

Rebooting employer branding in response to Covid-19

 By [Celeste Sirin](#)

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Employer branding is often mistaken to be the kind of activity only associated with companies needing to attract the best talent to meet their growth trajectory, especially within a buoyant and thriving economy. This is partially correct, however employer branding is built from the inside out.



Photo by Anna Shvets from [Pexels](#)

When the pandemic struck, many companies were put to the test having to quickly shift their focus introspectively. Leaders had to migrate and manage their employees remotely, working tirelessly towards looking after the well-being and engagement of their internal workforce.

[Josh Bersin](#), renowned thought leader and educator of Josh Bersin Academy, believes that irrespective of what industry companies are in, everyone is going through the four phase pandemic cycle of 'react, respond, return and transform'.

Are we there yet?

The dust has still to settle as many companies are beginning to reopen and on-board their employees back into the workplace. This was evident in a recent [South African Employer Brands – Steering Talent through a Crisis webinar](#), where leaders reflected on their trials and tribulations to date.

Employee engagement is more important than ever as companies navigate through the recovery phase of redefining and building their workplace. Many companies have worked successfully in keeping employees connected, engaged and spirits high through the thick of the pandemic; fostering all levels of remote culture building exercises.

However, these efforts need to continue across, what might now be, a split WFH and in-office workplace environment.

Personalising the employee journey

The Covid crisis soon exposed the underbelly, and the dire need to pay closer attention to the employee lifecycle, where individualised action was needed.

More than ever, leaders had to take deliberate action towards understanding that each valued employee had a psychological, emotional and financial requirement unique to the next. Every person experienced the pandemic setback differently with companies quickly realising that an individual and tailored approach had to be taken with every employee.

Polls are recording repeatedly that people continue to suffer high levels of anxiety, stress and fatigue with many people confirming that health is presently a major concern for them.

Mastering the employee life-cycle is ongoing work-in-progress, especially within a disrupted workplace, where the future is uncertain.



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Hybrid WFH model

Conversations continue with there being a disconnection between employers' workplace requirements and employees' shifted preferential needs. The transition into the workplace is "not all plain sailing", as companies are testing hybrid WFH and partial in-office working arrangements.

Whilst employees are enjoying working remotely in their uninterrupted WFH environments, the strong desire for employees to return back to office persists. Many people thrive on connecting in-person and enjoy the opportunity to hold scrum and project meetings, to continue building the team spirit that they so sorely missed.

This being said, many live webinar polls have confirmed that an increasing number of employees are enjoying a hybrid working arrangement, where they can benefit and enjoy “the best of both worlds”.

Communications

Stakeholder communications across all operational levels topped most of the workplace agendas, with many CEOs and leaders continuing with their transparent and consistent town hall discussions with employees through this recovery phase.

Leaders continue with intimate and regular conversations with their team members, having to demonstrate trust, empathy, team collaboration etc.

Marketing and Communications have shifted a great deal of their attention from consumer marketing towards internal communications on the well-being and safety of their employees.

It is imperative that conversations across all levels continue, especially whilst organisations have their workforce dispersed at home and on site.



Image source: Getty Images

Reframing the workplace

The pandemic has resulted in many companies having to reframe their staffing structures in order to future-proof themselves for our new world of work.

Certain roles are being terminated and others being newly created. Sadly, this gives rise to the possibility of further people being made redundant. Employees have to remain engaged in the aftermath of colleagues being laid off, and retrenched individuals have to join the masses in trying to secure employment.

Employees are being retrained and reskilled with companies redeploying and realigning their talent to meet their future business objectives. Creating agile and resilient organisations are now key focus areas for many businesses.

The attention that internal talent has received to date will remain, especially as companies undergo such big transformation during this recovery phase.

Employees, jobseekers /candidates and consumers continue to watch how companies are treating their stakeholders. This will determine employer brand credibility now and into the future. This African Proverb cannot be more relevant than now:

“ *Tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today!* ”

ABOUT CELESTE SIRIN

Celeste Sirin is an employer branding specialist, speaker, facilitator and founder of Employer Branding Africa which aims to develop employer branding best practice in South Africa by educating South African leaders. She is a leading authority in positioning and elevating employer brands for companies, offering extensive insight into local, African and international employer branding trends.

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