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A common strategy for employer branding

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Employer branding can be considered as any branding, only here the attractiveness as an employer is in focus and the target groups are existing staff and future employees. It is not only about the ability to recruit new staff, also about the level of satisfaction among current employees – are they ambassadors for the organization?

EfficienSea partners in WP3 have taken part of modern theory on employer branding and in Sweden and Norway, the maritime administrations decided to create a common strategy.

NCA sees that working with the employer brand issue is even more important than ever:

"We find that working with the internal perception and wellbeing is, in many ways, the basis for succeeding with a good perception externally. NCA is also an agency which is fully dependant on their human resources; we are a competence driven business and having the right mix of competence is crucial in order to succeed. So, in other words, our true asset is the competence of our employees and our management."

The SMA brand strategy is to develop an administration which *is* and *is perceived as* a service- and knowledge organization, focusing on business and societal value. The true asset is the competence sustained by our leaders and all staff. In order to be competitive we need to be perceived as an attractive employer, so that we can attract and maintain necessary competencies. In 2011, the SMA brand strategy was adopted and employer branding is part of the action plan:

"The objective is to create a positive service culture that enables development and joy at work; performance and assumed responsibility is encouraged and most employees have confidence in their leader and in the board of directors. SMA employees feel confident and proud of what the brand implies and have an understanding about how to contribute to the fulfillment of the brand promise. To be competitive, SMA needs to be able to attract and to keep the right competence. The organization has a strategy for employer branding."

CURRENT STATE

Today's young people are attracted to work places they perceive as exciting and well-known brands, that offer good career opportunities and has good reputation. In the Swedish maritime cluster, we are well aware of the fact that our business is rather unknown to most people. The "consumer close" ferry companies are well known, but otherwise both private and public business are absent in the minds of the young. The consultant company Universum presents studies that list the most popular employers among university students every year. There are

no companies from the maritime sector on this list. The Swedish Agency for Government Employees (SAGE) has studied how public authorities appeal to students and found that they

think governmental bodies offer stimulating work, nice working environment, a good salary and good career opportunities. Universities and colleges are most popular. The Swedish Transport Agency is a possible employer for about 50 % of all technology students. The Swedish Maritime Administration is considered by less than 2 % and does not even make it to the list.

Over the past years, we have made certain efforts to work with our employer branding, but we lack the systematic approach and an internal organizational responsibility. Today, we perform very little analysis on future recruitment and strategic supply of competence as it is difficult to obtain relevant data – we have old and insufficient systems.

Recruitment takes place when there is a need and the financial situation allows. The recruitment process is mapped and there is an understanding of time and cost. The cost for advertising is however distributed to various organizational parts – it is not visible in the budget and there is no estimation of the total cost.

Introduction is offered to all new employees. There is a check list for managers and new staff is invited to a central introduction in Norrköping. All routines are described on the intranet.

Exit routine is not extensive, but currently under development. People who resign from SMA will be offered an exit conversation and a questionnaire will be sent to all people, terminating their employment.

Employee survey is planned for in 2012 – then we will have a tool to measure employee satisfaction in various aspects.

External survey was carried out in 2010 when SMA took part in the Universum study. The questionnaire was offered to employees with academic background and under 40 years of age. The SMA group was compared to an external group, consisting of technology students and young professionals.

Promotion of SMA as employer is done at student fairs. We present ourselves at maritime universities and also at other career and education events that target even younger people – but then as a joint venture with Ship Owners Association, Ship Brokers Association and maritime university students.

NCA has, for some time, seen the importance of initiating the work with employer branding and for 2012, it is defined as one of the key project in the agency. The issue has also been

introduced to selected target groups in the organisation and they have supported starting this important project. Also, the Director General and the Assisting Director General, have initiated and very much emphasised the importance of this project.

During the fall 2011, the Staff for HR, initiated a project working with the NCA ethics. We see that this work, now can be integrated with the employer branding project and the strategy and the activities for this project, will be well integrated in the employer branding strategy that we are about to form. There is also a project run by our Staff for Surveillance, Audit and Quality "Lifting the quality issue 2012". We can find related areas in this project when it comes to employer branding and we will ensure coordination between the projects.

Following activities and actions have already been carried out and will serve as a basis for our further work with the employer branding strategy:

- **NCA ethics;** we have defined some critical areas when working with the NCA ethics and will bring these challenges along when working with the employer branding strategy.
- **Employee survey;** during the period October and November 2011, the Staff for HR carried out an employer survey among all NCA employees – total of 1070 persons. The results are now about to be analysed and will give the employer branding project important information as to the internal perception/image.
- **New website;** the Staff for communication and information launched the new NCA website at the end of 2011. As a basis for this work, there was carried out an analysis towards target groups; also focusing on potential new employees.
- **Employer branding workshops;** We have, in addition to the Talent Talk workshop in Stockholm, also participated at another Employer Branding Workshop, hosted by the company Medi 3 in December 2011.
- **Social medias;** Launching NCA on social medias such as Twitter, Facebook YouTube and Flickr, has given us important information and knowledge about our target groups – both internally and externally
- **Films;** NCA have made several films describing our operational business using our employees as "storytellers". We will implement these films in our future work with employer branding.
- **Recruitment;** the recruitment campaign "Sprek", was based on employer branding reflections and will be further developed/adjusted. We use a recruitment system that gives us some tools, though we need to go deeper into the challenges of recruitment and the whole process according to image in our recruitment processes. We also have dedicated projects for vulnerable trades/occupations, where we see that we need to give extra focus in order to recruit from this target group; for instance engineers.
- **Introduction;** we invite all newly recruited for a 2 days training program at the NCA head office. We have potential in developing a good tool for an introduction program than can be adjusted and used in all units and this is planned for in a dedicated project for recruitment. However, we also need to take this into consideration in an employer branding perspective.

- **Exit routine;** we have a system taking into account the more hardware elements. Though, we need to consider how we can ensure the feedback of employees leaving us, so that we can achieve this information and reverse it into valuable tools for improving our employer branding work.
- **Promotion;** NCA is represented at student fairs. We also participate publically by key personnel giving lectures at different forums and schools/universities. Other than this, occasionally, we do participate with advertisements in selected channels.

RISK

When looking at the labor market with a demographic perspective, you find that the number of young people is drastically decreasing. The people entering the labor market are fewer than the retiring. Maritime careers are not well known among young people about to make a career or education choice and very few are aware of the existence of the maritime administration. In the long run, we risk being challenged in fulfilling our tasks and live up to the commitment towards customers and stakeholders because of lack of competence. We also risk very costly and slow recruitment processes. Unless SMA is perceived as an attractive employer, we cannot compete for the specialists we need and we risk wasting money on too high turnover of personnel.

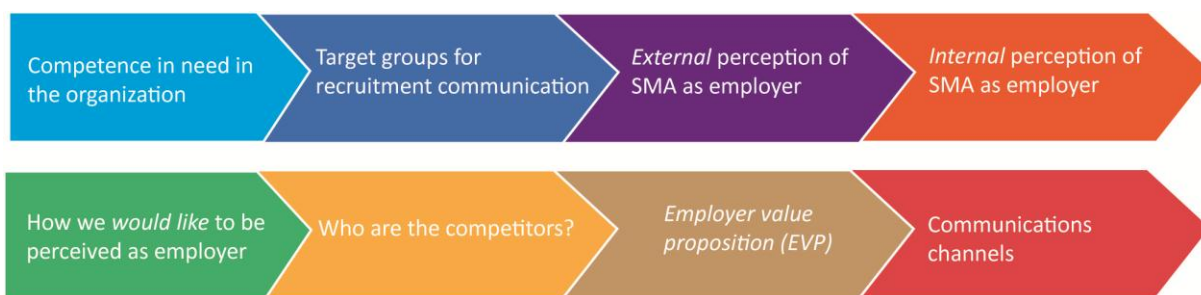
We cannot afford to not work with the employer branding issue. We are so dependent on both the competence we find in our organisation today, as well as the future competence we will need. For the moment, we do see that the lack of engineers is a great challenge. We have dedicated resources for this purpose; however there will be other vulnerable groups that will need our attention in the future. If we do not have a systematic and strategic approach to this process, we will not succeed. Another consequence not giving priority to this work will be that we risk not fulfilling our tasks towards the public and by that acquire a poor reputation. Also, if we are not perceived as an attractive employer, we will be using great resources in recruiting as well as losing key personnel. Both will give a great increase in costs.

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

In order to have a systematic approach on employer branding, you need to define the basic work and work through each step. NCA and SMA are individually about to form and establish a project group consisting of member from the Staff for HR and Staff for communication and during the winter/spring of 2012, this group will develop and carry out the employer branding strategy. It is also important that the work we carry out in this project has to be seen in

relations to the other projects that run and can give influence to the employer branding thinking, as well as the work that has already been done (listed under “Current state”). Our goal is to be even better in coordinating all our activities, as there are so many tasks that can reflect on and influence our employer branding work.

During the EfficienSea meeting in Stockholm in November, the Employer Branding Agency “Talent Talk” gave us a tool for how a systematic approach can be done when starting the employer branding work and forming the strategy. We have worked through some of these steps, but see that we need to be more analytic into every part of the model in order to form a complete basis for our work.



STEP 1 - COMPETENCE IN USE

First, map competence in use in the organisation today. The HR department is responsible for working out a method for this inventory. We are discussing different tools for collecting the current competence and this method for inventory needs to be considered and taken action on. There are already quite a few signals that this needs to be structured and that such a system would contribute in a positive manner as to best practice work within the organisation and securing the right competence at all times.

STEP 2 - COMPETENCE IN NEED

We have already started working with this analysis, but this is an ongoing process which needs to be worked on continuously. For the moment, we have defined that following groups need to be analysed according to need of competencies; Engineers, nautical personnel, economists/analysts/controllers, legal advisors, scientific personnel, electricians and other minor groups with specific competence/expertise.

It is crucial the HR takes part in the work of business intelligence. We need to be aware of how the labor market is developing and about what is happening in maritime business. There are a lot of things that might have an impact on the need of competence, for example technical and economical development. We have a large number of people with nautical background in our

staff. They are generally recruited from a career at sea. This is why it is interesting for us to keep track and have a positive influence on the recruitment to maritime universities.

The need analysis of various competencies should be done in both short and long term. Part of this analysis can very well be communicated externally. We see the need to engage in national and perhaps even in international HR networks to grasp the whole sector.

STEP 3 – TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS

Referring to the chapter above, the defined groups will need to be analysed. The NCA employer survey carried out in October/November 2011 will be further analysed and used as an important tool in our employer branding work.

In Sweden, the number one target group consists of SMA employees and managers. We need to establish and to develop indicators and key figures in order to follow how our employer brand is developing. When everybody is embracing SMA values and has a holistic view on our reason for being, we will have 1 200 invaluable ambassadors.

Maritime officers are the most important target group to map, both internally and externally. Other target groups will be identified by GAP-analysis on competence in use and competence in need. Account for numbers will not be sufficient – we need to study these target groups and map the drives, values, culture and trends. All the time with a parallel look in the mirror to see how we come out in the eye of the beholder. Target group analysis should take place on a regular basis and be the ground for an employer brand communications plan. It will be a dynamic plan that is updated according to available studies and other facts and data.

Employee survey

In 2012, an employee survey will be conducted at SMA. This will be a starting point for measuring how the organisation is perceived as employer. The survey will include some of the questions that appear in Karriärbarometern to enable increased comparison between the surveys.

Karriärbarometern (the Universum survey)

Every two or three years, SMA participates in the Universum survey. The survey targets young professionals with academic background and is offered to employees below the age of 40 years. The answers are compared to an external group of students and young professionals.

Competitors

In Norway, we have already done some analysis as to who our competitors are, however this analysis needs to be done for specific regions and specific trades/positions and will be carried out in the project.

STEP 4 – OUR OFFER AS EMPLOYER (EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION)

The project group will carry out an analysis as to the EVP of NCA. However, as a starting point, we have defined some points in our EVP that we find important – these are: pension benefits (best in Norway), educational benefits, cooperation between NCA and universities, policies “all phases of life”, benefits vacation homes, leave benefits and one of few employers that operates within construction at sea.

SMA has conducted several workshops and seminars with the consultant company Talent Talk in 2010 and 2011. In order to create the basis of our EVP we will perform focus groups with employees. Other input is code of conduct (currently being reviewed in a final exams project) and the result from working with basic values later this year. We will also use the results from the Universum survey of 2010. The final EVP will be set in the second half of 2012.

STEP 5 – ACTIVITIES

Based on the analysis carried out in the steps above, we will determine which channels we will select for marketing as well as other activities. We have participated at student fairs and we have also an ongoing project with a big culture event which attracts different target groups.

Some examples of important points/activities for the employer branding group will be:

- Securing a more comprehensive website for recruitment purpose.
- Reviewing the NCA graphic profile; also includes job advertisements and how we would like to appear/image.
- Initiate intranet project – will be launched in 2013 in both countries.
- Extranet project in SMA in 2012.

- How to secure the right image at student fairs and seminars – how to appear, how to secure uniformity in our image. Give signals of an innovative and modern agency.
- Focusing and reporting status on the employer branding work in all relevant forums/meetings. Make sure that there is awareness to the subject in the organisation.

Also, an important element when working with the employer branding project is that the project group must not operate by themselves, but make sure that they involve different groups in the organisation. We have not yet defined these groups, but as Talent Talk stated – it is important

to involve the line management. This was also reconfirmed at the second workshop for employer branding that we attended in December.

The range of branding activities will be determined by the analysis in step 1-3 and available funds. So far, we have prioritized students' fairs at maritime universities and also taken part in other fairs targeting younger students. We need to look into possible ways to target women.

Profiling

For those interested in a final exams project or working at SMA, we printed material as well as information on the website. The website will be thoroughly updated in 2012 and special consideration will be given to the employer branding perspective. For fairs and exhibitions, a new stand is produced in the beginning of 2012. Communication about SMA as employer is focusing on the same thing as we wish to communicate in general; to make us more visible and show the value we bring to the maritime business and to the society. We believe that personal meetings can be decisive when choosing a career and we will develop a network of SMA internal ambassadors for market communication.

STEP 6 – ATTRACTIVE EMPLOYER (KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS)

These factors determine employer attractiveness, according to Swedish consultant Göran Adlén.



Indicators for the administrations have not yet been elaborated. However, here are some suggestions to conclude the report:

1. We know the main reasons why people want to work here and we also know the main reasons for leaving.

Quantitative/qualitative indicator: Response rate and content

Method for measuring: Exit interviews

Responsible: HR department

2. Employees consider that the organization offers a situational leadership.

Quantitative/qualitative indicator: *to be determined*

Method for measuring: Employee survey

Responsible: HR department

3. When meeting the public and clients, employees feel to a large extent that they represent the entire organization

Quantitative/qualitative indicator: *to be determined*

Method for measuring: Employee survey

Responsible: HR department

4. The number of women working as managers or experts is increasing.

Quantitative/qualitative indicator: *to be determined*

Method for measuring: HR key figures

Responsible: HR department

5. The maritime administration is a known employer for targeted groups of students at universities

Quantitative/qualitative indicator: *Karriärbarometern*

Method for measuring: Employee survey

Responsible: HR department