Employer Branding: the importance of retaining employees in Portuguese organizations

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Employer Branding is a recent practice used in human resources management that develops a corporate brand as well as create an active relationship between an organization and its employees. This concept emerges in the 1990s (Mosley, 2007) and can serve as an important tool for organizations to position themselves as a reliable and inviting employer and a desirable place to work through employees point of view. (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

Nowadays, the companies give a special attention in the retention of its employees. The retention of employees in the organization is a priority for human resources management as it leads the companies to achieve high levels of profitability and success. Retention is a strategic management practice that promotes faithfulness and loyalty of employees to the organization they represent. It is a set of tools, planned and thought, to follow the specific strategy of each organization (Chaminade, 2006; Gurumani, 2010; Fitz-enz, 1990).

The present research had as main goal know the methods and tools used in the retention of employees and to understand the organizations' vision about the process of Employer Branding.

For the purpose of this study, we have analyzed eleven companies with presence in Portugal, using a qualitative methodology. These companies have different business areas, different locations and dimensions. Thus, the semi-structured interview was used as a data collection technique and also the principles of the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) for the analysis and treatment of the collected information.

In total, were interviewed eleven Human Resources managers of each organization, or one of the department's employees who was linked to people management. The sample of this study (interviewed participants) is composed mainly of female individuals, with an average age of 30 years old and with qualifications at the level of higher education. With regards to the studied companies, these are mostly located in the northern part of Portugal, with more than 35 employees and with completely different areas of activity.

The results of the analysis of the interviews are organized in three central dimensions: Employer Branding, retention and attractiveness of employers. Each of the dimensions emerged from a set of subcategories that helped to perceive and broaden the definition of each of the categories, giving an insight of the interviewees' opinions.

Briefly, we can claim that Employer Branding is a trendy process, but even though has more advantages than disadvantages (Backaus & Tikoo, 2004) and, when implemented, it is a successful tool that guarantees and increase employee satisfaction. Most of this process is linked to the creation of a brand around the organizations (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backaus & Tikoo, 2004).

In regards to retention, it is noted that employees are no longer view as a number, starting to exist a greater concern to retain. The retention process has been suffering some changes during the time and companies had to adapt to this new reality, adapting the practices used based on the analysis of the employees' needs and their feedback and suggestions (Chiavenato, 1999, Moscovici, 1995).

The biggest problem in retaining is the abrupt growth of organizations and issues related to leadership (Singh & Rokade, 2014) and, the biggest challenge is to maintain employee satisfaction (Fitz-enz, 1990, Osteraker, 1999). Organizations use a range of tools to retain. The most common being the food and drink supply; promotion of active communication; health insurance; activities and team buildings; rewards; management and career progression; flexibility in working hours and continuous training (Chiavenato, 1999; Kaliprasad, 2006; Hytter, 2007).

The employee attractiveness is analyzed according to the characteristics that are point out to the companies so that they are view as the best place to work (Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

The final results of this research suggest that the Employer Branding process has begun to gain ground in human resources management, and that companies in Portugal are worried about the retention of their employees, using diverse and often creative practices to achieve it.

Keywords: Employer Branding; Retention; Human resources management; Retention of employees; Retention practices; Companies in Portugal.