# Why and when companies should care about their

# EMPLOYER BRAND

## Part 1 of the Benivo Employee Experience Series

Within some companies there is a certain nonchalance towards the concept of Employer Brand.

Most recruitment and HR professionals know that being among the best companies to work for, the Googles or McKinseys, helps attract top talent. However, they shirk from having a systematic approach towards their own, slightly less glamorous Employer Brand.

In this White Paper, we explore which employee experiences have the biggest impact on the Employer Brand, and why it's important to invest in it, start measuring and managing it.
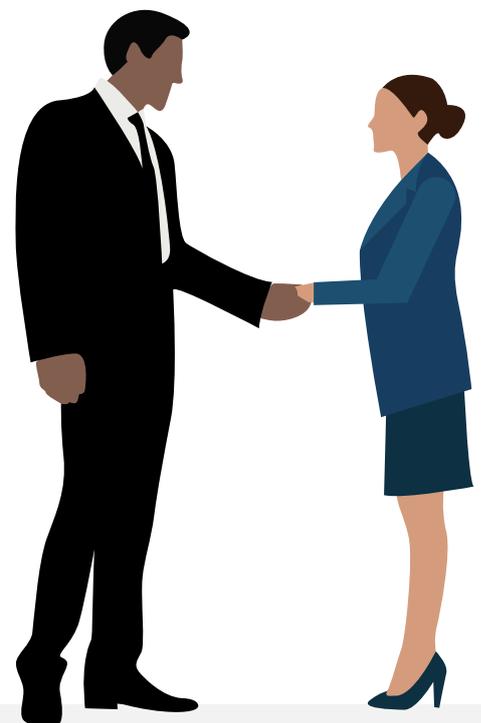
# Customer Experience vs Employee Experience

## From a company's point of view, customers and employees are similar stakeholders:

Both trade a scarce resource (money and time, respectively) to receive something valuable from the company (products or services; money). Both are free participants in the market (products or services; talent) and have the option to walk away in order to transact with competitors.

Many companies state that their employees are their greatest asset. And the concept of Employee Experience and Employer Brand comes up in many of our client discussions.

**So why does almost no one work systematically on optimising their Employee Experience and Employer Brand?**
Compared with resources invested into customer experience and customer brand, companies are giving employees short shrift.

It starts with formal roles. Here are a few LinkedIn search results* - how many people have the following terms in their job titles:

| | |
|---|---|
| "Customer experience" | 1,614,921 |
| "Brand Manager" | 359,738 |
| "Employee experience" | 30,612 |
| "Customer experience manager" | 21,780 |
| "Employee experience manager" | 325 |
| "Employer brand manager" | 292 |

*Searches conducted by a Benivo team member. Linkedin only shows an individual's 1st, 2nd and 3rd degree contacts, so your results will be different. Searches performed as exact match to maximise relevance.

Even if we take into account that many companies have more customers than employees (and thus need more customer-facing staff), these numbers indicate that Employee Experience and Employer Brand have not yet arrived in the HR mainstream.

## And this is an opportunity for you.

By systematically exploring and professionalising the area of Employer Brand and Employee Experience, you will get ahead of your competitors and attract and retain better talent.

In this and two following White Papers, we will explore the topic of Employee Experience and Employer Brand:

**In this Part 1**
We lay the groundwork on why this area is worth caring about, and what types of Employee Experience impact your Employer Brand the most.

**In Part 2**
We discuss ways to measure and manage Employer Brand.

**In Part 3**
We discuss an example of great Employee Experience, quantify its impact on the Employer Brand and describe how to use the underlying concept to systematically engineer an ever improving Employee Experience.

Let's first explore a few foundational concepts.

# Which Employee Experiences impact your Employer Brand?

**The truth is that you have an Employer Brand, whether you give it conscious thought or not. Your brand perception is shaped by employees' touchpoint experiences with the brand, such as:**

• Interactions with other employees, mainly those senior to one's own position

• Your company's processes and policies

• Resources and infrastructure available to get the job done

• The company's performance in the marketplace and the public behaviour of its leaders

The Employer Brand is the sum of all employee (current, prospective and past) experiences with your company. And in the same way as the customer brand helps in the aquisition of paying clients, the Employer Brand reduces recruitment cost by organically attracting, retaining and developing A-player employees.

# The Brand as Promise and Fulfilment

**A brand experience is the function of two factors:**

> The impressiveness of the promise   x   The degree to which the promise has been fulfilled

If you promise your customers **a cup of coffee**, that's about 0.01 out of 10 on the impressiveness scale. If you perfectly deliver on this promise, that's a 10 out of 10, your overall brand experience score will be 10 x 0.01 = 0.1.

Nothing to write home about, and no one will remember you.

If you promise to your customers **the best cup of coffee they ever had**, that's a whole different story. Impressiveness 10 out of 10. If you then manage to outstandingly please the senses (or at least be considerably better than average), you can achieve a fulfilment level of, say, 8 out of 10.
Total score 10 x 8 = 80.

That's reasonably close to brand heaven.

And the same applies to Employer Brand.

When it comes to how impressive the **employment brand promise** is, most quality employers do not differ very much from each other. For entry-level employees, it is usually a variation on the following elements:

• You will learn a lot
• You will be promoted if you do well
• You will contribute meaningfully to the company's mission
• You will have a good time with smart and fun people
• We will take good care of you

**The big variation lies in fulfilment.**
It's the company's ability to deliver on the brand promise that sets them apart and lies at the core of Employer Branding and Employee Experience.

So far, so clear: Your brand is a function of how well you walk your talk.

But it's not that simple.

# Not all Employee Experiences are Created Equal

**Brand mistakes (not talking the talk) have an outsized impact on an employee during a time of stress, such as job insecurity or a difficult life situation.**

### Employers make mistakes - everyone does.

The occasional onboarding experience is poor. The VP of Sales berates someone publicly. Employees are annoyed that the company still requires paper receipts and maintains complicated processes for expenses management.

These are all instances of companies not delivering on their Employer Brand promise. But not every mistake has the same weight for all employees.



"No, sorry - there's nothing I can do"

HR

"Oh well, I'll survive"

"No, sorry - there's nothing I can do"

HR

"I can't believe what you just said"

**Level of subjective distress**

For example, imagine an HR manager who insists on adhering to company policy of carrying over vacation days into the next year, and an employee who knows that in the past, the company was flexible - but not this time.

The affected employee who didn't take her vacation because she was too busy will be upset for a day or two, and then move on. She knew the company's policy, after all, and had chosen to not take the time off.

But an employee who hadn't taken her vacation because of a family bereavement will react much more negatively to the employer's perceived inflexibility.

# You can't always tell

Most empathetic HR managers will agree with this concept. When times are tough for an employee, a negative experience can have outsized impact. They will also concur that it's important to take an employee's challenging circumstances into account.

However, often **you simply don't know what's going on under the surface.**

For one of our blog posts, we spoke to an employee who relocated to a new city, was placed in a small spare room and wasn't introduced to the rest of the team on the ground. Being an introvert in a one-man team, with none of the local employees functionally relevant to him, he felt isolated. His HR contact back home occasionally asked about his wellbeing in a superficial way, but mostly covered administrative topics.

It was a seemingly trivial omission. The HR person and his boss probably thought that everything was going well. But below the surface, a storm was brewing.

This minor instance of neglect hit him at a time of personal distress. The result? He quit a few months later in anger and disappointment.
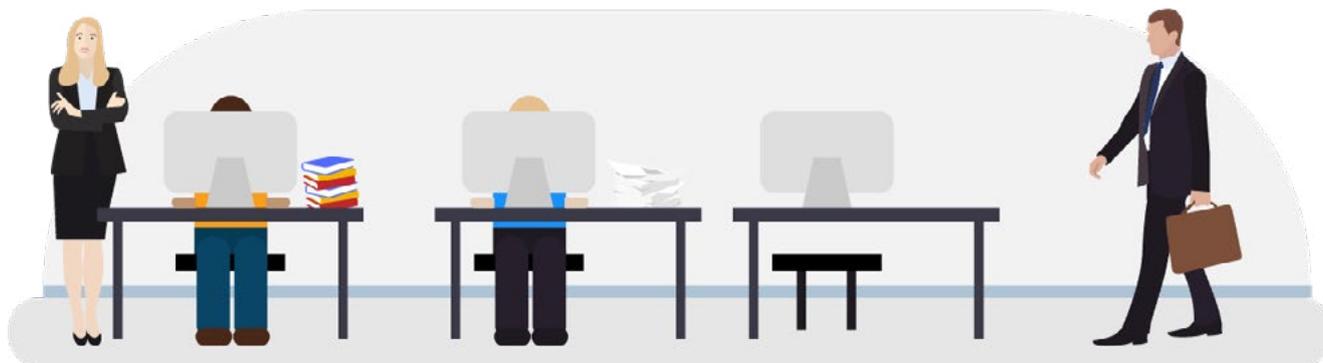
# Every risk is an opportunity

This process is by no means only about avoiding mistakes.

Times of stress and upheaval also present fantastic opportunities to boost your Employer Brand. Unexpected great treatment and a positive experience during a difficult period are ingredients for lifelong loyalty.

Doing a great job as an employer during stressful times can deliver outsized returns — and we will discuss an example of this in Part 3 of our series.

# Employer Brand Perception is the Sum of Countless Touchpoints...

## ...and it changes over time.

Every time an employee interacts with you as an employer, there is the potential to make a positive or negative impact on your Employer Brand.

And, as we discussed, the employee's senses are sharpened during periods of high stress. Nerves are exposed. What you do in these situations matters far more than during business as usual.

**Employee's stress level upon job start**
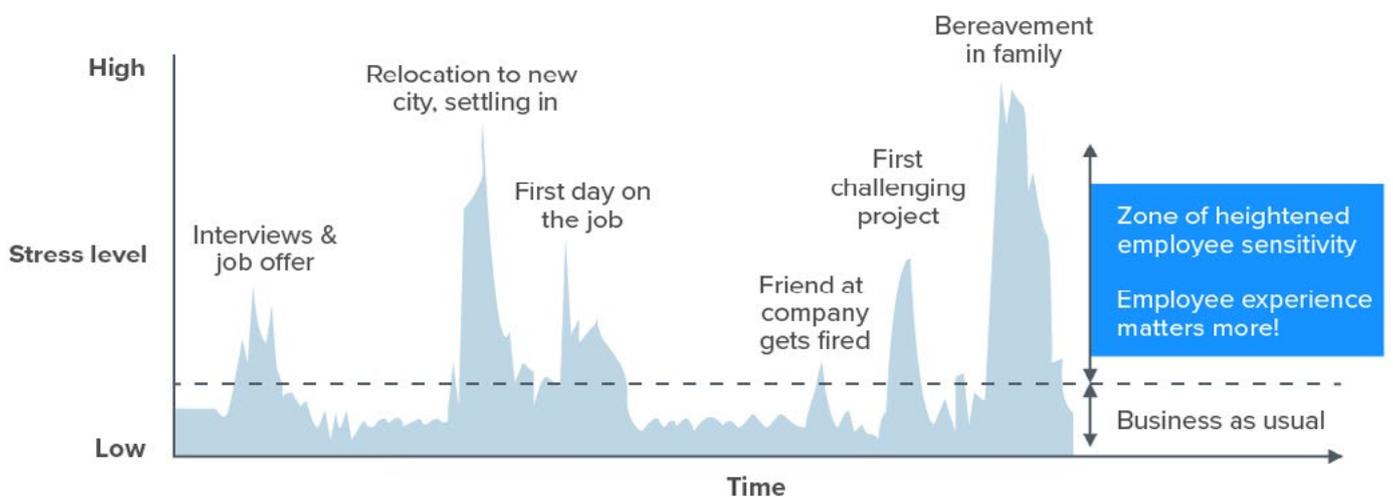


The memory of these touchpoints crystallises the Employer Brand in the mind of an individual employee.

And the sum of these individual employees' impressions, together with how potential job candidates and the general public perceive you, all this constitutes the complete universe of the Employer Brand.

Every day, new touchpoints occur and the way you handle them will determine the Employer Brand value at the end of each day, like a stock exchange's index at closing time.

# Bringing it all together

## So we have established

- Employer brand is as important as your customer brand, if not more.

- It is inextricably linked to the employee experience.

- Employee experience is a combination of your promise and how well you fulfil it.

- The fulfilment part is highly subjective and depends on your employee's state of mind. Possible mishaps weigh much more when employees are in a state of distress.

- You don't always know how your employees feel when they experience a touch point with your brand.

- Employer brand perception changes over time and is a composite of all employees' most salient brand experiences.

**Given how important your Employee Experience and Employer Brand are, it makes sense to ask the question: How can we measure them systematically?**

We will explore this in Part 2 of this White Paper series.

➜ **How to measure your Employee Experience**



Part 2

Benivo.com works with employers-of-choice to deliver an outstanding welcome experience when employees move for work — without breaking the budget. Learn more on Benivo.com or contact sales@benivo.com.