

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2018.043.050](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2018.043.050)

**MONIKA VENCOUROVÁ**  
Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic

## **CURRENT TRENDS OF EMPLOYERS' BRANDS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF EMPLOYERS**

### **Abstract:**

The article deals with the attitude of HR specialists to current HR trends. It addresses the question of building an employer's brand as a competitive advantage in the labor market. Companies have begun or are slowly starting to deal with the Employer Branding concept. They do not want to leave anything to chance and want to manage their business with a long-term perspective. With a long-term perspective which helps firms to promote themselves on the external labor market in front of potential candidates and on the internal labor market in front of their own employees. This promotion must be able to address, attract, retain and motivate talented and qualified employees and ensure the engagement of their own employees. It is and will be a major challenge in recent years. Employer brand should serve as a useful organizational framework for strategic human resources management.

For the purpose of these findings, an online survey is conducted every year, involving HR specialists. Research was conducted in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The analyzes of individual years were evaluated and the results are compared on a year-to-year basis. The results show four main recommendations for companies operating in the Czech Republic.

This paper is a part of a research – project IGA (Internal Grant Agency) No. PEF\_DP\_2018004, Department of Management, FBE, MENDELU in Brno.

### **Keywords:**

HR Marketing, Employer Branding, Czech Republic, HR specialists, Research of HR Marketing Trends, HR department, Employee, Employer, Personnel Marketing, Personnel Economics.

**JEL Classification:** M51, M54, M59

## 1 Introduction

When talking about the attractiveness of the employer, we come to two seemingly similar concepts, but there is a big difference between them. The talk is about Employer Branding and HR Marketing. Employer Branding is a set of activities to ensure that your business becomes a better employer - a partner of people. One of the tools of building an employer's brand is to determine its ideal position through Employer Value Proposition (EVP). HR marketing is a set of activities that represent the best that you have in your company and you can offer as an employer to people. The basic tool is a marketing communication plan that includes a description of the target groups, the offer, the content and its form, the means of communication and the channels. (Wilden et al., 2010) Employer brand is the company's effort to promote both inside and outside of the company. They try to give a clear and comprehensive view of themselves as employers. What value is it for employees and what benefits are offered to future employees. In doing so, company tries to distinguish itself from competition in the labor market. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) The competitive advantage of Employer Branding is also mentioned by other authors. To attract and retain talented and qualified employees is a major challenge in recent years. As a result, more and more companies are starting to apply policies and procedures regarding employers' brands in the field of human resources management. And they are willing to spend considerable money on campaigns to build employer brand. Practice shows that it brings them value in the future. (Mandhanya & Shah, 2010; Jiang & Iles, 2011; Tüzüner & Yüksel, 2009) Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng (2010) also emphasize the attitudes and behavior of their own employees. They can make a significant contribution to building an employer's brand. Companies should try to reconcile employees' values with the company brand.

Employer Branding, along with HR Marketing, should support the development and integration of new staff, develop and maintain current staff. It also attracts and retains highly skilled workers. The employer's brand is formed in the minds of employees. It is defined as a targeted, long-term strategy for managing awareness and perception of employees, potential employees and other stakeholders. Employer Branding has become the top priority for companies, because lack of candidates and the dismantled labor market does not give companies any other possibility. A good brand attracts the attention of the right job seekers. Employer Branding defines Employee Value Proposition (EVP), which includes the company's strengths. Employer Branding creates a loyalty among the employees and aids in retention management as well as generates an improvement in candidate attraction, engagement, commitment, and motivation. It serves as an HR perspective. Employer brand should serve as a useful organizational framework for strategic human resources management. (Mandhanya & Shah, 2010) From the strategic management of human resources, some authors come to the concept of sustainable human resources management. It seeks to link human resource management to

sustainability. (Kramar, 2014; Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade & Drake, 2009) Using sustainable human resource management, companies can create an attractive employer brand and achieve the goals set. (Truss & Gratton, 2006; App, Merk & Buettgen, 2012) In addition to personnel and administrative work, the HR department should bring added value to the company in terms of strategic use of staff. First of all, they should talk about company strategies, be in the planning of a long-term strategy of the company, and recommend activities that will not only encourage the recruitment of new employees but also the engagement of the company's own employees. So we have a new look at the HR department. HR department as an indispensable partner in the future direction of the company. (Mariappanadar, 2003; Lundy, 2006) Companies cannot take the HR department just as a support department in the company, but as one of the main departments that should talk about the functioning of the whole company. (Wilkinson, Hill & Gollan 2001; Mariappanadar, 2012; Ehnert, 2006) The new role of the HR Department will not only be the strategic direction of the company but also the recommendation of suitable activities that will support the attractiveness of the company and the related recommendations of suitable metrics to measure the results of these activities. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the HR department itself can also be measured and evaluated. (Ehnert, 2009; Clarke 2011; Shedden, 2010)

We must not forget the advances or rather the leaps in information and communication technologies. Even they affect the way HR managers work. (Van Gramberg, Teicher & O'Rourke, 2014) Study by Boon et al. (2017) tries to explain the concept of human capital in the context of human resources management. It sees it as a resource that helps companies gain a competitive edge, as human capital resources are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate. Human capital in a company can be a key factor in the quality of outputs and the efficiency of the work. These ideas are followed by other authors and are talking about human capital as the most valuable asset the company has. Companies that are fully aware of this support the human resources department with the aim of seeing human resources as the most valuable asset and behaving in such a way. (Bachm, 2005; Burkholder, Edwards & Sartain, 2003)

## **2 Methodology**

In the field of HR Marketing and Employer Branding, many foreign researches have already been carried out. However, each environment is specific and not the same in the Czech Republic. That's why a unified research has been carried out for the Czech Republic to match the labor market with which companies doing business in the Czech Republic meet every day. Research is thus mapping HR Marketing and Employer Branding in the Czech Republic. This is an online survey of current trends in the Czech Republic in the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. Online research took place on the web platform. Answers are closed in most cases. None of the questions is obligatory. For some questions, you can choose more answers. Respondents from the research

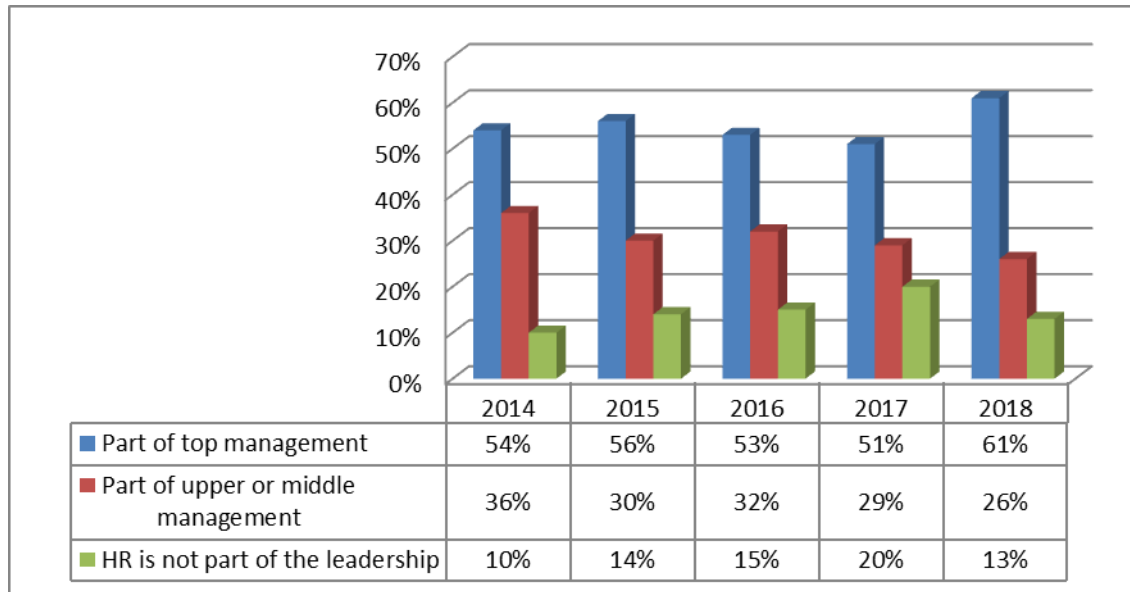
were HR specialists. In 2014, research was conducted in March and 101 respondents participated. The second year of this research took place in February 2015 and was attended by 140 respondents. The following year, that is, in 2016, online research was conducted at the end of February and March and 137 respondents participated. The fourth year of research took place at the turn of March and April 2017 and 100 respondents participated. And in the last year of research, that is, in 2018, research took place in March and early April. 101 respondents participated. The obtained data will be processed using Microsoft Excel, where respondents' answers will be in columns and individual respondents in rows. The data will be categorized and evaluated at the end of the questionnaire survey. If the answers of one of the respondents are incomplete, this line will be excluded from the overall evaluation. The streaked data will then be presented using tables of the resulting frequencies and graphical representation. The results from individual years are then compared with each other and strategies for improving the employability of employers are recommended.

### **3 Results**

The research is aimed at several areas. The first is the inclusion of the position of HR team/department in the company hierarchy and thus in the decision making process. If it turns out that the HR team/department is part of the top management, then it probably has decision-making powers and can speak into company strategies. The second area is the recruitment of new employees. Recruitment is and will still be a key activity of the HR team/department and the top management priority. In this context, research focuses on the most common means of recruiting new staff. It also deals with the biggest problems associated with recruiting new employees. In the context of recruitment, there is more and more talk about corporate culture, how important it is and what role it plays in choosing employees. The third area of research puts into context two terms that HR managers meet more and more often. This is HR Marketing and Employer Branding. It is becoming increasingly clear that HR teams/departments, as they once functioned, cannot work today. More and more is also discussed the question of a full-time employee, whose work would include HR Marketing and Employer Branding. Incorporating a new employee to focus on these areas would, of course, mean an investment not only in the recruitment of a competent person but also in the HR Marketing and Employer Branding activities. In this context, it is necessary to ask which department is responsible for HR Marketing and Employer Branding and which other teams are involved in working in these areas. The fourth area focuses on internal company matters. Questions are directed to the engagement of our own employees. Next, the issue of the employer's branding strategy is addressed and what data is being acquired in connection with the employer's branding. This can be self-collecting or in cooperation with external partners. The last area gives an overview of current trends in Employer Branding. The most interesting areas and their questions are further explored, described and evaluated.

The first question concerns the staff members themselves and their position in company. The results are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: What is the position of HR team / department in your company? (2014-2018)**

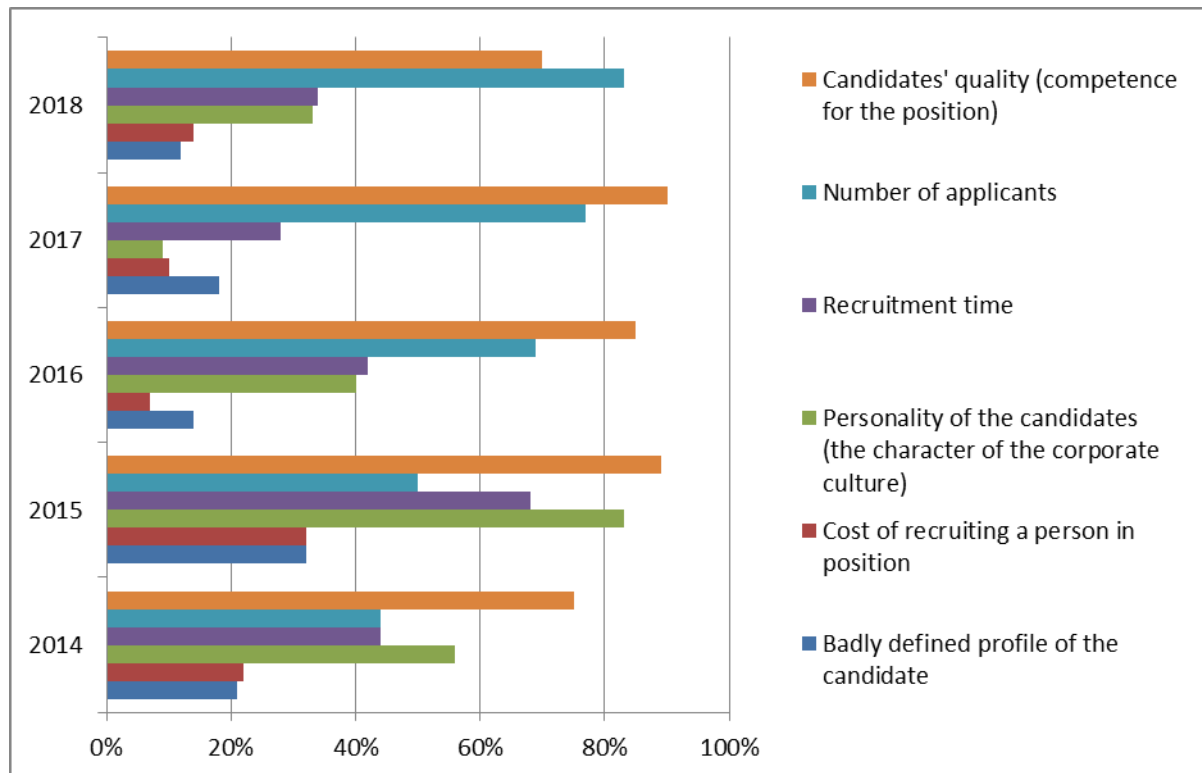


Source: Own adjustment based on *Research of HR Marketing Trends in the Czech Republic in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018*.

In 2014, only 54% of respondents said the HR team / department was part of the top management. If we use the opinion of most top executives of the company that people are our most important capital, the position of HR team / department should be much greater. In 2015, the situation is similar to 2014 and only 56% of respondents said that the HR team / department is part of the top management and their work is therefore considered an important part of the company's operation. In 2016, top management deals with HR issues in only half of companies. The same results can be achieved in 2017. A significant shift occurs in 2018 when it can be seen that the HR team / department is increasingly part of the top management. Companies that are aware of the value of their employees support HR teams / departments and aim to see human resources as the most valuable asset and also behave towards it.

In the following section, questions about recruitment will be evaluated. The results are shown in Figures 2 and 3. The recruitment process is demanding both financially and in time. The amount of effort put into it should end with the arrival of a new employee. Figure 2 shows the most problematic areas related to the recruitment process.

**Figure 2: The difficulty of selected areas within the recruitment process (2014-2018)**



Source: Own adjustment based on Research of HR Marketing Trends in the Czech Republic in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

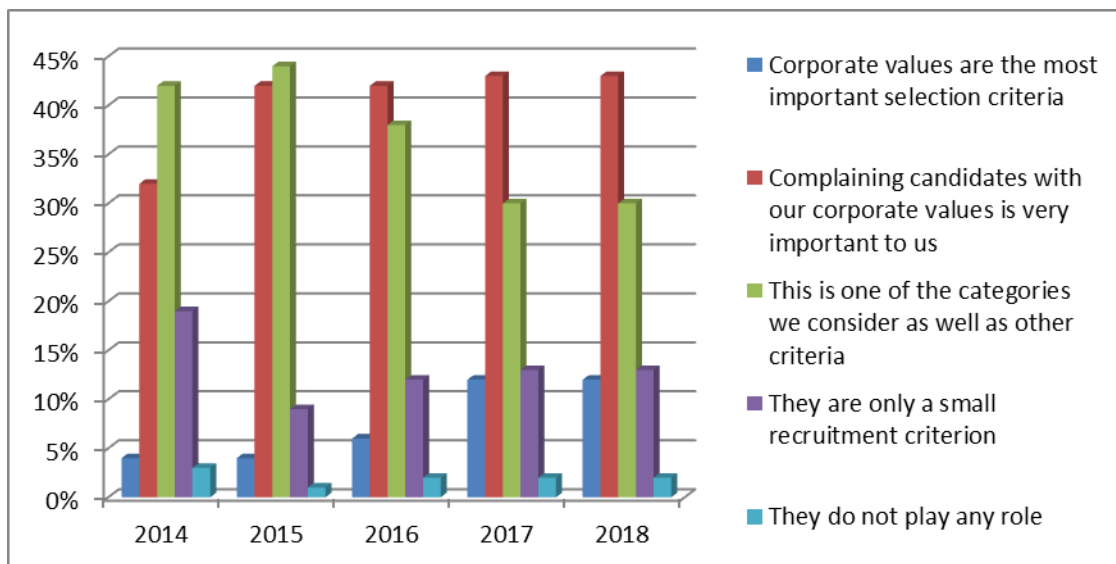
In 2014, the most challenging recruitment problem was the quality of the candidates, especially their competencies. The second biggest problem was the candidate's personality, his character therefore appropriate corporate culture. In 2015, the quality of applicants and their personality traits is the biggest problem. The third biggest problem is the recruitment time. In 2016, the quality of the candidates is again perceived as the biggest problem. Right behind him is the number of these candidates. 2017 brings the same findings as 2016. The biggest problems are lack of quality and lack of job seekers. Neither does the year 2018 improve. The lack of candidates is in the first place, but shortly after, there is insufficient quality of applicants who do not have sufficient competencies for the position. The lack of candidates or their lack of quality can be caused by many factors. The company should consider from its scope how its recruitment activities are taking place, what information and how it publishes. What all the information can be traced by the candidates and they can influence their decision making process.

In 2014, the most used tools of recruiting were online job portals, internal recruitment, and recommendations of existing employees. Little attention has been paid to targeted recruitment campaigns for specific positions and recruitment or talent development. Even in 2015, job portals, internal recruitment, and recommendations of existing employees dominate. Targeted recruitment campaigns for specific positions are used very little or not

at all. Year 2016 brings improvements. The recommendations of existing employees are becoming more and more important and they are used by 13% more than in 2015. Internal recruitment, which was used by 32% of companies in 2015, is also growing considerably, with 56% in 2016. Social networks are also in the forefront and have not been at all in previous years. Even in 2017, the most frequently used recruitment tools include job portals, internal recruitment, and the recommendations of existing employees. However, the use of social networks during recruitment is on the rise. While in 2016 it is regularly used by 30% of companies, in 2017 it is already 41% of companies. The last year surveyed was 2018. In this year, companies are more focused on co-operation with schools, with an increase of 20% from 2017 to 31% in 2018. On the contrary, firms use less staffing agency services.

Not only the recruitment tools are important, but also the corporate culture plays a role. The importance of corporate culture is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: How the company's corporate values are part of the criteria for recruiting new employees (2014-2018)**



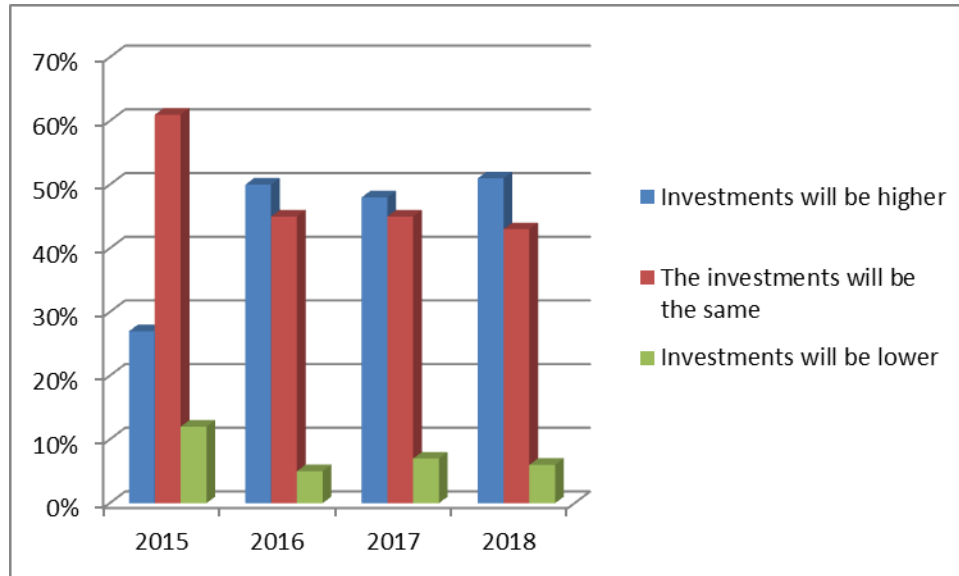
Source: Own adjustment based on Research of HR Marketing Trends in the Czech Republic in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

36% of respondents in 2014 stated that corporate values are important to them during the recruitment process. In 2015, the same statement was 46%, which is 10% more year-on-year. In 2016, it is already 48% of respondents who have highlighted the importance of corporate culture as important in the recruitment process. In the following years, 2017 and 2018, this criterion becomes important for 55% of respondents. The question remains whether companies are successful in defining their culture and putting it out to the labor market as well as inward towards its own employees.

At this moment, we are getting to evaluate the issues from the third area, namely HR Marketing itself and Employer Branding. Support from leadership in these activities is

very important. As mentioned earlier, HR activities and Employer Branding activities also require financial support from management. Therefore, another issue (see Figure 4) concerns investments in HR Marketing and Employer Branding.

**Figure 4: What are your investments in HR Marketing and Employer Branding this year compared to the previous year? (2015-2018)<sup>1</sup>**



Source: Own adjustment based on Research of HR Marketing Trends in the Czech Republic in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The results for 2015 show that 27% of companies will be investing in HR Marketing and Employer Branding higher than in the previous year. In 61% of companies, investments will be the same, and 12% of companies will reduce these investments. The following years show that investment in HR marketing and Employer Branding will grow. In 2016, 50% of companies will be investing in HR Marketing and Employer Branding higher than in the previous year. The same is true in 2017 (48%) and in 2018 (51%). About half of the companies are investing more money in HR Marketing and Employer Branding than in previous years.

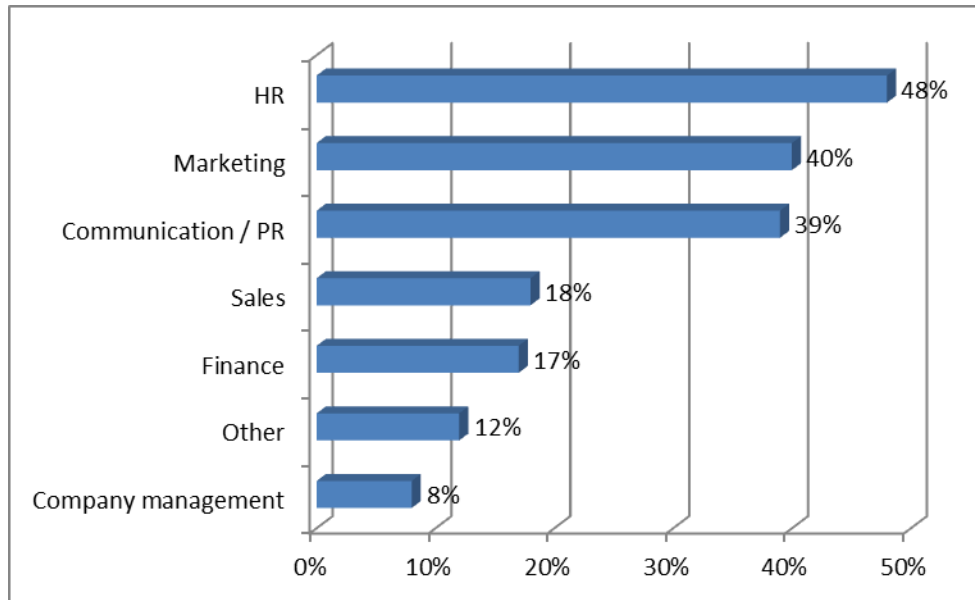
An interesting area that is discussed in many companies is also responsible for HR Marketing and Employer Branding. In 70% of cases this is an HR team. 11.5% of companies have a team composed across these departments for these activities. Cross-departmental collaboration is certainly a good idea, and each expert can bring a new perspective and contribute to common goals. Despite the responsibility for HR Marketing and Employer Branding under HR (48%), there are other teams involved in HR Marketing and Employer Branding (see Figure 5). In 40% of cases, HR partners in HR Marketing and Employer Branding are colleagues from marketing department, 39% of colleagues from communication department and PR, and 18% of colleagues from sales department.

<sup>1</sup> There is no data available for 2014.



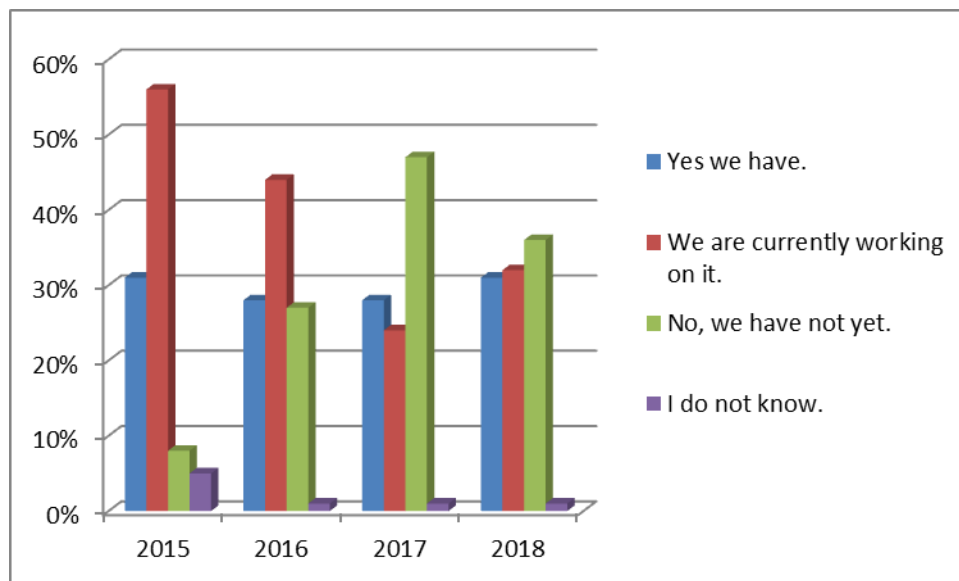
Only a minor percentage of respondents said they had an Employer Branding team. Other teams involved in HR Marketing and Employer Branding are less likely to be from the finance department (17%), other departments (12%) and only 8% of the management.

**Figure 5: Which teams in your company are involved in working in HR marketing and Employer Branding the most? (average values 2014-2018)**



*Source: Own adjustment based on Research of HR Marketing Trends in the Czech Republic in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.*

Involvement of other departments is also desirable because HR takes care of all employees in the company. For this reason, colleagues from the key departments of the company should be involved in HR activities. Together, a strategy for building an employer's brand should also be established (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Do you have a set strategy for building an employer brand? (2015-2018)<sup>2</sup>**

Source: Own adjustment based on Research of HR Marketing Trends in the Czech Republic in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

In 2015, 31% of companies have a set strategy for branding, 28% of companies in 2016, 28% of companies in 2017, and 31% of firms in 2018. A satisfactory finding is that if companies do not have a set branding strategy at least they are currently working on it. In 2015, it was 56% of companies, 44% in 2016, 24% in 2017, and 32% in 2018. While in 2015 only 8% of companies did not have the strategy, in 2017 it is already 47% of companies. In 2018, the situation is better, but 36% of companies still have no strategy to build a brand.

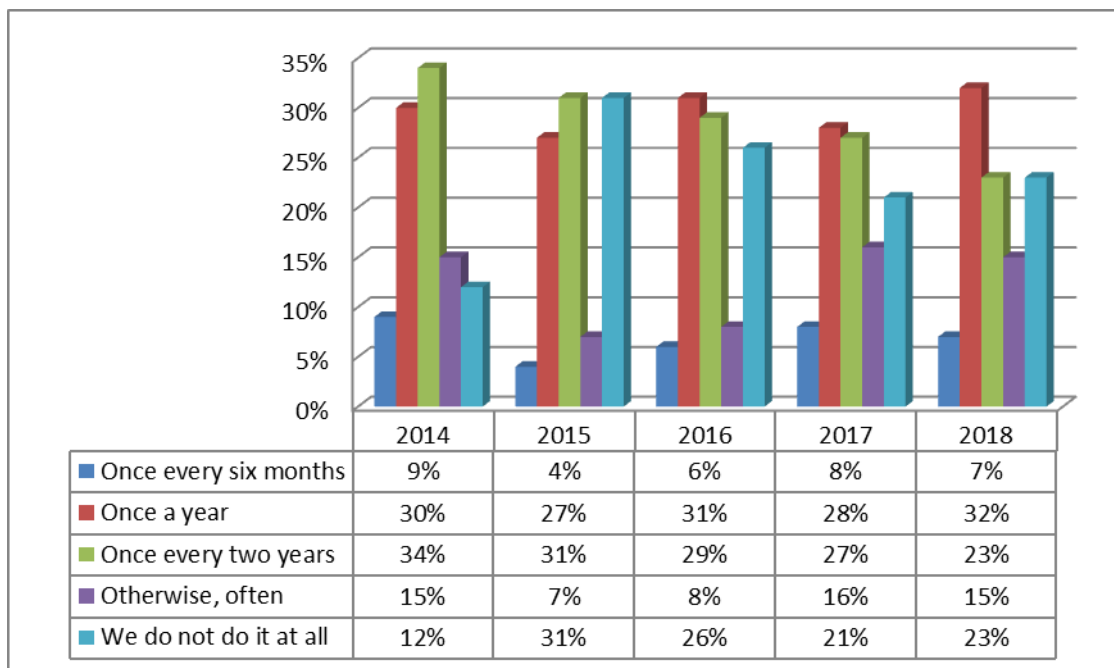
The strategy for building an employer's brand is closely related to the fact that companies need to know how jobseekers are to perceive and how they want to achieve it. It is therefore necessary to obtain own data needed to build an employer's brand. Whether alone or in cooperation with an external agency. The first most common form is surveys among their own employees when companies ask why their employees work in their company and what are their main motives. The second most frequent form is the interview questions where HR professionals appropriately ask what criteria the job seekers choose for their employer. And the third most common form is mapping the offer of competing employers, especially mapping what they say and how they present themselves.

Even though HR staff teams / departments are not only recruiting new employees, the recruitment process is the first in most companies, and the HR team / department is responsible for it. In this context, it can be mentioned that the HR team / department would have the same emphasis as placing recruitment on new employees, even keeping

<sup>2</sup> There is no data available for 2014.

the existing ones. It is not possible to engage in infinitely only the recruitment of new employees and not paying attention to the most valuable thing the company already has. So own employees. These activities are often forgotten and it is very easy to build a strategic concept of internal branding in the minds of our own employees. It is they who use the brand, who are "working" for it. For some reasons they are in this company and not in another. So the HR team / department does not necessarily have to invent the recruitment campaign from the start. Just ask your own staff and build their experience points (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: How often do you investigate the engagement of your employees? (2014-2018)**



Source: Own adjustment based on Research of HR Marketing Trends in the Czech Republic in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The results show that when companies make surveys of the engagement of their own employees, they do it most often once a year or once every two years. But there is still a lot of companies that do not do these surveys and these companies are not interested in how they have or do not have engaged employees. Engaged employees, according to various surveys, are doing much better work and are more efficient. Companies should be interested.

The results confirmed the trend of recent years, namely the lack of qualified job seekers and the low number of applications for employment. Companies have to think about luring jobseekers, telling them that it is precisely what this company is best for them, and above all, what a job-seeker will obtain from a company. Companies must build their brand in the labor market. At present, companies do not select jobseekers, but jobseekers are choosing a company. Classical marketing activities and one-time

recruitment campaigns are no longer sufficient. It is not enough to publish an advertisement. Jobseekers want more. Companies must build on sophisticated and long-term communication. Communication that will be open not only to the external labor market but also to the internal labor market. Another alarming fact is that companies forget their own employees and their needs. As confirmed by the results of the survey, the problem of internal communication, internal culture and internal relations is becoming more and more difficult. Employee engagement is not explored in many companies. Responsibility for these activities lies with the HR team / department in most companies. Often these are new things, new trends and activities that HR managers have not met yet. They need more support not only from the management of the company but also from other departments in the company. HR investments and Employer Branding are also linked to financial investments. As has been said, the activities that are associated with HR Marketing and Employer Branding are not of a short-term nature. It involves long-term efforts by companies to build an attractive company for both future and existing employees. Therefore, it is also necessary to think about the financial aspect of the matter from the point of view of employers' branding strategies.

#### **4 Conclusion**

Employer Branding is a complex, demanding and long-term discipline. Providing meaningful work and the opportunity for employee growth and development is, and will be, more important than ever before. Interviews with job seekers show that they are looking for a variety of experiences, meaningful work, and the opportunity to learn and grow. This means that companies need to set a long-term strategy and achievable targets for building an employer's brand. They must be able to address, attract, retain and motivate not only future employees but also existing ones. Designing a strategy for building an employer brand and its subsequent implementation can be decisive for a company. Based on the research and the above-mentioned findings, four strategies and trends can be identified and recommended. These trends are building up employers' brands:

- Recruitment activities needed intervention and marketing assistance.
- More and in-depth understanding was needed for applicants, their needs and requirements.
- Personal contact has become a powerful means of differentiating itself.
- Website attractiveness and website optimization for mobile phones has become a clear benefit for companies.

Branding includes all the marketing activities that help shape a unique brand. Properly used personal marketing tools then help companies build a quality brand of employer. It's basically about letting HR professionals work with marketing tools in human resources management. Personnel marketing is working with a job offer similar to classic product

marketing, emphasizing its role primarily in recruiting workers into the labor market, but it also has an important role to play after the employee arrives. Our employees are mainly concerned with strengthening their affiliation with the company. The goal of personal marketing is to fill all the vacancies with the right people at the right time and to build an attractive employer's brand. Employer Branding forms companies and their corporate cultures, HR Marketing company represents. Ideally, HR Marketing should build on the employer brand strategy. Employer brand should serve as a useful organizational framework for strategic human resources management.

## 5 References

- APP, S., MERK, J. and BUETTGEN, M. (2012) "Employer Branding: Sustainable HRM as a Competitive Advantage in the Market for High-Quality Employees," *management revue. Socio-economic Studies*, Rainer Hampp Verlag, vol. 23(3), pages 262-278.
- BACHM, S. (2005) *Managing Human Resources: Personnel Management in Transition*. John Wiley & Sons, 2005.
- BACKHAUS, K. and TIKOO, S. (2004). Conceptualizing and researching employer branding, *Career Development International*, Vol. 9 Issue: 5, pp.501-517, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430410550754>.
- BOON, C., ECKARDT, R., LEPAK, D. P. and BOSELIE, P. (2017) Integrating strategic human capital and strategic human resource management, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29:1, 34-67, DOI: 10.1080/09585192.2017.1380063.
- BURKHOLDER, N. C.; EDWARDS, P. J.; SARTAIN, L. (2003) *On Staffing: Advice and Perspectives from Hr Leaders*. John Wiley & Sons, 2003.
- CLARKE, M. (ed.) (2011), 'Sustainable HRM: A New Approach to People Management,' in *Readings in HRM and Sustainability*, Melbourne: Tilde University Press, pp. 1–7.
- EHNERT, I. (2006), 'Sustainability Issues in Human in Human Resource Management: Linkages, Theoretical Approaches, and Outlines for an Emerging Field,' in 21st EIASM SHRM Workshop, Aston, Birmingham, March 28–29.
- EHNERT, I. (2009), *Sustainable Human Resource Management: A Conceptual and Exploratory Analysis From a Paradox Perspective*, Berlin: Physica-Verlag.
- FOSTER, C., PUNJASRI, K. and CHENG, R. (2010). Exploring the relationship between corporate, internal and employer branding", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 19 Issue: 6, pp.401-409, <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610421011085712>.
- JIANG, T.T. and IILES, P. (2011). Employer-brand equity, organizational attractiveness and talent management in the Zhejiang private sector China, *Journal of Technology Management in China*, 6 (1) (2011), pp. 97-110.
- KRAMAR, R. (2014) Beyond strategic human resource management: is sustainable human resource management the next approach?, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25:8, 1069-1089, DOI: 10.1080/09585192.2013.816863.
- LENGNICK-HALL, M.L., LENGNICK-HALL, C.A., ANDRADE, L.A., and DRAKE, B. (2009), 'Strategic Human Resource Management: The Evolution of the Field,' *Human Resource Management Review*, 19, 64–85.

- LUNDY, O. (2006) From personnel management to strategic human resource management, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 5:3, 687-720, DOI: 10.1080/09585199400000054.
- MANDHANYA, Y. and SHAH, M. (2010). Employer Branding – A tool for talent management, *Global Management Review* . 2010, Vol. 4 Issue 2, p43-48. 6p. 1 Diagram.
- MANDHANYA, Y. and SHAH, M. (2010). Employer Branding-A tool for talent management, *Global Management Review*, 4(2), pp.43-48.
- MARIAPPANADAR, S. (2003), 'Sustainable Human Resource Strategy: The Sustainable and Unstable Dilemmas of Retrenchment,' *International Journal of Social Economics*, 30, 8, 906–923.
- MARIAPPANADAR, S. (2012), 'The Harm Indicators of Negative Externality of Efficiency Focused Organisational Practices,' *International Journal of Social Economics*, 39, 209–220.
- SHEDDEN, W. L. *Management Development Context and Strategies*. Gower: Aldershot, 2010.
- TRUSS, C. and GRATTON, L. (2006) Strategic human resource management: a conceptual approach, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 5:3, 663-686, DOI: 10.1080/09585199400000053.
- TÜZÜNER, V.L. and YÜKSEL, C.A., (2009). Segmenting Potential Employees According to Firms' Employer Attractiveness Dimensions in The Employer Branding Concept, *Journal of Academic Research in Economics*, 1(1), pp.46-61.
- VAN GRAMBERG, B., TEICHER J. and O'ROURKE, A. (2014) Managing electronic communications: a new challenge for human resource managers, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25:16, 2234-2252, DOI: 10.1080/09585192.2013.872166.
- WILDEN, R., GUDERGAN, S., LINGS, I. (2010). Employer branding: strategic implications for staff recruitment, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 26(1), pp.56-73.
- WILKINSON, A., HILL, M., and GOLLAN, P. (2001), 'The Sustainability Debate,' *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, 12, 12, 1492–1502.