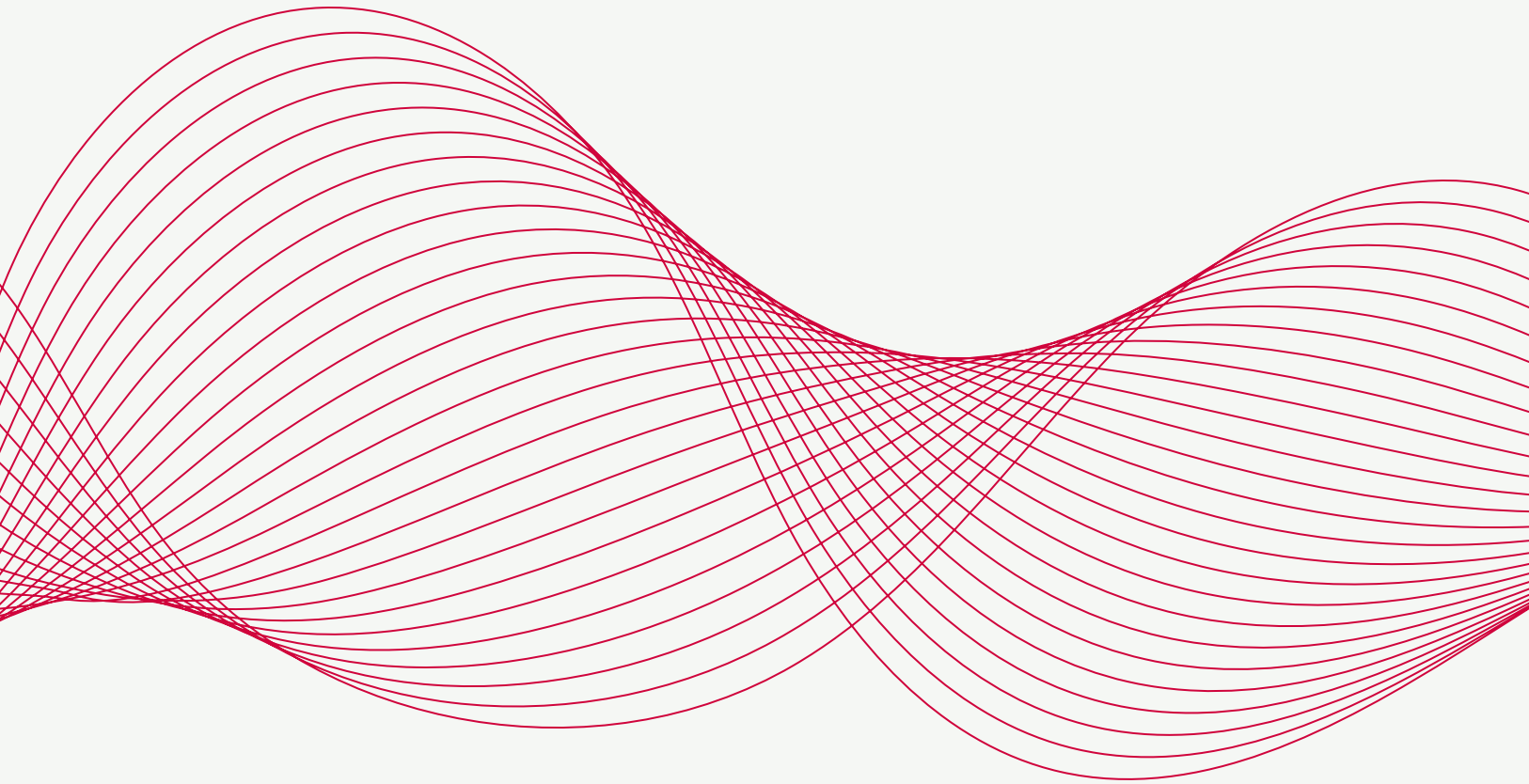


MBS Intelligence

Lessons in FMCG Employer Branding

A white paper from The MBS Group



Introduction

In an increasingly challenging talent landscape, employer branding is critical. Today, the best candidates are seeking employers with a clear vision, a strong culture and a unique identity.

Candidates have high expectations: they're discerning about good people policies; interested in their employer having a voice on the issues in matter; and looking to work for an organisation that offers them more than just great pay and benefits.

Not being able to meet candidate expectations is a costly risk, which could mean losing great talent to competitors. In short, a solid employer brand is not just a critical component of a good people strategy, but central to commercial performance.

Employer branding considerations are especially relevant in the global consumer goods industry. Major blue-chip businesses face specific challenges, not least how to bring multiple brands and international entities together under one corporate umbrella, to drive external awareness of a parent company narrative.

With all this in mind, I have spent the past few months holding in-depth conversations with Chairs, CEOs and HR leaders from Europe's biggest consumer goods groups.

Speaking with businesses undertaking major reputational transformations, organisations building an employer brand from the ground up, and global blue-chips uniting dozens of distinct brands under one roof, I've explored the steps companies are taking to create a compelling employer value proposition.

Different scenarios require different strategies.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to employer branding. A company's strategy will differ depending on their situation, their priorities and their long-term corporate goals.

There are a number of different scenarios in which businesses might be looking to invest in their employer branding. They could be:

- Looking to drive awareness and brand recognition
- Recovering from a reputational crisis or period of unfavourable public perception
- Undergoing a restructure following a major merger or divestment
- Combining multiple brands under one umbrella following acquisitions, or
- Adopting a new corporate identity

While strategies do vary across the consumer goods industry, there are some common threads. In this white paper, we have identified six key themes that are defining conversations around employer branding today.

I'd like to thank each of the leaders who gave up their valuable time to share their insights and contribute to this publication.

My hope is that this white paper will be used as a tool within the industry, as companies continue to build out their corporate narratives.



Huw Llewellyn-Waters

Partner, Consumer Goods Practice
The MBS Group

1 | There's never been a greater need to build a strong employer brand

The 'war for talent' is far from over. In June 2023, a study from PwC found that 23% of UK workers were expected to change jobs within the next 12 months, up from 18% in 2022.

And in particular, competition for well-qualified talent is increasing: according to the latest *Resource and Talent Planning report* from the CIPD, more than three-quarters (77%) of businesses are experiencing difficulty recruiting senior roles.

Against this backdrop, more and more companies are making building a strong employer brand a priority. In response to the CIPD survey, for example, 75% of organisations reported taking action to improve their employer brand within the last year, a figure which rose to 84% for larger organisations. And 'Enhancing EVP to attract and retain top talent' was identified as the number one priority among HR leaders in Mercer's *2024 Global Talent Trends report*.

In today's landscape, a strong employer brand is a commercial imperative. Evidence shows that an impactful employer brand is linked to better business performance, allowing companies to drive colleague engagement, encourage attraction, and boost retention.

In turn, a strong employer brand makes organisations more attractive to investors. Mercer's 2024 report found that 70% of asset managers say that a company's people sustainability – including employer brand – is critical to informing investment decisions.

Specifically, a strong employer brand can:

43% | reduce recruitment costs by more than two-fifths

28% | reduce staff turnover by nearly a third

x2 | be twice as impactful than company brand to attract talent

2 | Impactful employer brands are inextricably linked to vision and purpose

Throughout my conversations, almost all the leaders I spoke with commented that defining or revisiting their company values had been the first step in building their employer brand.

This strategy is part of a wider move towards purpose within the corporate sphere. According to a [recent report](#) from Deloitte, 86% of executives believe workers value a meaningful mission. And according to the same report, more than half of millennials and Gen Z make career choices based on the values and culture of a potential employer.

Across the consumer industry, businesses are establishing values which showcase their unique history or heritage, company diversity, global reach, entrepreneurial spirit, commitment to innovation, collaborative ethos, commercial objectives, work philosophies, and their positive community impact.

Well-defined values – which are concise and authentic – attract like-minded individuals into the company, and also cultivate a sense of pride and belonging among existing employees.

A clear set of values is a starting point for building an employer brand, and a benchmark against which to consider recruitment policies. As one leader put it: "there's no point having 'down-to-earth' as one of your values if you're going to ask candidates to attend interviews wearing a suit."

There are a few key considerations. First, establishing the right company values is not a quick win. Defining values might include conducting comprehensive employee surveys, engaging with brand agencies, and facilitating interactive workshops or focus groups to pin-down the right values. Often, it is a months- or even years-long process.

Second, a company's values must resonate across the business, including at different units or global entities. Here, some businesses have employed a certain degree of flex within the wording of their values, to ensure that values have the most impact in different markets.

Third, company values should be iterative, and leaders should be open to regularly reviewing and refining them – especially after major company changes such as a restructure. One theme that resonated throughout my conversations was the dangers of holding onto values which no longer feel relevant to the company.

3 | The greatest challenge (and the greatest opportunity) is in uniting multi-brand groups

A key consideration for many consumer goods groups is how to bring together multiple acquired brands under one umbrella. Companies are faced with the challenge of retaining the unique histories and narratives of the brands, while also building a strong central corporate identity.

Across the consumer goods industry, companies are taking starkly different approaches: some are investing heavily in building a group-wide brand, while others are focusing on driving awareness of the individual entities.

Investing in a robust group narrative offers several advantages:

- It simplifies the story for potential candidates, presenting a clear and unified proposition.
- It can foster a sense of unity and pride among global teams, bringing shared identity and purpose.
- It enables guaranteed quality control on processes such as job advertisements, hiring practices, and employee onboarding, ensuring consistency across the organisation.

On the other hand, many groups are reaping the benefits of focusing on individual brand recognition – sometimes at the expense of a unified group identity. This approach brings advantages:

- It allows companies to capitalise on existing brand identities, which are usually better developed and more widely understood than group-wide narratives.
- It opens up more targeted avenues to attract talent, based on diverse brand stories and opportunities. This is especially effective in consumer goods, where candidates usually have affinities with certain labels as consumers.
- It allows the unique cultures and heritages of the brands to shine through, which is particularly important in food and drink.
- It gives individual brand teams a sense of uniqueness and autonomy.

Some companies opt for a hybrid approach, striking a balance between the two strategies. They may maintain distinct brand identities and narratives for external facing initiatives, while fostering a shared internal culture and values under the parent company umbrella. This approach allows for targeted external branding efforts while promoting unity and collaboration internally.

Crucially, rolling out a group-wide employer brand requires company buy-in. Many of the leaders I spoke with told me that making the transition from multiple brand narratives to one group identity has been a hugely challenging process. Taking colleagues on the journey is critical.

4 | Consumer goods groups are taking a marketing-first approach to employer branding

Across the consumer goods sector, some of the most forward-thinking companies are treating their employer branding efforts like a marketing initiative, taking a research-led and insights-driven approach. There are a few areas where this plays out:

Undertaking in-depth research. To build an effective employer brand, companies are investing time and resource into asking and answering some key questions:

- How do key talent segments perceive the company?
- How do current employees perceive the company? What is the nature of their experience?
- What do current employees value about the company?
- What are prospective employees looking for in an organisation?

Building a comprehensive employer branding strategy requires sophisticated workforce analytics.

Rethinking job descriptions. Often, consumer groups are missing opportunities to 'sell' their role and their company in the role descriptions for prospective employees. There are opportunities to treat them more like adverts; to produce different versions catered to different talent pools; and to ensure each one has a real 'hook'.

Creating targeted content. The most advanced companies are gathering insights about different candidate segments, and producing content targeted at different groups.

Measuring impact. To ensure maximum impact, consumer goods groups are closely measuring success rates of different hiring approaches and employer branding content strategies.

Hiring agencies. Some of the companies we spoke with had brought in external expertise to advise on and build a new employer brand.

Refreshing careers website. Throughout my conversations, leaders told me that they had been refreshing their careers website, and thinking differently about the information included. Many companies have been taking a "feelings over facts" approach, opting to articulate colleague experiences and development opportunities, rather than placing emphasis on numbers and statistics.

5 | Authenticity is a critical priority

Across the global consumer goods industry, authenticity tops the list of priorities for businesses building an employer brand.

A well-crafted and authentic employer brand can act as a powerful filtering mechanism, attracting candidates who genuinely resonate with the organisation's ethos and discouraging those who may not be an ideal fit. This self-selection process is crucial for ensuring a more targeted and qualified inbound candidate interest, reducing the likelihood of costly mismatches and turnover down the line. As one leader I spoke with told me: "we're not looking to attract everyone. We execute a targeted approach, looking to draw in those whose values and experience match ours."

Moreover, one of the most effective ways to attract new talent is through referrals and word of mouth. Building an authentic employer brand encourages current team members to be advocates for their organisation – both in-person and online. Indeed, many leaders I spoke with noted the significance of a strong and positive presence on job sites like Glassdoor and Fishbowl.

"How people talk authentically about us as an employer is far more important than any website," said one HR leader. "We really encourage people to share their experiences of what it's like to work here with others."

“ How people talk authentically about us as an employer is far more important than any website.

Human Resources Director,
Global Consumer Goods Group

6 | Establishing and communicating progressive people policies is increasingly important

The furthest-ahead companies recognise that an effective employer brand is inextricably linked to a progressive people and wellbeing strategy. This is especially true now, at a time when candidates have higher expectations of their employers.

In the last decade, we've seen companies roll out progressive and human-centric people policies, which have become central to their employer value proposition. These policies might include:

- Parental and family leave
- Hybrid and flexible working
- Menopause support
- Mental health support
- Professional and personal development

In particular, personal development has been proved to have a significant impact on employee attraction and retention. Recent research from McKinsey found that the top reason (41%) people cited for quitting previous jobs was lack of career development and learning opportunities. And according to respondents to the CIPD *Resource and Talent Planning* report, perception of career development opportunities is the most important aspect of an employer proposition, beyond pay and benefits.

Once established, the best companies are placing strong people policies at the centre of their employer branding efforts, and communicating them externally within recruitment materials and on social media. And as a result, businesses known for investing in personal development become magnets for ambitious talent looking to build their skills and networks.

A few leaders we spoke with also touched on the importance of their company's physical environment to their employer brand. As one leader put: "our modern and contemporary office space reflects the business we want to be going forward. It's a source of pride for current employees, and is a great way to attract new talent when they visit the offices."

Antony Lorman

Regional Vice President, Europe
Edgewell Personal Care

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Different people are drawn to different things, but we are all unified by our corporate purpose.

Edgewell Personal Care is a global company with more than 25 market-leading brands in shave, grooming, sun, skin and feminine care. Home to brands including Wilkinson Sword, Bulldog and Hawaiian Tropic, Edgewell Personal Care employs approximately 6,800 people around the world.

As a large group that is home to a stable of well-known brands, what is your approach to employer branding?

Edgewell as a group doesn't have a high level of name recognition in Europe. If you work in the consumer-packaged goods (CPG) category, you'll probably know us, but most consumers only know our well-known and well-loved brand names. So, as an organisation, we have been investing time into raising awareness of our corporate brand as an employer by tying our content to our brand names.

In the past year or so, our local team has done a lot of work on recruitment and have dialed up our efforts to tie each brand to the Edgewell corporate brand. This has proved a good strategy: people are highly invested and engaged in our brands, and then the Edgewell logo on our email signatures, letterheads, and marketing materials ensures people understand that these household names fall under the group umbrella. Name recognition takes time, though, and Edgewell only became a standalone personal care company in 2015 – so we are a much younger corporate brand than some of our more well-known competitors. However, we are confident in our

employer branding strategy and will continue to find ways to raise awareness of who we are, what we stand for and how a role at Edgewell is a positive career choice.

What impact does this strategy have on hiring?

We have an in-house talent acquisition team who manage the vast majority of our hiring. This structure allows us to drive the narrative, to explain what we stand for as a group, and then talk potential candidates through our value proposition as an employer and the different brands under our umbrella. Practically speaking, we've got a group playbook for job advertisements and recruitment materials, so everything is consistent, and we aim to provide a joyful hiring experience from the moment a candidate sees a job advert right through to an offer stage and onboarding.

Depending on which brand we are hiring for, we have so many stories that we can share with candidates on what will make their Edgewell experience unique. With Wilkinson Sword, our most well-known shave brand, for example, candidates have the chance to make their mark on a 250-year-old brand. With Bulldog or some of our newer labels, there's an



opportunity to be part of a successful growth trajectory and to really change how consumers live. This means we have a diverse team across the group, because different people are drawn to different things, but we are all unified by our corporate purpose and values. I really like that diversity of thought and objective, but unified overarching purpose and ways of working.

What impact does your employer branding have on employee retention?

We are careful to ensure that our employer brand, which is the brand that those outside of Edgewell see, is very closely matched to our employee value proposition, which is what

employees experience every day as a teammate. We have very low turnover as a result of this transparency and alignment between what is promised and what is delivered.

We have also done a lot of work since 2020 on a cultural transformation – launching and embedding a relevant and unique purpose statement and set of values that our teammates can believe in and rally around. This was an enormous global body of work, and as a result we've created a positive environment for our teammates that is consistently displayed at each of our global locations.

There are also a lot of opportunities to make an impact here. I like to

call us a “mid-tier championship” organisation, and if you're working on a brand at Edgewell, you have oversight of the whole brand – not just one element of it like you might at a bigger consumer goods group. Within this framework you can have a lot of responsibility very early on in your career. The opportunities to thrive and make an impact are amazing, which gives people a reason to stay.

What advice would you give to people leaders who are considering their employer branding?

I'd say you must be clear on what you stand for and model that through actions, not just words. We've spent a lot of time crystallising our Edgewell corporate identity and a strong focus on and commitment to culture will always return better business results. We're a challenger, we grow hungry, and we're led by our values. And that culture comes through in everything we do.

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We have a very low turnover as a result of this transparency and alignment between what is promised and what is delivered.

Johanna Dickinson

Group Director Human Resources
Intersnack

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Our top priority was bringing all elements of our business together and establishing a common group identity.

Intersnack is one of the world's leading snack companies, turning over more than €4bn each year serving 15 million customers and employing 15,000 people. The group is home to operating companies such as KP Snacks in the UK whose brands include McCoy's, Tyrrells and Hula-Hoops and internationally, it has market-leading brands in Ireland with Tayto, and funny-frisch in Germany.

You became Group Director for Human Resources in January 2021. What have been your main considerations around employer branding in your experience so far?

Intersnack is a Global business. We have operating companies around the world, with a presence in 30 countries and more than 30 brands in our portfolio, many of which we have acquired over the past ten years. So, when it came to looking at employer branding, our top priority was bringing all the elements of our business together and establishing a common group identity. Practically speaking, this has meant undertaking a major project to unify Intersnack across our mission and values, our branding and website, and our people and recruitment processes.

As part of this, we set a long-term goal to better attract talent. Historically, Intersnack didn't have a high profile, and candidates, like consumers, only recognised our consumer brands and it was difficult for prospective employees to find information about us as a group online. So, we needed a solution to this.

Where did you start? What were your first priorities?

Our values, mission and purpose were the first port of call. These things really set our modus operandi. I worked with our Head of Corporate Communications to really establish what we stood for as a company. We had high engagement from our Group Board, and while the existing company values were still relevant, we agreed to evolve and modernise them.

The values and their descriptions took almost a year to finalise, and included external research and interviews with leaders about what Intersnack means to them. We scrutinised every word, hiring a copywriter and testing different versions in focus groups. It took longer than we expected, which could be frustrating, but actually it was necessary – it's so important to get it right. Today, our values are: 'thinking responsibly, acting entrepreneurially, and growing together'. We also have a mission which includes a reference to being proudly local and truly international – this means we want to grow globally together whilst respecting and giving freedom to our local businesses to develop the way they need for their respective markets.

We then set about integrating our updated philosophy into marketing, corporate branding and communications right across the group so that Intersnack and its businesses had a consistent look and feel globally. All our company logos now feature the red Intersnack tree picture, and this consistent branding appears across all our company communications, from websites to signage – whether you're in France, Poland or the UK.

We've been deliberate about telling the story behind the tree icon. A tree is a symbol of sustainability, and can be used as platform on which to climb and see far ahead. Our tree logo has four different-sized branches, to demonstrate our diversity and represent the four original categories that we operate in. By telling these stories, we've made that tree icon really special, and now there's a much greater sense of togetherness across the group.

What were the practical steps you took to re-think and roll-out your employer value proposition?

We worked closely with a consultancy and undertook market research to identify how we wanted to position ourselves in the employer market compared to other FMCG groups. There was a big piece of work required to review how we write job adverts, for example. In the past this tended to be transactional – less of a job advertisement and more of a job description. We looked at how we could hook people in, and how

we could cater our job adverts to target different applicant groups. An advert for a leadership role shouldn't look the same as one for an entry-level position or specialist role. We conducted photo shoots with colleagues at several locations to use in our employer branding, so we had authentic images of our workplaces.

We also produced a video to live on the careers section of the website. A video is a really nice way to convey emotion and get across what it's like to work at Intersnack. This wasn't without its challenges – it took a lot of time, and we had to ensure consistency in style, tone, and lighting even when filming in different countries using different videographers. But the result is an authentic two-minute video which conveys our values of collaboration, teamwork, entrepreneurialism and localness.

Another thing we needed to standardise was our measurement of employee engagement. In the past, each country used different providers, so we didn't have one single measure of how our teams felt about working for Intersnack. We're currently in the process of rolling out a unified system for tracking employee engagement, using Gallup. I like Gallup's system. It's simple – just 12 questions – and everything is very clearly geared towards the line manager in terms of ownership of the results and developing team actions. It feels like a good match for us. Five countries went live last year, and another five are adopting it this year. It will be



hugely valuable to see what kinds of insights come through so we can better understand our colleagues and how we can keep strengthening our culture both locally and globally.

Have there been any major challenges in bringing the different parts of the business under one employer brand?

I'd say the biggest challenge is striking the balance between group unity and local individuality. Local ownership and autonomy are a really important part of what makes Intersnack special, and we'd never want to lose that. But at the same time, it feels right that each of the individual identities is recognisably part of the Intersnack ecosystem, and we leverage all the advantages this brings.

Katie Pearce

Chief People & Diversity Officer, EMEA & APAC
Molson Coors Beverage Company



People want a feeling of home in a local business, but they also like the idea of working for an international organisation.

For over two centuries, Molson Coors has been brewing beverages that unite people to celebrate all life's moments. From Coors, Carling, Madri Excepcional, Doom Bar and Staropramen, to Cobra, Blue Moon and more, Molson Coors produces many beloved and iconic beer brands. While the company's history is rooted in beer, Molson Coors offers a modern portfolio that expands beyond the beer aisle as well.

What prompted Molson Coors to start focusing on employer branding?

We started to really engage with our employer brand around 2017 or 2018, when I was Chief People Officer for Europe. At that point, it was about driving awareness of Molson Coors as a group. Our local brands have always had a strong connection in country – Staropramen in the Czech Republic for example – but we didn't have great recognition as a parent company. So, we started thinking about how we can balance the local and global perspective to attract the best talent – people want a feeling of home in a local business, but they also like the idea of working for an international organisation. Since then, it's been a real journey, and we're still very much in the early stages.

And internally, did employees have a strong grasp of what Molson Coors stood for?

I would say not truly consistently at a global level pre-2020. At the end of 2019 we simplified our values and set out a clear ambition for our whole business, with our first

value "put people first" at the heart of everything we do. We held workshops internally, which I think really galvanised everyone around our global culture. It doesn't matter if you're in Australia or Burton Brewery, the values are the same.

Launching these new values during the pandemic helped employees understand what makes Molson Coors unique, and really sharpened our focus on the importance of a strong company culture in what were otherwise horrendous times. I think this experience of launching the values during Covid has sharpened our focus on culture in our employer branding. We really try to raise awareness of the things we do for our people, how we're a good employer, and why our culture is unique compared to other groups.

Beyond your values, what other actions have you taken to strengthen your employer brand?

One thing we did was review everything in our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion journey. We wanted to make sure our actions and policies in this space were authentic and impactful.

We've tried to make our initiatives much more grassroots and employee-led, like our recent #BetterWithYou campaign, rather than relying on top-down corporate campaigns.

One example is flexible working, which now forms a key part of our employer value proposition in EMEA APAC. Flexible working is the norm for many of our people, in the UK for example, we have a hybrid model with core days for our office-based teams. All of our teams in the UK and Ireland can also access what we call Life Leave, which provides everyone with up to ten days paid leave for life's big events – whether that's settling a loved one into a new caring arrangement or a child into a new school. We've also just launched equal parent leave in the UK and Ireland, with more countries to follow. No matter how you became a parent, you can get 26 weeks full pay from day one of your employment and up to 52 weeks parental leave.

How did rebranding from a brewing to beverage business impact your employer brand?

It certainly shifted the mindset and I think helped us to attract people into our business who are interested in beverages beyond beer. Our growing beyond beer portfolio, with brands such as Aspell Cyder, Tarquin's Gin, Bandero Tequila, Black Cow Vodka and Rekorderlig, has allowed us to think differently around how a broader drinks portfolio can help us

to open up conversations with a wider cross-section of potential talent. It's an exciting opportunity, and as we continue to grow in this beverages space, so too does our diverse talent pool.

Have you seen any tangible results from your employer branding efforts?

Our engagement survey scores, when benchmarked against other CPG companies, are in the upper tier. We also take really careful measurements from colleagues leaving the business, and people consistently cite our culture as something hard to leave behind, and mention that Molson Coors has evolved considerably as an organisation.

We're still on a journey when it comes to talent attraction. In Europe, we need to amplify the fact that being part of Molson Coors means being part of a local brand with heritage, but also part of a global family. In the UK, we've got quite low group name recognition, so we need to work on boosting our awareness.

Looking back on this process so far, what advice or learnings can you share?

Be true to your core values at every touchpoint, as candidates and current team members can tell when a company is saying something for the sake of it, or because an agency told them it would help attract talent. Admittedly, this sometimes means we



are not the loudest employer, but I prefer that we are always credible in our approach and have the backing of our people when we do go out externally.

Make sure your website, your processes, and your interviews genuinely reflect the company you are. There's no point saying you're down to earth if you expect candidates to show up to an interview in a suit, for example. Or if you want to attract and support diverse candidates, provide questions in advance and equip your teams with inclusive hiring guides. It's all about being authentic.

David Wilkinson

Human Resources Director
Premier Foods



It's about coming at the topic from both angles: focusing on building a sustainable business alongside a great colleague offer.

Premier Foods is one of the UK's leading food producers, employing more than 4,000 people across 13 sites. Operating across five key grocery categories – Flavourings & Seasonings; Quick Meals, Snacks & Soups; Ambient Desserts; Cakes; and Cooking Sauces & Accompaniments – Premier Foods is behind some of the UK's best-loved brands, including Mr Kipling, OXO, Bisto and Ambrosia.

Over the past decade, Premier Foods has executed a major turnaround strategy. How has employer branding played into this process? What has your approach to employer positioning been?

To answer this question we have to look right the way back, to when the enlarged business was forming after the acquisition of RHM and Campbell's. At that point, we held a lot of discussions around employer brand, including hiring a recruitment advertising agency to help us. But in reality, it was too early to be having these conversations. We didn't yet have the cultural foundations to back up our aspirations, and there were much greater commercial and integration priorities we had to address. It was a lesson not to push ahead with an employer branding strategy just because it's the 'fashionable' thing to do. It's important to have the substance and credibility in place before you start talking about it.

When I was appointed into the role of Human Resources Director in 2014, employer branding was part-and-parcel of the people strategy we built. There were issues that were relatively straightforward to fix – like bonus

schemes and maternity leave – that made a huge impact on how we were perceived by current and prospective employees. And once those things were established, it was about truly investing in our people. Now, if you ask the team what it's like to work at Premier Foods, they talk positively about inclusion and diversity, career development, pay and benefits, training programmes, leadership schemes, culture and trust. These things are the component parts of a great employer brand.

Critically, our employer brand has improved alongside our business performance. It's impossible to separate the two: it's tricky to attract people and build an excellent suite of benefits if you're struggling financially, especially if your share-price is being written about widely in the press. So, I think it's about coming at the topic from both angles – focusing on building a sustainable business alongside a great colleague offer.

What impact has this focus on employer branding and people had in your organisation? Have you seen any tangible returns?

Our colleague engagement survey is an excellent demonstration of how

people think about Premier Foods as an employer. We have about an 88% response rate, which means people care, and that they trust us with their data. And overall, the results of our survey have improved steadily year-on-year.

We've also seen an impact on retention – our turnover rate at management level is much lower. We've had a handful of more senior leaders who left to work at competitor food groups and who have since come back, which is really positive. And it's much easier to attract people, whether it's through the internal resourcing team or an external recruiter.

How do you communicate your refreshed employer brand externally?

It's an interesting question, and not something that we do deliberately. Our brands will always have more prominence than the Premier Foods group name, and that's fine by us. What we do do is make a big deal out of positive financial results. We really leverage our commercial success on LinkedIn and in recruitment campaigns, so candidates and potential future employees are clear that we're a business that's doing well. Given the challenging financial years the business has been through, this is a really important step in evolving our reputation. And now, the press coverage we receive is hugely positive. So it's about making a case that combines a solid employee

offer with a strong and commercially sustainable business.

Are there any other practical steps you have taken that impact on your employer brand?

Recently, we've moved offices – and the response has been a reminder of the importance of environment to employer brand. The environment we've created is radically different to what we had before; we're intentionally building a physical space which reflects the business we want to be going forward. It's modern, it's contemporary, it's got hot-desking spaces and a food studio where we can showcase our products. For current employees, it brings a sense of comfort and pride, and it's an excellent way to attract prospective team members when they visit us for interviews.

I also think policies around hybrid working play into employer branding. We don't mandate where our office-based colleagues should work from, but we provide guidance. I really believe we need to trust our leaders, and that our leaders should trust their team-members. I think insisting on four or five days a week can damage employer brand, as people want a certain level of flexibility. But of course it has to work for the business as well as the colleague, and we must remember many of our people can't work as flexibly, like if you're in one of our manufacturing sites. So, for them, we have to think of other ways to create an engaging workplace.

What advice would you give to other HR leaders who are considering how to re-vamp their employer branding?

I think it's about having business buy-in – from both senior leaders and the rest of the organisation. Building a good people offering can be expensive, requiring heavy investment into things like pay, benefits and training. A good HR leader knows how to bring the Executive team on the journey and show senior colleagues how this investment will lead to a stronger business (even if it means spending less on other parts of the business that year, for example).

Similarly, you need to make sure you're listening to employees. If something is thought up in an office full of senior leaders without engaging with the wider team, then that's likely going to be a very risky strategy because you will get out of touch with what is important to the wider colleague base.





Ross Davies

Regional HR Director,
UK & Ireland
Reckitt

Lee Nicholls

Global Head of Attraction
and Recruitment Marketing
Reckitt

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You can have the best career site in the world, but nothing will be more powerful than people talking in a positive way about your brand.

Reckitt is home to the world’s most loved and trusted hygiene, health and nutrition brands, including Nurofen, Dettol and Veet. With a diverse, global team of 40,000 people, Reckitt sells around 30 million products every day, and is committed to using its brands, programmes, and partnerships to make the world a cleaner and healthier place for all.

What is your philosophy for employer branding at Reckitt?

Ross: Thinking broadly, we’re becoming a business that’s driven by its people and its purpose as well as just its performance. Central to our employer branding proposition is showing our people – current and future – that our culture lies at the heart of what we do.

Lee: We’ve radically changed how we do attraction and recruitment in an efficient, inclusive and cohesive way across the globe. Historically, we’ve had an awareness challenge. People have always been aware of our products – we’re number one or number two in every category we have a presence in in the UK – but now, our recruitment marketing approach is about driving our reputation of Reckitt as the phenomenal organisation behind those brands.

What are your main aims? What steps have you taken?

Ross: Primarily, we are really trying to dial-up pride and purpose in the organisation – complementing our unique performance culture – and it’s making a real difference.

Lee: Yes, word of mouth and referrals are still crucial to finding great

people, so we wanted to make every person in our organisation an advocate for us. This isn’t about pretending Reckitt is perfect, but about supporting our team to be authentic and to translate our unique culture to those around them. You can have best career site in the world, but nothing will be more powerful than people talking in a positive and authentic way about your brand. And today, I can feel the difference today in how people talk about Reckitt.

Ross: We’ve also really invested in formalising our talent strategy and executing it very well. For example, in how we go-to-market, I’ve got a team of people who do recruitment marketing, and a team of people who do executive search. We’ve rolled out our Employee Resource Groups, who help us amend our policies and hire in a more inclusive way, and we’ve just been ranked among Stonewall’s Top Employers.

How do you go about attracting talent into your organisation? How do you position Reckitt in the market?

Lee: When we kicked off this process, there was a clear recognition that we had to actively promote the Reckitt brand as an employer. At that time,



we had a website with a career page but not much else, and we wanted to take control of our narrative. This meant re-thinking our processes, re-vamping our messaging and our content, and putting systems in place to measure impact. We want to be actively marketing, utilising digital channels, and optimising our output. I think there’s a danger with the term ‘employer branding’ that it’s just about putting out content in a passive way.

But at the same time, we don’t want to overcomplicate it. Fundamentally, what differentiates us is our purpose-driven, entrepreneurial, fast-paced and action-oriented culture. Our goal is to bring that culture and purpose to life for the candidates we want to reach.

I’m careful not to say that we’re aiming to be relevant for everyone. I wouldn’t be doing my job properly if we were trying to be relevant to everyone. We’re relevant to the people who have the skills and experiences to work in our job

functions like supply, manufacturing, sales, marketing and R&D. And we’re relevant to people who want to work at pace, in an environment with a lot of accountability. It’s about being front-of-mind to the right candidates, and bringing them in on the right messages. And if people aren’t right for us, our messaging is there to help them understand why they’re not. We’re asking people to self-select out, as well as in.

What impact has this focus on employer branding had on the wider business?

Ross: We have always been an employer of choice within sales and marketing, as a unique school for building entrepreneurial leaders of the future. The big shift I have seen is within some of the Global functions – like finance, HR, IT and supply. It’s really boosted our ability to hire the best people, as there’s a far greater understanding of who we are, and the scope of our ambition. We’ve seen a real professionalisation

of these functions over the last five years amidst major transformation programmes.

You’re a large, global business. How do you ensure consistency in your messaging, and design a strategy that speaks to every corner of the business?

Lee: This is really critical for us. I think something you see a lot in multinational corporates is a disconnect between the brand voice and the HR voice. We work hand-in-hand with HR, with group comms, and with marketing to make sure that our narrative is unified. The content we put out has to be consumable – and compelling – from an investor point of view, from a customer point of view, and from a talent point of view.

When it comes to different segments of the business, we try to make sure that our employer proposition balances universal themes with specific candidate messages, so we’ve got a blue-print that we tweak for different talent pools. This means producing content about our purpose, employee wellbeing, inclusion and opportunities for growth. It doesn’t matter if you’re working in a factory in North America or you’re in an R&D lab in the north of England, you want to know you’re going to be supported personally and professionally as your career progresses. But at the same time, we recognise that you might be equally as interested in health and safety, sustainably credentials, or our reward, perks and benefits, as you are in our purpose as an organisation.

Eveline Paternotte

Group Chief People Officer
Valeo Foods Group

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When it comes to employer branding, we've outlined a five-year strategic plan, focusing on our future vision for the company.

Valeo Foods Group is a leading international foods business, with growth platforms in the UK, Europe, and Ireland, specialized in sweet treats and snacks. Founded in 2010, Valeo has brought together more than twenty brands, including Rowse, Kettle, Jacob's, Barratt and Balconi, and today employs 4,500 people.

What is your approach to employer branding at Valeo Food Group?

We're relatively early on in a transformation journey which is bringing together multiple brands and dozens of super capable management teams under one roof. This is what lies at the heart of all our employer branding efforts. It's very motivating to think about it as an exciting opportunity to tell an untold story, rather than a complex challenge! The level of opportunity we have to grow is really unique. It's very exciting.

So when it comes to employer branding, we've outlined a five-year strategic plan, focusing on our future vision for the company. We're looking at our identity, our purpose, our values – what do we want to look like and stand for in five years' time? I think this aspirational element is really key – our employer proposition combines real-world narratives around current employee experience with aspirational thinking about our vision for the business.

With a clear vision for the future, we've really felt an increased sense of pride among our current employees. There's an excitement, and a willingness to be enthusiastic advocates for Valeo – which obviously plays a huge part in the employer

branding piece. Personally, it's so motivating and fulfilling to be in a place which is so ripe for change, and so different from working in corporates which have been established for many decades.

You're still relatively early on in your employer branding transformation. Looking ahead, what are your key priorities?

At the moment, our group brand awareness is still relatively low. Once we've got candidates round the table, it's not hard to get them excited about the size of our business, the breadth of our brands, and our future ambitions – but we're not universally recognised at a group level. So our first core aim is to lower that first hurdle and really drive an external understanding of who we are. Our senior leaders are all active on LinkedIn, which I think plays a subtle but important role in driving that awareness. As we're in the business of food, there's always some new innovation or product to talk about online.

Second, we need to work on pinpointing our key differentiators as an employer and as a business, to encourage people to self-select themselves for roles in our team. That way you get much more targeted interest.

And third, we'll be focusing on metrics. What drives hiring success? How can we improve application rates? What are the roadblocks in our hiring process?

Valeo is a global business with dozens of consumer brands. How do you bring them under one umbrella?

When I joined there was very little linking our brands together. Some businesses had done work on their reputation – like Rowse – but others were completely under the radar, and some still had family names because they used to be family-run.

We've had to get the balance right between building a unified group voice and championing the individual stories of our brands, because those stories are what make Valeo so special. We're very conscious that food is inextricably linked to authenticity and tradition, and we'd never want to strip our brands of that. One of our brands has been making chocolate & marzipan in Germany for 150 years, for example, and each year plays a central role in local town festivals – and we'd never want to lose that heritage.

And we're clear in our acquisition process that we expect the brand management to be entrepreneurs leading their business. We avoid too much bureaucracy, governance and interference. Brands come to us because they know we'll give them the space, and not expect them to be absorbed completely into the group. So, with that in mind, our challenge – and our opportunity – is how to



bring each of these brand stories together under one group umbrella with common platforms and with a common purpose and set of values.

As part of this process, you launched an employee engagement survey. What impact has this had on the business?

Last year we did a group-wide engagement survey for first time ever. We had a very high response rate of 77%, even though around 70% of our workforce is front-line, without access to a computer during the workday. We received so many comments, with people offering ideas about what it's like to work here.

We now have lots of insights on how people feel about the culture of our business, what they expect from us as an employer, and about what they think makes Valeo unique. It's been hugely beneficial for

crafting our employer proposition, and pinpointing what differentiates us in the market.

What advice would you give to other HR leaders who are looking to re-think their employer branding efforts?

I think we should all be focused on how we're making people feel, not what information we're telling them. If you join Valeo, you'll get the opportunity to work with amazing brands, interesting people, and across multiple sites and there are brilliant opportunities to develop and build great experiences as part of the journey that we are on to develop and grow. That's a more compelling message than listing the number of SKUs or employees we have around the world. I'm clear on the fact that the magnet to attract talent is conveying experience.

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The MBS Group is a leading sector-specialist B Corp executive search firm advising all consumer-facing industries, with a dedicated practice in consumer goods.

Clients consider us to be the partner of choice when searching for critical leadership roles that make a difference. We work at Board level and on executive positions across all functions of strategic importance.

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