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Employer Branding as a Strategic Differentiation for Key Positions in the Telecommunications Industry

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ABSTRACT

In the competitive talent war, employer branding has become an important strategy to attract and retain talent for key positions, especially in the highly dynamic and competitive telecommunications industry. This research aims to design an employer branding strategy for key positions in PT XYZ, focusing on how employer branding influences the decision of talents in key positions to be interested in joining and staying in the company. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data was collected through interviews, document analysis, surveys to employees and candidates for key positions. This research utilizes Moesly & Schmidt's employer branding framework in the steps of building a strong employer branding. The research findings show that employer branding efforts, especially those that emphasize career development opportunities, building authentic EVP values, developing talent communities, digital recruitment platforms and increasing employee engagement in employer branding programs play an important role in attracting and retaining talent in key positions. The proposed strategies include EVP internalization, cross-unit collaboration, talent community development and strengthening the employer branding platform. This study contributes to the academic discourse on strategic human resource management especially employer branding and offers practical recommendations for companies that want to become employers of choice in the telecommunications industry.

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Introduction

In an era of increasingly dynamic and competitive business competition, the talent shortage phenomenon has become a strategic issue facing companies worldwide. The ManpowerGroup Talent Shortage Survey (2023) report shows that 77% of global companies are experiencing difficulty finding talent with the right skills, the highest figure in

the last 17 years. This condition also occurs in Indonesia, particularly in the telecommunications sector, which is facing a surge in the need for skilled workers due to the acceleration of digital transformation, the development of 5G networks, and the increasing demand for data-based services (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology of the Republic of Indonesia,

2023). The gap between the need for competencies and the availability of experienced talent is triggering fierce competition among companies to attract and retain the best talent.

One of the main challenges in talent management is how companies can strategically attract, identify, develop, and retain individuals with key competencies, especially for positions that play a vital role in business continuity and growth. According to Tansley & Tietze (2013), talent management encompasses a comprehensive strategy for attracting, identifying, developing, retaining, and placing high-potential individuals within a company.

PT XYZ, a leading telecommunications tower provider in Indonesia, faces challenges in attracting and retaining talent in key positions. Based on PT XYZ's internal data in 2023, out of a total of 140 Manpower Requests (PTK), the recruitment team only managed to fulfill 136 PTK. After breaking down the 136 PTK, it was found that 30 PTK were fulfilled late. Of the 30 PTK whose fulfillment was late, 53% of the PTK that were fulfilled late were PTK for key positions.

In addition, based on the SOP for PT XYZ's Workforce Planning, a key position is a key position whose existence has a major influence on the success of the company's operations and business processes, has a strategic relationship with customers, has specific competencies related to strategic matters of the core business and is difficult to replace. The SOP also states that key positions in PT XYZ are at least at the section head/executive/analyst/senior engineer level.

According to Snell, Morris, & Bohlander (2016), human resource management is the process of managing human talent to achieve company goals. This view remains relevant, but in more recent literature, Armstrong & Taylor (2020) define HR management as a strategic approach to managing people within

a company so they can contribute effectively to achieving business goals. Similarly, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright (2021) emphasize that HR management encompasses a set of policies, practices, and systems that influence employee behavior, attitudes, and performance, including staffing, compensation, training, and retention.

PT XYZ is facing challenges as some of its best talent resigns and moves to competitors. The turnover rate for key positions has increased in the past two years, based on employee Key Employee Turnover (KETO) KPI achievement data as of December 31, 2022, at 8.31%, a gap of 0.81% from the 2022 target of 7.5%. Meanwhile, based on KETO KPI achievement data as of December 31, 2023, the achievement was 7.69%, a gap of 3.69% from the target of 4%. Data from the past two years shows that the turnover rate for key employees occupying key positions remains high.

Losing talent in key positions can disrupt operational continuity and hinder strategic development. This is in line with an interview conducted with the Organization Development Analyst of PT XYZ, where in 2023, an operator received a penalty of three hundred million rupiah because the Network Operation team was late in handling problems in one of the cities. The main cause was because at that time there was a vacant FTTH Back-End Section Head position and the limited existing team capable of handling emerging problems, resulting in late handling of trouble tickets and impacting the company's losses in paying penalties to the operator.

To answer the problems faced by PT XYZ, a special strategy is needed to overcome these problems, and based on PT XYZ's strategic map in 2024, one of the directions from TBIG management is to Attract People and Retain People. Management is responsible for creating strategies that can change public perception and attract candidates to work at TBIG.

According to Silzer & Dowell (2009) explains that effective employer branding must be based on a consistent and authentic value proposition, this can reduce employee retention and engagement if there is a significant difference between the promises made to candidates and what employees feel.

PT XYZ conducted an EVP survey in 2019 to assess the level of fulfillment of EVP promises and to identify the strongest and weakest areas of employee experience. Based on the survey results, the majority of employees had positive perceptions of the work environment (95.34%), culture (94.43%), and career (90.64%). EVP is crucial for increasing employee satisfaction and enhancing the company's competitiveness in attracting and retaining top talent, but there has been no follow-up from management regarding the EVP results.

In 2024, the company formulated the EVP IDEA (Improvement, Development, Environment, Ambiance) values. These values were formulated based on management directives, not research findings. Although PT XYZ has an EVP, the implementation of these values has not been consistently implemented in communication programs or branding activities. This creates a gap between internal (employee) perceptions and external candidates' perceptions of PT XYZ as an attractive workplace. However, based on the Strategic Human Capital 2024 directive, PT XYZ targets increasing the effectiveness of its talent attraction and retention strategy as a step toward establishing the company as an employer of choice in the telecommunications industry.

William Tincup, President of Recruiting Daily (in Ben Slater, 2020, accessed May 2020), stated that employer branding is a company's identity and uniqueness. It's everything that makes a company unique. Furthermore, a company's ability to differentiate and promote its identity to a specific group of candidates seeking employment with the company is called employer branding. Branding has

always been a crucial tool for companies seeking to attract customers. In fact, this section has evolved into a crucial component of the attraction section, which shows how marketing influences recruitment.

Employer branding is a potential approach to address these challenges. Mosley & Schmidt (2017) suggest that effective employer branding consists of: (1) understanding business and talent needs; (2) evaluating internal and external branding perceptions; (3) formulating an authentic EVP; (4) building a branding framework; (5) creating content that represents the EVP's values; (6) distributing through appropriate channels; and (7) measuring effectiveness periodically.

The urgency of this issue lies in the potential financial, operational, and strategic losses if companies fail to secure key talent. Losing employees in strategic positions can lead to operational disruptions, project delays, decreased service quality, and lost growth opportunities. In the highly competitive telecommunications industry, a strong employer branding strategy is necessary to build a company's image as an employer of choice, thereby attracting and retaining the best talent in the labor market (Mosley & Schmidt, 2017).

This study aims to design a relevant and applicable employer branding strategy for key positions at PT XYZ for the period 2025–2027. A qualitative approach with a case study design was used to explore in-depth internal perceptions, strategic challenges, and potential new directions for employer branding. The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions to companies in managing their image as employers in a more targeted manner while enriching scientific studies in the field of strategic human resource management, particularly in the context of key talent management.

Literature Review

Definition of Employer Branding

Employer branding is a concept that combines marketing principles with human resource management (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding is the concept of establishing a company's identity as an employer, encompassing the company's values, systems, policies, and culture to attract, motivate, and retain current and potential employees (Melin, 2005). Employer branding seeks to differentiate a business from competitors based on job openings, different employment opportunities, and desired workplace status (Ambler and Barrow, 1996).

Benefits of Employer Branding

According to Mosley & Schmidt (2017), employer branding can have a positive impact on business through the following functions:

- 1) Recruitment: can attract more high-quality candidates, improve the quality of new employees, and reduce recruitment costs.
- 2) Engagement: Employer branding is about making employees feel satisfied with their workplace and proud of their company. to increase engagement and productivity and customer satisfaction.
- 3) Retention: An ideal workplace filled with highly talented and engaged staff is a place employees want to be. Additionally, provide clarity about what the company expects from candidates before they apply.
- 4) Competitive Advantage: Companies can gain and maintain a competitive advantage in the industry thanks to the collective intelligence, creativity, drive, and determination of highly qualified individuals.

Steps in Building Employer Branding:

Mosley & Schmidt (2017) suggest that effective employer branding requires an integrated strategic approach between Human Resources (HR), marketing, and talent management. Ideally, an employer brand should be at the intersection of corporate strategy, talent needs, and the company's image in the labor market. Here are the steps to building a strong employer brand:

Understanding Business Goals & Talent Needs

Employer branding must support the company's business strategy and map the key competencies and talents needed to achieve those goals.

- 1) Corporate Brand: employer branding as a workplace must reflect the company's brand promise and ambition to customers.
- 2) HR and Talent: employer branding must support the type of talent a company needs to compete effectively.
- 3) Marketing: Marketing efforts should strengthen employer branding as a workplace, as a whole.
- 4) Employer branding strategies act as a liaison between these different stakeholder groups to help maximize the effectiveness and alignment of company goals.

Evaluating Employer Branding Image and Experience

To create or revitalize employer branding, it is necessary to conduct a thorough examination to identify existing strengths and weaknesses.

- 1) Looking at employer branding from within: is an analysis of internal employee perceptions, understanding employee perceptions to increase employee engagement and employee retention, reputation is basically a reflection of actual experience.

- 2) Looking at employer branding from the outside: a crucial part of creating an effective employer branding strategy because it allows companies to understand how they are positioned and perceived compared to their competitors when competing for candidates. A company's reputation as an employer is a fundamental component of its brand equity and determines the potential size and quality of its talent pool. Companies need to understand how they are perceived as potential employers.
- 3) Competitor analysis: an important part of creating an effective employer branding strategy because it allows the company to know how its position and perception compares to competitors.

Determining the Employer Value Proposition

EVP is the core of employer branding and reflects the company's commitment to the values, culture, rewards, and work experience offered to employees in return for their contributions. (Barrow & Mosley, 2005) A strong EVP helps companies attract and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive marketplace. A good EVP must have three key elements: differentiation, credibility, and sustainability. Differentiation is seen from what makes the company unique and attractive to top talent. Credibility means that the EVP attributes are realistic and in line with reality on the ground. Meanwhile, sustainability means being able to keep promises in the EVP and be consistent over the long term.

Building an Employer Brand Framework

A consistent brand framework is necessary to ensure that the employer branding message and experience are reflected across various communication channels and HR activities. Frameworks can take the form of a monolithic brand framework, a house of brands framework, or a parent-subsidary house of

brands framework, depending on the organizational structure.

Producing Story Content That Brings EVP to Life

Creating engaging content is key to capturing the attention and interest of your target audience. Storytelling is key to delivering your EVP in an engaging, authentic, and relevant way. As companies strive to attract and recruit top talent, content is king. Various types of content, including employee profiles, team stories, culture profiles, hero profiles, fact-and-figure content, and behind-the-scenes stories, are effective forms of content for building emotional connections with your target audience. Video content and interactive content can be effective ways to attract and engage the talent your company is looking for. Companies need to balance direct engagement with long-term brand building, highlighting your profile, and increasing employee engagement with your content.

Distributing Through Multiple Channels

Employer branding needs to be communicated through online and offline channels such as career sites, social media, blogs, job boards, video platforms, search engines (SEO/SEM) to increase the reach and effectiveness of branding content distribution, utilizing data-driven marketing automation (programmatic), college campuses and internships, and employee referrals. Collaboration with universities and educational institutions is considered crucial to ensure the flow of skilled and up-to-date talent into the job market (Eichhorst & Thode, 2012). The selection of channels is tailored to the characteristics of the targeted talent.

Measuring the Success of a Branding Strategy

To determine whether a company's branding efforts are achieving the desired results, evaluation is necessary. This evaluation is conducted using short-term metrics (number of applicants, candidate quality, content engagement) and long-term metrics to measure the long-term results of the

company's branding efforts, including brand awareness, employee retention, job satisfaction, and ROI on HR investments.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design at PT XYZ, focusing on designing an employer branding strategy for key positions. Data were obtained through document review, in-depth interviews with the Talent & Organization Development Department Head and the Human Capital Services Department Head, and surveys of employees and key position candidates.

The instruments consisted of a semi-structured interview guide and a document study guide compiled based on the seven steps of employer branding according to Mosley & Schmidt (2017). Data credibility was maintained through source and method triangulation, namely by comparing findings from interviews, surveys, and document studies to ensure consistency and accuracy of information (Patton, 2015). Data analysis was conducted using the Miles & Huberman (1994) model, which includes data reduction, keyword identification, coding (open coding and axial coding), and drawing conclusions related to talent management and employer branding theories.

Table 1.
Analysis Steps & Collection Methods

No	Analysis Steps	Method of collecting data	Results
1	Identifying the direction of employer branding strategy at PT XYZ	Study of strategic documents of HCM initiatives and interview with Talent & Organization Development Department Head of PT XYZ	Identified the direction of employer branding strategy at PT XYZ
2	Reviewing employer branding literature and theory	Document study of Mosley & Schmidt's (2017) theory on steps to build employer branding and scientific journals	A theoretical study that supports the design of employer branding strategies at PT XYZ
3	Analyzing the ongoing employer branding practices of PT XYZ	Document study and interview with Talent & Organization Development and Human Capital Services Department Head	Identification of employer branding practices at PT XYZ
4	Employer Branding Practice Gap Analysis	Study of PT XYZ's internal documents	Considerations in designing a relevant and applicable employer branding strategy
5	Formulating proposed employer branding strategies	Thematic analysis of interview results, adapted to Mosley's (2017) employer branding framework	Design an employer branding strategy that is suitable for key positions at PT XYZ

Source: Researcher's Process, 2025

Result

After analyzing the results of the interviews and the employer of choice survey of PT XYZ, the next step is to filter the findings to

determine improvement targets, and the following are the results of the analysis:

Table 2.
Gap Analysis of PT XYZ's Employer Branding Practices

Mosley & Schmidt steps	Survey Results	Interview Results	Gap Analysis
Integration with business, HR and marketing strategies	There are no indicators of synergy between units	HC, Corporate Secretary, CSR collaborate, Marketing is not yet involved	There is no cross-functional framework and cross-unit coordination is still limited.
Internal & external evaluation of brand perception	Internal & external prioritize salary & benefits, work-life balance, career path	The last EVP evaluation was in 2019 and was not specific to key positions.	Evaluation is not periodic and does not focus on key positions segments
Benchmark with competitors	Awareness is lower than main competitors	Competitor monitoring is done without strategic analysis	There is no systematic benchmarking and differentiation has not been optimized.
EVP reflects differentiation, credibility, sustainability	EVP "IDEA" was formulated without key position talent research	EVP is created based on management direction, not research.	EVP has not met expectations for key talent positions, and the EVP narrative has not been consistently delivered.
Employer branding framework	There is no consistency measurement	There is no formal employer branding roadmap yet	The framework is not documented and is not integrated into corporate strategy
Interesting and relevant content to EVP	Content is considered interesting but general and awareness is low	Generic content. Minimal key position storytelling	Content is not specific to target key positions and lacks EVP thematics
Distribution through various strategic channels	LinkedIn & job portals are dominant and Employee referrals are still limited	Internal distribution via PT XYZ Mobile, external via LinkedIn & Instagram	Not yet reaching all target segments, no talent community for key positions
Measuring the success of branding strategies	Not measured in the survey	Employer branding evaluation is measured through short-term and long-term indicators.	We have conducted an employer branding evaluation using short-term and long-term indicators, but no specific matrix has been created yet.

Source: Researcher's Process, 2025

The relationship between strategic direction and implementation gaps

PT XYZ places employer branding as a strategic component within its HCM framework. This is evident in its HCM strategic direction, which targets improving the company's ability to attract and retain talent, particularly in key positions. However, research findings indicate a mismatch between this strategic direction and its implementation. Structurally, there is no cross-functional team specifically addressing integrated employer branding. The EVP formulated through the IDEA approach has not been consistently narrated, and digital platforms have not been optimized to target key candidate segments.

This gap aligns with the findings of the analysis based on the Mosley & Schmidt (2017) framework, which shows that most of the ideal stages in building employer branding, from EVP formulation, content narrative, to performance measurement, have not been fully implemented by PT XYZ. The identified gap is not only a difference between theory and practice, but also reflects the gap between the company's strategic aspirations and the reality of its implementation. Therefore, the employer branding strategy designed in this study is aimed at bridging this gap. This strategy is not only based on theory, but also considers the internal context and needs in managing talent for key positions.

Strategic Plan

Based on the gap analysis above, the following is a strategic plan that can be used as a basis for developing employer branding in key positions at PT XYZ:

Strengthening the Digital Recruitment Platform

PT XYZ needs to develop and modernize its digital recruitment platform, particularly its career website and its integration with professional social media platforms like LinkedIn. This platform should be equipped with user-friendly, interactive features, and be able to clearly convey the company's EVP narrative. The addition of features such as a dedicated "Life at XYZ" page, employee testimonials, and job modules based on key positions will increase its appeal and ease of access for key candidates. PT XYZ also needs to build a talent community menu to gain early access to job opening information, connect with career opportunities that match their job family and skills, and build long-term relationships with the company through ongoing communication.

Optimizing the role of employees as ambassadors

Employees need to be empowered as corporate cultural ambassadors, who can play a role in authentically conveying stories, values, and work experiences. Companies can provide communication and storytelling training for ambassadors and actively involve them in branding activities, such as webinars, campus talks, and social media content. This strengthens brand credibility while encouraging internal engagement.

Diversification of EVP-based content formats

A content strategy needs to be developed in a variety of engaging formats, including short videos, employee blogs, videos, social media, and interactive content. All content should reflect EVP IDEA's values and be tailored to audience segments, particularly talent with

specific experience and expertise. Strong and consistent visual content will increase engagement and strengthen the public's memory of PT XYZ as an attractive workplace.

Expanding collaboration with campuses and professional communities

To reach potential talent in the broader ecosystem, PT XYZ needs to expand partnerships with universities, alumni programs, technology communities, and professional associations. This collaboration could take the form of joint employer branding activities, idea competitions, mentorship sessions, and strategic internship programs aimed at key positions. In addition to strengthening the talent pipeline, this strategy also serves as an effort to position the company in the professional ecosystem.

Utilizing a data-driven approach (Insight-Driven Branding)

PT XYZ needs to establish a measurement and analytics system to evaluate the effectiveness of its employer branding strategy. Data such as the number of applicants for key positions, lead times, digital content engagement, and candidate feedback can be used to inform improvements and decision-making. This data-driven approach allows the company to be more adaptive, targeted, and measurable in building a strong employer brand.

Implementation & Improvement Initiatives

Employer branding improvement initiatives are designed based on the results of identifying gaps between actual conditions and the steps to build employer branding according to Mosley & Schmidt (2017). Without structured steps to address these gaps, there is a risk that the formulated employer branding strategy

will not have an optimal impact on the company's ability to attract and retain talent in key positions.

The results of the analysis show that at least four main aspects of the seven steps of Mosley & Schmidt (2017) have not been optimally fulfilled by PT XYZ, namely: development of a cross-functional employer branding framework, consistent activation of the EVP narrative through content, distribution through strategic channels, and measurement of the success of employer branding effectiveness through relevant indicators.

Internally, several unit leaders at PT XYZ have different orientations and priorities regarding talent management and employer branding. Although the company's strategic direction has recognized the importance of attracting and retaining key talent, managerial support for employer branding initiatives remains limited and has not been integrated into the work culture across units. This has resulted in the absence of a cross-functional and sustainable employer branding management structure. Therefore, to initiate improvements to the employer branding strategy, initial steps are needed in the form of internal socialization and collective commitment from all levels of leadership, particularly at the directorate level directly related to Human Capital, Corporate Communication, and marketing. Furthermore, the formulation of a formal employer branding framework is needed that not only explains the implementation structure but also explicitly includes the vision, scope, and indicators of success. This aims to ensure that all stakeholders, both internal and external, have a common understanding of the contribution of employer branding in supporting the achievement of the company's strategic goals.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study shows that an employer branding strategy specifically designed for key positions at PT XYZ is a strategic step in realizing the company's vision as an employer of choice in the telecommunications industry. Employer branding is positioned as a tool to attract and retain key talent, emphasizing the importance of integrating EVP IDEA values into communication strategies, cross-unit collaboration, developing a talent community, strengthening digital recruitment platforms, and increasing employee engagement as brand ambassadors.

Research findings indicate that while TBIG's employer branding practices have successfully reached the fresh graduate segment through programs like internships and TLDP, their effectiveness in reaching talent for key positions remains limited. This is due to a lack of message differentiation, a misalignment between content and EVP values, and suboptimal utilization of digital channels such as the career website, LinkedIn ads, and programmatic ads. Furthermore, there is a gap between the externally communicated image and candidates' perceptions of the company's work culture and competitive advantages.

The draft employer branding strategy for the 2025–2027 period focuses on five main pillars: (1) strengthening the digital recruitment platform; (2) optimizing the role of employees as YEARS Ambassador; (3) diversification of EVP-based content formats; (4) expansion of collaboration with campuses and professional communities; and (5) utilization of data-based approaches (insight-driven branding).

This strategy is complemented by implementation guidelines that include the development of cross-functional SOPs, ambassador training, and measuring effectiveness through KPIs such as social media engagement, employee referrals, and the contribution of digital platforms to the recruitment process for key positions.

This research contributes to the development of human resource management studies, particularly in employer branding focused on key positions. The emphasis on the strategic dimension of employer branding enriches the perspective that employer branding functions not only to attract talent in general, but also as a strategic approach to retain and secure talent with a critical role in business sustainability. This research supports Mosley & Schmidt's (2017) framework regarding the importance of alignment between company promises and actual employee experiences in shaping a company's reputation as an excellent workplace, especially for key positions.

Practically, PT XYZ is advised to strengthen top management support for employer branding, form a cross-functional team that focuses on consistent EVP narrative and distribution, develop a more interactive and segmented digital recruitment platform for key positions, and conduct regular evaluations of the EVP to keep it relevant to industry dynamics and talent needs.

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