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## **EXTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING TOOLS USED FOR ATTRACTING GRADUATES BY ENERGY COMPANIES LISTED AT WARSAW STOCK EXCHANGE**

### **Abstract:**

As business environment face many challenges employer branding became an important part of long term strategy. It is expected that companies will try manage the awareness and perceptions of current and potential employees, and related. Companies try to develop their image as an employer of choice the one who employee wants to work for and associate with. Many researchers emphasise that such approach should allow to recruit and retain the best workforce. Thus the company should use various channels and tools to demonstrate attractiveness and benefits to prospective employees'. It should show the uniqueness of the firm and distinguish from competitors and draw employees to that company. Employer branding is very often divided into external branding and internal branding. Internal employer branding is concentrates on creating a friendly work atmosphere, building opportunities for development and growth for employees inside the organization. On the other hand external employer branding focus on building company image that increase candidates' and market awareness of the brand(company) and the advantages of working for it..

This paper will look at which external employer branding tools are mostly used by energy sector companies' listed at Warsaw Stock Exchange. It will also investigate similarities and differences within this sector. The content analysis reveals that in energy sector companies use similar external employer branding tools to attract talents such as social media, job fairs, companies websites. However the collaboration with universities still use old fashion approach of mainly guest lectures. More interactive approaches such as brand ambassadors, on Campus designates events or open days are still rather rare practise

### **Keywords:**

Employer branding, human resource management, HR marketing

**JEL Classification:** J24

## Introduction

Companies cannot succeed if they don't attract relevant type of employees. The global pool of talent is shrinking (Botha, Bussin, de Swartd 2011). Attracting high quality applicants becomes rather challenging in the recent years. Companies with better reputation attract more and higher quality of candidates (Turban and Cable 2003).

Employing the right candidates does not limit only to placing the advertisement and offering relevant pay. Companies try to develop their image as an "employer of choice", the one who employee wants to work for. So employer branding became an important part of company long term strategy. There is a number of research that demonstrates that employer brand strongly influence the attractiveness of the company to prospective employees (Minchington,2010; Crous, 2007; Willock 2005).

Due to the talent shortage ability to attract skilled employees and retaining talents is one of the main factors strengthening competitive advantage on the market (Hallen 2007, Prinsloo 2008; Mohaptra 2005) as talent shortage make companies vulnerable and less sustainable (Minchington, 2006; Prinsloo, 2008).

When looking for a job recruits often consider several firms and use corporate reputation as a source of information about working environment, company culture and job prospects.

Employer branding promotes and profiles the company to potential employees. This requires creating and communicating compelling and unique perception of company in the minds of both prospective recruits to attract them and current employees to retain them. Any organization that wants to build its competitiveness on the market consciously, should also build its brand of "employer of choice".

Employer brand of specific organization is determined by such factors as: attractiveness of the sector, company's reputation, quality of products and service, location, work environment, pay, economic conditions, employee benefits, people and culture, work/life balance. Company needs to shape its image consciously to be able to influence on how it is perceived as an employer.

The objective of this paper is to present the preliminary results of investigating external tools of employer branding used by energy companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. This paper will look at which external employer branding tools are mostly used by energy sector companies' listed at Warsaw Stock Exchange to attract graduates. It also investigate similarities and differences within this sector.

## What is it employer branding?

Employer branding is a growing field and the concept has been defined in several ways. Employer branding was firstly defined by Ambler and Barrow(1996), who claimed that an employer brand is a package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company.

According to Sehgal and Malati (2013) employer branding is the image of an organisation that is perceived by stakeholders, shareholders and employees. It should show the uniqueness of the firm, allow to differentiate from competitors and encourage employees that the company is a good place to work at. Lloyd (2002) emphasises that employer branding comprises of various company efforts to communicate to existing and upcoming employees as a desirable place to work at. Employer branding is a promise given to current and prospective employees.

One of the most important factors that influence recruits decision of which company apply to is their perception of company brand (Turban and Cable 2003, Highhouse et al 1999). CIPD research shows that for 75% of companies the employer branding helps with making recruitment process effective (Dyer,2007)

Mark and Toelken (2009) as well as Wheeler et al. (2006) emphasised that employer branding strategies should be aligned with overall company brand and company strategy. Employer branding becoming long term company strategy to manage the perception of current and prospective employees and related stakeholders about particular firm (Sullivan 2004).

Hudson (2014) reports shows that almost 63% of the 324 largest World businesses defined employer branding in their strategies and undertake activities related to this area. In addition research conducted in 2011 by LinkedIn indicated that there are three reasons to develop good employer branding concept (Linkedin,2012):

- spending less on hiring – it can lower by 50% per hire the company cost,
- boosting retention - it can reduce employee turnover by up to 28%,
- influencing candidates decision.

## The principles of employer branding

Employer branding is nowadays perceived as a necessary part of long-term strategy. It should help to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regard to particular organisations.

There are two main models of employer branding strategy (Kantowicz-Gdańska2009)

- Martin's model – employer branding is a process used to create company image. It is determined by corporate identity and deeply embedded in organisational culture. The company image is basis of firm reputation that attracts employees.
- Backhouse and Tikoo's model – employer branding is a group of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company. It establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It comprises of company value system, policies and behaviours that can attract motivate, and retain the firm's current and potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

According to ManpowerGroup (2015) there are eight essential factors in developing effective employer branding strategy:

- Be Candidate Centric – company need to use marketing tools in their recruiting processes. They should use customized approaches that will engage applicants in ways they are not being engaged before. Company need to understand candidates' unique motivators, needs and life stages etc.
- Be Authentic - emotional connection with candidates is vital as separates one employer from another. Trust brand ambassadors with social media, don't try to influence their voice as contrived or forced messages as it will seem inauthentic and could harm good employer brand.
- Be consistent – the employer brand should have consistent tone and core values throughout the whole process. The objective and message should be clear to all parties that supporting the process to avoid “bait and switch” perception.
- Be informed – companies need to be aware of what is being said about them – good and bad – true and untrue as this create recruits perceptions about company. The company should continuously monitor and assess all the tools that are available like Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Glassdoor, Get Rated! etc as they have real influence in the marketplace.
- Be creative – employers need to make sure that their job descriptions are up to date and reflect current trends on the market. They should reflect why the

company is the best choice, why it is good to be employed by them and stay there. Companies should use innovative approaches such as employee ambassadors' videos of daily workplace activity or their testimonials. Company should have clear and efficient strategy how efficiently use Employment/Career/Work section of the company's website.

- Be proactive – company should continuously nurture talent communities before it needs to fill vacancies as this will allow company to secure real competitive advantage for attracting best talents when new positions arise.
- Be reactive – if employer spots any negative reviews/opinion about the firm the issues arising should be followed up and then rectified. The positive reviews give an opportunity to provide deeper insight into company values and how it reinforces the EVP<sup>1</sup>.
- Be bold – employer reputation is increasingly being formed online often by factors the company has a little control over. So employers should be proactive and closely monitor marketplace dynamics.

### **Types of employer branding**

Companies can build employer brands in different ways. In practice, employer branding is most frequently divided into internal branding and external branding (Kozłowski, 2012). Internal employer branding is primarily focused on creating a friendly work atmosphere and a possibility of employees' development inside the organisation. It is directed primarily to existing and leaving employees and focuses on developmental programs and building a well-defined corporate culture. Firms try to build good employee experience and turn them into brand advocates. This is extremely important as talented recruits conduct thorough research about the prospective employer by speaking with employees of the company.

External employer branding is directed to professionals, students, graduates and other stakeholders. It is executed by using modern communication channels, building relations with the academic community, co-operation with opinion-leading media, image-enhancing recruitment projects etc. It concentrates on creating strong company visibility on the targeted talent markets by designing complex approaches including websites with content on the company culture, compensation and benefit practices and career opportunities and why they are a great company to work for. If external branding is expected to be successful it requires dissemination of the relevant, reliable message on the market. External employer branding may perform two functions. Firstly image-creating function that aims at increasing candidates' awareness of the

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<sup>1</sup> Employee Value Proposition

brand, informing the job market of the company and the advantages of working in it, presenting the competitive advantage or implementing the corporate social responsibility principles. Secondly recruitment-oriented function whose most important objective is finding the most appropriate candidates and influencing them to apply for the available vacancies.

When assessing prospective employer recruits look for (Simmons, 2009):

- Recruitment and selection procedures,
- Job role, competitive compensation and benefits, job satisfaction,
- Challenging, stimulating and fulfilling work environment,
- Health and safety,
- Training and development,
- Contribution to societal well being,
- Employer brand value proposition,
- Work life balance.

As stress by Shah (2011) external branding only achieve its results if it is able to create positive experience for employees (positive internal branding).

Regardless of the chosen approach, employer branding requires involving employees at all levels of the organisational structure in the process so that the employer's brand could reflect the actual aspirations and challenges of all managers and employees. The values which are included or which will be included in the brand have to comprise information related to organisational culture, management styles, expectations of current employees and future recruits. This will help in developing group of values offered by a company to its employees (Backhaus, Tikoo, 2004).

## **Employer Branding Tools**

The fast growing development of social media made it very attractive to employers as a way to disseminate information about their brand, values and opportunities to prospective recruits. Every month over two million jobs are posted via social media mainly on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter Kaur et al. (2015). It is quick, easy and wildly accessible for substantial public. Internet search has been broadly use by candidates as well as the Human Resource Department.

Social media become essential element of company talent management strategy (Kaur 2015 et al.). In recent years the use of social media for recruitment and screening candidates significantly increased (Clark and Roberts 2010). Kaur et al.(2015) stressed that using social media for employer branding has two sides and it can be a boom or bane depending how it is used, so companies need to closely monitor information that are posted online.

Currently some of the mostly used approaches in employer branding are (ManpowerGroup, 2015);

- Talent Communities - group of people who may not be quite ready to apply for a job or for which there is no appropriate position open. Prospective candidates may try to stretch their skills in order to qualify for a vacancy. Talent communities leverage that behaviour. Community members may include entry-level job seekers as well as those of upper-management positions. Company needs to communicate with community members on continues basis and keep them engaged and demonstrate that the company is an employer of choice, whether or not they are actively job seeking. It allows company to build and maintain a robust cluster of talent before the need arises. It also presents an opportunity to better understand and profile talent for future opportunities.
- Employer Ambassadors – involving employees as brand ambassadors. It requires finding engaged employees to speak out about the company and the workplace. This can be one of the most effective and cost-efficient recruiting tools available. Prospective applicants are more likely to find employee peer experiences more credible than many other sources of information.
- Gamification - employers are increasingly looking to games and new technology as a means of immersing people in real-life challenges that demonstrate their job skills and simultaneously engage candidates with the employer. Some companies hire game developers within their recruitment budgets.
- Social Media - proactive companies encourage employees to use social media, however this strategy should be carefully introduced and involves some training on what is expected in terms of tone, content and overall appropriateness.

All this tools are available to Polish companies, however the most frequently used when developing an employer branding strategy are preparing talent management and development programme, defining EVP, developing a communication strategy of the employer's brand, including a separate 'career' page or a 'career' tab on the company's website, developing social media strategy, remuneration strategy, reference programmes for employees, an effective leadership development programme (HRM INSTITUTE, 2016).

## Research methodology

The aims of this research is to investigate the use of external employer branding tools by selected companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange (GPW). The study focus on energy sector. 8 companies has been selected. The factor used to select the sample were:

- length of the presence on the stock market - at least 10 years,
- listing on the GPW main market,
- inclusion in WIG 30<sup>2</sup>,
- not appearing the alert list<sup>3</sup>.

The research focus exclusively on the external tools used to build employer's brand. The data has been collected through content analysis of annual reports, corporate social responsibility reports, corporate websites, trade unions' releases, and various published reports on brand and operations of selected companies, as well as targeted interviews with company representatives.

The following research questions have been raised:

- Is the use of employer branding already a standard for the listed companies in energy sector?
- Do the listed companies in energy sector use all available external employer branding tools?
- Is it possible to determine a level of the significance of selecting particular tools?
- Can a universal employer branding method be developed for the listed companies in energy sector?

## Research findings

The results of data collection has been presented in Table 1.

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<sup>2</sup> WIG30 index has been published since 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2013 and represents the capitalization-of weighted stock market index based on the portfolio value of the 30 largest and most liquid companies listed on Warsaw Stock Exchange.

<sup>3</sup> The list of alerts includes companies at risk of bankruptcy.



**Table 1 External employer branding tools used by selected stock companies**

<b>ENERGA</b>	
<b>CARREER / WORK TAB</b> - description of vacant positions - description of the recruitment process	- a direct link from the Career/Job tab to the current vacancies - each vacancies comes with detailed information about criteria, benefits, development opportunities etc. - a competition addressed to Polish graduates wishing to pursue an internship in the company
<b>JOB FAIRS</b>	Presence at "Absolwent Talent Days"(Graduate Talent Day) the biggest graduate employment fair in Poland presenting company's specifics and development opportunities program offer to current and future employees. Fairs participants are offered various activates including quiz about personal preferences and computer simulation.
<b>EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES</b>	Close relationship with University of Gdańsk: - Delivering lectures/seminars classes to the Faculty of Management, - Presence of Energa at the Student Organization Week - presentations of internships program as well as Q&A to the Faculty of Economics of the University of Gdańsk - - workshops - representative of the Center for Corporate Finance and Supervision Energa SA, explain how to build and use financial models - "The Exchange without Secrets" workshops to broaden understanding about the capital markets for individual investors delivered at the Faculty of Management of the University of Gdańsk
<b>COMPANY AMBASSADORS</b>	Lack
<b>OPEN DOORS</b>	Lack
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	www.pracuj.pl; Facebook; Youtube; LinkedIn
<b>OTHER</b>	- Imagine Cup Program – Energa is a main sponsor for the Polish chapter of the largest technology competition for students in the world for start-up organised by Microsoft. This venture brings together the best business and technology professionals - Award for the best doctoral thesis - "Acta Energetica" - in cooperation with Gdansk University of Technology since 2009 Energa S.A. published quarterly scientific journal about innovative power engineering research
<b>ENEA</b>	
<b>CARREER / WORK TAB</b> - description of vacant positions - description of the recruitment process	- a direct link from the Career/Job tab to the current vacancies - each vacancies comes with detailed information about criteria, benefits, development opportunities etc. - 3 month paid summer internships in 11 business areas
<b>JOB FAIRS</b>	Presence at "Absolwent Talent Days"(Graduate Talent Day) the biggest graduate employment fair in Poland (2015 and 2016)
<b>EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES</b>	- providing access to data for dissertation projects - participation of ENEA specialists at conferences organized by colleges and universities.
<b>COMPANY AMBASSADORS</b>	Lack
<b>OPEN DOORS</b>	Lack
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Facebook; Twitter; www.dnikariery.pl
<b>OTHER</b>	Competition for Modeling the Energy Market - the aim of the competition is to broaden students' knowledge of Polish energy sector, as well as the nature of the analyst's work in this area.

<b>TAURON</b>	
<b>CARREER / WORK TAB</b> - description of vacant positions - description of the recruitment process	- a direct link from the Career/Job tab to the current vacancies - each vacancies comes with detailed information about criteria, benefits, development opportunities etc. - summer internship
<b>JOB FAIRS</b>	- presence at several job/graduate fairs a year
<b>EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES</b>	"TAURON Distribution" Knowledge Academy - transfer of expertise and sharing knowledge and development in power engineering
<b>COMPANY AMBASSADORS</b>	Advertised as "Become a Tauton Group Ambassador" however no details about the program are provided
<b>OPEN DOORS</b>	Open Door(open day) at Tauron Heat Production Plant in Katowice
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Facebook; Twitter; Youtube; LinkedIn
<b>OTHER</b>	Competition for the best master's thesis.
<b>LOTOS</b>	
<b>CARREER / WORK TAB</b> - description of vacant positions - description of the recruitment process	- direct link from the Career/Job tab to the current vacancies - each vacancies comes with detailed information about criteria, benefits, development opportunities etc.
<b>JOB FAIRS</b>	Presence at the biggest fair events: Career EXPO, International Pomeranian Metropolitan Job Fair and Entrepreneurship
<b>EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES</b>	lack
<b>COMPANY AMBASSADORS</b>	First ambassador project was launched 2014/2015, each successive Ambassador of LOTOS supports his/her HR Process Team. The project is a collaboration with the academic community through a representative at the university, thanks to such approach the company can effectively respond to the specific needs of students (e.g. organizing more workshops or meetings)
<b>OPEN DOORS</b>	Special Open Days - addressed to business customers rather than potential employees
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Facebook; Instagram ; LinkedIn; GoldenLine; Pracuj.pl; Trójmiasto.pl; Youtube.com
<b>OTHER</b>	- LOTOS Academy - the aim is to create a partnership team and build LOTOS Group as a modern, efficient and competitive organization. Enable students, graduates and high school students to gaining experience and deepening their knowledge about the industry. - providing students access to data to develop bachelor and master's theses. - Scholarship program for the best master and doctoral dissertation (duration from 1 month to 3 months)
<b>KGHM</b>	
<b>CARREER / WORK TAB</b> - description of vacant positions - description of the recruitment process	- direct link from the Career/Job tab to the current vacancies - each vacancies comes with detailed information about criteria, benefits, development opportunities etc. - Internship - useful information on how to apply - Talent Mine - the program address to final year students and recent graduates offers unique opportunity to work for one of the world's largest mining companies: rotation in various areas of the company (including international offices)
<b>JOB FAIRS</b>	Presence at the biggest fair events: Career EXPO
<b>EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES</b>	lack
<b>COMPANY AMBASSADORS</b>	Lack

<b>OPEN DOORS</b>	The Open Days of KGHM ZANAM – to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the company's operations, a unique opportunity has been provided to deepen knowledge and gain exposure to the modern technology in mining technology
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Youtube; LinkedIn
<b>OTHER</b>	- providing students access to data to develop bachelor and master's theses.
<b>PGE</b>	
<b>CARREER / WORK TAB</b> - description of vacant positions - description of the recruitment process	- direct link from the Career/Job tab to the current vacancies - each vacancies comes with detailed information about criteria, benefits, development opportunities etc. - "Energy for the Future" training program for students of the final year and recent graduates - Academy of Capital Market Leaders - the best participants of the Academy have the opportunity to take paid internships at the PGE Group - WE BUILD THE VALUE OF THE POLISH ECONOMY. WORK FOR US!- an internship program for graduates supported by Ministry of Treasury, addressed to the best master engineering students, offers internships to gain experience in the most interesting projects in the PGE Capital Group.
<b>JOB FAIRS</b>	Presence at few job fair events over the year
<b>EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES</b>	lack
<b>COMPANY AMBASSADORS</b>	lack
<b>OPEN DOORS</b>	Special Open Days - addressed to business customers rather than potential employees
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Facebook; Instagram; LinkedIn
<b>OTHER</b>	"Energy of the Future" competition address to student of all discipline, students should write an essay describing the energy of the future
<b>ORLEN</b>	
<b>CARREER / WORK TAB</b> - description of vacant positions - description of the recruitment process	- direct link from the Career/Job tab to the current vacancies - each vacancies comes with detailed information about criteria, benefits, development opportunities etc. - ORLEN Training Program - Group Practice Program – run in cooperation with schools and universities, opportunity to participate in tasks using the latest technology under the guidance of experienced specialists - Dissertation support – assistance with conducting a bachelor or master research project(thesis) on Polish Oil Concern ORLEN
<b>JOB FAIRS</b>	- Presence at few general job fair events over the year - Participation in specialized engineering job fairs
<b>EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES</b>	ORLEN's Day of Knowledge - an opportunity for students to broaden their knowledge through workshop and collaboration, where teams work on proposing solutions to emerging real issues.
<b>COMPANY AMBASSADORS</b>	lack
<b>OPEN DOORS</b>	Special Open Days - addressed to business customers rather than potential employees
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Facebook, LinkedIn
<b>OTHER</b>	

Source: own work.

The conducted study shows that in energy sector employers use some similar employer branding tools to attract graduates:

- All companies included in the sample try to attract prospective candidates by detailed information about available vacancies and additional benefits offered. They also offer on-line application process.
- Most of the companies offers not only graduate roles, but also work experience, internships and placements.
- The scope of the description of the recruitment process presented to applicants varies, with some companies showing very detailed information about various recruitments stages (including graphs).
- All companies have “Career/Job” Page as a Tab on the company homepage.
- All surveyed companies participate in job fairs, as they believe that this is the fastest and most effective communication channel with prospective applicants. They also regard job fairs as a great opportunity to create a database of prospective job applicants. Some companies prefers general fairs as other concentrate on specialise ones.
- Unfortunately employers collaboration with Universities is limited and mainly focus on delivering lectures/presentations and sometimes participation in University Events
- Employers branding tools such as open doors are still very limited as companies fear competition and leaking key information and they only offer such opportunities to customers but not prospective employees.
- Using Employer Ambassadors is much limed and companies should explore this tool more and use it more efficiently the future.
- All companies fully utilize social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook; Twitter; Youtube as they believe that this is the most important and fastest growing communication channels. This is in line with research conducted by Kaur et al (2015).

## Conclusion

Employer branding concept has evolved from a novelty and solution originally addressed only to large businesses to one of the tools used nowadays to build competitive advantage and oriented towards attracting the most talented candidates, as well as a method of limiting fluctuation of key employee.

The content analysis reveals that in energy sector companies use similar external employer branding tools to attract talents such as social media, job fairs, companies' websites. However the collaboration with universities still follows the old fashion approach of mainly guest lectures. So there is no proper partnership between companies and Universities. More interactive approaches such as brand ambassadors, on Campus designates events or open days are still very rare.

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