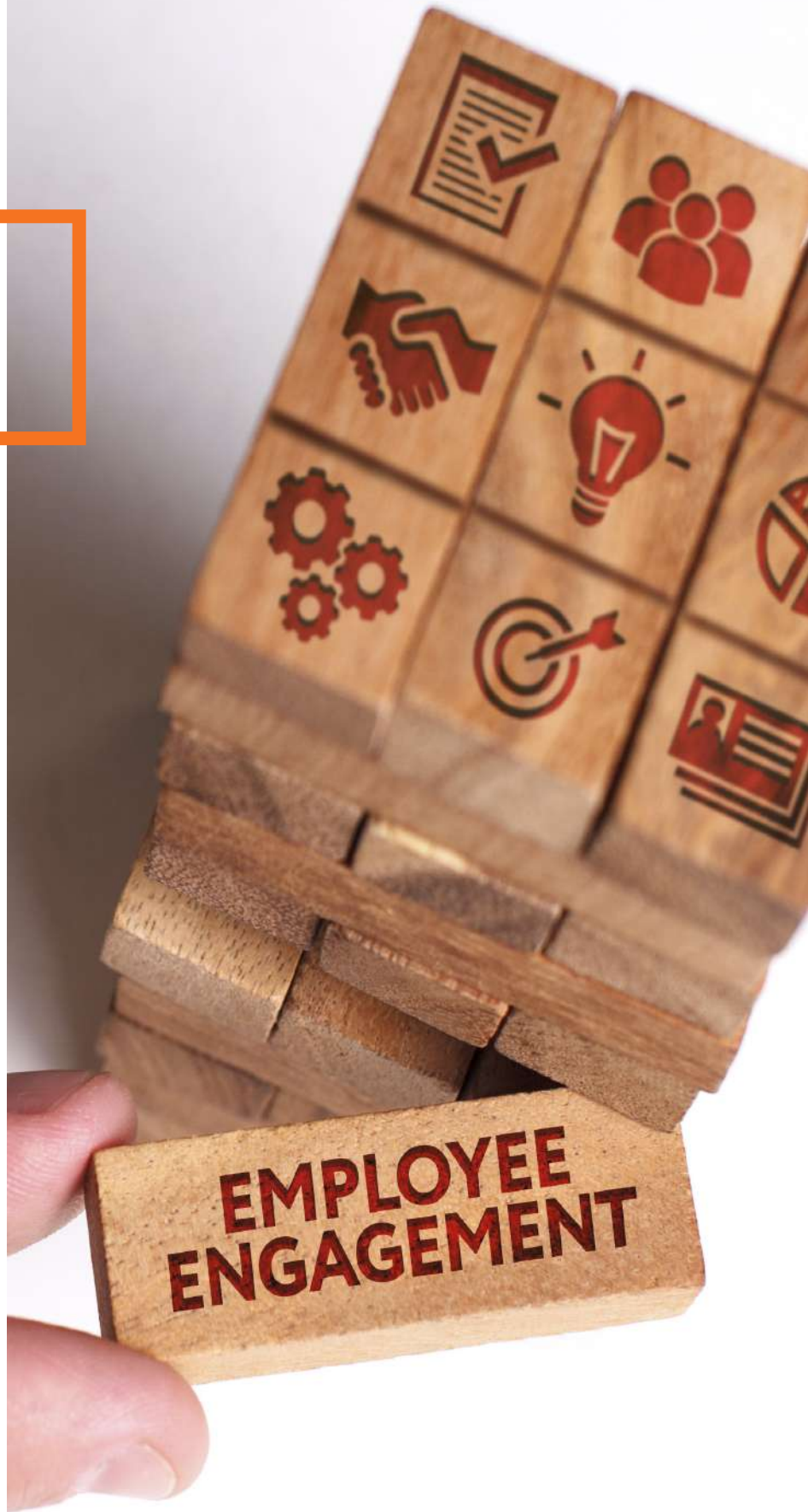
Sectors included Construction, Health Care, Automotive, Motor-sport, Fast Food and the contribution of a well-known British Airline.

I am pleased to be able to share these findings with you. The author provides marketing support to HeathBrook Workwear Solutions and shares our company's passion for empowering employees to fully engage with its organisation's brand. I believe this paper will prove a valuable tool to our customer base and also a wider audience of communication professionals, who look to ensure unequivocal success in any brand strategy roll-out.

Andrew Greenfield, Managing Director HeathBrook Ltd.



**THE
CHALLENGE**



THE CHALLENGE

2.0

HAVING EMPLOYEE AND COMPANY SHARED BRAND VALUES HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON A COMPANY'S BRAND EQUITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT.

This is a message amplified by many academics and the industry professionals referenced throughout this paper.

SO WHY IS IT SO MANY COMPANIES FAIL TO EXECUTE SUCCESSFUL INTERNAL BRANDING INITIATIVES AND ARE NEGLECTING A CONCEPT CAPABLE OF FULLY ENGAGING EMPLOYEES - RESULTING IN ENORMOUS ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS?

'This paper is a valuable checklist for HR, Internal Communication (IC) and Marketing professionals involved in the roll-out of a branding strategy and who are looking to fully engage with employees'.

This paper looks to identify the commonalities between the aims of HR professionals, internal communication specialists and marketing professionals, providing evidence that there are opportunities for them to work together to achieve successful 'brand engagement'.

More importantly, this document is a valuable, practical workbook for communication professionals involved in the roll-out of a branding strategy. Checklists have been developed based on the experiences of HR, Internal Communication (IC) and marketing professionals, who were candid about successes and failures.





THE INSIGHTS

**EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT**





THE INSIGHTS

3.0

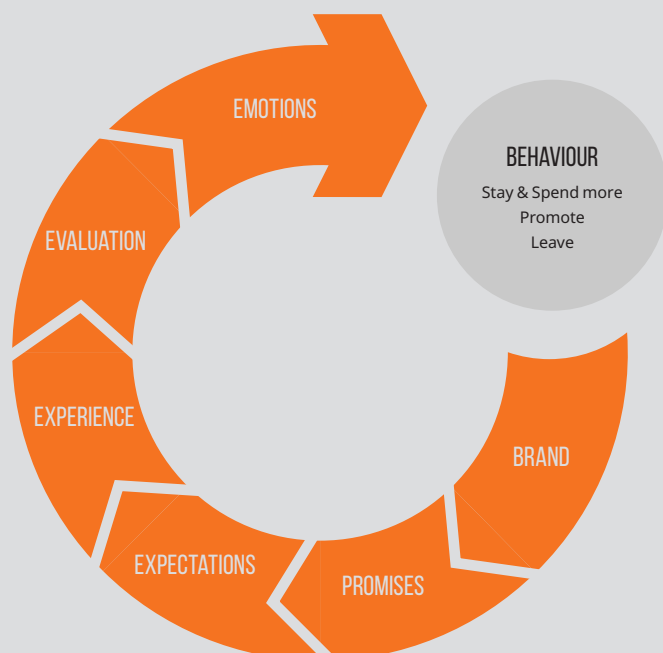
3.1

THE BRAND PROMISE

Corporate Branding Expert - Balmer:

"THE CORPORATE BRANDING PHILOSOPHY, AT ITS CORE, REPRESENTS AN EXPLICIT COVENANT BETWEEN AN ORGANISATION AND ITS KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS INCLUDING CUSTOMERS. THE COVENANT IS SET FORTH BY SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN TERMS OF A CLEARLY ARTICULATED CORPORATE BRANDING PROPOSITION. IT IS EXPERIENCED THROUGH CORPORATE AND STAFF BEHAVIOUR, AND IMPORTANTLY, THROUGH THE ORGANISATION'S PRODUCTS AND/OR SERVICES."

Balmer points out the importance of a consistent experience to deliver on the brand promise, emphasising the need for employees to understand the branding philosophy, so they can truly represent the organisation.



Source: Balmer (2012)





THE INSIGHTS

3.2

A Branding Consultant and Executive Communications Director in the Health Care Sector shared their insights and experiences of how the brand was used to engage employees.

GAINING BUY-IN, GETTING IT WRONG

If senior management truly want 'buy-in', the culture of the organisation and the internal messaging need to be fully aligned to deliver the promise.

A Harvard Business Review article:

In this article, Mitchell mentions a health insurance company, which advertised the welfare of its patients being the number one priority, while employees were told that their main goal was to increase the value of the organisations stock options through cost reductions.

GAINING BUY-IN, GETTING IT RIGHT

Two Health Care Organisations who got it right:

"The executive team were very engaged and they got their hands dirty in wordsmithing. Writing came from all directions. We did rounds and rounds of employee forums to get them to answer who are we, and why do we exist. We also did the same exercise with directors, middle management level and with physicians, as we're a health care organisation. Then there was a core group of us that synthesised that feedback.

I think there were probably people who feared how much feedback we were getting. It's a safe place to do that and then you have a ton of buy-in. Employees see words in the final product and they're like yes, I used that word. They took that from my sheet, which I filled out. In reality, there were probably hundreds of people who used that word. However, you get this sense of ownership when you see it in the final product. Even as a communications professional, I was surprised by how concise we were able to get it to be, and for it to be as all encompassing as it was."

Executive Director Communications & PR - large health organisation in the USA.





THE INSIGHTS



Interviews with experts in the field of communication, provided valuable insights about how to properly engage health organisation professionals.

3.3

“Unfortunately, in most companies, internal marketing (branding) is done poorly, if at all” and few companies, “understand the need to convince employees of the brand’s power – they take it as a given. (Mitchell, C. 2002. “Selling the Brand Inside”, Harvard Business Review, Jan 2002).

“In the hospital that we we’re working with, a large number of staff don’t work in the front line. In the wards; they often work behind the scenes, and don’t feel so valued. They feel that their jobs are quite boring, and that they are not taken seriously. There, I think it will be possible to create a keener sense of where they fit in to the plan and the customer experience; and therefore, make their jobs more relevant and energised, just by presenting the brand more coherently to them.”

Branding Agency Director, UK.

ENSURING ALIGNMENT

Alignment is key:

A company will achieve its greatest advantage when employee actions and brand identity reinforce each other.

Mitchell:

“UNFORTUNATELY, IN MOST COMPANIES, INTERNAL MARKETING (BRANDING) IS DONE POORLY, IF AT ALL” AND FEW COMPANIES, “UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO CONVINCING EMPLOYEES OF THE BRAND’S POWER – THEY TAKE IT AS A GIVEN.”

Boone:

“EMPLOYEES SHOULD BE ENGAGED TO MAKE THE BRAND COME ALIVE” REFLECTING THAT “THE MESSAGES SENT TO EMPLOYEES ABOUT THE BRAND ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE ONES SENT TO CUSTOMERS”.

Employees are in a strong position to judge if what is being said externally, marries with the internal realities, or if the message is simply delivered as a marketing exercise, or yet another senior management initiative. The power of emotional engagement cannot be underestimated.





THE INSIGHTS

3.4

THE POWER OF EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The Gallup Organisation interviewed over one million employees worldwide; their findings confirmed employees were looking for emotional engagement in their work. This presents a key opportunity for marketing, human resources and internal communication specialists to work together; once transactional engagement has been met (monetary rewards, minimal expectations around employer and employee relationships), the emotional desire to engage with the organisation needs to be cultivated.

The table below highlights the importance of vision and values on organisational engagement and makes the point that research has shown employees need to “express opinions and receive feedback” to be fully engaged.

WORK AND ORGANISATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

WORK ENGAGEMENT	ORGANISATIONAL ENGAGEMENT
The work you do	The vision of the organisation, where it's headed
Your team environment	The values of the organisation, what it believes in
Personal development opportunities	The perceived support given to all employees
The relationship with your line manager	The way that senior managers communicate with all employees
The opportunity to have a say about what goes on in your team	The opportunity to have a say about what goes on in the organisation
The response provided by a line manager to views expressed	The response provided by senior managers to views expressed

Source: Ruck (2015)

The table also highlights the need for a multi-departmental approach. Work engagement can be viewed as more of an HR and line management function, whereas organisational engagement is more an IC and senior management function. The degree to which employees are empowered to have their say around the organisations aims and values, and also at what point they are involved, is a key aspect of a fully aligned branding process.





THE INSIGHTS



3.5

THE BRAND AS A TOOL

What a brand should be (Collins et al. 2011):

"THE BRAND CAN ACT AS AN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TOOL BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND ITS EMPLOYEES, SENDING A SIGNAL ABOUT THE NEW VALUES AND STRATEGY OF THE ORGANIZATION. IN TURN, EMPLOYEES' REACTION TO THE BRAND, THEIR LEVEL OF ADOPTION OF BRAND VALUES, AND THE WAY THEY SHAPE THE BRAND TO THEIR OWN MARKET UNDERSTANDING AND REPRESENTATION, MAY INFLUENCE THEIR JOB SATISFACTION, WHICH MAY ALSO HAVE AN IMPACT ON THEIR MARKET PERFORMANCE."

VALUES VOICE STRATEGY
JOB SATISFACTION LOYALTY
CREDIBILITY
ENGAGEMENT PERFORMANCE
TRUST BRAND
AMBASSADOR ADOPTION





THE INSIGHTS

3.6

Interviews with experts in the field of communication, provided valuable insights about what to do at the start of a roll-out strategy.

KEY CONSIDERATION AT THE START

BENCHMARK EARLY:

"I wish that I had collected more data before we started. I didn't start collecting data until after we were in the process and people knew we were doing it. We should have started asking about: why do you work here and how important is your individual role to the success of the organisation up front. I think that then, we would really have a better picture of how far we have moved the needle."

Executive Director Communications & PR - large health organisation in the USA.

FIND A NATURAL CONNECTION:

"Internally we are working on creating the connection for our employees with the heritage that comes from being part of something as strong as a Formula 1 team, which started in the 1930s."

"There was a big culture project around what it means to be part of the team. We're creating an internal brand, which is all about 'teamship' and being part of this organisation, and that has this incredible history and heritage behind it."

Internal Communications Manager - F1 Team.

GET A CROSS REPRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEES:

"When we were doing the workshops, I was thinking about representation from different parts of the business. I was also thinking about different levels of people, so it wasn't just the leadership team, but also trying to get insights from people throughout the business."

Professional Branding Consultant.





THE INSIGHTS



The level of involvement and who is involved is an essential to a successful programme. Understanding your audience is important. Expert Academic Papers also talk about the “What Is In It For Me” Factor.

INVOLVE EMPLOYEES IN THE JOURNEY:

“I can say with confidence, that had I tried to do this alone or with a small group of people. I really don’t think it would have landed in the same way. I think we were being quite open about the process as well. Everyone knew what was happening and what we were doing, we were all on a journey.”

Professional Branding Consultant.

“Everything went well in terms of the actual activity, so everything launched successfully. All the marketing materials, or communications materials got out, but in my personal view, it felt sort of rushed and then once it was done, it was done. Nothing really felt like it had moved forward. It has to be more about the people”

Internal Communication Manager - Large Global Construction Consultancy.

UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE:

“I always think there are three categories of people that will react to a brand strategy. They either fall into a very quick subjective, either they don’t like it, or they: “love it and are with you all the way.” And then probably, even more worryingly, is the third category: the “I don’t care” category. “It seems remote to me and what I do day-to-day, and you can do what you like.” And they neither have a particularly strong view on it one way or the other.

I actually think that if that group is large, that’s almost a worse problem to have, than having people in the organisation that don’t like it. Because you’ve just got a lot of apathy, and people are just not engaged, or don’t see the relevance of it to what they’re doing. And then I think, it becomes a lost opportunity for the business.”

Professional Branding Consultant.





THE INSIGHTS

3.7

CREATING AN ENABLING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

We asked corporate culture specialists at 'The Habits Revolution' to provide their perspective:

"Many organisations fail to successfully implement internal branding initiatives because the carefully defined direction and strategy are not underpinned by an enabling business culture.

All the attempts at messaging and driving engagement through internal branding and communications can be compromised by conflicting messages and behaviours from the leadership team.

The steer from the senior team is vital, but it is critical that the direction is supported by empowering behaviours that allow the team to thrive and deliver their best work."

THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE CHAIN



"Strategy is important. But too often the business focus begins and ends here. In addition to having the right goals and processes in place to deliver results, it is essential to create the best environment for your people.

Without your people you have no business and this is the reason why, it is essential to recognise and fix both the management disconnects within the strategy AND the leadership disconnects within the culture.

The business culture can either enable or destroy the business opportunity. Ignoring destructive behaviours becomes a tangible barrier to success, but equally, a strong marriage between culture and strategy enables organisational resilience to meet the most challenging circumstances head on."





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS

QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE CHAIN

Many internal branding initiatives result from a need to change or to clarify the aims, vision and goals. The Habits Revolution have identified some of the key questions you should be asking in order to understand how well placed your organisation is to implement any form of process, structure, strategy or people transformation. It is worth reviewing this before embarking on any branding activity.

The 1 - 10 scale below is intended to help you identify how well your organisation is performing against some of the key organisational habits that underpin an enabling culture. Rating your internal performance against the measures of excellence, by ticking the box that best represents your current position, will build an initial picture of the WELLness* within your organisation.

While this is not a complete exercise in itself, the answers will begin to identify where the resilience of the organisation is weakest and how and will be helpful to underpin further initiatives and change to support a successful roll-out.

Full analysis and further guidance are available from The Habits Revolution on 01372 860824 or via hello@thehabitsrevolution.com or by visiting www.thehabitsrevolution.com.

ORGANISATIONAL WELLNESS ASSESSMENT (Excerpt)

Habit	Element	Excellence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
CLARITY	VALUE PROPOSITION	Is our value proposition clear and well articulated across the whole business and used as a filter for all decisions, actions and prioritisation?										
	BEHAVIOURS AND CULTURE	Are our values recognised by all and do the leadership team take full responsibility, individually, for upholding best behaviours at all times?										
COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATION PROCESS	Are lessons learned, shared and used to drive improvements in customer service and performance and is the effectiveness of the communication system reviewed regularly?										
	MESSAGE CREATION	Is communication interactive and care taken in the messaging, method of delivery and physical environment where communication takes place, with the internal brand positioning always considered and understanding checked?										
COLLABORATION	TRUST	Are promises visibly delivered against and are interactions perceived as honest, open and trustworthy, with individuals and teams actively supporting their internal commitments to each other?										
	PROJECT MANAGEMENT	Is there a proactive approach to project management at all levels of the organisation, visibly led by leadership team and with learning routinely collected and fed back into the business improvement processes?										

*WELLness is The Habits Revolution measure of how your organisation compares to 'What Excellence Looks Like'





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS

ORGANISATIONAL WELLNESS ASSESSMENT (Excerpt)

Habit	Element	Excellence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
COMMITMENT	LEADERSHIP AND BEHAVIOURS	Do all leaders proactively sustain the culture and business ethos through their behaviours and attitudes and act as enablers to brand deployment, organisational learning and innovation?										
	DECISION MAKING	Is decision making collaborative and effective with decisions communicated and responses integrated into the process?										
CREATIVITY	KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	Is a learning and knowledge management system in place for sharing of information across the entire organisation, and is physical space conducive to learning for individuals and teams?										
	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	Is there a strong fact based evaluation and improvement process in evidence across the organisation with shared information accessible to all and continuous improvement integrated into the organisation's culture?										
CARING	ORGANISATIONAL SENSING	Are there regular company wide reviews of the organisational feedback, with the insights informing cross functional improvement activities and an organisation wide, ongoing action plan in response?										
	HEALTH AND SAFETY	Do all staff believe that health and safety is a critical aspect of their role, with the organisation providing resource and time for initiatives and systems to be implemented to continually improve workplace safety?										
CONSISTENCY	PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	Is there consistent use of customer feedback and market data to develop services and products in anticipation of customers' emerging needs, so that customers perceive a seamless professional service from the organisation?										
	MEASURES / PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Is there a coherent and integrated set of measures across the organisation, with regular communication of results to all, to provide clear guidance for the strategic planning cycle?										





BRAND ROLL OUTS IN PRACTICE



Value

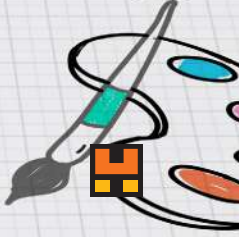
Having a good brand strategy allows you to have a major advantage in gaining a large increase in your market competitions. Your brand tells your customers what they can have or expect from the products and services you offer.



Branding

Design

Having a good brand strategy allows you to have a major advantage in gaining a large increase in your market competitions. Your brand tells your customers what they can have or expect from the products and services you offer.





BEST PRACTICE

4.0

Talking to senior managers in each discipline provided these valuable insights to best practices and learnings. Common themes emerged and these can act as a guide to the key considerations for success.

4.1

CREATE A TEAM SPIRIT AND LOOK FOR A GENUINE BINDING THEME

Making sure everyone felt they were part of a team with a common goal was a view expressed by several practitioners. This was also seen to break down the silos that might exist within communication departments. There was emphasis on picking up on a product, service or element of the company's ethos that could be a uniting internal factor.

4.2

HAVE THE RIGHT REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE START AND GIVE EMPLOYEES A VOICE

Make sure that any group involved in helping with any kind of branding opportunity includes representation from all levels and functions within the organisation and seek clarification, as much as reasonably possible, from a wider audience during the brand journey.





IN PRACTICE

4.3

STRUCTURE THE ORGANISATION SO INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IS RECOGNISED AS IMPORTANT

Senior executives need to recognise the importance of branding as an engagement tool and ensure communication departments / or personnel are either closely aligned through organisational structure, or look to have them collaborate on project requirements.

4.4

DON'T EXPECT IT TO BE A SHORT-TERM PROJECT

You cannot affect cultural change or brand alignment overnight; it cannot be a top down paper exercise - it is important that everything about the organisation reflects what it is saying externally. It will also be important to recruit employees that understand and share the company's vision.

4.5

TREAT INTERNAL BRANDING WITH AS MUCH CONSIDERATION AS EXTERNAL BRANDING

Recognise the value of brand ambassadors and an engaged workforce around the company's brand. Treat measurements of internal brand success as you would external, and make sure feedback mechanisms are in place.





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS

5.0

QUESTION CHECKLIST FOR ANY CORPORATE BRANDING STRATEGY TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES			
DEPARTMENT	✓	QUESTIONS	NOTES
ORGANISATION			
		Does the branding strategy have Executive Level support?	
		Do employees understand the brand philosophy and have they had an input to what the brand means (been part of the branding journey)?	
		Are the interior and exterior messages aligned, i.e. don't conflict and represent the true values of the company, as experienced by employees?	
		Is there a key theme or service that will resonate with the entire organisation, to ensure greater engagement?	
		Is there a brand-centric continuous improvement programme in place, and are brand values incorporated into the organisation's KPIs?	
		Has the "what's in it for me?" been considered on an emotional, intellectual and transactional level for all employees?	





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS



QUESTION CHECKLIST FOR ANY CORPORATE BRANDING STRATEGY TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES			
DEPARTMENT	✓	QUESTIONS	NOTES
ORGANISATION			
		Is there a feedback mechanism in place that genuinely gives the employee a voice, and are systems in place to recognise and act upon that feedback?	
		Is there a 'self-identification process' so employees can tailor the branding messages to interactions they have with both internal and external stakeholders?	
		Is brand performance discussed regularly at Executive Level?	
HR, IC & MKTG (ALL THREE)			
		Are resources allocated and departments encouraged to work together around brand values (bonuses, project teams to focus on aspects of brand values (including multi-disciplined and multi-levelled employees, in addition to communication departments)?	
		Have all 3 communication departments been brought together at an early stage of any branding initiative and given an opportunity to bring their distinct skills to the process?	





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS



QUESTION CHECKLIST FOR ANY CORPORATE BRANDING STRATEGY TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES			
DEPARTMENT	✓	QUESTIONS	NOTES
HUMAN RESOURCES			
		Have systems been devised that help employees discover their strengths, blind spots and preferences that support the brand values (and those that don't)? Have plans been created that leverage these strengths and mitigate blind spots for better alignment?	
		Have critical work processes of each function been identified and how they connect with other functions in delivering the brand promise been considered?	
		Does the company's performance management system include brand-centric measurement of performance and potential? Does the competency mapping system identify and nurture brand supporting competencies throughout the employee life cycle?	
ADD YOUR OWN CHECKLIST ITEMS			





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS



QUESTION CHECKLIST FOR ANY CORPORATE BRANDING STRATEGY TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES			
DEPARTMENT	✓	QUESTIONS	NOTES
MARKETING			
		Is the external message the same one that is given to employees?	
		Are external campaigns shared at early stages and employees encouraged to be brand ambassadors?	
		Has an employee early warning system and market intelligence system been set up, so the brand can be adapted to environmental and market factors?	
		Are marketing resources (and trusted communication tools) being used to engage employees, as well as external audiences?	
		Is there benchmarking in place to ensure brand performance is measured internally and externally?	
ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS			





CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS



QUESTION CHECKLIST FOR ANY CORPORATE BRANDING STRATEGY TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES			
DEPARTMENT	✓	QUESTIONS	NOTES
INTERNAL COMMS			
		Is the internal communications department viewed as a key function within the organisation, and as a function, does it have the ear of the Executive?	
		Are internal communications working with human resources and marketing to ensure that opportunities around branding are not being missed?	
		Have internal communications a vested interest in the strategic delivery of brand messaging and values? Have they been involved from the start?	
		Are internal communications looking at how aspects of the brand can be adapted to create specific internally-focussed initiatives, which build a greater sense of belonging, team spirit or emotional connection with the brand?	
		Are internal communications taking specific responsibility to ensure employees are fully engaged with the brand and that employees have an opportunity to provide regular feedback and influence how the brand is interpreted?	





RESEARCH APPROACH





RESEARCH APPROACH

6.0

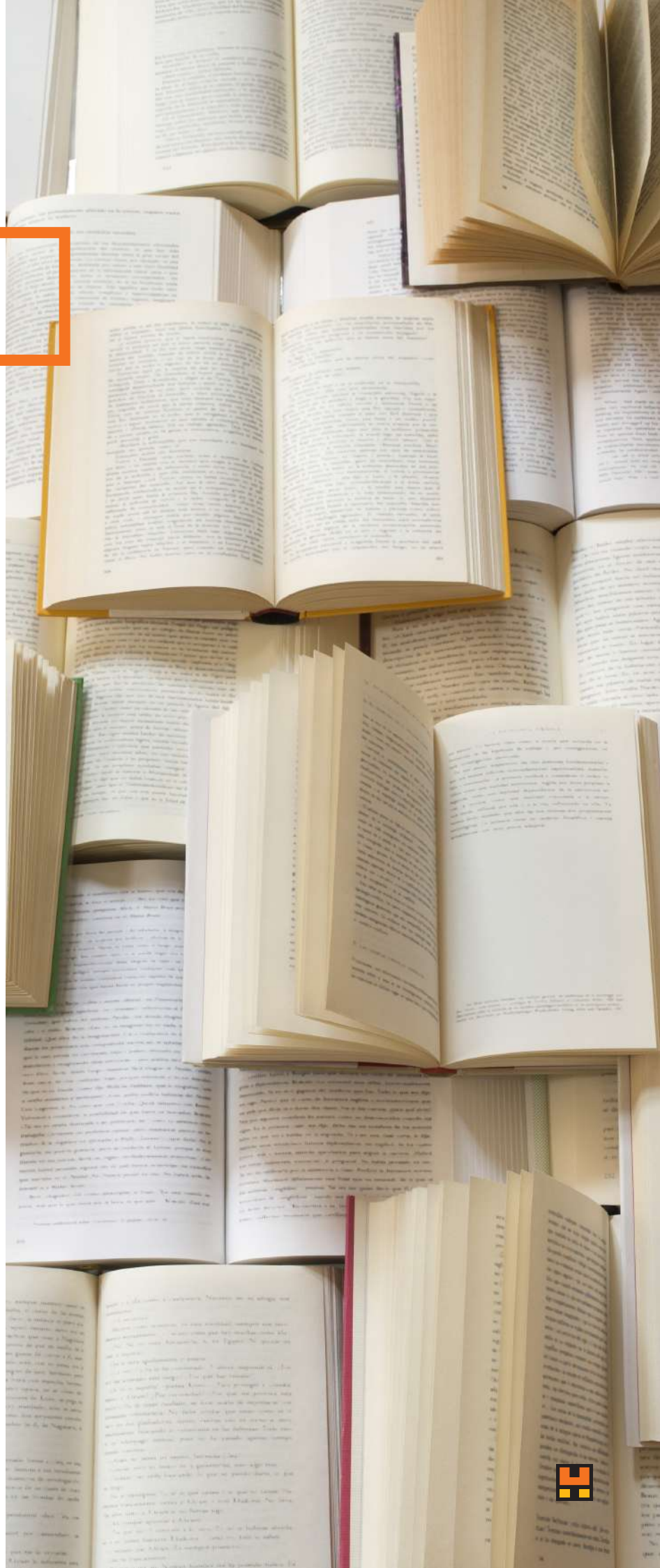
Academic papers written for professional bodies in the field of HR, Internal Communications and Marketing were all scrutinised. It was seen as important to understand corporate branding from the perspective of all three different disciplines, as well as key aspects of best practice employee engagement, and how these might be linked to the company brand.

The research showed considerable synergies, but the focus was very much discipline-centric. There was limited if any references to communication department collaboration. In contrast however, it was widely acknowledged that success only occurred when the whole organisation was involved, and employees had a voice in the execution.

The findings were therefore used to form a checklist of questions for in-depth interviews of HR, IC and Marketing professionals that had been involved in branding projects in a number of companies. They were all candid about successes, failures, shared learnings and best practices. They also commented on how they could work with other communication departments to achieve a common goal, and the benefits they saw in this approach.



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REFERENCES

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