CASE STUDY: ESPN

Employer Brand

CHALLENGE

ESPN, Inc., is a leading multinational sports entertainment company featuring the broadest portfolio of multimedia sports assets with over 50 business entities. Although ESPN is well-known from the consumer perspective as a leader in sports entertainment, there were many misperceptions in the employment market about the organization as a place to work.

Those in industry-transferable positions, such as IT and HR (which comprise many of ESPN's open positions), did not view the company as a career choice and had been known to ask the question “Why would I work there?” ESPN's core jobs, such as content developers and digital media representatives, were difficult to fill as there are few sources available to tap into when recruiting for these positions.

ESPN is perceived as male-dominated, and the company struggled to draw the types of professionals that they wanted to hire, even though they received upwards of 15,000 resumes per month through their website. ESPN identified these challenges and understood they needed to change perceptions, articulate their employee value proposition and reposition themselves as a top employer to key talent.

SOLUTION

To more effectively recruit and retain difficult-to-fill positions, as well as industry-transferable positions, TMP Worldwide worked with ESPN to create an employer brand strategy and messaging guidelines for the organization. TMP Worldwide began the engagement by applying its unique employer brand process to gain insight from both internal and external audiences, and then distill that insight to develop a strategic employer brand platform.

This insight was acquired by conducting executive interviews and facilitating an employer brand workshop to learn about leadership aspirations; deploying a company-wide employee survey and employee focus groups to learn about the importance and delivery of employment attributes; and moderating external focus groups to learn about target audience drivers and perceptions.

Strategy

Once we were able to gain a clear picture of the employee experience, TMP developed the Employee Value Proposition by determining which employee attributes were viewed as most important, as well as being delivered well by ESPN. Upon analyzing all of the data, we developed the Positioning Essence of the employer brand, which focused on ESPN as a destination employer, a unique organization that people sought out not for one reason but for multiple reasons.

We also developed the Positioning Statement, an expansion of the Positioning Essence, designed to serve as the strategic basis for the development and articulation of all employment marketing communications, both formal and informal. ESPN’s positioning statement outlined how and why working at the organization was unlike working anywhere else.
With the employer brand platform in place, TMP developed message guidelines that outlined how the employer brand should be communicated to the market at large, and to key market segments such as specific job categories. Message guidelines help to outline the hierarchy of messages (primary and secondary) for specific audiences and connect those messages with proof points that enable ESPN to speak authentically about the employment experience it offers.

Implementation
Creative concepts were developed to reflect the brand strategy and message guidelines. The concepts were presented to ESPN and one was chosen as the final platform.

TMP Worldwide built a comprehensive brand toolkit, complete with brand guidelines and creative executions, and trained ESPN-appointed brand ambassadors on how to implement and live the brand. The training was designed to ensure that ESPN’s work force was prepared to accurately and appropriately evangelize the new employer brand and bring it to life within the organization.

RESULTS
This Employer Brand Development process aligned the aspirations of ESPN leaders, realities of the employment experience, and perceptions of the target audience groups, while helping to define who the organization is as an employer in the US. This resulted in a carefully crafted Employer Value Proposition and Positioning Statement which are authentic and differentiating to the core of the employment experience at ESPN.

The messaging guidelines helped ESPN speak to the individual audiences – IT, HR, content developers and digital media representatives – and clearly and succinctly answer the question “Why would I work here?”

This, in turn, allowed us to create specialized, targeted creative and messaging tools to utilize within and outside of the organization, not only to attract the right kind of candidate to the organization, but also to aid in the engagement of existing employees.

CREATIVE

Before:

![Image of before creative concept]

**Dear the search engine's requirement of fresh content**

**Leverage your SEO by optimizing media planning and execution to assist with conversion rates and improved ROI**

**Optimize your content, but not just web sites, but other media as videos, photos, news articles.**

**TMP Worldwide. The Digital Brand Authority**

**Search Engine Optimization**

**Website Development**

**Metrics & Measurement**

**Campaign Management**

**Search Engine Marketing**

**Improved ROI**

**Deal with reputation management issues around ne...**
Example: Rich media banner progression on a Yahoo news page.

1. First ad impression
2. Second ad impression
3. Third ad impression
4. Final ad impression

Import and export content and date automatically to fulfill the search engine’s requirement of fresh content.

Search Engine Optimization
Leverage your SEO strategy in your media planning.

Optimize more than just websites, but press releases and more.