

“Getting the Right People on the Bus”

Recruitment, Selection and Integration for the Branded Organization

Abstract

This paper examines how employer branding is used and embedded through the organizational HR practices; specifically recruitment, selection and integration. The paper adds to the growing literature on employer branding by specifically focusing upon concrete HR practices, which are often left unexplored in contemporary accounts of branding practices. Our research question is to explore the specific role that these practices play in the enactment of employer branding and assess their implications. Moreover, in order to better understand the wider significance of employer branding, scholarship needs to explore these processes in contexts where brand recognition is less prevalent. Drawing on a large multi-national organization (CollinaTrade) involved in the provision of products and services in the construction industry, the organization's minimalist focus on consumer brands makes them a useful case study for evaluating the work of employer branding outside consumer facing industries. This paper points to the significance of viewing employer branding as a management tool in terms of cultural reinforcement and symbolic representations at work and the way in which this work through HR practices. Our data shows that the logic of employer branding in contexts where the brand is less significant, is essentially contradictory, requiring both individualism and uniformity which may have a greater impact on workplace identities than previously thought.

Keywords: Employer branding, integration recruitment, selection,

Introduction

The concept of employer branding has been defined by Ambler and Barrow (1996: 187) as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company.” Similarly, the term employer branding “...suggests the differentiation of a firms’ characteristics as an employer from those of its competitors. The employment brand highlights the unique aspects of the firm’s employment offerings or environment” (Backhaus Surinder Tikoo, 2004: 502). Both branding and employer branding have recently emerged as growing themes in the scholarship of organization studies and Human Resource Management (HRM) with contributions within these fields attempting to further understand the meanings, practices and significance of working under branded conditions (e.g. Brannan et al., 2015, Brannan et al., 2011; Kornberger, 2010; Land and Taylor, 2011). This work has extended the disciplinary focus beyond marketing expertise on which branding studies traditionally resides and that generally has as its main focus the relationship between the brand and its customers (Fournier, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005). Employer branding focuses on the positioning of the organization as an ‘employer brand’ to attract and retain the best prospective employees (Barrow and Mosely, 2005). Whilst the concept of ‘best’ employee is open to interpretation, this is generally accepted to be those that align most closely with organizational objectives and values. The marketing literature on branding generally focuses on organizational attempts to increase the value of brand equity, often through consumer-brand identification (e.g. Keller, 1993; Van Osselaer and Alba, 2000). Industries that are characterised by strong consumer brands are the most obviously places to study branding processes, such ‘sites’ of employee branding are well represented in the literature. Recent work is also developing to explore the concept of co-creation with respect to brand meanings through the operation of brand communities (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Schau et al., 2009; Ongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder, 2011) and wider cultural processes (Holt, 2004; Balmer, 2006).

Within the field of management and organization studies an important theme has been the intra-organizational effects of branding (e.g. Kärreman and Rylander, 2008), viewing branding as embedded within the employment relationship. Here cultural and social processes within the walls of the organization are explored, and brand symbolism is viewed, not only in its ability to attract customers and stakeholders, but also to elicit employee motivation and commitment through brand-identification. Whilst recent critical studies of branding in action are welcome, it is noticeable that studies are inevitably drawn to organizations that have a strong consumer brand (Google, IKEA, Lego, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines), and are hence easily recognisable. In addition there is an absence of empirical studies into the role of traditional HR functions such as recruitment and selection strategies and employee integration in relation to employer branding. This paper seeks to contribute to the emerging organizational branding literature by exploring branding in action for an organization whose brand is less well known. We do this though a particular focus on traditional HR practices as they relate to employer branding.

The Brand at Work

Scholarship on branding has historically been the preserve of marketers and understood as a form of organizational communication. Conceptualised in this way branding is seen as oriented externally and about the projection of images and meanings outward from

the organization to an audience of customers and clients (Levitt, 1981). More recently however there is evidence of a broadened or critical scholarship of branding and this seeks to recognise the unidirectional characteristic of branding (Mitchell, 2002). A key element of this has been the recognition of the way in which organizational brands find receptive audiences both inside and outside organizations. So whilst marketers have considered the role of branding most prominently from the perspective of external recipients, more recently studies have considered the role of branding from an employee perspective. Specifically this perspective considers how organizational brands for example might broker more intense forms of employee engagement with their organizations (Edwards, 2010). An additional area of investigation relates to how the brand might become a terrain over which the control over service work might be contested (Johnston and Sandberg, 2008). Alternatively the brand is also seen as offering opportunities to bring customers and employees together to engage in co-creation of value, products, services, images or meanings (Ind et al. 2013).

Seen from the view point of Human Resource Management, employer branding offers a vehicle to 'engage employee loyalty and build organizational commitment' (Martin et al., 2005:78). This is even more important in multi-brand organizations which face growing competition to attract and retain skilled, qualified employees as internal brand conflict can occur (Slavich et al, 2014). The role of brand images has been stressed in the literature on HRM, thus recognising that if people identify with the brand and integrate it into their own self-concept may become aligned with it, making them more willing to stay with the organization and potentially work harder and smarter (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Reiche, 2008).

Employees consuming the products of the organization for which they work might not be particularly new, however the idea of 'living the brand' away from the workplace (Miles and Mangold, 2004) is a more recent manifestation of this phenomenon. Building upon literature that recognises the influence that employees outside the workplace have upon corporate image formation (Kennedy 1977), the idea of living the brand has important resonance with the group popularity of roles such as 'brand ambassadors' (Thomson et al., 1999). Whilst critical scholarship points to wider implications with respect to privacy, work life balance and the regulation of conduct beyond the employment contract, living the brand calls for both display and performance, and potentially represents the brand image both within the workplace and outside.

It follows therefore that employee recruitment, selection, training and on-going monitoring is key to the alignment between behaviour and brand image, and potentially represents a new 'frontier for control' for the employment relationship. Some large organizations have enthusiastically adopted employer branding as a key aspect of their Human Resource Management (HRM) strategy (see Barrow and Mosley, 2005) and seek to promote the idea more widely to other organizations (e.g. Gotsi and Wilson, 2001, Martin and Hetrick, 2006), yet work beyond the often cited customer friendly brands is uncommon, thus signifying a significant gap in the literature.

The contribution that this paper makes lies in its focus on the concrete HR strategies of recruitment, selection and integration involved with branding. This shows how concepts and ideas that surround employer branding are put into practice. This empirical case study is useful on its own terms but the wider significances lies in our study of employer branding in conditions where the context is unreceptive for the introduction of change. Pettigrew (2012) highlighted this in his ICI study which critiques the rational and linear

processes of change, and for us, highlights how the internal practices of CollinaTrade do not benefit from a strong external brand context. This is important because for employer branding to be meaningful it must be utilised and be seen to be effective outside the narrow confines of a dominant consumer logic. We also show how employers and potential recruits engaged with elements of the brand during the recruitment process and how this requires us to consider branding as a performance discourse (Martin et al, 2005). Intangible assets and intellectual capital are used as a strategic advantage and HR specialists can make a greater claim to their need to be included in the brand management process because it will contribute to sustained organizational success. HR specialists also have a role to play with building bridges to other functions within the organization, such as the marketing department and ensuring that relationships are established with clients and customers (Martin et al, 2005). Despite the weak links between HR and branding in the past, it is recognised that in a global economy, the ‘war on talent’ and needing to be an ‘employer of choice’ is a central HR and business imperative for some organizations. The organization has to attract employees and retain them which is why becoming an employer of choice is a deliberate business strategy – it drives some organizations to benchmark themselves against others in the ‘Best Places to Work’ rankings. The challenge that branding can bring to an organization is brand risk which stems from poor employee performance and this can be damaging to brand reputation and image.

The Case Study Organization and Research Methodology

CollinaTrade is a global organization employing almost 20,000 people and operating in more than 120 countries. The organization is a world leader in developing, manufacturing, marketing and supplying high quality products for the construction industry. It specialises in products used in drilling and demolition, diamond coring and cutting, measuring, fire-stopping and screw fastening. The research was conducted at the organization’s UK headquarters located in the North of England. The British site employs approximately 600 people of which half have direct contact with customers. Worldwide the organization emphasises its customer orientation and the personal contact it offers to each of its customers: “*each day the Collina team has more than 200,000 individual customer contacts. This represents 200,000 opportunities to talk with the customer, to learn their needs and to offer solutions to their problems*” (Annual Report 2010). CollinaTrade has embraced many of the principles of relationship marketing (i.e. Grönroos, 1990) representing itself as a customer-driven organization, concerned not only with developing a relationship with customers but also with embedding customers’ views in their decision-making processes. It is recognised as crucial, that all employees, and particularly the customer-facing staff, deliver consistent ‘on brand’ performances that are viewed as authentic and in line with the organization’s values. For instance, the Annual Report (2006: 14) states:

CollinaTrade aims to recruit the best possible employees, people who are prepared to give their all and develop beyond what is actually required of them

The research presented in this paper was gathered through fieldwork engagements with the organization between December 2009 and September 2010. We selected CollinaTrade as a site for investigation because firstly we were committed to investigating the organization’s role and use of employer branding, rather than the branding of solely marketed products as this added to the academic literature. Secondly, it was an

organization that we had acquired contact with through one of the author's PhD research. This made accessibility easier.

Data collection included documentary analysis, interviews and non-participant observations. Seven individuals were interviewed during the three, day-long visits and they included one team leader, three fire engineers, two customer call centre employees and an off-site inspection manager. The rationale for the number of visits was based on the depth of data we acquired during this period of time, and the availability of the individuals involved due to their work schedules. The individuals interviews were selected on wider but shorter initial discussions we had with employees on the first visit. In addition, we spoke to the two call centre employees who then directed us to the team leader. This created a 'snowball' sample (Marshall, 1996, p. 523) whereby interviewees were asked to recommend individuals who work in and who were knowledgeable about the organization's brand. The individuals became more of a 'purposeful' (Coyne, 1997) sample as we were directed towards colleagues who felt that others in the organization may be able to add a different dimension to our research.

The early interviews with employees, including those in a management position were relatively unstructured and explored the organizational culture and HR practices. We did not at this point know that employer branding was going to be such a key feature of the research. Our focus initially was on the organization's culture as a broader phenomenon. Analysis of the interviews and discussions began immediately and involved identifying key words, writing ideas in the margin of field notes and expanding these as ideas emerged and connections were made. This was the first stage of the analysis that involved 'coding' (Emerson et al, 1995:146) the material and the analysis of the interviews resulted in us realising that three key themes reflected the ways in which the branding process at the organization took place, and these form the structure of the paper. We did not know in advance that branding would run through the HR practices of selection, recruitment and integration in the finely grained way that it appears to have done, but recognition of this provided 'the first step in translating experience...into the intellectual sphere...[whereby one]...gives it form' (Mills, 1959). It became a guide to analysing interviews, documents and our observations of meetings. The unexpected is, for us, one of the great strengths of detailed qualitative research and so it was 'only' over 'the course of the research', that we discovered 'what the research' was 'really about' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:175).

The third method of data collection involved documentary analysis. We obtained access to documents that enriched our understanding of the brand and how the organization aimed to influence the brand through active HR strategies. The most valuable document was the 'Team Camp Guide', which is distributed to all new recruits. Its 150 pages contain very little text as most of the information is displayed in symbols, diagrams and tables. The guide is perceived as significant in terms of communicating the brand and highlighting ways in which employees are encouraged to adopt the associated values and behaviours. The research therefore employed 'an array of interpretive techniques' so as 'to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency' (Van Maanen, 1988:520) of events and issues as they emerged through our time in the field.

The intention of our chosen methods of data collection was to spend a substantial period of time in the field so as to be able to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1993) of the events and organization observed. The three visits included invitations to lunch, coffee,

observations of the customer call centre and opportunities to talk to individuals informally as we spent time touring the building. Employees warmly invited us into their offices as we passed by on the organization tour and they often used this opportunity to invite us back before we departed for the day in order to inform us of aspects of the organization which they had not discussed when their fellow colleagues had been present. These observations had the aim ‘to gather first-hand information about social processes in a “naturally occurring way”’ (Silverman, 1993:111).

Recruitment, Selection and Integration

Recruitment

This section explores the way in which CollinaTrade seeks to attract a pool of candidates to put forward for interview, with the intention of selecting those that best fit the organization and the specific role. Our focus here is upon the way in which the brand is used as a recruitment tool to project key features of the organization to potential candidates and we consider two specific forms of recruitment used extensively by CollinaTrade; general advertising and recruitment fairs.

Participants when asked about branding most frequently made initial reference to Collina’s logo: its emblematic white lettering, with distinctive font on a background of red which makes it visually appealing and memorable. Brand colours and lettering help staff to embrace the brand as well as generate enthusiasm to encourage customers to embrace it too. As Keller (2012) discusses, colours, visual imaginary and the extent to which the brand signifies choice, increases trust and reduces risk is important in branding because it creates a level of value which is tangible and creates meaningful distinctions for customers to choose from. The visual display and use of recruitment adverts has also been found to differ between the profit and non-profit sector; the latter being supposedly less eye-catching and providing less information to potential employees regarding intrinsic values (interesting work, challenges, variety) in the advertisement description (De Cooman and Pepermans, 2012). All recruitment undertaken by the organization is done so against a background of the organization’s logo and this provides a starting point for the recruitment process. This is significant because many recruitment communications contain few if any organizational details except the logo, this therefore implies potential applicants will already know about the organization despite the lack of consumer brand.

CollinaTrade highlights the importance of recruiting individuals who are productive, self-motivated and whose contribution will add value to the organization (du Gay, 1996). CollinaTrade go beyond formal qualifications and experience and attempt to (re)define employee contribution beyond what is expected, thus rewriting new organizational expectations with a focus on employees beyond organizational boundaries. CollinaTrade is keen to attract people of a specific calibre, but it does this by promoting its own success, thus drawing attention to its position as a trusted and respected employer, for example they are ranked in the ‘The Sunday Times top 25 ‘Best Companies to Work For’ 2014 and use this to advertise to potential employees of the desirability of working for the organization. However beyond this they are keen to differentiate themselves on the basis of the ‘sorts’ of people they are looking to attract and this becomes evident in the job adverts. Mission statement and the core values are used as the starting point in all job adverts and secondary to a short description of the responsibilities of the role before

finally an outline of the necessary skills expected. The emphasis on core brand values dominates recruitment adverts.

Analysis of the organization's recruitment advert reveals a strong emphasis at the recruitment stage on individuals being focused on the customer and building relationships with them. Potential employees are required to demonstrate 'strong motivation and awareness'. The role advertised as 'Brand Manager' is reflective of the commitment that the organization has in terms of ensuring the brand is promoted as much as possible and 'managed' in a way which is seen as attractive to future applicants and existing employees and customers. The adverts also indicate the importance of wanting employees who are 'willing to relocate' and this is supported by a quote on the organization's website which states "*Our company is always searching for people who want to move things forward and bring new perspectives and innovative ideas. We continuously invest in the further development of our team members by providing them opportunities across functional and geographical borders as well as to pursue a career as an expert*" (CollinaTrade website, 2014)

The brand awareness and communication strategy is supported by the Human Resource Director of CollinaTrade who stated in a recent press release:

'...our brand represents premium and quality; therefore our people are the foundation of our brand. We recruit on our core values of integrity, courage, teamwork and commitment.' (Russell, 2011)

Notable from this quote together with analysis of job adverts is the absence of any meaningful discussion of the actual skills required for a role at CollinaTrade in their bid to appear entirely brand driven, with the emphasis on 'our people are the foundation of our brand' and 'we recruit on our core values...'. Despite the job adverts mentioning 'verbal and communication' skills, there is no reference to anything else required which is indicative of the way in which the brand is used as a benchmark from which to judge employees' suitability for working at the organization. It would be expected that even prior to employees joining, there would be some evidence of 'authentic' behaviour and 'self-motivation' which demonstrates the potential recruits fit with the organization. Hurrell and Scholarios (2014: 55) discuss this in terms of how job applicants' initial attraction to an organization occurs when they perceive a congruence between their own values and personality and what the organization presents as its culture, thus leading to a potential 'self-selection' process. Hannah, a newly recruited sales coordinator, reinforced this process by stating in a confident tone:

'I know the HR department are heavily involved in recruitment and I think [if] you start at that point and look for values (rather than qualifications or skill) in the individuals...before they come into the organization, there must be a really small chance that you get somebody that comes in that maybe it doesn't sit quite right with, and they don't end up believing in it...'

Hannah has clearly absorbed the person-brand fit approach to hiring emphasised at CollinaTrade. Here employees are pre-screened for their propensity to identify with, and incorporate, brand values. As discussed by Hurrell and Scholarios (2011) such an approach to selection, rather than emphasising the technical qualities of the recruitment and selection methods, focus on the social and interactive qualities allowing both parties to establish 'fit'. The need to retain employees who have this level of commitment appeared to be a continual objective which recruiters faced when interviewing candidates

and often led to a focus on graduate-level recruitment. Campus-based, University recruitment fairs play a key role in recruiting potential employees with CollinaTrade attending around 12 fairs a year. Apart from their direct role in recruitment, these fairs provide an opportunity to 'showcase' the CollinaTrade culture as a recent recruit testifies: "I saw CollinaTrade at a graduate fair (Nottingham University) and was really attracted to their culture, I could see that they were very forward thinking and that actually attracted me to the company"

A key element of the recruitment process is to attract what CollinaTrade term 'the right value'; as Elaine, a customer service representative stated:

"I know the CollinaTrade way of recruiting people, they look at you and they look at what your values are and what your experience is so the interview process from the beginning is very thorough, a systematic process where you're asked to explain the contexts and situations you've been in. Previous roles, previous experience is vital to them and you're asked to explain how it fits with their core values....[they]...want people who are ambitious, willing to go the extra mile".

Going the 'extra mile' has been classified by Ind (2004) as reflective of 'extra-role behaviours' undertaken by brand champions who are employees that show commitment to the organization and the lowest levels of brand sabotage. The alternative to brand champions are 'disruptors' who have the lowest level of extra-role behaviour and show a lack of contribution to the organization. Interestingly, in discussion, participants found it hard to think of anyone they would classify as a disruptor. This finding needs to be cautiously interpreted because of the possibility of impression management, although the frank tone of many of the interviewees does lead us to believe that the efforts to achieve fit by design were perceived largely to be successful.

A key value that CollinaTrade focus upon in the recruitment stage is the willingness of employees for future learning and their commitment to personal professional development throughout their careers. However, interestingly, rather than ask potential recruits to discuss their desire to learn (this is taken as given) CollinaTrade focus upon potential barriers to learning. Here CollinaTrade identify the need for potential recruits to show courage:

"You're looking for people who want to learn, you want people who want to develop their skills, give me more, I want to learn more. This is where we've formed the idea of courage because we want people that are actually prepared to try things they haven't done before"

The reference to being 'prepared to try things they haven't done before' resonates with branding as a 'constant trial' (Tarnovskaya, 2011) which refers to how employees were expected to constantly improve and work towards new projects or events, rather than stagnate. Employees clearly felt the weight of the on-going responsibility to improve when one recognised that: "you can't fall asleep here, you have to be awake to new things which are around the corner. If you start off success then you get a reputation, there's always an expectation you can give more" (fieldnotes).

Selection

In this section we consider how the organization chose between the various candidates at formal selection events. We draw upon interviews and discussions with successful

candidates as they recall their interviews. Our argument here is that selection is related to brand-specific HR initiatives in that candidates are selected on the basis of them being able to demonstrate behaviours and attitudes that are concurrent with espoused organizational brand-based values. Candidates are asked to use examples of previous or current work experience when they discuss how they are aligned to the CollinaTrade brand.

Through the selection interviews individuals are required to ‘confess’ (Collinson, 2003: 535) in order to expose their own qualities in relation to the brand as a pre-condition for being considered for employment. Prospective employees at CollinaTrade were asked to provide examples of situations where they showed the application in practice of Collina’s brand values. For instance, selection practices at CollinaTrade can involve active participation in job roles as described by one employee whom we interviewed shortly after she commenced work at the organization:

“I had a field day instead of attending an assessment centre. This was a chance for me to shadow somebody for the day to see if the role was something I would enjoy. I was picked up at half 8 by an Account Manager and spent the day asking her questions and seeing what the role involved. It was very enjoyable and extremely helpful as I have never known a company to do this”.

This form of selection extends the process beyond academic achievement and assessments of interview answers, and as Hurrell and Scholarios (2014: 56) state, approaching selection in this way can minimise the ‘social skills gap’, as it involves providing potential employees with an insight into their future job role. However, it effectively means that prospective employees can be fired before being hired! Employees are under constant observation throughout the day of their selection process and are being assessed in terms of whether they would be someone who would be a ‘brand ambassador’ (Hurrell and Scholarios, 2011: 63). This suggests that there is a call being made by the organization for prospective employees who are brand driven but also authentic in their outlook and who will be committed to call upon their own personality and values in order to service the brand and express it in their everyday work practices (Pederson, 2011). There is therefore an emphasis not only on identifying with the brand values but being able to demonstrate or display this identification to others. For instance, Sarah (corporate social responsibility officer) reflecting back on her interview recalled:

‘...in my interview I was asked to describe situations which showed the core values, so where I showed courage, teamwork, commitment...I used some examples from my previous job...’.

Only by employing individuals who ‘believe’ in the brand values can CollinaTrade continue to pursue its quest for authenticity. As Pederson (2011) found, employees are invited to be authentic at work by unleashing their creativity and utilising their private selves as a means of being more productive and spontaneous in the interests of the organization. As Callaghan and Thompson (2002) suggest companies aim deliberately to recruit and mould individuals who already have the ‘correct’ attitude on entry ensuring that individuals working in the organization will be both committed and motivated by the brand, and willing to reproduce branded dispositions and performances (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007).

As highlighted by Hurrell and Scholarios (2011) homogenisation is likely to be a consequence of employee-brand fit strategies that reinforce standardised representations

to ensure desirable conduct. In informal discussions in the field, a few employees admitted that an individual would find out very quickly if they were *'the right type of person for CollinaTrade'* as they would otherwise find it *'uncomfortable working here'* (notes made from informal discussion), yet curiously employers found it difficult to recall instances where this had actually happened. Despite this, respondents did seem to agree about the importance of belief in relation to the organization and its brand, Kim (sales co-ordinator) revealed, for example how she:

"couldn't go to [work for] another company which didn't do the same as CollinaTrade. I couldn't promote something I didn't believe in, I believe in CollinaTrade, its brand and its values; I couldn't work for them otherwise".

When encouraged to clarify what she meant when using the words 'value' and 'brand' Kim replied that they refer to *"how you live your life, if you do these things right then everything else will follow. It's about trustworthy, integrity – once you embody it, you love it"*. The reference that Kim makes to 'once you embody it' indicates that there is the potential for employees to embrace the brand beyond their working life in a way that becomes beneficial for the organization.

The increasing colonization of employees' private lives is reflected in the comments by Kelly (corporate social responsibility officer), as she recalls how she used some of the branded exercises used to align employees to the brand when teaching her son how best to behave.

"You take parts of CollinaTrade into your home life, it kinda drifts in. The cultural values and training we get has definitely helped with my young son. He's five now and a bit of a handful, but we've actually started using similar practices with him and we've replicated the training session with him. So, we use stuff like the courage and integrity value to tell him to 'be brave if things get tough' and 'behave at school because you get rewarded with gifts' (laughing). I've spoken to other guys here and they've done the same with their children, some of the things can help to resolve problems, it's great, in a funny sort of way"

Here Kelly is indicating that the boundaries between CollinaTrade as a workplace, and as a feature of one's personal life can become increasingly blurred.

Thus far, we have focused on the concept of 'fit' and brand loyalty 'inside' the organization's boundaries, yet an emerging theme in discussion was how employees must be cautious as to how they represent the brand outside of the confines of the organization As Cascio (2014: 122) warns *'...consider that your brand walks out of the door every night as employees go home and post news on Facebook or LinkedIn about what happened at work'*. CollinaTrade is facing this on a daily with 53,000 LinkedIn follows this also became a way we were able to establish and maintain research contacts with employees. It was useful to keep in touch with employees whom we had previously interviewed face-to-face but wanted to engage with for follow up questions. Ben (fire engineer) communicated with us via LinkedIn and mentioned that:

"Social networking is good for the brand, it allows us to display our values to the outside, but also we can see which potential employees are interested in us as a company. We get profiles of people asking for jobs and identifying their skills, asking if they would be 'right for the post'. LinkedIn is a platform where we can communicate to people before they even step through the door for an interview, it works both ways"

Organizations therefore need to consider the wider impact of web-based recruitment strategies, not only on the design and branding campaigns but the ways in which they reflect the attractiveness of the organization to potential recruits through branding campaigns.

Integration

In our final section we explore the way in which CollinaTrade seeks to integrate new recruits into the organization once they have been selected and the key role that the brand plays in this process. We specifically focus upon a textual analysis in the documentation that new starters received referred to as the ‘Team Camp Guide’ which CollinaTrade proclaims to be the ‘employee’s bible’. Secondly we explore the role that ‘corporate culture workshops’ play.

Team Camp Guide

The Team Camp Guide is a vital document for those joining CollinaTrade and acts as a reference point for all employees. It is carefully constructed and a good resource for documentary analysis as a way of attempting to understand how CollinaTrade perceives its own culture, and provides a ritualistic guide to introduce new employees into the CollinaTrade way of doing things. Analysis of the guide reveals a conceptualisation of culture *as a journey*; implicitly accepting a view of culture as dynamic and changing, emergent and processual. With the ‘journey itself rather than an end point being the objective, key employees along this journey are identified as SHERPA guides (Spirited, CollinaTrade Team Members, Energised to build, Relationships with customers, Passionate for Achieving) sustaining performance and profitable growth. Rather than attempting to describe or ascribe a specific version or articulation of culture, CollinaTrade favour aspirational objectives founded upon the concept of “*living strong values*” and this, it is suggested, shapes behaviours. Employees are encouraged to “*act with integrity ... demonstrate courage to go beyond the circle of habits ... outperform through team work [and].. have a commitment to personal and company growth*” (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 9)

The core values of CollinaTrade are represented in the Team Camp Guide book in a visual sense in the form of a compass, with the values of Integrity, Courage, Teamwork and Commitment shown as the magnetised pointer which guides employees in the ‘right’ direction (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 27). The justification of this is that the values (Integrity, Courage, Teamwork and Commitment) provide a means of rationalising ones behaviour and knowing that employees are engaging in their work in the appropriate and autonomous way that the organization encourages. As it states in the Team Camp Guide (2004: 27) ‘*...when we are in a difficult situation, a lonely situation...we have to rely on that compass. Who are we? What do we believe? Do we believe we are doing the right thing for the right reason?...And sometimes, that’s all we have*’.

Defining culture as “*the way things really get done around here*” (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 7) calls attention to behaviour and the ‘values framework’ that underpin it. CollinaTrade defines its business success as underwritten by “*Team Members rather than product, market performance, or innovation*” (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 1). A specific element of this is a twin focus on employees and customers and in both of these domains CollinaTrade’s desire is

to create what it terms ‘*CollinaTrade fans*’ (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 10). The attainment of which is measured externally by an annual global opinion survey (GEOS) to measure satisfaction, and engagement and integrated customer opinion survey (ICOS). There is a strong distancing from the idea that corporate culture initiatives are a ‘programme’ with references to on-going engagement and daily application of values.

Worthwhile Work

CollinaTrade attempt to imbue work with a sense of meaning; “*when we talk about core purpose, we mean serving a high purpose*” (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 19) this transcends the humdrum of everyday employment and encourages employees to see beyond products and services. An important issue for CollinaTrade is the way in which a higher purpose might be conceptualised in an organizational context. CollinaTrade draw upon abstract notions for example by comparing the ‘bricklayer’ and the ‘cathedral builder’. An image in the team camp guide portrays two workers working with identical tools on identical stone blocks. We see one worker, with a glum face, imagining an assemblage of blocks, the other worker envisaging a cathedral with a smiley face. The Team Camp Guide poses the question “*Which one can you get passionate about?*” (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 20)

Envisaging passionate, purposive work however is not merely an abstract task but has practical implications. Using a ‘Focus-Energy Matrix’ managers are asked to locate themselves and their past work within a two-by-two grid with the quadrants labelled as ‘procrastinators’ (routine tasks, fail to take initiative or raise performance or engage with strategy), ‘disengagement’ (lack energy and resources to engage or see little meaning in work, ‘distraction’ (are unfocused and create confusion, sometimes desperate to do anything) and ‘purposefulness’ (feel personal responsibility for the organization’s fate and demonstrate unrelenting will power).

For CollinaTrade work is central to life, furthermore what they term worthwhile life is infused with values.

“We have evaluated the way we have lived our life over the past 50 years and realised that a work ethic without ethics leads to corruption. A goal without a mission takes us nowhere important. A life without work based on no value has little value. Despite some good intentions, we are experiencing 50% divorce rates, substance abuse crisis, and an epidemic of low self-esteem. Now we realise it isn’t enough to just make a living; we want to make a life. What we are aiming for is balance. A balance between our personal and professional lives that leaves us feeling satisfied and full, not frustrated and empty” (Team Camp Guide, 2004: 48)

This quote in the Team Camp Guide about the necessity of balance between work life and home life is not the same as simply stating that employees should strive for authenticity or achievement in either one of those areas. Instead CollinaTrade encourages employees to give equal commitment and achievement in both work and home life in order to be a ‘worthwhile’ individual where neither area is compromised. When we spoke to Sandra (call centre employee) she clarified to us what the ‘balance’ meant:

“CollinaTrade are very good with encouraging you to be yourself. If you have a family and you’re aiming for the work-life balance, well, within the company there’s lots of things they do, they do family fun days and involve your family at Christmas parties, that includes partners, and children have even been known to come along and be looked after while we enjoy ourselves (laughs). I

think it's a real clever thing that CollinaTrade do, involve the family, you're not just an employee number here, you're a person who has a family at home and a life outside, it's very inclusive"

Employees are directed to align their personal goals with the organization's values and here freedom to act is granted albeit based on purpose and values in the context of responsibility for results. From a leadership perspective this involves enabling team members to exercise their empowerment to achieve goals.

When we asked Kim (sales co-ordinator) what she thought about 'worthwhile' work and what she meant by 'values', the response was:

"Values are something which are deeply embedded in the CollinaTrade culture. I always see my work here connected to the way I live my life outside, if that makes sense. So if you get the values right inside the company then your life outside will be good and will follow that path too. It is about being trustworthy and having integrity, but CollinaTrade also recognises that we are all people at the end of the day as well as employees and once you embody that then you're more likely to be satisfied and enjoy your life. I've been here fourteen years and still have the same level of enthusiasm when I started, that says something"

Bob (team leader) recalled that the 'work-life balance' has even involved team holidays to reinforce to employees that a break away from the company will help refocus employees, enabling them to return to work relaxed and refreshed:

"There have been instances when teams have gone on fabulous holidays, some of which were worth four thousand pounds! This was in an attempt to show to employees how much the company valued them and that work life is only effective if you're happy outside of work as well, you know, so spending time with family abroad and relaxing. Yes it was with your work colleagues but we're like a big family here so no-one really minded"

Induction

Once employed CollinaTrade place a significant emphasis on what it terms integration, identifying successful integration as resulting in employees who remain with the organization for two years or more. The way in which they achieve this is to enrol all employees at the CollinaTrade training centre which consists of full day classroom based and practical demonstrations. The initial aim of it appeared to be introducing new recruits to the technology that the organization sells. However, as time went on, it became clear to us as we observed from a distance that individuals were being continually exposed to the organization's brand values and being encouraged to share their strengths and weaknesses. One exercise involved individuals sitting in a circle and taking it in turns to explain something which they were currently anxious about and the other members of the group would offer solutions to improve it. This became somewhat of a 'sounding board' as employees discussed a range of matters from personal to professional worries. Although it appeared cathartic to some, it was obvious that others found it difficult and awkward, causing more anxiety than the original issue they were meant to be discussing. This 'offloading' session began to form a personal development plan with the intention to address learners' needs and concerns. The induction training was explained by Ruth (new recruit):

“you were asked to talk about some personal stuff which was a bit strange in front of strangers, but it got easier and I know it was related to the value of ‘courage’ – not being afraid and all that. The whole induction day, well, I didn’t really think of it as a structured induction day, like I’ve experienced with other companies, very formal and rigid. Here it was relaxed, informal and I found myself taking product information in without even realizing it. It was very interactive and informative, really good fun”

Employees’ ability to ‘integrate’ successfully was continually monitored alongside CollinaTrade’s retention, development and predetermined sales targets in a strategic way. After individuals had worked in the organization for three and six months, they were given an integration questionnaire testing their acquired skills and knowledge thus far. One of the experienced members of the training team explained:

“We are producing quality people who identify with our culture and are able to develop successful careers within the organization” (Nigel, team leader).

One way of utilising and reinforcing employees’ success and strengths is through the reward and recognition programme called CollinaWorld. Employees were involved in rewarding each other in recognition of good work with gifts, tokens and the creation of “raving fans” awards for customers who are loyal. The impact of CollinaWorld as a brand communication strategy was exemplified to us when we walked past the multiple open plan offices. Looking in through the open doors directed our attention to employees’ desks where it became clear that successful individuals could use the gifts they had been awarded by their team members to distinguish themselves from others. Gifts were displayed on their desks and became symbolic of the value and gratitude that others had for them. One of the items that we saw was a plug-in speaker which was attached to employees’ computers and was the result of them receiving five tickets; this meant that five people had nominated them for a reward. The significance of the gifts was also due to the branded products being unable to be purchased outside the organization and therefore became merchandise which was specific to employees who had embraced and represented the brand. The branded items received by employees became part of the integration and socialisation process and by allowing employee agency it appeared to lead to stronger brand identification (Hurrell and Scholarios, 2011). As Alison (customer service rep) discussed with us:

“It’s nice to be able to give gifts to colleagues and thank them for doing stuff for us. Sometimes you come into the office and you’ve already had a bad morning and the day hasn’t even started, but then one person may just make you laugh, or smile, or make you a coffee and you feel tons better. Its things like that which we thank and reward each other for, and the branded items are top quality, you wouldn’t get this outside”

Employee agency which was encouraged at CollinaTrade through the rewarding of colleagues who embraced the brand could be seen in a negative light by some as a means by which to enact surveillance techniques (Searle, 2006) or as Willmott (1993: 534) stated “...corporate culture programmes are designed to deny or frustrate the development of conditions in which critical reflection is fostered. They commend the homogenization of norms and values within organizations”.

Corporate Culture Workshops

CollinaTrade were proud to inform us in interviews that they invest in more than 35,000 working days per year in corporate culture workshops, stating that corporate growth and individual growth go hand in hand. *Zoomorphic* workshops involve the instillation of the brand values to employees by communicating them (integrity, courage, worthwhile work) through the use of animals, thus encouraging individuals to embrace the brand in a fun, memorable and humorous way (the animals include squirrels, beavers and geese). CollinaTrade drew on the book by Blanchard and Bowles (1998) as a means by which to convey their use of animals as symbolic representations of the organization's values. Firstly, squirrels represent 'worthwhile work' because they spend time collecting food and storing it for the winter; this demonstrates the organization's value of 'working towards a shared goal' and knowing that everyone '...can make the world a better place' (Blanchard and Bowles, 1998: 38). Secondly, Beavers encourage individuals to be autonomous and take responsibility for their own work, and everyone's opinions, feelings and needs are listened to and acted upon (ibid: 74). Thirdly, Geese are the manifestation of teamwork which is reflected in the ways in which employees support and 'cheer each other one' (ibid: 133) and is shown in the way that they use the Raving Fan award scheme and reward each other with gifts.

Using animals as a brand strategy helps employees to remember the values and want to be associated with them. We spoke to a team leader who was responsible for communicating the brand values to employees through the zoomorphic workshops. His role was one of interest and disbelief to us. Bob (team leader) reflected on a previous training session:

"...it got to the evening session and then we all dressed up as penguins and started (chuckling) using this analogy of change through 'Our Iceberg is Melting' which is a book that was written which just uses the metaphor of melting ice and penguins to talk about the situation...there are some things that if they're changing and if your iceberg is melting you need to do something about it and the different characters were played by penguins to dramatise it...so we didn't like the drama but there we are again putting it in a different way, so we do like drama really..."(laughing)

Bob (team leader) continues to describe his role in communicating the brand values to employees; we later find out he is actually talking about himself:

"...he's [fox] made of real stuff you know so its dead animal skin and some people don't like it, you know he's got a stuffed fox on his head...some people don't like it because it's furry. But removing that away from it, I mean it's just a fox. It's at least manmade, although I think he might have some ears on his head (laughing)"

As is evident from the team leaders' quotes, the brand communication involves a rather bizarre approach, as would be viewed by the outsider whereby team leaders who are running a team building or training session, would dress up as animals, reflecting symbolic organizational values. The brand creation and communication tactics were made clearer when speaking to Sarah who said:

"...I think it's clever how they've done it and you do see people thinking 'gosh' when Bob does put some of his stuff on...you think 'what is he wearing that for' but it's what is actually said and how people actually engage with it [that] is what you kind of take away from them...it's a clever way to help you remember things with these characters and stuff because you do remember when Bob jumps out wearing a fox outfit! (laughing)"

The associated with this particular incident was a vivid memory in employee's minds as more than one of them recalled it and this was the organization's intention as it was a key to leveraging the brand throughout the organization. The workshops were also supported with specific team building and brand related exercises which helped the brand message be shared across the various departments.

One event which was used to reinforce the values was recalled by three individuals during an interview and it was based on an exercise whereby they took it in turns to stand on a six foot wooden pole and fall backwards into the arms of their colleagues below. This aimed to improve trust relationships between teams and encourage them to rely on each other for support which could be replicated within their job roles. Employees expressed their concerns at participating in the task, especially about their fear of not being caught by their colleagues. Kim, who commented on her body weight throughout the interview, reflected back to the event, and laughing said:

“...six foot may not sound high but when you're up on the sixth step that means your head is eleven foot off the ground...me, being a big girl, I didn't want to do it. But my team told me to let me eyes follow the ceiling and I would just fall back, and so I did it, and they caught me!”

Such events reinforced the value of 'courage' but also encouraged effective collaboration and support by finishing the event with a 'team cheer' (notes from informal discussion) where employees all huddled together, put their hands in the centre of the circle and cheered. Other practices to reinforce the brand values included making a video of 'University Challenge' where teams classified themselves into what one employee termed the 'cool ones and the geeks' (comments from fieldnotes). The event was videoed so it could be replayed later and employees said that they made adverts of CollinaTrade so that it 'looked like a real TV show' and they used it to promote the organization's products which had to include the logo and branded colours.

Conformity to display and articulate the brand is reflected in Kim's comment, when she implies that she felt there was an expectation to be actively involved in all activities, along with her peers. She stated:

“In these team events we do, you have to participate; you can't just sit there, you have to contribute. It's not just about revealing things, but it's about team work, supporting others and this helps you to bring that back into the work you do at company level. It helps you work together on a daily basis”

The majority of employees discussed the team camp guide and the internal branding events at CollinaTrade in a positive way. Descriptions included how such practices meant 'having a bit of a laugh' and 'being really good fun'. Bob (team leader) however expressed to us that sometimes the activities made people feel awkward and uncomfortable as employees were required to behave in ways that reflected CollinaTrade's brand, even though the activities were perceived as embarrassing. This was demonstrated when the managing director was forced to massage someone's hand and arm in order to develop positive relationships with his employees and colleagues. Hardly able to explain the situation due to laughing, we have selected the following lengthy quote by Bob to illustrate what he meant:

“...you know it gets a bit touchy feely [in the team camps] and so we get new people together and we talk about this idea of teamwork, what does it mean and everybody knows what it means...one of the key things is doing things for each other...helping each other out. Right, so then I say what we’re going to do is massage the person’s shoulders in front of you [showing me as if he is massaging] so we all have a bit of a laugh because you can’t do it without laughing (chuckling). So we get them to massage each other’s shoulders and so that’s the first step towards teamwork, innit? But you know, I remember our MD, this big macho type (laughing) we did this session on one of the camps of hand and arm massage. You can imagine that massaging male to female was fine, but massaging male to male (laughing), yeah, well, he wasn’t too happy about that, not too happy about doing that at all! I had to tell him to remember one of our values is courage, so what have you got to lose, it’s only us in the room...”

The value of ‘courage’ was mentioned as a key aspect of the brand and it was expected that employees embraced it in order to show their commitment and alignment to the organization.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper has been to explore how employer branding manifests itself in an organizational context where brand recognition is less prevalent. We were also keen to focus upon concrete HR practices that are designed to embed employer branding and to assess their implications. In an organization whose brand is less well known, we have sought to demonstrate how recruitment, selection and integration all have a role to play in achieving brand-based fit. Our case study approach provides an ideographic account but is relevant to wider organizations via theoretical generalisation.

Sirianni et al (2013) argues that person to person communication in relation to employer branding is much more effective than advertising because it is memorable and employees can use their personality to transfer the brand to customers. For example, employees at Southwest Airlines are required to display attributes of the brand through being fun, happy and lively when engaging with customers (Miles and Mangold, 2005) and the sports brand Lululemon Athletica strategically hire avid runners and yoga teachers to promote their physically active brand image (Sacks, 2009 in Sirianni et al, 2013). The transfer of the brand values to customers is however only possible once employees have embraced the brand and can demonstrate the brand values through their behaviours and verbal communication to customers. The authentic display of brand values must therefore go further than surface acting (Hochschild, 1993). When brands are communicated in a memorable way to customers, they become familiar and more familiar brands need less brand-alignment between employees and customers (Sirianni et al, 2013). We see this in our data through the way in which CollinaTrade are keen to recruit employees who understand the value of personal relationships so that they are not only recruited on the strength of the brand but are willing to become brand advocates in their interactions with customers. Furthermore, our respondents also show an understanding and acceptance that each in customer interaction and, indeed, in all aspects of their lives, they are always brand ambassadors.

Importantly however the way in which the brand is used in recruitment shows that the organization assumes potential employees have already at least partially acquired the brand code this is surprising given the lack of substantive customer brand. Interviews for example require recruits to show how, in previous roles, they have displayed values

and behaviours they may be closely aligned to CollinaTrade, an approach which brings to the fore social and interactive qualities of the individual, often at the expense of more formally defined skill sets. Theoretically, in relation to the wider application of employee branding, this helps us to understand the shift from technically-based skills recruitment platforms to a growing emphasis on social competence and behavioural qualities and the way in which the grammar of branding is well understood if unevenly distributed. This process of recruiting brand-fit seems to be intensified via the use of technology, so paradoxically while, Sivertzen et al (2013) argue that recruitment processes involve getting the right potential recruits by encouraging people to search for jobs using social media, word of mouth through reputation, and the internet to apply for vacancies, Searle (2006) warns of the potential for control, autonomy and power to be taken away from the applicant as new technological recruitment and selection techniques are used to make the process rapid and cost-effective.

Our data here also provides empirical support for Slavich et al (2014: 185) when they point to the way in which organizations assess brand-fit, first and foremost: 'In order to prevent mistakes in the selection process, we always try to assess whether the candidate fits the brand, rather than just assessing the job qualifications'. More broadly, brand-based selection strategies therefore aims to achieve individual-brand fit, whereby individuals align themselves with the organizational brand and use it as a 'mirror' to reflect their own identity and vice versa (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991: 551). A recent article by Jin (2014: 423) identifies where there is a gap between individuals and their organization, then they are likely to '...borrow the identity of their organization to fill out the gaps, so that the direction of the integration may head toward organization-side'. This has important implications for HR in that they become the primary producers and distributors of brand communications in non-consumer sectors as opposed to the role that marketing has historically been assumed to play. Selecting for 'fit' may however lead to decisions based on whether individuals are similar to those already in the organization, thus risking the creation of an isomorphic and homogeneous workforce. Socially this raises the theoretically possibility of new forms of inequalities.

The internal brand strategy at CollinaTrade was also based on encouraging potential employees to internalise the brand before employment commences, and in the recruitment process attention is paid specifically to the relationship between skills offered by candidates and organizational values. CollinaTrade refer to this as 'getting the right people on the bus in the right seat, doing the right things...' (Corporate Review, 2008: 14). If employees find the brand values appealing and can resonate with them, then they will be more committed to pursuing organizational objectives, whilst simultaneously affirming their own individuality (Pederson, 2011). However, with this in mind, maybe the question should also be 'what happens to those that do not embody it?' In becoming brand portraits 'people must recognise the brand value as their own' (Kapferer, 2004: 52) so that the brand is represented not only when interacting with customers but in most aspects of life. As brands lack material, tangible dimensions it remains unclear what individuals can do if they are perceived as lacking brand fit.

Through informal recruitment fairs and work trials, it appears that potential employees at CollinaTrade were able to gather important information on the organization's brand 'personality' thus facilitating a dynamic assessment of their fit with the organization. CollinaTrade appeared to be 'honest' about their brand values during the selection process, pointing to examples of what would be considered as non-fit. As with many

examples of organizational research, the ‘missing population’ or those who were not recruited, remain a silent voice that further studies will need to amplify.

While seemingly benign, the expansion of brand alignment and behavioural compliance into realms outside the formal work sphere is potential evidence of the extension of capitalist control through the mechanism of brand-identification, beyond the confines of the workplace and into the home lives of employees. This type of strong identification with the brand is more likely to be facilitated by recruitment and selection practices that promote person-brand fit. That said, it must also be recognised that the ‘fit’ with the organization is not just a decision made by the employer, but arguably more importantly by the potential employee who can make brand-fit judgements prior to getting hired. Drawing on the notion of ‘Fits Like a Glove’ (FLAG) taken from Allen’s (2002) work, we can see that decision making with regards to employment is an intuitive, spontaneous process that is made *in situ* and shaped partly by an employee’s previous experiences and history. Alan (2002) argues that individuals self-select an organization because their decision-making is based on an intuitive or spontaneous process and follows an underlying identification with the brand. The use of the phrase ‘fits like a glove’ illustrates how employees self-select themselves into the organization by virtue of what they see, or whether their experience previously and socio-historical background is similar to the organization they are applying for. Our research also thus draws attention to the important role of employee agency within the recruitment and enculturation process. Branding here is not prescribed and controlled, rather employees are encouraged to be active in demonstrating fit and provides an example of active rather than passive socialisation.

In addition, our methodological approach reveals an experiential element to recruitment and selection where part of the branding processes are experienced through non-work elements of play, dramatization and informality. This works to incorporate and broaden the appeal to a wider range of employees. In this organization, animals are symbolically commodified, with their attributes enveloped into human behaviours and values. This provided a powerful way of positioning the brand and allowing a range of individual pathways to alignment with it. Although further research is needed in this area to identify whether different organizational brands have similar practices to achieve employee identification and fit, this does reveal the creativity with which organizations are designing HR processes to promote brand-fit.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper provides insights the ways in which employer branding is enacted in a non- consumer brand industry. We respond to our research question by focusing specifically upon HR strategies but in doing so show their importance, creativity and point to some unforeseen potential implications. A key aspect of our empirical account is the documentation of the ways in which an organization’s brand and socialisation techniques draw on a variety of methods in order to encourage person-brand fit and align individual values to the organization, both pre-and post-hire. We point to implications wider than the individual organization or even industry through theoretical generalisation and this contributes to the branding literature by focusing upon a sector that is traditionally neglected by employer branding studies. As a corollary, our work demonstrates the centrality of the HR function and the ways in which this

reinforces critical scholarship on branding which calls for an evaluation wider than a narrow marketing perspective.

Our study raises important questions, especially in relation to the potential unintended consequences of employer branding strategy with respect to new forms of inequality. However, our work is limited by its inability to explore these issues with unsuccessful applicants to CollinaTrade and perhaps more importantly those who were put off from applying in the first place. A further consideration is to question the extent to which employees actually joined the organization due to the brand, or whether it was a secondary aspect of their self-selection process. It is not clear from the research that we undertook whether the brand was the only reason for the level of commitment and person-brand fit; more finely grained analysis would be required to answer this question. We can only assume this is the case, but when reflecting on the negative thoughts and anxieties shown by some individuals during the 'massage' task for example, it becomes questionable whether their original positive perception still remains once hired.

Due to the informality and the humour associated with the employer brand, we may question whether this makes it easier for employees to buy into the brand or whether they genuinely feel a sense of passion and worth from working in an organization that seems to acknowledge them as individuals but requires alignment to a collective brand. The drive for employees to self-select on the basis of the organization's brand is something to be explored in greater detail. Given the apparent positive references to the culture that many employees referred to, it is worth considering the extent to which these are reflective of their own actual thoughts and if the congruence between verbal expression and actual practice is genuine or a display for the purpose of researchers and/or management. Encouraging employees to express their thoughts in an alternative manner, such as a diary or blog may reveal more that we could acquire through interviews and observations.

CollinaTrade has an explicit focus on ensuring that potential employees are well suited and matched to the organization and in doing so, it experiences little employee turnover. After recruitment and selection has occurred and hiring is complete, brand identification and person-organization fit is not simply left down to chance with employees' commitment assumed as something which will be maintained relentlessly. Instead, the organization continues to enact practices through the team camp guide and use of cultural workshops to strategically embed the expected brand requirements and associated behaviour into employees. For some, this may appear a control driven mechanism to socialise and restrict employee autonomy, but from the perspective of the organization it is infused with the attempt to ensure that the 'right' person is selected so both individual and organization attributes are matched in an active enculturation process, leading to a reduced social skills gap and a more productive happy and aligned workforce.

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