

## Research on Employer Brand Construction of Chinese Military Enterprises -- Take AVIC Chengfei as an Example

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### Abstract

**Employer brand construction is crucial for enterprises in the current fierce competition for talents, especially for military enterprises. This article analyzes the employer brand construction method of military enterprises through internal and external two-way analysis, combines the actual situation and existing problems of military enterprises, summarizes the experience from various angles, and draws some inspirations about how military enterprises build employer brands. It also provides reference value for other Chinese companies that want to build an employer brand.**

### Keywords

**Employer brand, military enterprise, AVIC Chengfei.**

### 1. Introduction

The employer brand was first proposed by Ambler and Barrow, which is a combination of functional, economic, and psychological benefits that are provided by employment and linked to the employer. At present, the definition of employer brand in the academic circle can be roughly divided into three categories, the first category defines the employer brand as the internal brand, regarded to consider the existing internal employees of the enterprise; the second category defines the employer brand as the external brand, which believes that the employer brand is targeted at job seekers outside the company; the third view is that the employer brand should be understood from a comprehensive perspective, involving both internal and external, and organic integration of the two[1]. This article is in favor of the third category of views, focusing on the construction of internal brands and external brands as well as starting from attracting talents and retaining talents at the same time is more beneficial to the brand image of the company.

The impression left by state-owned enterprises on the public is generally traditional and rigid, especially for military enterprises. The traditional personnel management methods adopted by them are out of touch with modern enterprise strategies, and they are not attractive to talents. From the perspective of attracting talents, military enterprises undertake the task of national defense research and production, and are more in need of high-end talents. From the perspective of retaining talents, the phenomenon of brain drain in military enterprises is serious, and the training period of military enterprises is longer than that of ordinary enterprises. What's more, because of the more special nature of it, the loss of talents is more harmful to military enterprises. Therefore, it is very necessary to enhance the brand image of military enterprises through employer brand building.

Founded in 1958, AVIC Chengdu Aircraft Industry (Group) Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "Chengfei") is a large-scale enterprise directly under the China Aviation Group. It's an important base for the development and production of fighters in China. In the decade of 2001-2011, 90 aircraft were exported, second only to Martin of the United States and France (Faasso), ranking third in the world. Since the beginning of "the Eleventh Five-Year Plan", based on the two-way

needs of the company and its employees, under the guidance of the “achieve everyone” human resources vision, Chengfei has built a strategic human resource management system, which is according to the goal of “two-way demand as the pull, mechanism innovation as the basis, and platform construction as the support”. And Chengfei use this as a core to start the road of employer brand building in a planned, systematic and innovative way [2]. In 2012, Chengfei ranked 9th in China's best employer “equipment/electrical industry” sponsored by ChinaHR.com.

## **2. Practice of Chengfei Employer Brand Construction**

### **2.1. The Construction of the External Brand**

#### **2.1.1. Determine Brand Positioning Based on Its Own Characteristics**

Determining positioning of the employer brand not only depends on the actual situation of the company, but also the internal employees and external potential job seekers' views on the best employers. The combination of the two can achieve a stronger appeal and attraction to the target talents.

In 2010, Chengfei launched an internal and external employer brand survey as a starting point for the entire employer brand building. The research for potential job seekers (college students) mainly involves four aspects: the ideal employer of defense and aerospace industry and its elements to attract college students, the ideal work of college students, the image of Chengfei in the minds of college students, campus activities of Chengfei, etc. Satisfaction survey was also conducted for existing internal staff on the internal environment, salary and benefits, personal development, and value realization. In the employer brand construction, combined with the special nature of its own military industry, the company always takes "aviation spirit of the country" as the core, and puts the "two finals" values throughout, and strives to create a place for employees to realize value.

Finally, through the data of the employer brand research report and the combination with its own corporate culture and values, Chengfei initially explained the three unique attractions of its employer brand, namely: lofty cause, common development and atmosphere of solidarity [3].

#### **2.1.2. Increase Publicity and Boost The Appeal To Talent**

In order to attract more outstanding aviation talents, Chengfei has increased its propaganda in schools, using various means of publicity and activities to keep in touch with the teachers of the target colleges, and to discover, contact and target the talents in advance.

In 2013, Chengfei and the university jointly launched the “Chengfei Customized Class”; since 2014, Chengfei has established campus clubs with Beihang University, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. In 2015, Chengfei began to build intern project; In 2016, AVIC Chengfei and the domestic universities jointly built the “Zihui Blue Sky” Science and Technology Incubation Center.

Chengfei has continuously increased its influence through multi-form and wide range of promotional activities, attracting many excellent job seekers.

#### **2.1.3. Continuously Improve the Talent Selection System**

In order to select outstanding talents who truly recognize Chengfei's corporate culture and meet the requirements of the company, Chengfei has been committed to perfecting the talent selection system.

The first is based on their own needs and recruitment data, from multiple factors to determine the target institutions, so that the selection work is precisely focused; and the research team, composed of internal and external experts, establish a position competency model by using BEI

technology to interview and analyze excellent employees. In 2012, the company introduced the "Organization Preference Test", built a recruitment quality model, and independently developed a structured interview question bank; standardized training for the interviewer, established an interviewer qualification certification system, and created a professional team to screen high-level talents.

## **2.2. The Construction of the Internal Brand**

### **2.2.1. Cultivation -- To Improve Employees' Capacities**

When employees want to better integrate into the company, they must first go through a process of grinding each other. AVIC Chengfei not only pays attention to how to improve the capabilities of new employees, but also manages prospective employees in an innovative way.

Chengfei uses the new media tools to create quasi-employee WeChat groups, and launches a series of online training and humanistic care activities, which strengthens employees' sense of belonging to the company, realizes online communication among employees and provides a platform and learning resources for understanding the company.

By launching a probationary target management project and introducing a scientific career development assessment tool and a mentor system for new employees, each new employee will have his own tutor and post master so that they can find their future career direction more quickly, as well as integrating faster into the business. Under the impetus of Chairman Fubo Cheng, Chengfei has developed a three-year training named "wing plan" for new employees, and divides the growth of new employees into three phases: adaptation period, study period and growth period. After three years of work, combining their own career planning and personal characteristics, with the support of the company, the new employees will rationally develop their own career development plans.

### **2.2.2. Reward -- To Give Employees Incentives**

Chengfei has a perfect reward system, and as long as you are willing to do it, you can get credit. The company's value orientation is "diligence, hard work, innovation, and advance, giving glory to the doer." In addition to the internal reward system, there are special honors such as "Excellent Engineers", "Top Ten Youths" and "Weekly Stars". In the performance appraisal, Chengfei abandoned the traditional assessment method that only valued the results, combined the results with the process, and established a more comprehensive assessment system to better motivate employees.

Chengfei is never stingy in giving employees opportunities. As long as they want to do it, the company will provide a stage for outstanding employees to show their talents, let them go and innovate. For employees, the company is the biggest supporter to show their creativity.

The company's developments are shared with the employees, and the employees' benefits and corporate benefits are regarded as equal. The concept of comprehensive compensation management and comprehensive recognition of incentives is implemented for mobilizing employees' enthusiasm and creativity.

### **2.2.3. Care -- To Improve Employees' Happiness**

In order to form a happy and harmonious working atmosphere and strengthen the care for employees, Chengfei integrated resources to implement the "One Two Three Blue Sky Care Program" and built three platforms: "health platform", "communication platform" and "service platform": implementing medical insurance, at the same time, actively carrying out various cultural and sports activities, paying attention to the physical and mental health of employees; conducting EAP coaching skills for party cadres, setting up a psychological counseling room, and establishing a regular analysis system for employee forums, and attaching importance to employees' mental health and communication skills; timely increasing the welfare programs such as meal allowances, providing mutual assistance to difficult employees to pass warmth.

In addition to paying attention to the quality of employees' work, Chengfei makes full use of social resources, cares for the lives of employees and their families, and builds living places such as Chengfei Kindergarten, Chengfei Hotel, Chengfei Hospital and Chengfei Park, so that employees can have a good life. A good living environment enables employees to devote themselves to the aviation industry.

### **3. Enlightenment of Chengfei on Employer Brand Construction of Military Enterprises**

#### **3.1. Build Employer Brand from the Height of Enterprise Development Strategy**

Chengfei's employer brand building is based on the company's vision of "developing a world-class aviation manufacturing company with leading technology and excellent management" and has set a goal for human resources, that is, "giving the stage and honoring aspiring people". In addition, it implements the strategy of realizing enterprise development by human resources, takes "change, innovation" as the work theme, respects value creation and focuses on the improvement of all employees, in order to achieve the strategic goal of "leading development of enterprises and overall progress of employees", so that first-class talents and outstanding enterprises can achieve mutual achievements and complement each other.

The construction of Chengfei's employer brand not only reflects the vision and practice of Chengfei's human resources, but also the deep understanding of the mission and historical responsibility of the aviation industry, which thoroughly analyzes the company's strategy and culture, and accurately grasps the inherent needs of the contemporary aviation industry talents. Chengfei's strategic thinking and employer brand's forward-looking awareness, professionalism and high thinking are the realms that most Chinese companies are striving for. Chengfei's employer brand building, closely following the company's mission and serving the company's strategy, has become a complete talent management system for employer brand strategy, and unites the hearts of many outstanding talents. If they don't do this, it is not enough to support their lofty ambitions to become a world-class enterprise; and not enough to support their great mission of serving the country.

#### **3.2. Emphasize The Identity of Corporate Culture and The Realization of Personal Value**

In China's labor market, the number of ordinary people and migrant workers is large, but there are not many high-quality talents trained in professional skills. In the context of shortage of labor market talents, how to attract and retain talents is the key point to improve core competitiveness for enterprises. As an important part of corporate brand, employer brand is the winning means for enterprises to attract and retain talents.

In 2013, Lievens and Highhouse divided employer brands into functional and symbolic features. Functional features refer to the objective, specific and real factors of the enterprise, while symbolic features refer to the subjective, abstract and invisible factors of the enterprise [4], in which corporate culture and personal value realization are also components of functional features. Because of its special nature, military enterprises provide a more attractive corporate culture and a higher platform for realizing personal value than the other ordinary enterprises. Military enterprises are strategic enterprises involved in national security, so working in military enterprises is to link personal values with national destiny. Military enterprises can realize the enthusiasm of employees to serve the country and ignite the national pride of employees and this is its unique intangible assets. In order to enable the new Chinese aviation industry to catch up with the pace of the world's advanced technology, the academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the famous aircraft designer, Jida Tu, dedicated his life to

the Chinese aviation industry. This passion is inseparable from his deep feelings to serve the country.

Cheng Fei has always believed in the "two finals" belief -- "the motherland will eventually choose those who are loyal to the motherland, the motherland will eventually remember those who dedicate to the motherland", is the spiritual pillar and wealth of all the Chengfei people. It has attracted a group of outstanding talents who are willing to dedicate themselves to the motherland, and it also supports the silent dedication and pioneering spirit of generations of aviation people. De Xu, the deputy chief engineer of the J-10 aircraft, used his life to guard the J-10 aircraft. Even if he was diagnosed with rectal cancer, he was still engaged in the aviation industry and went to work after the operation. De Xu always said: "Life is more valuable if it is linked to the prosperity of the motherland." Military enterprises should use their unique characteristics to establish values with native land emotion, attracting excellent talents who agree with the corporate culture and have the enthusiasm for the country.

### **3.3. Focus on Building A Platform For Young People To Grow Up**

People are the fundamental and key to the development of enterprises. If enterprises want long-term development, they should not only pay attention to the working conditions of the old employees, but also pay attention to the training of new employees, the growth of young people, and let the talent team form a virtuous circle. Only in this way can the company have hope for future development. Building a platform for young people to grow up, from the perspective of external employer brand building, it can attract ambitious young people who want to improve themselves; from the perspective of internal employer brand building, It enables existing employees to continuously learn and train themselves at work, gaining knowledge and a sense of accomplishment.

Chengfei's employer branding has always been guided by the goal of "achievement of all", focusing on providing a stage for employees to grow up and show. For young employees, Chengfei will provide learning resources and conduct online training during the period of quasi-employee; provide special instructors and post-masters for each new employee, and develop a three-year training "wing plan" to enable young employees to grow more quickly. For young people with ambitions and ideals, Chengfei will do its utmost to build a platform for them and help them with their dreams. For example, the design department "UAV Creative Design Youth Innovation Studio" established in 2016, the studio staff are basically post 90's.

Wei Yang, deputy director of the Science and Technology Committee of China Aviation Industry Corporation, said: "The younger generation is both the main force and the hope of the future. As an aviation company, we should create more conditions for the growth of young people, whether it is the work stage, the treatment or the realization of personal value." Actually, whether it is an aviation enterprise or other military enterprises, we should focus on building a platform for young people. In this way, the future development of the enterprise may be better.

### **3.4. Construct Employer Brands From Both Inside and Outside**

The company's external employer brand reflects organizational inducements and is aimed at potential job seekers; the internal employer brand is the key to establishing an emotional bond between the company and the existing employees. The organic integration of internal and external employer brands not only enables job seekers to have a better understanding of the company, but also enhances the satisfaction and loyalty of existing employees, and the two combine to form a complete employer brand.

For military enterprises, its special mission makes it more demanding for talents, and the loss of talents is even greater. However, from the outside, the traditional and rigid impression of military enterprises is not conducive to attracting outstanding talents; from the internal perspective, "the salary incentive system is not perfect", "the performance evaluation mechanism is unreasonable", "the training mechanism is imperfect" and other factors make the

phenomenon of brain drain in military enterprises is serious. Military enterprises undertake the task of scientific research and production, so the employees shoulder the heavy responsibility. If enterprises want to make employees settle down to their work, enterprises should provide them with a good living environment and welfare protection. Therefore, external and internal employer brand building are both necessary. More importantly, building employer brands from inside and outside can better shape the corporate brand image. The mutual cooperation between internal and external employer brand construction is more conducive to attracting and retaining excellent talents.

Since 2011, Chengfei has been rated as “China's Best Employer Brand” for many years. Its comprehensive internal and external employer brand building has overcome the problem of the disconnection between traditional personnel management and modern corporate strategy. It is an innovative practice. As a state-owned military skeleton enterprise, AVIC Chengfei has let the public see the open and confident appearance of military enterprises, and has provided many ideas for military enterprises and other enterprises committed to building employer brands.

#### 4. Conclusion

Under the topic of employer brand, this paper introduces the state-owned military skeleton enterprise—Chengfei Company, which has been rated as “China's best employer brand” for many times, as an analysis object, combining the special nature and practical problems of military enterprises. Under the two-way analysis of the employer brand construction practice from both inside and outside, it sums up how military enterprises to carry out employer brand building, which is undoubtedly beneficial to Chinese enterprises.

The research on employer brand building of enterprises should not only combine the specific nature and actual situation of enterprises, but also consider many influence factors. The author has only done a shallow analysis in the construction of employer brands in military enterprises, and further research is needed. Employer brand building is a key means for contemporary enterprises to enhance their core competitiveness. I believe that more scholars will participate in this research in the future.

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