

# Important Employer Brand.



Employer Brand Strategy

[www.thehighermix.com](http://www.thehighermix.com)

**Author:** Jo Woodfield  
**Email:** [Managing Director](#)  
**Tel:** +61 438 193 648



Connect with LinkedIn

COPYRIGHT ©



Please visit our website: [www.thehighermix.com](http://www.thehighermix.com)

Author | Text by Jo Woodfield copyright © Trustees of *The Higher Mix*  
All illustrations, diagrams developed by and the property of *The Higher Mix*  
All rights reserved.

No part of the publication can be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, including stored in retrieval system/databases, without prior written permission of Managing Director of *The Higher Mix*.

### **CONTACT**

Jo Woodfield, Managing Director  
*The Higher Mix*  
Email [jo@thehighermix.com](mailto:jo@thehighermix.com)  
Tel +61 438 193 648  
Perth, Australia

*First eBook Edition 2017.*

# CONTENTS

## **What is Employer Branding?**

Why Employer Branding is so important?

Employer of Choice: So Much More Than Looking Different

## **Employer Brand Relationship to Company Brand**

Direct Connection between Reputation and the Employer Brand

## **Best-Practice Employer Branding Process**

### **Employer Branding Framework (Simplified)**

Employer Brand is Evidence-Based

'Whole of Systems' Approach: Phases

Employee Engagement Matters

## **Employee Value Proposition (EVP)**

Psychological Contract

Employee Experience Journey Mapping

Critical EVP Characteristics

Developing EVP Attributes

## **Employer Brand Strategy**

Culture Underpins Employer Brand

Claims Test EVP for Authenticity

Embed, Internalise & Align EVP

EVP Communications Strategy, Engagement

Optimise, Measure EVP

## **Getting most out of your Employer Brand Journey**

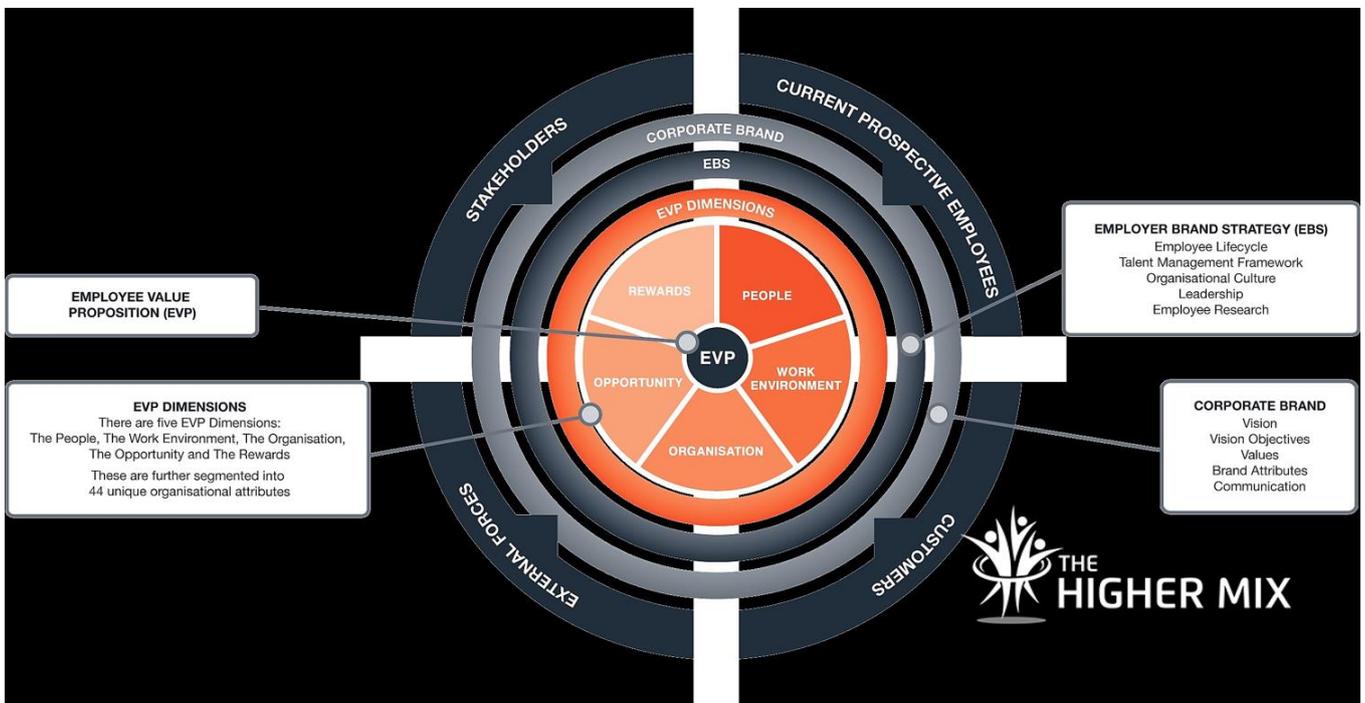
Beware the Employer Branding Pitfalls

# What is Employer Branding?

In simplest of terms, the identifiable *unique* employer identity (value concept) behind your organisation and the potential it has as an employer, both of which **differentiate** it from competitors.

Assurance of an employment experience, **brand promise** so you will attract type of talent who perform best and thrive in *your* company's culture.

Employer branding favours organisations endeavouring to **attract and retain** great people with diverse experiences, skill sets and ways of thinking. Consistency; appropriate messaging externally and the resource to more effectively manage staff expectations and drive accountability internally.



©The Higher Mix Employer Branding Framework

# Why Employer Branding is so important?

Every company wants to attract a very specific type of talent who will stay productive, engaged in their environment and culture. Stark reality today is most organisations struggle in their attempt to be **truly different** from their competitors, find necessary efficiencies, for some the difficulty is even staying abreast of effective (relevant) talent acquisition practices.

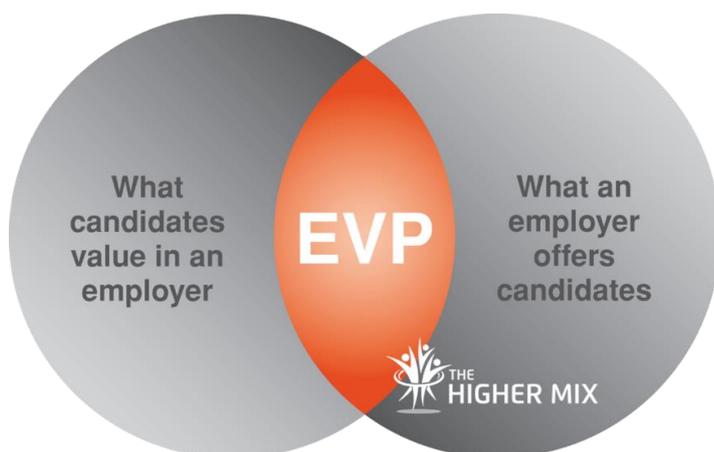
Making introduction of a clear, compelling Employer Brand (**and EVP**) into any organisation absolutely vital.

*Harvard Business Review* demonstrates in their Blog just why **CEO's need to take Employer Brand seriously**.

Basically, Employer branding translates into your organisation becoming far more competitive and winning in talent markets.

Finally employer brand has hit its straps; as the answer to unlocking enormous economic potential and future growth - but only if the employer brand is constructed **strategically**. Focusing on **developing resource capabilities company-wide**, imperatives which not only attract the best talent, but retain-engage-hold onto your existing great people too.

What we're talking about here is a **vital talent management tool**.



EVP enhances change; impacts on the **entire employment experience and positively affecting people's motivation** engagement levels and the wider company culture, at the same time.

Again, only if the employer brand strategy is crafted and executed *properly*.

## QUEST FOR SKILLED TALENT, PROMINENCE AND APPEAL

Companies of all maturity levels are aware now of the incredible value (and opportunities) employer branding best practice brings.

Capacity to attract, retain and engage quality talent in today's new economy cannot be underestimated. Knowledge, technology and other niche skill-sets are competitive enablers; shortages of which hamper organisational efforts, obstruct strategy delivery and/or render delays; further straining economic growth, affecting bottom lines, even posing significant threat to an organisation's sustainability (as is the case, right now for a good many companies.)

Employer and **company branding** boosts presence in markets; enhances ability to win over talent and play at *employer of choice* level. Internally, strong **strategic employer brands** increase staff retention, reduce recruitment, agency and human capital costs, decrease time to fill and positively impact on the internal culture of your organisation.

Perhaps your business already has a great culture; just want it maintained-enhanced as it grows, or you are mid-way through an ambitious **transformation strategy**, alternatively revising a business plan aimed at significant growth and which requires fast access to specialised skills, across different sectors, locations? Maybe market or legislative changes are frustrating retention-recruitment processes, targeting efforts across national and global markets?

**Employee value proposition** (EVP) differentiates an organisation from their biggest competitors; but end-to-end strategic employer branding programs involve far more than just crafting an EVP.

Deep dialogue and engagement directly with key stakeholders, facilitated learning experiences through the various functions, levels of a business, calibration of performance levels in direction of competitive norms, and support for different talent strategies (correlating significantly to cross-cultural and gender diversity, longevity in the workplace, ageing workforce considerations and specifically, new ways of working etc).

Seeking to appeal (attract/retain) unique, valuable skill-sets (and to future-proof)? Then look no further than employer branding to help you achieve these outcomes.

# Employer of Choice.

## So Much More Than Looking Different

Far too many employer brands (EVPs) are built in boardrooms. Why many fail to gain traction, because leaders assume they know employees well enough to be able to speak for them, how they feel and what it is they want.

As employer brand consultants we **rely on evidence**. On adopting strategic employer branding methodology and an agile approach to mesh **all the elements** in determination of what an organisation should rely on to **differentiate itself and drive its talent and business goals**.

Nothing will kill off your reputation in the labour market faster than doing a great job advertising a work experience you do not deliver

*David Ogilvy*

Employer brands hinge on mental and physical availability, so organisations must concentrate on **building consistent actions and associations** to their own talent, potential candidates and to the marketplace.

Employer brands position organisations to more competitively compete in labour markets, prevailing across all types of market conditions to guide attraction, recruitment, induction, socialization, commitment, along with supporting existing HR iterations (organisational development, employee engagement, **culture change** and much more.)

Process has to be elevated *above* it being all about an “attraction” exercise; despite what creative agencies (who infer they ‘do’ employer branding) might have you believe, and subsequently direct both efforts and investment into...

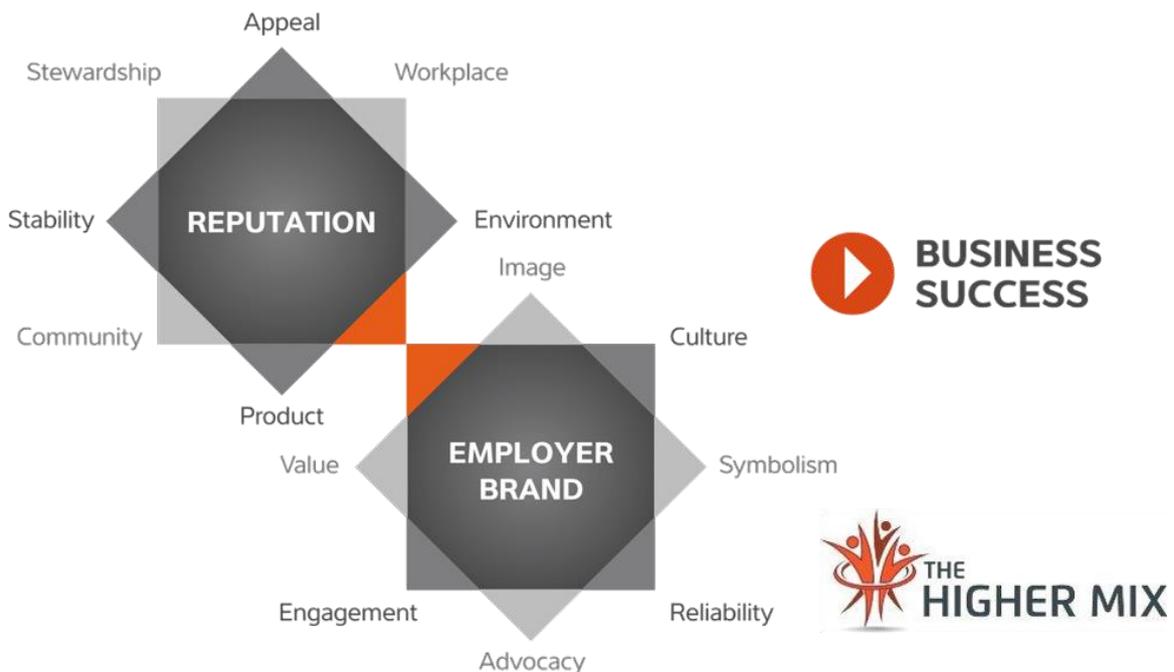
Regardless of decisions you make, or where focus is put (from employee experience perspective) be sure to arrive at it from a place of sound research and authentic feedback from your people.

# Employer Brand Relationship to Company Brand

Employer branding methodology involves attention being directed at **organisational branding** elements too.

Well-articulated employer brands attract the right talent to your organisation, however **visible alignment** between the company brand and its employer brand is essential. After all, it's company **brand positioning** and appeal that captures prospective talent's attention, and moves them into action.

## Direct Correlation between Reputation and Employer Brand



Employer branding is synonymous with company reputation, but they aren't the same thing.

Deliberately nuanced, maintained using mix of science, creativity and purpose - both present a company with stronger positioning but damage to one also weakens the other. Employment-specific, often localized, fact remains employer brands intimately connect to, echo a company brand and therefore directly impact on **brand identity**, internally and externally (and vice versa.)

## Employer Brand Relationship to Company Brand cont.

Here's the kicker - an employer brand can only ever be as strong as the company brand.

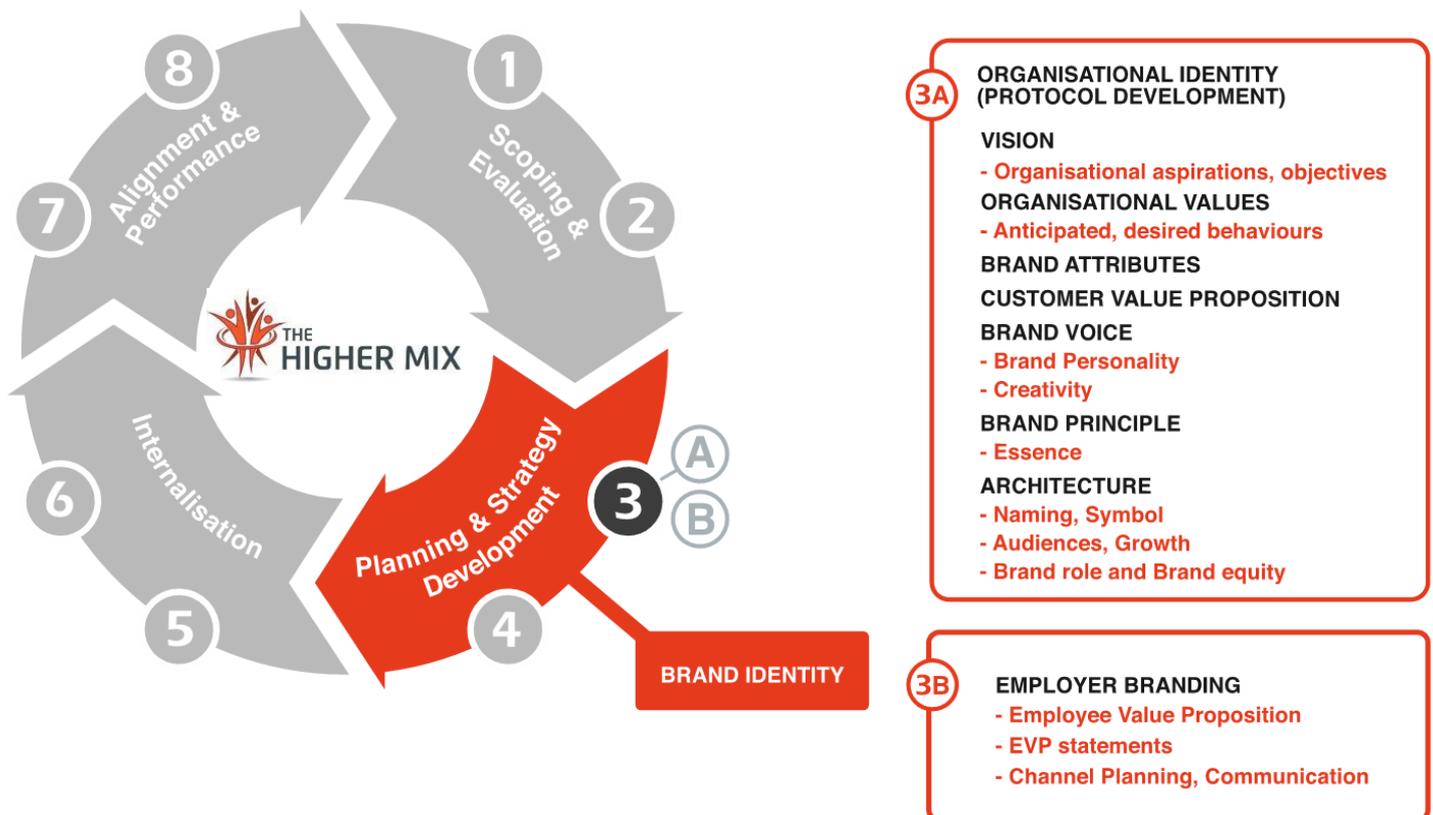
That said, organisations can use one to influence the other.

End-to-end branding means your company's perceived *identity/image* and its *actual* organisational culture and people **are one and the same**. Another pretty solid reason for ensuring employer brand development is treated as a strategic exercise, well considered and not crafted in isolation.

# Best-Practice Employer Branding Process

Employer brand is a powerful business tool, and very much a **science meets art approach** all throughout the employer brand process.

Before launching into an examination of process more closely, it is worth mentioning employer branding is **one of the non-negotiable brand protocols** all businesses need to have in place (as evidenced in company branding process-flow at 3B below.)

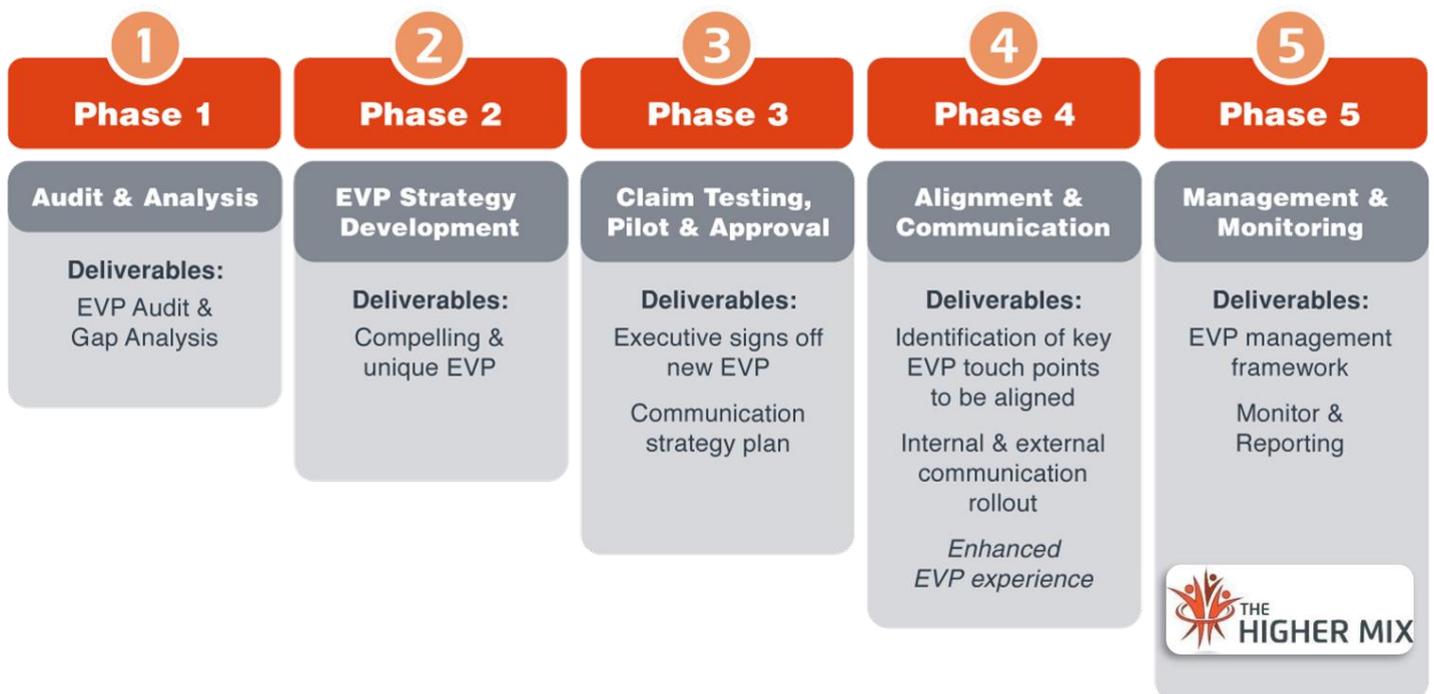


© The Higher Mix

# Best-Practice Employer Branding Process cont.

## Employer Branding Framework (Simplified)

On the journey to discovering how to construct a powerful employer brand, it is useful to provide you with scaled-back version of our employer brand framework from *The Higher Mix*; Introducing various phases to a strategic Employer Brand program.



Further along in this eBook we break the employer branding process down even further, into the most vital phases and actions.

# Employer Brand is Evidence-Based

Strategically designed EVP relies on specific data; along with qual feedback gathered and analysed, so the employer brand is both authentic and deliverable.

Employer brand strategy (and methodology) takes a long hard look at **the entirety of the employment experience**.



Research uncovers basis for EVP, and fosters employer brand well into the future. Data/ information gleaned from primary focus areas including:

1. **Stakeholders:** current employees + customers + partners;
2. **Labour markets;**
3. **Competitors** (for talent); and
4. **Existing organisational strategy.**

## ‘Whole of Systems’ Approach

While employer brand process guides companies to more fully understand **market perceptions** of *both* their brands (employer and **company**) also provides baseline to close gaps between what employees/ potential candidates expect, and what your organisation delivers.

Not just concerned with a workplace either – analysing a company brand, its reputation, externally interviewing key customers, partners (recruiters, JV partners etc) for their perceptions, and evaluating the candidate experience.

Importance hinges not just on how Employer brand supports existing assumptions but dispels myths and bias.

## Employee Engagement Matters



Rigour extends internally to examining to specifics of company culture and engaging your people in the process.

Ascertains what goes to make an organisation so different? What's happening inside it? How people behave? How the work gets done? How people are managed and developed?

Understand also how your employees feel? What it is that they **value in the employment experience**, feedback about their working with your org, dealing with customers, recruiters, project partners etc?

## Research, Discovery & Engagement *cont.*

As people let down they talk from the heart and we see the *real* brand. Plus a first-class engagement exercise too, as compelling EVP will reflect that type of positive feedback.

As employer branding strategists, we review and use existing data-sets the company already has - quantitative data; engagement surveys, employee surveys, focus groups completed, talent analytics etc. Breaking down this data, by area, location, commonalities; assessing differences / gaps, because employer brands need to echo nationally, globally as they go to market.

Wider engagement ensues. This time, externally (with recruiters and clients) because they shine a valuable light on servicing, qualities (and occasionally shortcomings.)

**Environmental scans** assess existing labour market expectations, and competitor activities; evaluation of these helps us, to help you, get the brand's positioning right.

So right about now, you're becoming quite conscious that employer branding, done well, is a relatively complex (cultural) process. Good, because it is, strategic process demanding a mid-term view if your company wants employer brand equity, along with those longer-term outcomes we discussed earlier in this *Employer Branding eBook*.

# Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Every organisation has an Employer Brand, consciously developed or not. Thus, the means to evaluate and use what's at their disposal to keep their employees happy, the brand appeal high and employment experience strong.



**Employee Value Proposition (EVP)** is the promise of a total distinctive employment experience; matching distinctive attractiveness to a total workplace experience, consideration of the **company values**, systems, policies and behaviours, with ultimate aim of attracting, motivating, retaining existing talent and attracting new team-members.

EVPs are used in many ways. None the least, as a tool for influencing **brand appeal (improving business profiles** as “great places to work”). EVP strategy informs on how to best manage and effectively **market** those qualities. **EVP internalisation** with Leaders and Influencers ensures it cascades through the entire organisation.

# Employee Value Proposition (EVP) cont.

## Psychological Contract *Employee Experience Journey Mapping*

All organisations want unique perspectives on strengths, gaps (**actionable insights**) on the talent experience. To use this as opportunity to unite, connect teams, managers and key influencers, and achieve deeper engagement with them.

Also, valuable exercise as informative means to articulate current state, unfolding brand directions, strengths and so on.

## Critical EVP Characteristics

When we develop Employer brands, of most concern to us are critical EVP characteristics. Analysing what's *adding to, detracting from* both employee experience and culture in the organisation.

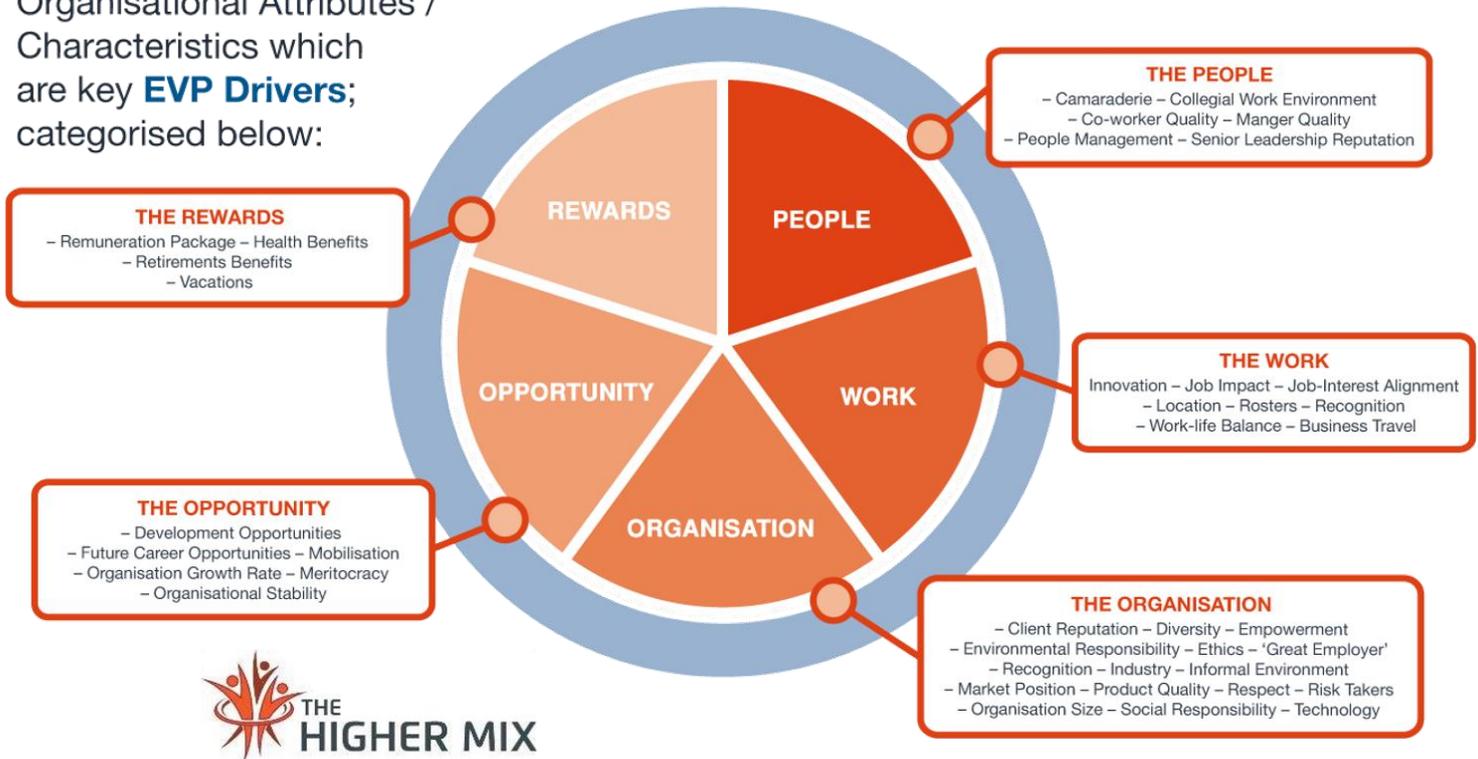
Exploring the psychological contract between employer and employee; understanding what these parties expect to give and get from each other.

Team contributions create organisational value and sustainability. So, employer brand solutions are therefore developed best with the employee life-cycle in mind.

# Critical EVP Characteristics cont.

The Higher Mix Employer Brand methodology typically analyses over **44 different attributes** of the employee experience, eliciting other important opinion on the brand's differentiation, servicing, operations while we're at it.

Organisational Attributes / Characteristics which are key **EVP Drivers**; categorised below:



# Developing EVP Attributes

One of the most common mistakes we see is that organisations aren't strategic enough about **specifics they want to brand and market**.

Critical EVP attributes coupled with the value your company offers potential talent and existing teams – fully **amounts to brand differentiation**.

While studies confirm a culture of career growth, innovation, challenging work, pay for performance and values-driven organisation are all fundamental **EVP attributes** workers look for in the ideal employer; will these work just so for *your* business?

# EVP Attributes cont.

When an employer brand is crafted properly, it carefully considers how it is your organisation wants to **uniquely symbolise its own set of values and promises.**



Question is - would internal teams have necessary skills to apply plethora of the knowledge gained and context of just how the company is viewed/ respected as an employer and as a service provider?

This is an exercise requiring strong conceptual abilities across multi-discipline group environment. Steering teams with the skills and abilities to comprehend **where the real value resides**, from great many elements the company has on offer. Choosing **what to market, why and how**, is as important because total sum of wonderful attributes about a company can't all be promoted at once.

Yet another important consideration - esp. if seeking to avoid very real potential of derailment of the EB exercise. How to be sure you can get all execs and steering group members collectively to point where they will reach a consensus – agreement on formalised EVP territories/ attributes/ resulting EVP statements. Easier said than done.

# Employer Brand Strategy

Following confirmation of the authentic, deliverable EVP - employer brand strategy determines **how, where to best market a value proposition effectively**. Definitive set of steps and actions organisations take to enhance brand appeal, strengthen positioning as an employer and build on relationships with existing or potential talent and/or external stakeholders.

Whether your objective is fresh approach to talent recruitment & development, to transform to become customer-centric, and achieve closer team/client relationships - all outcomes achievable from employer branding, and addressed in strategic piece as *The Higher Mix* develops EVP strategy.

Does your organisation have an employer brand strategy? Is it resonating and creating a real connection with qualified, interested talent in and out of your business?

[CLICK TO CONTACT OUR EMPLOYER BRAND SPECIALISTS](#)

## Culture Underpins Employer Brand

Culture has a huge stake in Employer Branding. Everyone knows brand position, customer loyalty and shareholder value all depend intimately on the company's ability to deliver quality, consistent team and customer experiences.

Employer branding therefore is yet another tool (and primary pathway at your disposal) to **improve organisational culture**.



# Employer Brand Strategy cont.

Great companies often extol their competitive advantage/ differentiation as hailing from their own people, and even as we all work hard to elevate and evolve our cultures, it is still about **what your people feel and believe is valued.**

Attitudes, behaviours, skills characterizing the entire organisation – what people do to ‘fit in’, be accepted, how they’re recognized, rewarded, developed and so on.

Recognise now just how intimately culture is connected to (and impacts on) **delivery of the EVP?** [As assurance of certain type of workplace experience.]

## Claims Test EVP for Authenticity

Before marketing the employer brand; **pilot/ claims-test your EVP** to make certain the organisation is about to communicate real (authentic) experience, over one a steering team thinks or assumes is the case.



Claims-testing prior to activating any brand provides the opening to expose it to fresh eyes. Pressure-test it through their lens, tweak and validate it for assurance that it will indeed stack up...against competitors and for broader appeal, authentically to local [and global] markets.

# Employer Brand Strategy cont.

## Embed, Internalise, Align EVP

Constructive behaviours from internal teams remains most effective way to deliver upon **business strategy**.

Best practice Employer Branding connects **organisational values**, the heads and hearts of your people, human capital strategy and HR practices/policies.

As implementation of an EVP nears; **alignment and internalisation of an EVP** becomes crucial. Systems | Process | Practices | Technologies | Touchpoints and Behavioural Alignment (key messages aligned to your employee attitudes & action) all have to be considered when you integrate/ embed EVP into the business.



Through this phase; rubber hits the road, strategy and planning are activated. We help companies understand also the implications, and act on the evidence previously presented in their discovery phase, **to alter what's affecting both the employee experience and candidate experience**.

**Anchoring EVP with Leaders** through **EVP alignment** phase too.

As with any type of implementation planning - we continue to guide and actively advise on just where gaps and roadblocks are, how best to overcome these.

# Employer Brand Strategy cont.

## EVP Communications Strategy, Engagement

Communications strategy (below) ensures the employer brand will lay out the foundations for a **culture** chock-full of brand ambassadors and influencers.

Employee EVP education, orientation is crucial to successful EVP implementation. Just as important even as how your company goes about communicating its EVP externally (probably more so...) Esp. if it wants more brand ambassadors in its ranks.

Phase below, communications strategy (internal and external) is planning and execution of the brand (launch, monitor and optimise an EVP) incl. digital and workplace communications.



## Employer Brand Technologies

A side note on the stack of options and new technologies out there, all claiming to be able to develop, change or improve employer brands.

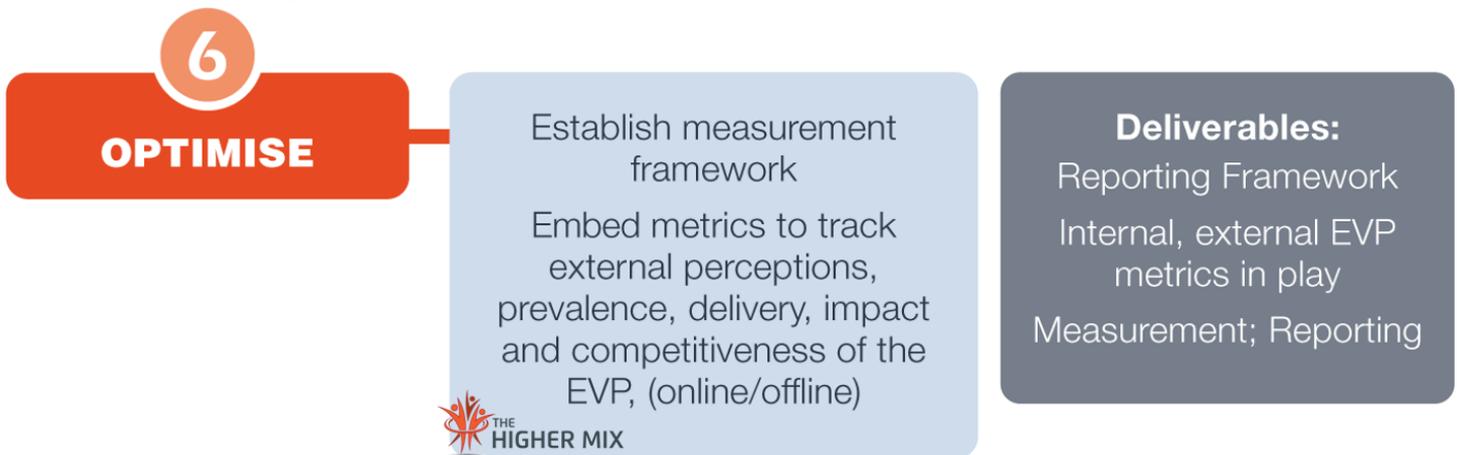
Remember, **brands aren't built on "systems" or pieces of technology.** No singular piece of tech can save the day, or manage an entire employer brand journey well.

As with any uptake of new technology, the culture needs to be there to support that; along with the skills internally to drive it, and maximise its value.

# Employer Brand Strategy cont.

## Measuring EVP

Lastly **measuring an EVP** is another key component to employer brand process.



## Get more out of your Employer Brand Journey.

We trust you found familiarising yourself with our methodology and IP on Employer branding useful, in quest to attract, develop and retain great talent inside your organisation.

In closing, as employer brand experts, here's a few snippets to keep your focus on the big stuff:

- Ensure the company has **documented, up-dated employee value proposition**; one that has been **internalised with your people**.
- **Define organisational responsibilities for the employer brand, and a dedicated budget** for initiatives (common traits with top companies – because they get it – importance, criticality to protecting their future).
- **Know that this process takes time. EVP development, esp. engagement, internalisation phases** typically run a timeline of between 4-6 months - out to more than 12 months for sizable organisations; just doesn't happen overnight.
- **Firm focus on delivering value to current employees**; including their empowerment and development.
- **High-level executive buy-in (incl. line managers)** makes the process strategic – it is the only way forward. Likewise, having the foresight to arm your own employees with direct role in promoting the company's employer brand too.

## Get more out of your Employer Brand Journey cont.

- **Who to include in an EB process?** Representative sample of different functions of your workforce, steering team as a mix of high performers | A/B plus players who can | will meet employer brand activities schedule / commitments. Usually select diverse group of people across the board – by gender, ethnicity, age, tenure, location, function and/or by level.
- Lastly, **confidentiality and high-trust** are key considerations because treating the raw (often highly sensitive) data demands an openness, integrity and aligned trust from the steering team.

## Beware the Employer Branding Pitfalls

Potentially countless pitfalls, but our thinking is to address the three that we encounter most regularly:

### **Brand Vanilla.**

Considering all that input, opinion and perspectives shared through this process - no surprise companies who've had a stab at building their own employer brands will regularly find themselves stuck in the 'safe zone' - meaning the brand is so dumbed down as result of trying to reach consensus, they end up with EVP product looking nothing like the organisation's most valuable cultural attributes or employment experience. Just looks, sounds, positioned just like any other industry competitor. And as employer brand specialists; we see this a *lot*.

### **Overpromise / Underdeliver.**

There can be no disjoint. As employers there's probably a whole heap of elements we'd love our companies to be, but just aren't. So, claiming what's not part of the brand-employment experience is absolutely off the table. True to others, true to self protects brand authenticity over the long term.

### **EVP as Entirely "Creative" Product.**

Often, we are called in to support organisations to re-address a lack-lustre EVP product; deficient in clarity, confusing messaging, no traction, inability to overcome stereotypical positioning, sanitised beyond measure or all too focused on creative assets.

This is your chance to really get it right; strategic about the entire project. Good Luck.

## About the Author Jo Woodfield



Jo is Founder, Owner and Managing Director of *The Higher Mix*.

Respected organisational branding, employer brand expert, Jo has consulted and led national and international brand programs, for vast array of mining, engineering, retail and government clients.

She heads up *The Higher Mix* team of strategic management consultants, agile digital practitioners and research analysts as they guide, advise client companies to improve their brands, marketing (strategic and digital offers), employer brands, transformational change programs, culture and leaders.

A published eAuthor, Jo is also an acclaimed keynote speaker on topics of Brands and Culture, and she has been an invited guest panellist and/or keynote speaker at over 150 domestic/ national events and conferences across Australia.