



WHY YOU SHOULD TREAT YOUR PEOPLE LIKE YOUR BRAND, NOT LIKE YOUR TANGIBLE ASSETS

ALIGNING BUSINESS AND PEOPLE STRATEGIES TO OUTPERFORM

To achieve the best of any situation, the activities of individuals who are motivated and invested in – not only in their own welfare, but also the organisation to which they belong – result in productivity, profitability, and effectiveness. Their performance excels, in both their personal and work lives, as they strive to be and do their best.

That said, not every individual or organisation succeeds in their endeavours. The number one reason, in fact, as to why many organisations fail to perform or outperform is due to the misalignment of business strategy and people's desires. When goals collide, the usual result is needless consumption and waste of personal and/or corporate resources. This outcome is particularly true when an employer recruits and hires candidates who do not fit the company's culture or brand. Managers must find and cultivate talented individuals who can take charge of their own growth while empowering others to achieve shared goals.

THE NEED: ACCURATE DATA AND STRONG LEADERS

The larger the percentage of misalignment between the two entities, the more challenging it becomes to attain optimal performance. It is that simple. But company leaders cannot simply reach an expected or desired outcome by an uninformed guess or assumption about the percentage of that alignment. The gap may be significant.

Sadly, many organisations do not even attempt to investigate this disparity and continue navigating their business as though flying a plane without a navigation system (GPS) in place. When, to no one's surprise, the plane crashes and everybody on board dies (or, the company fails and goes bankrupt), the business or the unit in question becomes obsolete. The few survivors typically conceive another so-called stellar strategy and repeat their mistakes over and over again, thereby wasting valuable resources, time, shareholder value – and, unfortunately, people! The individual victims become collateral damage, and nobody questions the cause.



This corporate behaviour is one of the most important arguments for having strong and capable leadership in our organisations. Solid leadership, from both the individual and organisational perspective, can help avoid or at least minimise such collateral damage. The word “leadership” is foremost about being “responsible” and “accountable” for things and for others, representing the number one reason why leadership exists – to take care of the business and, obviously, the people who make it happen. How can we even think of navigating our businesses in today’s complex world without having a proper navigation system in place to inform our decisions?

THE ANSWER: APPROPRIATE VALUING OF EMPLOYEES

Consequently, managers need to stop guessing and start knowing and using tools that are critical to navigate the short- and long-term activities involved in their businesses. Although there are many tools available at our disposal, before jumping to conclusions as to which one(s) offer the most benefits, we need to step back and review a conventional misperception.

The concept that employers should treat their employees as their most valuable asset is misleading and lacks serious reflection for the following reasons:

- People are not tangible assets, but are very intangible in many ways. Their value resides mostly in the intangible world, of which we have very limited control. Organisations can definitely contribute to increase the value of that intangible asset, but the only return is goodwill and nothing else.
- It is important to note that intangibles are called that because they are influenced by many more factors that are not necessarily in our control. That means their value is much more unstable than any other tangible assets. Of course, there are examples of tangible assets losing their value from factor beyond our control, such as business or political environment; however, when strictly compared, intangible assets are more unstable.



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How can we then counter this instability and unknown? Treating your people with the same importance and respect as the company brand may represent an excellent starting point. It allows a conceptual shift to something more stable, sustainable, and strategic. “Branding,” as a marketing practice, creates a name, symbol, or design that identifies and differentiates the company’s products or services from that of competitors. Employees, as a form of company brand, should reflect the business by being engaged, motivated, positive, committed, and personal leaders. That is the brand that employers should embrace and support.

THE POSSIBILITY: SUCCESS AND GROWTH

That said, the idea of treating employees in the same way as one does a company brand or image requires care. Managers cannot simply say, “from now on, we are going to treat our people with the same importance as our brand.” That would be a serious and damaging mistake.

We have to first “know,” rather than “assume,” what percentage of our people are, in fact, aligned with the company’s strategy to assess the potential of the employee brand to positively contribute to company goals.

The most significant trouble between employers and employees is that organisations do not take the time to evaluate, in an honest fashion on both sides, the compatibility between the two. Without that assessment, the concept of an employee brand will fail, as neither party is pen about their needs and desires. It is a shallow trade: work for money, without acknowledgment of any commitment to mutual growth.

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But with genuine information, managers can strive to achieve better alignment to support this new thinking and vision for the business. The key is to only hire those individuals who fit the brand, who believe in the company's overall goals, and who truly represent the organisation in its best light to the public and its clients. Leadership should invest in programmes that facilitate employee self-discovery to attain sustainable growth and better resource allocation. In the end, what we really want to achieve needs to focus only on best outcomes – for both the business and individuals – and not settle for anything less than that.

About the Author: Ali Kursun is a Senior Consultant at sparkChief & Co., a consulting firm that helps organisations to align their business strategy with their people through a variety of online and offline tools.

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