



# WINNING THE CANDIDACY TO A WINNING EVP: THE ROAD TO BUILDING YOUR EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION

HCI EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

J W T INSIDE

# INTRODUCTION

New marketing approaches and ideas are arising in unexpected places, most notably in political campaigning. In fact, political campaigns and big brand marketers are sharing best practices and making a 'new normal' in the marketing and communications universe. Employee communications practitioners should study the successes in these 'mass marketing' areas and apply them to gain a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talent.

"Both brands and politicians start in the same place as a company seeking to define itself as an employer: in need of a clear vision and a tight communication strategy. We borrow some best practices to build sharp and distinctive strategies, or Employee Value Propositions (EVP's) that meet the same criteria a politician needs to accomplish, to build trust, likeability and authenticity" said Rob Quish, CEO of JWT Specialized Communications.

This paper explores how organizations can pull best practices from the 2008 political campaign to build a winning employer brand. The first step is building a winning employee value proposition that uses creativity to define the culture of the company, instills pride in employees and has lasting relevance. When we pull best practices from the converging worlds of politics and business and follow the example of great companies who have gotten it right, we see that a winning employee value proposition has the potential to not only transform a company but sometimes even the industry in which it competes.

## ADOPTING BEST PRACTICES FROM THE POLITICAL ARENA

The 2008 presidential race provides us with invaluable lessons that can be applied to our business strategies if we pay attention. Perception is based primarily on momentum and marketing during political elections. John McCain's team has rallied up significant momentum based on his reputation for being authentic and consistent, while Mitt Romney struggled to build a winning base even though his

campaign spent over \$70 Million. It shows that money does not necessarily dictate an election, but having the right message can.

"Running an election isn't simply a balancing act of issue-management, and negative and positive message management...", says Quish, "it requires very clear positioning, well-executed relationship management and a 360 degree communication plan with interactivity at the core." The 2008 campaign is different from previous campaigns because candidates are now following a more traditional marketing strategy. They use multi-media, message marketing and tap voters frequently and repeatedly to ensure their position is heard. Some examples follow:

- **Clear Vision/Positioning** — Hillary Clinton's message emphasizes her 35 years of experience, while Barack Obama's message is one of "change." Their on-going themes can be compared to the corporate marketing campaigns of major corporations like Coca-cola and Procter & Gamble. They establish a key message, and then develop sub-messages to support it. *Similarly, employers should have an over-arching vision and then have supporting positions to attract and retain their people.*
- **Relationship Management** — Pulling from the world of direct-marketing and relationship management, the candidates work on cultivating relationships over time, not only for raising campaign funds, but also for driving grass roots marketing. These include spreading positive word of mouth, getting people to caucuses and primaries and ultimately creating a movement of supporters who drive a sense of momentum. Employers can benefit from similar efforts to create word of mouth support for an organization by promoting positive messaging through the community and keeping prospects warm by having an ongoing communication stream using email marketing, social networks and community based events.
- **360 Degree Communications** — Candidates rely on communication that circles their target — the voter. A 360 degree communication plan might invite the public to events such as community forums, which might lead to a posting on a web

blog, follow-up phone calls to the voters. *Employers who create multiple channels for prospects to learn more about the company and its culture will find a more prepared candidate and a faster rate to close.*

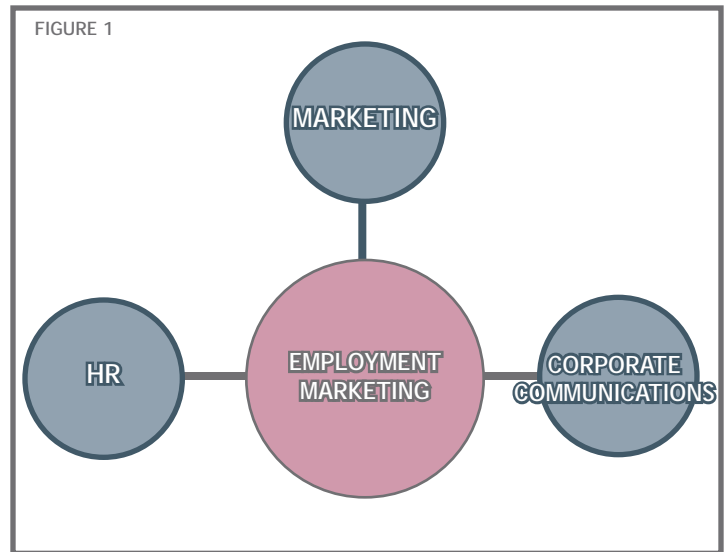
- **Interactivity at the Core** – And lastly, the use of interactive media in politics is much more sophisticated than ever before. Candidates use social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook to reach out to voters. YouTube and CNN have joined forces to offer coverage of the debates online, with an interactive forum for viewers to post their video questioning. *A company's first need is a dynamic Web site and a rich experience in their career site. In addition, the Web offers many other forums where your people and your prospects are learning about your company and forming opinions about your employer brand.*

Consider the impact sophisticated marketing techniques have had on the presidential political campaign? Here are some examples:

- Ron Paul raised \$6 Million online over one weekend
- Hillary Clinton has 73,000 friends on Facebook and 165,000 on MySpace as of January 22
- Barack Obama landed John Kerry as a key supporter and coveted the 300,000 e-mail addresses he acquired
- Mike Huckabee came from nowhere and won the Iowa caucus with less than \$10,000 through viral marketing

## EMPLOYMENT MARKETING

“HR communications teams are becoming more and more like political consultants and marketers. They are advocates of the employee just like a marketers are the advocate for the consumer and the politician is an advocate for voters”, says Quish. Evidence of these changes are when Human Resources practitioners are teaming up with their marketing and corporate communications colleagues to create an engaged workforce through employment branding (see Figure 1).



According to Quish, JWT INSIDE operates under the belief that when employees are engaged they succeed and as employees succeed, companies thrive; and so JWT INSIDE emphasizes employee communications to drive employee engagement as a crucial part of any business-building strategy. The main components of a successful employment marketing campaign include:

1. Creating a strong employer brand and starting with a winning employee value proposition
2. Creativity and innovation in delivering the message
3. A 360 degree communication campaign to build relationships
4. Measuring the impact through analytics and using those measures to drive decisionmaking

## BUILDING THE EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION

This paper focuses on point one above. The Employee Value Proposition is a contract between the employer and the employee: It expresses the expectations of both the employer and the employee. However, done well it must also be a distinctive lasting promise that instills pride in all employees. A winning EVP stands out amongst the competition as unique, and delivers a message that has relevance, not just a year from now, but many years into the future. A winning EVP can even transform a business, and building it requires the same level of sophistication and strategy

development that big brand marketers and political campaigns use.

## RITZ CARLTON

Take a look at an industry leader like Ritz Carlton, which is recognized as a top company to work for. Their EVP: "We're ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen." Their EVP meets our four crucial criteria for success:

1. It *defines the relationship between the company and employee* by setting fair expectations.
2. The *message is distinctive* by creating a mutual promise of treating each other with respect that stands out amongst the competition.
3. The company *instills pride* in the employees by identifying a standard that they are successfully meeting every day.
4. Their *message has lasting relevance*, communicating a mutual commitment between employees and Ritz Carlton that has stood the test of time.

An employee value proposition can not only transform a company, it can transform an industry. "If we do something magical, if we do something really brilliant for our clients, or if you do something really brilliant for your company, it can actually have a transformative effect on it," says Quish. "Incredible intellectual property value can come from an original EVP."

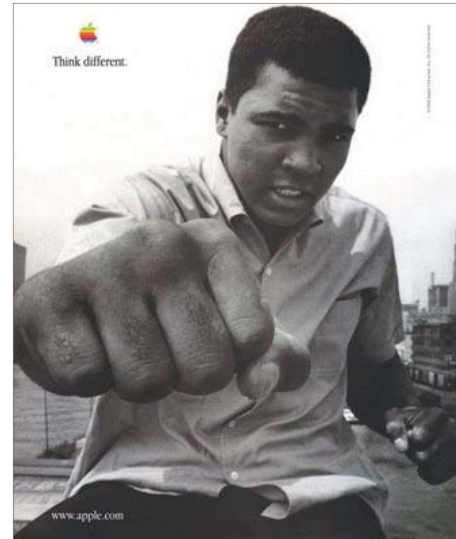
## APPLE'S WINNING EVP

Apple Computer originally used the message "*Think Different*" to tell their customers to think differently about their next computer purchase, and to buy a Macintosh instead of a PC. If we were to turn their advertising slogan into an employee value proposition, e.g. "We nurture and reward those who think different," you'll note it sends a clear, thoughtful and timeless message about who they want on their team. Those that 'think differently' should be rewarded and celebrated and 'different thinkers' should be the first criteria for employees whom they interview.

"With the right people, Apple drove their software and computer business while transforming the music and telephone industries because they expected and enabled their people to think differently," says Quish.

Apple's example shows how an idea can be transformative, by encouraging employees to think outside the box. They created an idea that defined their culture with an emotional aspect to it so it would capture people's attention and imagination and instilled a kind of pride that drove their business, and their industry forward.

FIGURE 2



# AVOIDING MISTAKES, USING THE POWER OF CONTEXT AND TESTING YOUR EVP

## THE POWER OF CONTEXT

There are some pitfalls that organizations must avoid when developing their EVP. Organizations can not operate in a vacuum; they too must think outside the box. It would be a mistake to simply frame the company culture, sell it, and hope it attracts the right people or to analyze the most successful employee, reward them, and then hope to hire or reward clones.

Companies also need to pay close attention to the context in which their EVP will be delivered. An EVP that doesn't properly fit with the company strategy and current trends could do a lot of damage. Keeping tabs on competitors' EVPs can help. Competitors often have similar messages,

which is noticeable in recruiting campaigns, especially in college recruiting. Similar EVPs make it difficult for candidates to make any differentiation between employers. Companies should also consider their social strategy and community reputation and how it fits into the overall message, as well as the current social trends. For example, Shell Oil would want to take into consideration environmental concerns as part of their EVP while fast food restaurants should consider the concern over obesity in the United States as it defines an employer branding strategy.

JWT has its own social trends scanning effort. Every company should have a pulse on society trends that impact their category, impact their company directly, and impact specific employee segments that are important to it, says Quish.

In a recent 60 Minutes segment, JWT's Marianne Saltzman discussed a trend that the 80 million millennials are setting as they look to fill the jobs left vacant by retiring baby-boomers:

"I believe that they actually think of themselves like merchandise on eBay. If you don't want me, Mr. Employer, I'll go sell myself down the street; I'll probably get more money. I'll definitely get a better experience. And by the way, they'll adore me, you only like me."

This generational trend is just one example of a social trend that can effect how your employer brand is received.

## THE POWER OF CONTEXT

"The relationship that people have with companies starts with trust and likeability, and likeability is the umbrella for the reputation of a company ... the emerging trend that's transforming marketing in general, and it's because of the ability to uncover every truth, ugly or otherwise on the Web, in a brand OR in a politician, is authenticity."

No great idea alone is going to transform a company. Employees want to join and stay with a company that has values and whose behavior reflects those values. This is entirely measurable and communications can have a profound effect in driving understanding. The message has to come from an authenticity of the company, according to Quish. It needs to start at the top, with the CEO establishing a mission statement that is communicated to employees, and that they view as important.

# CONCLUSION

The 2008 political campaign has provided us with an opportunity to review how marketing and branding best practices can be put to use in employee marketing. Step one to employer branding is the development of the Employee Value Proposition. Organizations have an opportunity to shed their skin, and cast new light on a brand new authentic identity, or re-enforce a time-tested message with employees. Developing an EVP is the critical first step and must be done creatively and methodically, to uniquely define the expectations of employers and employees, instilling pride and creating a lasting message can lead to an EVP good enough to put on a T-shirt, help transform a company, and, perhaps even change an industry.

Based on the Human Capital Institute webcast, *Winning the Candidacy to a Winning EVP: The Road to Building Your Employee Value Proposition*, January 22, 2008.

#### PRESENTER

Robert Quish

Region president, JWT; CEO, JWT Specialized Communications

Rob is based in NYC and is Region President of JWT with oversight of the agency's regional offices in Atlanta and Toronto, and JWT's Atlanta — based practice in Communications, Entertainment and Technology.

A member of the JWT global board, he also holds the role of CEO of JWT Specialized Communications, with responsibility for JWT's recruitment marketing and employee communications agency (JWT Inside), a baby boomer marketing agency (JWT Boom) and an enrollment-marketing specialty agency (JWT Education). JWT Specialized Communications operates in over 20 markets and has clients in the UK, Europe, Asia and North America.

Rob joined JWT in April, 2005 as Chief Talent Office and was named to the additional post of Region President in September 2005 and CEO of the specialized agencies in January '07. Over his 20-plus year career at creatively charged advertising agencies which included DDB, Ally & Gargano and Ammirati & Puris, Rob has worked around the world for multinational clients such as Hershey, Federal Express, Motorola, UPS and Procter & Gamble, Gneral Motors, Verizon, Quaker Oats and LEGO.

Prior to joining JWT, he was involved in a TV startup, The Luxury Television Network, built on the promise of a convergence in entertainment and marketing. From 1999-2003, Rob served as president of Lowe, New York steering the 2 billion advertising agency through a tumultuous and massive merger. Rob is married with two boys, a soccer coach and a committed advisor to Columbia Presbyterian's Pediatric Oncology department.

#### MODERATOR

Bill Craib

Vice President, HCI Communities

Human Capital Institute

Prior to joining the Human Capital Institute, Bill was the Founding Director of AIRS Human Capital Solutions, and served as Director of Training and Curriculum Development from 1997 to 2003. An early Internet adopter and advocate of its far-reaching potential, Bill developed his practical experience by establishing an Internet-centric executive search practice focused on telecommunications. This endeavor helped lay the groundwork for the significant contributions he has made to the core curriculum of AIRS. Bill earned a BS Degree from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and spent 10 years as a journalist working for several media organizations, including ESPN and the Rocky Mountain News, before entering the recruiting industry.

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About the Human Capital Institute: The Human Capital Institute is a catalyst for innovative new thinking in talent acquisition, development and deployment. Through research and collaboration, our programs collect original, creative ideas from a field of top executives and the brightest thought leaders in strategic HR and talent management. Those ideas are then transformed into measurable, real-world strategies that help our members attract and retain the best talent, build a diverse, inclusive workplace, and leverage individual and team performance throughout the enterprise.

**ABOUT US:** JWT INSIDE helps organizations advance employee engagement through comprehensive advertising, marketing and employee communications services. Measurement tools, consulting resources and strategic approaches are employed to put the right people in the right jobs and keep the workforce engaged. The agency has 12 offices and 9 satellite locations across North America and internationally. It is a subsidiary of JWT, the largest advertising agency in the United States and the third full-service network in the world. Its parent company is WPP (NASDAQ:WPPGY). Visit [www.jwtinside.com](http://www.jwtinside.com) for more information.