

# Agile EVPs

How to develop your EVP alongside  
activating your employer brand



Reason **Why**

# Introduction

Employer brands existed before anyone coined the term. People have always had a perception of what it might be like to work for you. And that perception may or may not match reality.

So, people have been activating their employer brand for as long as anyone can remember too. However, it's true to say that those efforts have become significantly more sophisticated in the past couple of decades.

And that has meant that a need for EVPs has arisen, as a way of maintaining good employer brand consistency as you activate that brand in more places and in more ways.

## However...

With a need for EVPs comes a whole industry around them. And not everyone in that industry does the best job at showing their clients realisable value for their EVP, in the shortest possible timeframe.

Defining your EVP is often presented as being a difficult, complex and long project. There may be good reasons why that's the case.

But for most organisations, and especially smaller, simpler organisations – it doesn't need to be that way.

The process of definition can be speedy, and you can be activating that EVP in a matter of weeks.

And I believe you don't even \*have\* to fully define that EVP before you get going on brand activation.

Using this guide, you can start to gather evidence in a more agile way. You can activate your brand, almost immediately, and then iterate the messaging as you go.



# Setting Out

Before starting the journey, it's useful to understand the destination.

I think of an EVP as:

**A narrative that spells out the perception of your organisation, as an employer, that you want to influence people towards.**

And then your employer brand activation / employer branding is:

The stories you tell to move people to the perception defined in your EVP.

The other EVP definition I have time for is the **Differentiated Value** that you offer employees.

However you think of it, to be a useful and practical tool to manage your employer brand, I think you will need these elements:

**The EVP itself:** A short paragraph that describes your unique offer to employees. It may never be visible, but everything visible should carry that meaning.

**Your EVP model:** The 3/4/5 themes that you distinctively offer and/or demand of employees i.e. the 3/4/5/ themes you should repeat.

**Your EVP messaging framework:** This is also where we show you how to segment for different audiences e.g. job families, functions, regions

**Your EVP narrative:** A detailed expansion of your EVP paragraph that leaves nothing to interpretation, binding all the elements of the EVP model, in your language and tone.

**Your EVP evidence pool:** Showing how you came to this EVP, with evidence for all themes - both data and sentiment - showing how it all builds to the case you're making.



# Stage 0 - Your Thoughts

Most people in your organisation, if they were given time and useful prompts would be able to describe their EVP, and there would be a lot more in common than there would be differences across their descriptions.

A useful exercise is to think about – for yourself and maybe a handful or others – what does your EVP likely look like?

If you do engage with others, perhaps pick peers you know well, as well as people in different functions you know less well.

If you need stimulation, think about these 12 factors that tend to be important to people at work

## **Status and Reputation**

Prestige and stability of the product, service, innovation or the employer itself, giving employees a level of belief and pride in working there

## **Integrity and Values**

Consistency, fairness and doing the right thing on CSR, inclusion, diversity, safety, customer satisfaction, wellbeing

## **Leadership and Vision**

Very clear direction and narrative for the organisation, which has an understood meaning. Delivered by trusted and authentic leaders

## **Management and Support**

Day to day direct input from a manager who supports, feeds back, coaches, stretches, trusts, listens to and respects each employee



## **Expectations and Focus**

Clearly communicated expectations that balance employer, employee and customer, so that everyone is clear how they can contribute

## **Voice and Contribution**

Employees who have a voice, and are able to participate in decisions, show creativity and contribute to changing what is done or how

## **Accomplishment and Control**

The quantity of tasks, how interesting and stimulating they are, and the level of empowerment in how to perform them and see them through

## **Recognition and Value**

The level to which employees' contributions are seen and appreciated, and the chances that they have to show their expertise

## **Learning and Progress**

The chances to be challenged, to use and develop skills and competencies, and to move on or up in the organisation

## **Time and Place**

The degree of flexibility for where and when the job is done, and a culture that supports and allows a work-life balance: day to day and through life-phases

## **People and Teams**

The levels of teamwork, support, respect, help, expertise and social interaction provided by the people that employees work with

## **Environment and Process**

The physical environment that employees work in, the resources and tools that they are given to do their job, and the structural and people processes



# Stage 0 - Record Your Thoughts

What does your organisation do well?

What does your organisation do differently?



# Stage 0 - Record Your Thoughts

What does working here offer that people would be less likely to get elsewhere?

Review these as you proceed.

Remember, you need to always – **always!** – be alert to your own assumptions and be prepared to have them challenged.



# Stage 1 – Marketing

You already have an employer brand –and that’s just a different side of your organisational brand.

You might want to activate that employer brand. But that certainly doesn’t mean you want to deviate from the organisational brand.

Your first step to activating your employer brand in an agile way should be to take the organisational brand and change the lens.

So, you’re not talking to customers or service users, or suppliers, or investors - you’re talking to employees.

**How do you translate that organisational brand for them?**

Your brand and marketing teams will have documents and assets that hold a crucial part in defining your organisation’s difference and therefore your EVP. For example:

- What is your mission or purpose? How does that mean that working here is different to elsewhere?
- What are your values? How do they translate to how people work together, or to the working experience?
- What’s the proposition you have for customers or service users? What does that require of employees?
- How do you ensure that you positively impact your community? What does that offer for employees?

There will be different examples for different organisations, different things that define your place of work.



# Stage 1 – Marketing - Recording

Item	Why is that important for your customers / service users?	And so, what does that mean for employees?



Item	Why is that important for your customers / service users?	And so, what does that mean for employees?

**Presenting this to your audience of employees or candidates, will take you a long way to bringing your employer brand to them.**



Reason Why

# Stage 2 – HR

Better than most, HR understand the experience of people working in your organisation.

And that is a huge part of what you want to reflect in your EVP, so it is important to capture.

HR will have a lot of data they can share, but also a keen sense of what's what and how people feel, so be sure to talk to them in depth too.

**Your aim is to find out what the employee experience is, why it's been designed like that, and how it makes people feel.**

You will want to ask about things like:

## **Engagement data**

What does this tell us? What are the real successes – what truly motivates and retains people here? What do we think are the outliers, that we do better than others? What have we been able to improve over time?

And for all of these – why are they important to people?

## **Recruitment and retention**

What insight is there on why people come here? What are the things that most excite people when they first consider working here? What makes them commit to working here?

And conversely, why do you sometimes not convert or retain people. What context can we give around the more challenging aspects of the experience?



# Stage 2 – HR

## Programs and Policies

What's been the big focus historically and in recent times?

How has the organisation been able to show a track record, and improve on that record for key topics like:

- **Reward** – as far beyond pure salary as possible to include all benefits
- **Flexible working** – in all its forms
- **Development** – advancement, gaining new experiences, achieving mastery
- **DE&I** – where has the organisation made strides, and what benefits has that brought?

## Behaviours

- What is most valued here?
- How are those behaviours defined?
- How do people feel when behaviours are lived?
- How, and why, does the organisation succeed when these behaviours are lived?



# Stage 2 – HR - Recording

Item	Why is that important for your current employees?	What does that help the organisation, or your teams, to achieve?



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**Now that you have understood and defined these, you're now able to add a people dimension to your employer brand activation**



Reason Why

# Stage 3 – Leadership

It's probable that by this stage you will have advised leadership of what you're doing, and the benefits you hope to realise.

You may already be able to document some of those benefits, in the terms that matter to them of costs, quality, improvement – as well as enhancing the overall brand.

Also, **their views are going to be the ones that have and will shape this organisation for the near future, and you want to build that into your EVP** too.

They will have a really clear view on:

**Purpose:** What you are striving for as an organisation, and therefore what commitment that needs from your employees. What do people need to bring to enhance this organisation?

**Vision:** What the vision is for the organisation – which you might already have a strong sense of – but especially, what is the vision for people within the organisation?

In every place of work, people are your greatest assets – what do they bring here, and what do they receive in return?

**Near future:** What is already in the pipeline, how will your organisation grow or change? What will that mean for people? What will they need to do differently? What will they gain from this change?

**Culture:** How does this organisation operate when it is at its best? What gets the acknowledgement and acclaim of your peers? How do you identify your best people?



# Stage 3 – Leadership - Recording

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Why is that important for the organisation?</b>	<b>What does that demand of, or offer to, employees?</b>



Topic	Why is that important for the organisation?	What does that demand of, or offer to, employees?

**You're now able to add a top-level, future-proof dimension to your brand and people perspective.**



Reason Why

# Stage 4 – Operational

Finally, you want to hear from the line managers and individual contributors that can directly talk about the experience of working here for the majority of your workforce.

This will build on all of the knowledge that you have gained so far, and perhaps give it crucial, real-life context.

But this is also **the core evidence, the basis for your employee advocacy that will form a great deal of your ultimate brand activation.**

You will want to ensure that you talk to a range of people at different: Levels / Roles / Functions / Locations / Backgrounds

And ask them, not only about what you have discovered and defined so far, but about their day to day experience. You'll want to ask questions like:

- Why did you join this organisation?
- Why do you stay here?
- What's most satisfying or interesting about your work?
- What's important about your work?
- What do you get here that you might not get in other places?
- Why should someone like you want to work here?

Be prepared to not always accept first answers, be prepared to push a little harder and ask:

- Say more about that?
- Why is that important?
- Why do you feel like that?



# Stage 4 – Operational - Recording

Record here the themes that come up most frequently, or strongly

Theme	Why is that different?	Why is that attractive?



Theme	Why is that different?	Why is that attractive?

**Now you can add a personal and emotional level to your brand activation.**

**AND you're ready to define your EVP.**



Reason Why

# Stage 5 – EVP Definition

With all the information you now have, you should be able to define your EVP.

Most EVPs are defined with the help a brand model, and most of them have “pillars”. These are usually 3, 4 or 5 big ideas that define the experience of working for you.

I would suggest that first you review all of your evidence, and see what themes come out – as long a list as possible is best.

See what is important, or come up as an idea in more than one place. Then take that long-list of themes, and group under 3, 4 or 5 headings – these are your “pillars”

<b>Pillar 1</b>	<b>Pillar 2</b>	<b>Pillar 3</b>	<b>Pillar 4</b>	<b>Pillar 5</b>
Draft Name	Draft Name	Draft Name	Draft Name	Draft Name
Themes Included	Themes Included	Themes Included	Themes Included	Themes Included



# Stage 5 – EVP Definition

You'll want to test that grouping and a good way is if you can write a description for each pillar as a single narrative.

Even better is if you can write a narrative that – in as unforced way as possible – runs through from the start of the first pillar to the end of the last.

Then you're in a place where you can step back and review. How can you describe everything in those pillars, in a way that maintains the four key principles of an EVP?

- Distinctive
- Attractive
- Realistic
- Consistent

A common mistake is to try and do it in a sentence, or worse, as a strapline.

Don't limit yourself or you will lose those principles, you'll become same-y. Give yourself a paragraph to do it.

That then is your EVP. Ready to use ... but perhaps more importantly, ready to validate.



# Stage 6 – EVP Validation

You can take the description of your EVP, and the pillars that support it, back out to the operational parts of your organisation.

Ask them:

- Is this correct?
- Does this sound like us?
- What have we missed?
- What haven't we captured right?
- What doesn't belong here?
- How would you feel if asked to talk about this, publicly? Could you, would you, use these words?

And use that feedback to make your EVP more accurate, more you in tone and feel, more reflective of the entire experience of working for you.



# More Help

If you need assistance with any of these stages, Reason Why Ltd can help.

There are many more insights that you can bring to bear, to help refine, improve and personalise your EVP.

What we have covered here focusses on the easier bits, the internal insights. There is a lot more that you can understand so that your EVP talks about you in the terms that your audience demands.

For more advice on :

- How to dive deeper into internal perception
- Identifying the positioning that separates you from your competitors
- Understanding your target audiences' needs
- Capturing an external view of you, from the viewpoint of the people you want to attract

And all other aspects of EVP insight and definition

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