

Brand management: one of the keys to the modern working world

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Well-being at work is not utopian thinking – it ensures future success in times of ongoing crisis.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown that organisations in business and public administration must prepare for the future and position themselves as crisis-resistant or resilient. In times of demographic, social and digital change, as well as increasing internationalisation and a shift in values between generations, public administration must position itself as an attractive employer. This is not only a matter of attracting talent with the appropriate skills but also of winning over their ‘hearts’ – all while considering the digital and analogue transformations in the world of work that are taking shape. These are just a few of the challenges in the VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous). However, it is already becoming clear that digitalisation, demography and diversity cannot be viewed as isolated pillars but rather as elements that require a holistic approach in terms of strategy and concept.

New Work

As an employer, what else must you factor into the public administration ‘brand’ aside from aspects such as job security, interesting tasks, work-life balance and career opportunities? A potentially negative image of public administration in terms of the nature of work and access to the latest technologies is unlikely to be restored in a meaningful way even by the most effective human resource management.

The main emphasis in New Work is on meaningfulness. In terms of public

administration, this equals a strong focus on the common good or employees’ contributions to society. As is well known, this is a great incentive to apply for and take on a role in public administration – and stay in the long term. The choice of employer will most likely also depend on the nature of the tasks of individual departments, the reputation of these departments in society, as well as how work (in-office or digitally) will be performed there in the future. Thus, each type of administration will again act independently in shaping ‘its’ brand.

Work-Life Balance

The fading of boundaries between work and private life, the desire for more work-life balance, demands for optimised, IT-supported collaborative forms of work, more personal responsibility, self-management at work, recognition and appreciation, remote leadership, opportunities for lifelong learning, networking and a different form of communication and knowledge transfer: all of these will clearly influence the quality of working relationships and working conditions in the mobile, flexible world of work in the future. In addition, agile and non-hierarchical work, more participation to ensure services are effectively geared towards users (user-centredness) and more flexibility in terms of working time and place of work demand organisational and human resources development in equal measure.

Well-being at work is becoming more and more important for all generations, and this development does not conflict with performance. On the contrary, having a purpose and enjoying your job are important levers for employee engagement and mental health, and thus for the overall performance of public administration. This can become an important competitive factor for recruiting new, individual talent or talent groups. It has long been known that corporate cultures characterised by shareholder primacy don’t retain talent in the long term, even in business, despite offering good pay. How people

interact, plus their personal and social skills, are becoming increasingly important factors.

Teleworking and Mental Well-Being

Experiences from mobile work during the pandemic show that this should be closely interlinked with the design of health management as part of organisational development. Many services in the pandemic, for example, aim not only to support managers but also promote employees' mental health while they work from home. A modern working world and a modern employer also need a new understanding of health.

Organisational resilience through flexible organisational and process structures, agile forms of work to strengthen innovative capacity and creativity, as well as flexible arrangements in terms of work location and working hours are currently being discussed in this context. To master the diverse and increasingly complex tasks of the future, every organisation needs competent, committed and healthy employees whose employability must be promoted at every phase of life. Public administration, too, is experiencing an ever greater push to strengthen individual employees' resilience skills in order to ensure their performance. However, resilience is an equally important skill in relation to digitalisation. These aspects can also be effectively integrated into a digitalisation strategy or new work strategy to achieve synergy effects.

Organisational Culture

Effective and modern health strategies as part of organisational and human resource development should therefore focus on co-designing the organisational culture as well as modern working environments in the context of New Work. Good working relationships and working conditions also help to promote health alongside the 'conventional methods'. This is essentially about the emotional level between managers and employees. Psychological contracts and thus also expectations of employers and their human resources policy

instruments (such as life balance, individual development opportunities) are not fixed constructs in writing. If promises, agreements and suchlike are not kept, this leads – as in private life – to disappointment and frustration. Attractive offers from employers help to support talent acquisition. However, with a view to staff loyalty, these offers can also result in frustration and, in serious cases, in motivation-related absenteeism if an employee's experienced reality is different, for example, in terms of the leadership and collaboration in the day-to-day work of public administration. Modern human resources marketing in public administration is also closely linked to careful expectation management. The previously mentioned psychological contract is also significant in this case – at least conceptually.

Leadership

One indicator of employer attractiveness is the culture of leadership and collaboration – incidentally, this is also a reason why some public administrations outside Germany, and even the OECD, very actively use engagement surveys to gauge the working atmosphere. These are certainly also used as marketing for recruitment and retention management.

Given that shared values are becoming increasingly important in how we interact with each other, principles of leadership and collaboration that have been adapted to the modern world of work aren't a relic of the past. They can be the basis for a living administrative culture and thus also for a future-oriented health strategy. This describes values and requirements for both managers and employees. To ensure sustainable implementation, these dimensions can also be integrated into feedback systems of appraisals and management reporting, for example.

Employee-oriented (transformational) leadership, determined to create and shape action, is becoming increasingly important. The requirements for this leadership skill, which also promotes health, are defined below:

'Provides a framework for staff, sets clear goals and offers support when needed. Engages in value-centred dialogue with them and highlights each individual's personal contribution to success. Explains the meaning of tasks, sustainability and climate-friendly behaviour. Adopts a role-model function in promoting a culture of transparency, trust and effective collaboration. Provides support in the event of conflicts. Designs and supervises change processes (including digital change) as well as in-person and virtual collaboration with employees. Actively involves employees in further developing the organisation or optimising work processes, and is also open to their ideas and new thoughts. Promotes innovation and knowledge transfer and intergenerational learning. Recognises and promotes the

potential of employees in every phase of life and encourages employees in taking their personal responsibility. Promotes equal opportunities, equality and diversity. Tackles discrimination'

Managers have to guide both the analogue and digital working world, all while shaping changes. Accordingly, they should be supported by leadership tools that help them to design good working relationships and working conditions.

Public administration can build on many aspects in order to promote well-being at work. A modern understanding of leadership and collaboration helps to shape the modern world of work. This is an important factor in positioning yourself as a brand in the competition for talent and 'hearts' and preparing your organisation for the next crisis.

The views expressed in this blog are those of the authors and not necessarily those of EIPA.