

[A LETTER FROM VAL]

Emergency Employment Branding More than a Lick and a Promise

Dear Friends:

Did you hear about the Internet company who just lost an individual contributor engineer to a local competitor who offered him a \$500,000 sign-on bonus? We just heard that one on our VF&Co BatPhone. Did you read about the US Justice Department busting major tech companies including Google, Apple, and Adobe for prospective employee “Do Not Call” lists? If you didn’t think that the war for talent was back, these stories should convince you. Let’s get right to the point with exactly what you need to do to keep the employees you want to keep, and be able to hire the ones you need to hire. This is when you revisit your Employment Branding. Unless you’re in a really bizarre business (using prison labor to make furniture you sell back to prisons...), this Employment Branding stuff is way critical to your success.

I’ve got corporate clients who’ve done a bunch of acquisitions and if you call five of their internal extensions, you’ll hear five different company names. Doesn’t build confidence. So, what do you need to know? Employment branding is “A targeted, long-term strategy to manage awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders to drive recruitment, retention and productivity management efforts.” Be careful: your marketing is only as good as your product. Employment branding is not just about communicating; it’s about having something positive and compelling to share.

In order for employment branding to work, you’ve got to do all of the below:

1. Heal those corporate wounds. If you’ve got the cobwebs of dissent left over from downsizings, pay cuts, and lack of time to perform an ideal level of management, deal with it now. A public acknowledgement, (“What’s happened has happened and now let’s move on. Here’s the new plan.”) followed by rolling out the strategic plan is a great start.
2. Share the vision. Revitalize the entire workforce by sharing the new strategic plan and then having managers roll that down throughout the organization until every single person knows exactly what he or she must do to contribute.
3. Set the new tone. Put back much-needed structure. People miss the weekly one-to-ones. They miss direction, and hearing what’s going on. Retrain your managers and supervisors on a back-to-basics of goal setting, strategy, delegation, and empowerment.
4. Pay market rates even if you “can’t” afford it. Coming out of a recession, it’s better to have fewer employees who are being paid market rates and feeling good about it than to have more who aren’t and don’t. Your competitors will be happy to take your high performers and pay them more—remember the \$500,000 sign-on bonus!
5. It’s all about the career. Have you revisited career paths at your company recently? Where can each person go next? How can both the Average Joe and the executives continue to guarantee their employability?
6. Develop an Employment Brand identity. Even if it’s a simple one or you ‘borrow’ most of it from a competitor. You know, “We’re #2, so we’ll let you do more and grow your career faster.” “We’re small, you have a greater impact.” “We’re bigger, so you get more resources and can work on the cutting edge.” Take any position and brag about it; otherwise the market will determine it for you.

7. Word on the street must be positive or mute. Gossip about how awful your CEO is and how bad the culture is, always sprouts organically like tomato plants in my compost. You need to communicate 400% as much positive stuff to counter the negative. Your recruiters and search firms can really help with this (remember: Telephone, Telegram, Tell-a-Recruiter).

8. Someone's actually in charge of this branding stuff. Overhauling your Employment Branding now, and refreshing it regularly is probably not part of your job description. Do it yourself, or make someone accountable for it.

9. Partner with corporate PR. Employment Branding is HR's PR, and people lose respect if the "style" sheets and messaging are subpar. Think excellence and consistency: website, job descriptions, one-pagers for recruiters, aligned LinkedIn profiles, posters, internal newsletters, interview training, a paragraph inserted into offer letters.

Back to the BatPhone. Batman was all about style, with hidden strength. Employment Branding is the same: it's gotta look good inside and out.

This month I'd like to thank Carol Mahoney, a visionary talent management consultant, for referring us business. Thanks, Carol. You rock!

Take care,
Valerie Frederickson

Ask Valerie

Dear Valerie:

Everyone at my company is so demoralized about, you know, pay cuts, layoffs, and forced holiday closings, even though we are doing better now and haven't had any mandatory closings recently. We've tried ice cream socials and talking to them, but nothing seems to work.

- Frustrated

Dear Frustrated:

Try pizza instead. No, seriously. You've got to have a multi-pronged change management strategy here. Have an exec announce the new reality; roll out the new strategic plan; trickle it down until every, single employee understands what they should be doing; and then only listen to conversations about results and how people are achieving them.

Dear Valerie:

I agree with you that the average employee doesn't have a clue about exactly what their manager wants them to be working on. The problem at my company is that the executives don't know either, and there is this huge lack of leadership at the top.

- Bummed

Dear Bummed:

If this is really true, it's time to change jobs. Otherwise, figure out how you can be part of the solution, not pointing fingers at the problem.

Dear Valerie:

My CEO insists that we pay below market. We did 20% pay cuts two years ago and haven't raised anyone since. We lost four people last month at the Director-level, and I'm having a hell of a time finding replacements. How can I convince him?

- Concerned

Dear Concerned:

Too bad you can't take him to a produce market and show him the price of the nice, shiny apples, and then show him the apples they have over at the clearance bin, you know, the worm-eaten, bruised ones. All you can do is to show him the turnover reports. Who knows? Maybe for a variety of reasons, high turnover is not important to him.

- Valerie

[HR Consultant & Contractors' Corner](#)

What's Up in HR At Successful Companies?

Each month you can check out what's critical to our clients by seeing what kinds of HR projects we're doing.

Cool Contracting & Consulting Assignments:

- **Talent, talent everywhere** — Top talent management contracting role with an exciting web-based company to help bridge their talent acquisition leadership gap while they search for a full-time VP
- **CFOptions** — Career coach working with a career CFO who is reviewing career options and a potential change after many years in the function
- **Client is having Bene-fits** — Client is having fits trying to get their benefits under control. Contractor is on-site to address issues and review systems alternatives to improve efficiencies and control cost.
- **Make me relevant, please** — Conducting HR workshop focused on HR Competencies which directly relate to business objectives and practical application to improve HR's perceived relevance
- **Collateral Damage** — Executive coaching assignment to help a very talented leader improve their inter-personal skills, reduce casualties and lessen their organization's stress

[Current Executive Searches](#)

Vice President of Human Resources (Bellevue, WA)

Newly-created position at a high-tech consumer services company, reporting to the head of HR and responsible for over 1,500 employees worldwide. Provide guidance and support to the executives leading the various divisions of this rapidly-growing global organization and lead a high-performing international HR team. Hands-on experience in both large and small organizations and senior-level communication and interpersonal skills required.

Vice President of Human Resources (Bellevue, WA)

Responsibility for approximately 1,500 employees of a major high-tech web-based firm, with offices spread across 51 locations and 30 countries. Report to the head of HR and support the sales and analytics group executives for a global, fast-paced, rapidly-expanding organization. Hands-on HR generalist background with extensive international experience and senior-level communication and interpersonal skills required.

Vice President of Talent Management (Pacific Northwest)

Very strategic talent management executive to manage all talent initiatives of an international Fortune 1000 tech company, including staffing, succession planning, leadership development, employee engagement, and employee retention across numerous businesses. Significant leadership experience and sophistication required. Full-time or Contract-to-Hire.

Director of Human Resources (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Exciting start-up role as the first on-the-ground HR leader for a global, Internet-based consumer products and services company. Hands-on and strategic impact setting up HR systems and processes, and hiring the entire team for the new Brazil office. Must be legal to work in Brazil, speak fluent English and Portuguese, and be familiar with Brazilian labor laws.

Director of Human Resources (San Jose, CA)

Reporting to the GC, who is a big fan of HR, manage all HR-related activities for this high-growth, pre-IPO startup including organizational development, strategic planning, total rewards, recruitment, employee relations, training and development, and more. This is an upgrade role and will give the right candidate a chance to put his or her mark on HR at the firm, plus get a lot of easy wins!

Director of Human Resources Operations (San Francisco, CA)

Reporting directly to the global VPHR of a major global professional services firm, manage all HR operations including shared services, systems, processes, strategic planning. Partner with key HR leaders around the world to provide creative, cost-effective upgrades and solutions in a variety of value-added areas.

Compensation & Benefits Manager (San Francisco, CA)

For high-profile, high-growth startup with very sophisticated CEO and board, report to the VPHR and lead all rewards strategies and hands-on work. Work directly with the board of directors and support the VPHR to provide competitive rewards packages for an in-demand group of employees.

Benefits (and Systems) Manager (San Francisco, CA)

Leading benefits role for a global professional services firm with an excellent reputation for treating their employees well. Manage all benefits-related issues and activities including vendor negotiations and management, employee relations, and provide a high level of service to the diverse employee population. Prefer someone with a strong systems background. Full-Time or Contract-to-Hire.

Talent Acquisition Manager (Taipei, Taiwan)

Manage full-cycle recruiting across Asia-Pacific including locations in Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Korea for a mobile-phone and mobile device applications provider with a truly fabulous, sophisticated HR team ready to help you take your career to the next level. Could be a rotational role with the US or in other HR roles in two years.

Human Resources Manager (Taipei, Taiwan)

Responsible for all aspects of HR for an extremely high-growth tech company in the APAC region with employee population of approximately 18,000. Manage staffing, retention programs, training and development, employee relations, and legal.

HR Business Partner (Plano, TX)

Partner with internal business leaders to prepare and manage the people strategy going forward for a name-brand technology company, including succession planning, communications, leadership development, training, and retention.

Industry Events

13th World Human Resources Congress

September 27–29, 2010 — Montreal, QC, Canada

Learn and network with 3,500 dedicated HR professionals from around the world at the 13th World Human Resources Congress in Montreal this fall! Renowned HR experts from Canada, USA, Mexico, France, Switzerland, Singapore, UK, Australia, Dubai, the Netherlands, and Puerto Rico will be offering almost 100 sessions based on this year's theme of "HR Without Limits".

Human Resource Executive's 13th Annual HR Technology Conference

September 29–October 1, 2010 — Chicago, IL

Based on real-time feedback from LinkedIn group members, this year's HR Technology Conference in Chicago will focus on three critical areas in HR technology – Talent Management, Social Media and HCM & Workforce Planning. Additionally, the conference will be revisiting some of the more traditional functional areas (such as payroll, compensation, and benefits) that may have plagued you for years. The highlight of this conference will be the hands-on Twitteriversity training class that will turn you into a pro in just 75 minutes!

NCHRA Strategic Compensation Conference

October 5, 2010 — San Francisco

Does your compensation plan drive your organization's goals? Popular motivation studies may laude the relational side of our workplaces, but these more intangible influencers assume that the foundation of the social/employment contract—compensation—is solid. Successful HR leaders know the importance of compensation. How does your plan ensure success? Join Valerie as she leads this full-day conference to exchange creative and practical ideas for successfully reshaping your total rewards agenda.

The Middle East HR Summit

October 24–28, 2010 — Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Through extensive research conducted with regional HR Practitioners, the Middle East's premier HR Summit offers cutting-edge insights into the latest trends and developments on both a local and international scale. The programme gives you the opportunity to develop effective strategies that are key to the success of all organizations, and provides a platform for debate, Q&A, creativity and knowledge sharing.

European HR Directors Business Summit 2011

January 24–25, 2011 — Birmingham, United Kingdom

The HR Directors Business Summit 2011 features the leading HR business practitioners and thinkers sharing insights into the challenges faced by the HR Director and the future of the HR function. The 2011

agenda will address the core issues of business transformation, skills shortage, team building, self-service HR, HR 2.0, and top challenges for the European HR Director role. Key speakers include HR executives from Royal Mail, Standard Life, The BBC, Axa UK, ACAS and The Carphone Warehouse.

Human Resource Executive Forum
March 14–16, 2011 — New York, NY

The Human Resource Executive Forum will examine today's most critical HR issues—including benefits, recruitment, leadership, talent management, workforce planning and technology—through the voice of senior HR executives. It is an intimate venue for top HR leaders to exchange practices and ideas with other senior HR executives. Debuting this year, the Forum gives you the rare opportunity to participate in open, insightful discussions on navigating today's most pressing business-critical issues.