

# ‘Case Study: How Can Employer Branding Contribute to Both Differentiated HR and Marketing Activities?’

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## ABSTRACT,

*In recent years, the importance of employer branding in attracting and retaining employees has grown significantly, especially due to the shortage of technical talent that many companies face. HR and marketing departments play a vital role in effectively communicating a company its identity as an employer, and employer branding can greatly contribute to this. Despite the existing knowledge about the positive impact of strong employer branding, there remains a lack of specific studies on Dutch technical companies. This research focuses on examining the perception of DGS, a Dutch machinery firm, its employer brand among both the management team and employees, identifying the key factors that DGS employees value in an ideal employer, and exploring the ways in which employer branding HR- and marketing activities within the unique context of DGS. The findings of this research show that a strong employer brand plays a critical role in several HR activities, including onboarding, talent development and employee engagement. It emphasizes the importance of alignment between HR and marketing to ensure clear and consistent communication both internally and externally. Furthermore, the research reveals striking differences in the perception between the DGS management team and the employees. By shedding light on these insights, the research contributes to a better understanding of employer branding within the specific context of DGS and provides tools for optimizing their employer branding efforts with practical implications.*

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## Keywords

Employer Branding, Employer Value Proposition, Case study, Human Resources, Communication Strategy, Marketing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business landscape, the concept of employer branding has become increasingly important as it serves as a crucial tool for attracting, engaging, and retaining top talent employees. Employer branding refers to the process through which organizations create and communicate their unique identity, value proposition, and reputation as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It involves shaping the perception of current and potential employees, aiming to attract, engage, and retain top talent that aligns with the organization its values and goals (Cable & Turban, 2001). Employer branding plays a critical role in shaping the image of an organization among both current and prospective employees, as well as the wider market.

The literature gap that lies within existing research is a lack of specific insights into the relationship between employer branding and HR/marketing activities within the context of a machine company like DGS. Much research has been done on general issues within employer branding, but specific cases on young employees at engineering companies in the Netherlands is scarce. Moreover, we are now in an era where digitalization plays a major role. This also creates a gap in existing research on the impact of employer branding within digital activities of HR and marketing. This study examines how employer branding can add value to HR and marketing activities specifically aimed at young talent within the technical sector in the Dutch province of Overijssel.

This case study explores the relationship between employer branding and the differentiated activities of human resources (HR) and marketing within the context of DGS, a multinational machinery firm from the Netherlands. By exploring and analyzing the perception of DGS its employer branding from the perspectives of the management team and employees, valuable insights were obtained about the impact of employer branding on HR and marketing strategies.

The aim of this study consists of three parts: The first one is to understand how DGS its employer brand is perceived by the management team and employees of DGS; secondly, to explore the relationship between employer branding and HR and marketing activities; and finally, to identify areas of improvement and provide recommendations for strengthening DGS its employer brand and its contribution into HR and marketing activities. By studying the perceptions of both the management team and employees, we gain a comprehensive understanding of DGS its employer brand. This approach allows to evaluate the extent to which DGS its employer branding efforts align with the experiences and expectations of its employees. Additionally, it was explored in which different ways HR and Marketing activities can contribute to the development and communication of an employer brand.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on employer branding by providing real-world insights from the context of DGS. The impact of employer branding regarding HR activities such as recruitment, employee engagement, and talent development were examined. Furthermore, we delved into the influence of employer branding on marketing activities, including brand positioning, customer perception, and the integration of the employer brand into marketing campaigns.

For organizations which are seeking to attract and retain employees it is crucial to understand the important relationship between employer branding and HR and marketing. By aligning these three and developing a clear employer brand, organizations can create a compelling value proposition for both employees and customers. This case study offers practical insights and recommendations for DGS and other similar organizations looking to optimize their employer branding efforts.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In recent years, organizations recognize the importance of attracting and retaining top talent, especially in the technical industry. Therefore, the attention for employer branding has gained significantly. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

### 2.1 Definition and conceptualization of Employer Branding

In recent years Employer Branding has gained significant attention and has been defined by several professionals in the field. The key definitions contain of:

Ambler and Barrow (1996) highlight that employer branding involves aligning organizational values and culture with the expectations and aspirations of target employees.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) describe employer branding as the process of creating and communicating a distinctive identity and value proposition to current and potential employees.

Barrow and Mosley (2005) define employer branding as the strategic management of the employment brand, focusing on creating a favorable reputation and distinctive image as an employer.

In this paper, Employer Branding is defined as the process through which organizations create and communicate their unique identity, value proposition, and reputation as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It involves shaping the perception of current and potential employees, aiming to attract, engage, and retain top talent that aligns with the organization its values and goals (Cable & Turban, 2001). Employer branding encompasses diverse aspects, including an organization its culture, mission, values, and employee value proposition (EVP).

#### 2.1.1 The Employee Value Proposition

The Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is an importance concept within employer branding as it has a major role in attracting and retaining top talent. EVP can be defined as the unique bundle of attributes, benefits, and rewards an organization offers to employees in exchange for their skills, capabilities, and commitment (Cable & Turban, 2001). The EVP represents the overall value of an organization and serves as the foundation for shaping the employer brand and attracting talent that aligns with organizational goals and values. The EVP itself may vary between organizations depending on their own specific context. However, an EVP consists generally key elements as Compensations and Benefits such as salary, bonuses, retirement plans, and other monetary rewards (Cable & Turban, 2001). Another important element is Growth Opportunities and Career Development, which refers to promotions, training programs, professional development, and advancement within the organization (Edwards & Edwards, 2019). Furthermore, the policies and practices for supporting a healthy Work-Life Balance is an important element (Klassen & Menkens, 2021) as Organizational Culture and Values which consists of shared beliefs, values and norms is too (Louwaars, Veldhoven, & Kuipers, 2018). Other commonly elements for an organization its EVP are the Work Environment and Physical Facilities which contains of all resources that contribute to a productive and comfortable workplace (Schley & Harari, 2017) and recognition and rewards which refers to the acknowledgment and appreciation of employees its contributions through non-monetary incentives (Cable & Turban, 2001). The last element for a strong EVP is the quality of leadership and management within the organization (Edwards & Edwards, 2019). This

includes supportive management practices, clear communication and opportunities for employee involvement and empowerment. Research by Klassen and Menkens (2021) found that organizations which aligned their employer branding efforts with a well-defined EVP experience enhanced recruitment outcomes and improved employee retention rates. In today's competitive labor market, organizations with an aligned employer brand and strong EVP are more likely to succeed.

## 2.2 The Relationship between Employer Branding and HR Activities

A great understanding of the relationship between Employer branding and HR activities is necessary to identify opportunities and explore the different ways in which employer branding could influence HR activities and outcomes. Employer branding, as stated before, refers to the organization its brand as an employer, while HR activities involve strategies, practices and processes concerning human resources within an organization.

### Employer Branding and Recruitment:

During the recruitment process, employer branding plays a crucial role in attracting high-quality candidates (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It has been found that effective employer branding has a positive impact on recruitment efforts. Organizations with a well-defined employer brand experience a competitive advantage in the competitive labor market, attracting a lot of talented individuals who align with the organization its values and beliefs (Slaughter & Zickar, 2006). Next to that, research conducted by Eisenberg and Stoddard (2015) has shown that organizations with a strong and well communicated employer brand are likely to attract more potential candidates and receive more applications for jobs.

### Employer Branding and Employee Engagement:

Employees are not only attracted through a strong employer brand, but it also contributes to increased employee engagement. Engaged employees are important for an organization because they tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment to the organization they work for (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). Furthermore, a strong and clear communicated employer brand aligns employees its values with the values of the organization, which will stimulate a sense of belonging and pride (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The importance of employer branding regarding the engagement of employees is studied by Cable and Turban (2001), which highlighted the crucial role of employer branding in creating a positive work environment.

### Employer Branding and Employee Retention

As research has shown, organizations experience higher levels of employee retention and lower turnover rates when they have a strong employer brand (Chang & Huang, 2005). Employees who have a positive employer brand experience are more likely to stay with their organizations and are less inclined to seek alternative employment opportunities (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). The alignment between employees its personal values and the employer brand contributes to a sense of belonging and loyalty, which fosters long-term commitment to the organization. To increase retention rates and ensure a positive employee experience, HR activities such as performance management, employee recognition, and talent development should be aligned with the employer brand (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

### Employer Branding and Talent Development

Regarding talent development, employer branding is also an important aspect. Research shows that organizations with a strong and well-defined employer brand are better equipped to develop and nurture their employees, providing opportunities for growth, learning, and career advancement (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Furthermore, having a strong employer brand leads to attracting and retaining high-potential individuals, facilitating a pipeline of talent for future leadership positions (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

### Employer Branding and Organizational Culture

The culture of an organization is very important and therefore plays a critical role in employer branding. A great employer brand reflects the organization its mission, values, and culture, creating a consistent and unique employer brand image (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Research by Moroko and Uncles (2008) shows that a seamless integration and positive employee experiences are achieved by aligning the employer brand of an organization with its culture.

To conclude, there is a strong relationship between employer branding and several HR activities such as shaping recruitment strategies, onboarding procedures, selection processes, and talent development initiatives (Eisenberg & Stoddard, 2015). By recognizing the importance of the relationship between the two, organizations can improve their ability to attract, engage, and retain employees.

## 2.3 The Relationship between Employer Branding and Marketing Activities

Two crucial components of a comprehensive organizational strategy are marketing activities and employer branding, as they both contribute to shaping the external perception of the organization. However, the focus of employer branding is creating the perception of the organization as an employer, while marketing activities intent to shape and communicate a positive image of the organization to its external stakeholders. Research shows that the organization its overall reputation and brand image is positively influenced by a strong and effective employer brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Therefore, the relationship and alignment between those two elements is crucial to create a consistent and clear message.

As mentioned, employer branding plays a significant role in various marketing activities such as brand positioning and differentiation. To attract employees that align with their culture, organizations can highlight their unique employer values and differentiate themselves from competitors (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). By integrating the employer brand into marketing campaigns, several marketing activities can leverage the differentiation and enhance the overall brand positioning in the market (Cable & Turban, 2001). Furthermore, employees with a high level of satisfaction, loyalty, and engagement could become brand ambassadors, both outside and within the workplace, which translates into positive word-of-mouth marketing (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). By incorporating employee interviews and stories into promotional materials, marketing activities can amplify this advocacy. Last, marketing activities regarding employer branding also have a positive impact on customers and their perception and trust in an organization. Research suggests that customers tend to trust and have a positive image of companies with a strong employer brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Marketing activities can also leverage the employer brand

its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to improve brand reputation and appeal to socially conscious customers. Research by Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) has shown that customers prefer to engage with organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to CSR.

The relationship between employer branding and marketing activities is essential for creating an authentic and strong brand image for an organization. When marketing activities and the employer brand are aligned, organizations can capitalize on the strengths of their employer brand to enhance brand positioning, customer perception, and overall brand reputation. The importance of integrating employer branding and marketing strategies is to create a clear and unified message that resonates with both internal and external stakeholders.

## 2.4 Key Components of a Strong Employer Brand for Differentiating HR and Marketing Activities

For attracting and retaining employees while differentiating in a competitive market, having a strong employer brand is necessary. To develop a strong Employer Brand, organizations must be able to identify and understand the key components of it. By describing these components, organizations can create targeted strategies to improve their employer brand and develop a distinctive identity which can effectively differentiate HR and marketing activities. However, it is important to note that the components mentioned, may vary based on organizational context and industry.

### *Component 1: Employer Brand Identity and Image*

Employer Brand Identity is described as the unique set of values, attributes and characteristics that define the organization as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It represents the desired perception the organization wants to express to its target group. Furthermore, the reputation and external perception of the organization as an employer is also an important aspect of an Employer Brand, which is called the Brand Image (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

Research indicates that clearly defined and authentic values contribute to a strong employer brand (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).

### *Component 2: Employer Brand communication*

The strategies and channels used to communicate the organization its employer brand to its target group is called Employer Brand Communication. This involves presenting a unified message across various channels such as social media, career websites, recruitment attributes, job advertisements, and internal communication channels (Edwards & Edwards, 2019). Consistent and compelling brand communication helps shaping the desired brand perception among job seekers and employees. Moreover, consistency in brand communication is crucial to ensure alignment between HR and Marketing activities.

### *Component 3: Employee Engagement and Advocacy*

Engaged employees who believe in the organization its brand are more likely to become brand advocates. When they actively promote the organization its values and culture, speak positively about their experience, and recommend the organization as an employer, it adds credibility and helps attract more potential candidates (Bauer, 2015). HR plays an important role in fostering

employee engagement through effective talent management, employee recognition programs, and opportunities for professional growth (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

### *Component 4: Positive Employee Experience*

The experiences of the employee should align with the values and promises of the employer brand. HR activities such as onboarding, performance management, training, and employee relations, should reflect the organization its brand attributes. This alignment makes sure that employees its interactions and experiences within the organization strengthen the desired brand image (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

An integrated approach to employer branding involves alignment between HR and marketing activities to convey a clear and consistent brand message. Collaboration between HR and Marketing departments is crucial to create and execute effective employer branding strategies. This collaboration ensures that the external brand image communicated by Marketing aligns with the internal brand experience communicated by HR (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

In this research a case study design will be used to gain a comprehensive understanding about employer branding and how it can contribute to HR and Marketing activities at the Dutch company called DGS. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific situation within its real-life context (Yin, 2014). By adopting a qualitative approach, subjective perceptions, experiences, and behaviors to employer branding will be explored (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative methods provide a chance to capture the complexity and depth of participants its point of view and generate in-depth insight into the research topic (Creswell, 2013). To collect data directly from the organizational setting of DGS, field research will be conducted. This could involve informal conversations, on-site observations, and in-depth interviews with employees and stakeholders (Creswell, 2013).

All interviews were conducted at the DGS office in quiet closed rooms. The interviews with the employees and management team were conducted face-to-face to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). It consisted of open-ended questions about their perception of DGS's employer brand and how employer branding can contribute to certain HR and Marketing activities. Regarding the DGS management team, the research consisted of two parts. The first part comprised an interactive session lasting two hours, attended by the owner, sales manager, and HR manager. Using the value proposition theory by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010), the session aimed to define DGS's employer value proposition interactively. The seven building blocks were visually presented on a table, allowing participants to share ideas and discuss points by adding text using post-it notes (see appendix A). The second part of the study occurred two days later and involved separate face-to-face interviews with each participant. These interviews consisted of twelve open-ended questions focused on DGS's employer branding and its potential contributions to HR and marketing activities, tailored to the knowledge and skills of each candidate.

## 3.2 Data Collection

Considering the qualitative characteristics of this case study, the primary data collection method for this research is in-depth interviews with employees and stakeholders of DGS. In-depth interviews offer a flexible and interactive approach to gather detailed information from key stakeholders within the organization, including employees and HR and marketing executives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). To gather a natural balance between guiding questions and the possibility of exploration of new themes and insights, semi-structured interviews were held (Seidman, 2013).

The research that was carried out with the key stakeholders consisted of an interview of twelve questions and a session in which the seven key components described in chapter 2.4 were answered in the context of DGS its Employer Branding. The aim of this research was to establish and define DGS its employer brand from the executive its perspective. In addition, the purpose was to gain insight into how the management of DGS thinks that employer branding can contribute to various HR and Marketing activities and how important they think employer branding is. The participants of this study were the owner, sales manager, and HR advisor of DGS. This study was performed in week 20 and took place on two different days. First, the session was held to determine DGS its employer brand. Two days later, the interview was conducted separately. The reason for this was because it was expected that there would be better answers to the questions about the added value of employer branding in HR and Marketing activities when the participants had already delved into employer branding before, as happened in the session.

The interviews conducted with the HR advisor and Marketing advisor consisted of fourteen open-ended questions, each focused on employer branding and their own department. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into employer branding of DGS, to what extent they think employer branding can contribute to activities within their department, and which specific activities they think can have the most positive influence. The interviews were held in week 2.

The survey, which was conducted among the employees of DGS, consisted of fourteen open-ended questions. The purpose of these interviews was to investigate what the image of DGS as an employer was among employees, what values they find important in an employer, and what they consider important in certain HR and marketing activities. To answer these questions, sixteen employees with junior functions from different departments were interviewed. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and, with the participant its approval, the audio was recorded. The examination was administered in week 21.

### 3.2.1 Research Population

To ensure a reliable representation of the DGS its employees, a purposive sampling strategy will be used where participants are from different levels, departments, and roles within the company. In this research, it means that the sample consists of employees from diverse departments with diverse roles (Patton, 2015). At the request of DGS, participants with the same level were deliberately chosen, as this is the largest and most important group within the company. All participants have a junior position and are between 20 and 28 years old. DGS its experience has shown that with this target audience, HR and marketing plays a major role within the recruitment process and retaining is more difficult as with senior positions. In addition, a deliberate choice was made for a small, specific target group so that the research is not carried out too broadly and can produce better and more reliable results.

Additionally, key stakeholders who are responsible for employer branding, HR, and marketing will be included to provide insights from an executive perspective. In case of this research, the owner and sales manager were chosen as a perspective from DGS itself, because they started and shaped the company as it is now and know the employer branding of DGS better than anyone. The Manager Director is not included in this perspective, as he just started working at DGS in January 2022 and has therefore a less reliable understanding of the employer branding of DGS. See appendix B for the list and characteristics of all the participants.

## 3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis process of a qualitative conducted research involves several steps to derive meaningful insights from the data. First, the interview recordings were transcribed into written text. Once they were ready, the researcher engages in familiarization by reading and re-reading the data to gain a thorough understanding of the content (Silverman, 2016). The second step is coding and involves assigning codes to segments of data that represent meaningful concepts, categories, or themes to identify patterns and connections. Inductive coding is used, where codes emerge from the data (Saldaña, 2015). The identified categories will be supported by using direct quotes from the interviews to ensure transparency and credibility of findings (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The transcribed documents were coded on open, axial, and selection level by using the online program ATLAS.ti. First, all transcribed interviews were read through, and main-theme codes were linked to key sentences. Then, by axial coding, assigned codes were compared and codes were merged within an overarching code. In the final step, the main codes were found, and connections were made between the data through selective coding.

The session with the management of DGS was not recorded, which means transcribing is not possible. However, the post-its represent the participants its perspectives and the main topics discussed. The post-its will be used as data and will be analyzed by reading and merging the notes. After the notes and ideas are concrete, an online framework will be created which represents the employer brand of DGS.

## 4. RESULTS

The data analysis of the various surveys revealed many new insights about DGS its employer brand from both the management team its perspective and that of employees. In addition, much information has been gained on ways in which DGS its employer brand can contribute to HR and marketing activities. By conducting several interviews with different stakeholders within DGS, a lot of information has been obtained which is described in this chapter.

### 4.1 Current Perception of Employer Branding of DGS

To explore in which manner employer branding can contribute to HR and marketing activities for DGS, it is important to first establish and define the employer branding of DGS. With the results of the interactive session with management and interviews with various stakeholders from different departments, an employer brand identity for DGS has been created through an EVP.

#### 4.1.1 Perception of Management team, HR and Marketing

To describe DGS its Employer Branding from the perspective of management, four interviews were conducted. To substantiate the results of this study, the main codes Identity and Image, Brand communication, Engagement and Advocacy, and Employee Experience were used. These group codes are based on the four main components described in chapter 2.4. The entire coding scheme can be found in Appendix D.

The results from management on employer branding within DGS is generally very positive. All participants explicitly mentioned that DGS is a very flexible organization, where a lot is possible in terms of functions, responsibilities, and tasks. DGS therefore likes to identify itself as a company where there are few hierarchical layers, and everyone is treated equally. Participant 1 explains:

‘We are very flexible as an organization. Both in managing people but also in thinking of responsibilities. Who should work where, for example. We don't think in boxes. In that, we are creative and flexible. Functions are sometimes adapted or transferred, depending on the abilities of the employee.’

It also turns out that DGS attaches great importance to the atmosphere on the work floor and the relationships between colleagues. They also consider employee engagement very important. They do this by creating a healthy balance between work and leisure. Concrete examples are the standard Friday afternoon drinks, a staff party every year, a bbq in the summer and a party at Christmas. In addition, DGS regularly participates in sports tournaments in the neighborhood. These organized activities are entirely voluntary for staff, they are not obliged to participate. To further increase engagement among employees, important information about the company is shared on a screen in the company canteen.

DGS is very conscious of the valuable network of its employees and has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen employee advocacy. A concrete example is the €750 bonus for bringing in new employee. In addition, DGS invests 5,000 euros annually in promotional materials for employees such as sunglasses, caps, and hats. This allows staff to promote DGS even outside work. Participant 3 about Employee Advocacy at DGS:

‘There is a great sense of pride among employees at DGS. They also radiate this energy to the outside world, making other people enthusiastic about DGS as an employer. I personally have never

seen a company where so many employees are proud of the company. That is quite unique.’

The image that DGS portrays as an employer must also match the reality within the company. As an employee at DGS, on your first day of work you will be given a tour and introduced to everyone in every department. Also, to the management and higher functions within the company. This shows that DGS is approachable, and they also want the new employee to feel welcome right away. In addition, DGS has a professional image, which means that all employees also receive the necessary work clothes and attributes from the company. The new premises and workshop also show that employees will be working in a professional company.

DGS communicates its employer brand through various channels such as social media, the website, sponsoring, internship markets, social initiatives and more. Only images of our own staff are used to attract new staff and promote DGS as an employer. The reason for this is to create the best possible image of DGS as an employer to the outside world. In addition, we regularly participate in internship marketing and company visits to promote and strengthen the image of DGS. Participant 4 about Brand Communication:

‘In the past year, a lot of time and money has been invested in promoting DGS as an employer in the region. Among other things, a campaign has been launched with testimonials from staff about working at DGS and a partnership has also been entered into with Metal Skills Kids in which primary school students receive a welding workshop at DGS. All these actions ensure positive reactions in the environment and an increase in the number of applications.’

All in all, the management team describes DGS as a flexible employer that provides a good working atmosphere and working environment for its employees. In addition, they invest a lot of time in staff involvement by organizing various activities. Employer Advocacy is also stimulated with bonuses and promotional material, among other things. DGS is a young, dynamic, and accessible company with little hierarchy. There is a lot of togetherness and passion in the work. In addition, a lot is invested in developing talent by offering training and career opportunities.

In conclusion, the management team perceives DGS its employer brand in a highly positive manner. They highlight the organization its flexibility, absence of hierarchical layers, and equal treatment of employees. The emphasis on a positive work atmosphere, employee engagement, and work-life balance is evident through various activities and events. DGS actively encourages employee advocacy through monetary bonuses and promotional materials. The management team also recognizes the importance of aligning the portrayed image with the actual employee experience. Overall, the management team sees DGS as a dynamic, accessible, and supportive employer that values talent development and relationships between colleagues.

#### 4.1.2 Perception of Employees

The results of the interviews with employees revealed that DGS has a good working atmosphere and is very committed to bonding colleagues in an informal way. This is done, for example, by organising various activities and parties throughout the year. In addition, 13 of the 16 participants indicated that there is an approachable culture within DGS. Participant 7 says:

‘The informal working atmosphere within DGS is the same. It is not used as a marketing word to lure staff.’

This also indicates that the employer experience is very much in line with the external communication of DGS as an employer.

In addition, a large proportion of participants indicate that DGS is a young and fast-growing company, with a lot of ambition and drive. This provides many opportunities for growth and talent development. It also makes it interesting for employees because there are always new projects and challenges. The work is varied. Yet it is mentioned that employees often have to come to manager themselves for development opportunities. DGS itself does not have a proactive attitude in this. Participant 10 says:

‘DGS definitely gives you the opportunity to grow, it's just that you have to ask for it yourself. They might publish the vacancies internally first.’

Furthermore, the survey found that DGS is growing fast, and therefore has little structure within internal processes and communication. Because of the low-threshold culture, there are short lines and it is easy to talk to someone, but it is not always clear who you should talk to and who is responsible. It is also mentioned that DGS may sometimes protect its employees from the workload. This is sometimes too much, but due to the drive of DGS itself, this is quickly overlooked.

Benefits such as the workplace, activities and development opportunities are mostly discussed by the participants. Salary was mentioned by four of the 16 participants as an important aspect of being a good employer. It is striking that this is mentioned by the older participants. An explanation could be that they are more likely to have financial concerns such as a mortgage etc.

Research has shown that DGS employees also find it important that their workplace is in order. Work clothes and, for example, a laptop should also be in good order. It is striking that employees in the office are more satisfied with this than employees in the workplace. Participant 12:

'In general, the working environment at DGS is great. We have nice premises with a very nice workshop. However, it often takes a very long time when certain work materials are requested. This sometimes takes months even though these are simple materials we just need to do our work'.

Finally, 16 of the 16 participants mentioned that they find appreciation important in a good employer. This can be both through spending bonuses, but more importantly they find verbal appreciation. By saying they did their job well or a simple pat on the back.

All in all, the management and employees of DGS are very much on the same page about DGS' employer brand. Both see DGS as a driven, fast-growing company with many opportunities for growth. Yet not every employee feels they actually have access to these. The structure within the company is also lacking, so communication is not always flawless. The value of structure is underestimated by the management team. DGS also considers the working atmosphere and relationships between colleagues very important and invests a lot of time and money in this. This is confirmed by the employees. The approachable culture and the challenges within the work itself are also pillars of DGS's employer brand.

In conclusion, it can be said that the perception of DGS its employer brand among its employees is generally positive. The company is praised for its good working atmosphere, informal bonding activities and accessible culture. Employees experience DGS as a young and ambitious organization with plenty of career opportunities. However, improvements are needed in the field of proactive talent development and internal structure.

Appreciation, working conditions and relationships with colleagues are highly valued aspects of the DGS employer brand.

#### *4.1.3 DGS Employee Value Proposition*

Together with the management of DGS, an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) has been defined which represents the set of unique characteristics and attributes of DGS as an employer. The EVP is made up of seven different elements: Culture and Values, Career Development and Growth Opportunities, Work-life balance, Recognition and Rewards, Work Environment, Compensation and Benefits, and Leadership. The EVP of DGS can be found at appendix D.

## **4.2 Values and Attributes in DGS its Employer Branding which Contribute to HR and Marketing Activities**

The survey found that there is much room for improvement especially in HR. One explanation may be that DGS has had its own HR department only since November 2022. During the onboarding process, three things mainly emerge that are perceived as important. These are the tour and introduction round to all colleagues, making sure the workplace and resources are complete and communication to the new employee in the first few days. A so-called 'work buddy' is suggested by eight of the 16 participants. This person is then assigned to the new employee so that he or she has a contact to go to for questions. The tour is also considered important by many employees. Not only for the new employee, but they themselves also like being informed about a new employee. The introduction round on the canteen screen is a good initiative for this. It is also mentioned that the management team could take a more active attitude in developing its staff. Employees know there are opportunities for advancement, but they must come up with them themselves. Annual performance interviews could be a solution for this. There is also improvement to be made in internal communication with employees. Employees often hear through the grapevine that projects have been won and news about the company itself is often not communicated. According to many participants, the culture within DGS is excellent. There is a good relationship between colleagues and the values of the company are clear to everyone. Participant 15:

'DGS has a lot of ambition and always wants bigger and more. We are a hardworking company with a great passion for technology. We would like to grow even more and realize even better projects.'

Showing development opportunities that DGS offers can contribute to employee retention. according to a large number of participants, many good interns have opted for another employer because they were not clear about the possibilities at DGS, or because they were informed too late. If DGS pays more attention to this, good interns can be retained. In addition, the research also shows that appreciation, nice colleagues, and personal attention are important points for retaining staff. It is important to DGS employees that they feel valued and that they enjoy going to work. The personal attention also gives a feeling of appreciation. These are important points for them to continue working for an employer.

It has emerged that DGS has invested a lot of time and money in their employer branding in the past year. Many refer to the marketing campaign with testimonials for recruiting staff. This is, according to a large number, the correct way of communicating to the outside world. Real employees are deployed who are allowed to tell their own story. In this way,

DGS does not make it more beautiful than it is. It is mentioned that DGS can be more active on social media regarding employer branding. For example, the use of Instagram and TikTok could offer great opportunities. Furthermore, the promotional materials for staff and customers are often positively rated. Employees wear this weekly in their free time and they think it has a nice and good look. The sunglasses that DGS has purchased for the coming summer are also very popular. Providing employees with promotional materials automatically makes them brand ambassadors. Wearing a DGS cap or backpack gives brand awareness in the region without making too large investments. In addition, it can raise questions about working at DGS, causing employees to create conversations about DGS with external persons. The use of photos of employees in advertisements also generates positive reactions. Participant 18:

'For an advertisement during a party in my own village, a photo of me was used by a colleague because we live there. The text stated who wanted to work with us. We are of course recognizable for the village, and it resulted in many positive reactions. I was even asked 4 times what it's like to work at DGS and what kind of work we actually do'.

To conclude, the research shows that DGS its employer brand mainly contributes to HR and marketing activities through strategic onboarding, internal communication, employee development and authentic marketing campaigns. These aspects have a positive impact on employee retention, brand awareness and recruitment. By focusing on these values and attributes, DGS can improve its overall reputation as an employer and effectively engage with both current and potential employees.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the case study on how employer branding can contribute to DGS its HR and marketing activities emphasizes the significant impact of a strong employer brand on various aspects of organizational functioning. The findings indicate that organizations with a clear employer brand gain a competitive advantage in the labor market and attract potential employees who align with their unique values and work-culture. In addition, a strong employer brand contributes to greater employee engagement by aligning employee values with those of the organization, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

The study also shows that organizations with a strong employer brand experience higher levels of employee retention and lower turnover rates. Employees who have a positive employer brand experience are more likely to stay with their organizations and exhibit long-term commitment. To enhance retention rates and create a positive employee experience, HR activities such as performance management, employee recognition, and talent development should be aligned with the employer brand.

The relationship between employer branding and marketing activities is also important to recognize. A well-defined and clear communicated employer brand positively influences the overall reputation and brand image of an organization. By integrating the employer brand into marketing campaigns, organizations can enhance brand positioning, differentiate themselves from competitors, and attract employees and customers who trust and have a positive image of the company. Additionally, engaged employees can become brand ambassadors, contributing to positive word-of-mouth marketing.

In the specific case of DGS, the study provides insights into the current perception of employer branding among the management team, HR, and marketing, as well as employees. DGS is described as a flexible organization with a strong focus on a

positive working atmosphere, employee engagement, and employee advocacy. There is a low-threshold culture where there is little hierarchy. The company highly invests in activities to promote employee pride and involvement, both within and outside the workplace. The findings also highlight the importance of aligning the employer brand with the reality within the organization to ensure consistency. Last, there was a lot of overlap in the employer branding that the company wants to radiate as an employer and the reality for the employees. However, it has been found that DGS falls short in certain areas, such as appreciation towards the staff, structure within the organization and having a proactive attitude for talent development.

Based on the findings, DGS has developed an Employer Value Proposition (EVP) that represents its unique characteristics and attributes as an employer. The EVP includes elements such as culture and values, career development, work-life balance, recognition and rewards, work environment, compensation and benefits, and leadership. These values and attributes can contribute to both HR and marketing activities by attracting and retaining top talent, enhancing brand positioning, and creating a clear and unified message that resonates with internal and external stakeholders.

Overall, this case study underscores the critical role of employer branding in shaping HR and marketing activities. By recognizing and leveraging the relationship between employer branding and these functions, organizations can improve their ability to attract, engage and retain employees, while improving their brand reputation and positioning in the market.

## 6. DISCUSSION

This study joins the existing literature on employer branding and contributes to the understanding of the connection between HR and marketing functions in driving organizational success. The practical implications highlight the need for strategic alignment between HR and marketing to develop an authentic employer brand that resonates with employee and organizational goals.

In addition, the research is valid because each interview was conducted in the same setting. The questions have also been carefully composed after thorough research on important components of employer branding and in which ways employer branding can contribute to HR and marketing activities. These findings were the foundation of the questions. In addition, the perceptions of DGS its employer brand of various stakeholders have been included in the research, so that it does not rely on one view only.

This case study contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between employer branding and HR and marketing activities by providing a specific context of DGS. The findings strengthen the understanding that employer branding plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining employees, as well as creating the organization its external brand image. The case study emphasizes the importance of aligning HR and marketing strategies to form a consistent and clear employer image. Participant 9: 'Nowadays almost all companies talk about how great they are as an employer. Development opportunities, a varied function and a nice team to work with. They have it all. Fortunately, I can honestly say that DGS does not just say this to attract people, but also delivers on their promises'.

The findings of this study provide practical insights for organizations, particularly in the context of DGS, to enhance their employer brand and maximize its impact on HR and marketing activities.



This research has shown that employer branding plays a major role in attracting and retaining employees. Through proper integration with various HR and marketing activities, this can make a positive contribution to the company. Recognition of how important employer branding is therefore necessary. DGS has invested a lot in good employer branding in the past year, but this does not mean that they are done now. Employer branding is a continuous process in which time and money must be invested. The results of the survey indicate that junior employees sometimes feel unappreciated. Participant 12: 'Sometimes I feel that working over time is seen as normal. I do not get appreciation for it. A simple thank you or good job would be enough'. To solve this problem, DGS could encourage senior managers to show their appreciation more often, for example through compliments. In addition, the on-boarding process appears to be important for both new and current employees. The onboarding process differs per department, and it would therefore be advisable to write a general onboarding process that each head of department adheres to. It is advisable to add an introduce round and possibly a buddy with whom the new employee can work during the first week. In addition, it is important to communicate properly internally all the development opportunities that DGS has to offer. For example, by first sharing vacancies internally.

For marketing activities, the advice is to be visible online on multiple channels. Research shows that the right message is spread, but it is not always found by the right target group. Channels that can contribute to this are, for example, Instagram, TikTok, a job website and various sponsorship campaigns at sports associations and events in the region. In addition, research shows that internal communication is an important point. Current employees like to be kept up to date with company news and even get involved in various marketing campaigns. For example, starting a newsletter can be a good initiative. Brainstorm sessions with your own staff can also be an option for more employee involvement. The use of our own employees in marketing activities like videos or photos works well and it is therefore strongly advised to continue with this. Participant 4: 'When images or videos are needed for communication there is no doubt: we use our own employees. That is because we are proud to have them. You also see that employees enjoy seeing themselves reflected in flyers, social media posts or the website'.

## **7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

While this case study provides valuable insights into the relationship between employer branding, HR, and marketing within the context of DGS, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. First, the study focused exclusively on DGS, a multinational machinery company from the Netherlands, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries or organizational contexts. Suggested future research could include a wider range of organizations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between employer branding, HR, and marketing activities across different industries.

This research also relied on self-reported data from the management team and employees of DGS. While efforts have been made to ensure confidentiality and encourage honest responses, self-reporting introduces the potential for bias and social desirability. Future research might consider incorporating additional data collection methods, such as observational studies, to complement the self-reported data and provide a more holistic view of employer branding within organizations. In addition, all interviews were conducted by the researcher herself, who also

works at DGS. This may have resulted in incorrect answers because the employees did not feel free to answer completely honestly.

Furthermore, this research mainly focused on the perceptions and experiences of the management team and employees of DGS. Future research could extend its scope to include external stakeholders, such as job applicants, customers, and industry professionals, to gain a broader understanding of the impact and effectiveness of employer branding strategies. In addition, only employees with a junior position were included in the survey. For even better understanding of the employer brand of DGS, senior functions could be included, or segmentation based on department could give valuable insights.

In terms of suggestions for further research, it would be useful to examine the long-term effects of employer branding on employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational performance. This would provide valuable insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of employer branding efforts.

Additionally, exploring the role of digital media in shaping employer branding perceptions and strategies could be an area for future research. With the increasing reliance on online (social) platforms for employer branding activities, understanding the influence of digital channels and their effectiveness in reaching and engaging target audiences would be valuable for organizations.

## 8. APPENDIX A



## APPENDIX B

<b>ID</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years working at DGS</b>
<b>Participant 1</b>	Eigenaar	Management Team	40	9 years
<b>Participant 2</b>	Sales Manager	Management Team	44	8 years
<b>Participant 3</b>	Senior HR Adviseur	OT-Team	44	7 months
<b>Participant 4</b>	Marketing Adviseur	Marketing and Sales	22	1,5 year
<b>Participant 5</b>	Sales Engineer	Sales	29	6 years
<b>Participant 6</b>	Junior Detail Engineer	Engineering	23	9 months
<b>Participant 7</b>	Junior Detail Engineer	Engineering	24	2 years
<b>Participant 8</b>	Junior Detail Engineer	Engineering	26	3 years
<b>Participant 9</b>	R&D Engineer	R&D	24	1 year
<b>Participant 10</b>	Sales Spare Parts	Service	29	3,5 years
<b>Participant 11</b>	Monteur Buitendienst	Buitendienst	21	4 years
<b>Participant 12</b>	Monteur Voormontage	Voormontage	27	6 years
<b>Participant 13</b>	Junior Detail Engineer	Engineering	26	2 years
<b>Participant 14</b>	Sales Engineer	Sales	29	5 months
<b>Participant 15</b>	Werkvoorbereider	Inkoop/werkvoorbereiding	25	2 years
<b>Participant 16</b>	Magazijnmedewerker	Magazijn	27	4 years
<b>Participant 17</b>	TIG Lasser	Lasserij	21	2 years
<b>Participant 18</b>	Werkvoorbereider	Inkoop/werkvoorbereiding	30	3 years
<b>Participant 19</b>	Elektro Engineer	Elektro	27	2 years
<b>Participant 20</b>	MIG Lasser	Lasserij	21	3 years

## APPENDIX C

Participant	Quote	Group code	Rating
ID-1	'As a team, we radiate energy and bring our enthusiasm about working at DGS to the outside world.'	Engagement and Advocacy	Positive
ID-3	'DGS is a young and dynamic company where employees are given a lot of freedom and responsibility'	Employee Experience	Positive
ID-4	'As DGS, we stand for passion. And we express this to the outside world by having our own employees tell what working at DGS is like.'	Brand communication	Positive
ID-2	'At DGS, we have an approachable culture, and everyone is welcome and <u>equal to each other</u> . We want to make sure everyone feels heard.'	Identity and Image	Positive

# Employee Value Proposition DGS



## Work-life balance

- Freedom to discuss working hours
- Confidential advisor for private matters
- Understanding of personal circumstances
- Preferably everyone works the same hours

## Recognition and rewards

- Referral bonus
- Compliments
- Intern communication channels

## Work environment

- Modern business premises
- Required work clothes and work equipment will be reimbursed
- Great canteen
- Share office with own department

## Culture and Values

- Hard working culture
- Passion for the industry and technology
- Ambition and drive
- Flexibility
- Accessible work culture
- Organising activities
- Young, fast-growing company
- Sense of pride

## Career Development and Growth Opportunities

- Lots of promotion options within organization
- Traineeship for young professionals
- Training and classes
- Many internship opportunities
- Various departments to work

## Compensation and benefits

- Above average salary
- Additional hours are paid extra
- Many vacation days
- Travel hours are paid
- Certain functions will receive a company car
- Free use of workshop for private activities

## Leadership

- Accessible management team
- Few hierarchical layers
- Creative way of working
- Flexible



## Vragenlijst werknemers DGS:

1. Wat is je volledige naam, leeftijd en functie bij DGS?
2. Hoe lang werk je al bij DGS?
3. Hoe zou jij DGS beschrijven als werkgever? → Wat maakt DGS anders dan andere werkgevers?
4. Wat vind jij belangrijk in een goede werkgever? → In hoeverre denk je dat DGS deze waardes naleeft?
5. Wat denk jij dat DGS een aantrekkelijke werkgever maakt voor jonge mensen zoals jijzelf?
6. Wanneer je andere mensen spreekt over DGS, denk je dat zij een goed beeld hebben van DGS als werkgever? → Welk beeld hebben zij?
7. Hoe zou je het onboarding proces van DGS omschrijven? → Welke onderdelen vind je effectief en welke zouden beter kunnen?
8. Welke kansen en manieren denk jij dat er mogelijk zijn voor werknemers van DGS om zichzelf te ontwikkelen?
9. Welke factoren spelen bij jou een grote rol voor het langdurig blijven werken voor een werkgever?
10. Welke manieren van communiceren gebruikt DGS om werknemers geïnformeerd te houden over nieuws, veranderingen en updates rondom DGS?
11. Hoe zou jij de sfeer en cultuur van DGS omschrijven?
12. Welke secundaire arbeidsvoorwaarden of extraatjes vind je het meest waardevol bij je werk bij DGS? → Zijn er nog aanvullende voordelen die je graag zou zien?
13. Welke acties die zijn ondernomen in de afgelopen jaren denk je dat succesvol zijn geweest in het verbeteren van een positieve werksfeer en werkomgeving bij DGS?
14. In hoeverre vind jij dat DGS erkenning en beloning biedt voor prestaties van medewerkers?
15. Wat kan volgens jou HR om de werknemerservaring bij DGS verder te verbeteren?
16. Wat kan volgens jou Marketing doen om het imago van DGS als bedrijf te versterken?

## Vragenlijst management DGS

1. Wat is je volledige naam, leeftijd en functie?
2. Hoe lang werk je al bij DGS?
3. Hoe ziet u de rol van employer branding in het aantrekken van talent bij DGS?
4. Op welke manieren denkt u dat DGS kan bijdragen aan talentontwikkeling en loopbaangroei onder werknemers?
5. Hoe belangrijk vindt u de betrokkenheid bij DGS van de werknemers?
6. Op welke manieren heeft DGS externe communicatie gebruikt om het werkgeversmerk en imago uit te dragen? → Kunt u succesvolle voorbeelden noemen?
7. Hoe zou u de huidige manier van recruitment bij DGS omschrijven? → Zijn er gebieden waarop u verbeteringen of mogelijkheden ziet?
8. Hoe belangrijk is het voor DGS om de waarden en cultuur van het bedrijf te communiceren naar zowel interne als externe stakeholders?
9. Op welke manieren heeft DGS de prestaties en successen van werknemers erkend en beloond?
10. Welke uitdagingen of obstakels ziet u in het implementeren en versterken van het employer brand van DGS? → Hoe wilt u daar mee omgaan?
11. Hoe denkt u dat employer branding kan bijdragen aan HR activiteiten?
12. Hoe denkt u dat employer branding kan bijdragen aan marketing activiteiten?

## Vragenlijst HR DGS:

1. Wat is je volledige naam, leeftijd en functie?
2. Hoe lang werk je al bij DGS?
3. Hoe zou u de employer brand van DGS omschrijven?
4. Op welke manieren denkt u dat employer branding kan bijdragen aan HR-activiteiten?
5. In hoeverre is er binnen DGS aandacht voor een positieve werkcultuur? → Kunt u specifieke voorbeelden noemen?
6. Op welke manier zorgt u ervoor dat het recruitment proces aansluit bij de employer branding van DGS en het gewenste imago?
7. Welke initiatieven heeft u geïmplementeerd voor talentontwikkeling?
8. Op welke manieren stimuleert u werknemers om ambassadeurs van ons employer brand te worden en vertegenwoordigers van DGS?
9. Op welke manieren heeft DGS externe communicatie gebruikt om het werkgeversmerk en imago uit te dragen? → Kunt u succesvolle voorbeelden noemen?
10. Op welke manieren heeft DGS de prestaties en successen van werknemers erkend en beloond?
11. Op welke manier ondersteunt DGS werk-prive balans van werknemers?
12. Welke uitdagingen of obstakels ziet u in het implementeren en versterken van het employer brand van DGS? → Hoe wilt u daar mee omgaan?
13. Welke specifieke activiteiten heeft u ondernomen om het employer brand van DGS te versterken?
14. Wat zijn volgens u belangrijke toekomstige ontwikkelingen omtrent Employer Branding binnen DGS en hoe wilt u de organisatie daarop voorbereiden?

# Vragenlijst Marketing DGS:

1. Wat is je volledige naam, leeftijd en functie?
2. Hoe lang werk je al bij DGS?
3. Hoe zou u de employer brand van DGS omschrijven?
4. Op welke manieren denkt u dat employer branding kan bijdragen aan Marketing-activiteiten?
5. Welke specifieke acties heeft u ondernomen om het employer brand van DGS te versterken?
6. Hoe belangrijk is het volgens u om de waarden en cultuur van DGS te communiceren naar zowel interne als externe stakeholders?
7. Op welke manier zorgt u ervoor dat externe communicatie-uitingen aansluiten bij het Employer brand van DGS en gewenste imago?
8. Op welke manieren heeft DGS externe communicatie gebruikt om het werkgeversmerk en imago uit te dragen? → Kunt u succesvolle voorbeelden noemen?
9. Denkt u dat er verbetering te halen valt bij de vacature teksten?
10. Hoe word het employer brand intern gecommuniceerd naar werknemers? → ziet u hier verbetering in?
11. Welke kanalen worden er gebruikt om DGS haar employer brand te promoten?
12. Op welke manieren stimuleert u werknemers om ambassadeurs van DGS te worden?
13. Welke uitdagingen of obstakels ziet u in het implementeren en versterken van het employer brand van DGS? → Hoe wilt u daar mee omgaan?
14. Wat zijn volgens u belangrijke toekomstige ontwikkelingen omtrent Employer Branding binnen DGS en hoe wilt u de organisatie daarop voorbereiden?



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