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CREATION OF AN INTERNAL EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION AS A STRATEGIC WAY OF BUILDING AN EMPLOYER BRAND BASED ON AN IT COMPANY PIPEDRIVE

Master's thesis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this master's thesis is to create a suggestive employer value proposition to the IT company Pipedrive. In order to reach this, the author of the thesis set the following research questions 1) What are the reasons why people choose to come to work in Pipedrive? 2) Which are the benefits of working in Pipedrive? 3) Which are the differences of how employees see benefits of working in Pipedrive based on gender different, office location, department, working experience and time spent in Pipedrive?

The sample of this thesis is a global IT company Pipedrive. The author conducted both a quantitative and a qualitative research. Qualitative research was done through three interviews with managers of Pipedrive, quantitative research through a questionnaire that was sent out to all the employees globally.

The result of thesis is that the suggestive employer value proposition for Pipedrive should be connected with people/team and a challenging job. These were also key things that both employees and managers saw unique about the company and can be promised to every employee, future and present of the company. In addition, the suggestions were also about clarifying the roles for building a strategic employer brand, about consistency in employer branding and taking a stand on things that the company sees are important.

Keywords: employer branding, internal employer branding, strategic employer brand, employer value proposition

INTRODUCTION

Estonian population is decreasing, but at the same time, competition among companies for top talent grows bigger. This creates a situation, where companies that are used to choosing the best employees to their organization, have to start competing for candidates who have many job offers to choose from. These demography trends are creating a need for companies to develop their unique strategic employer brand in order to have a stronger presence in the labour market (Franca, Pahor, 2012), because as research shows, companies agree that their most important resource is their people (Konig, 2008).

After employer branding concept was firstly introduce in 1996 by Amber and Barrow, the changing demographics and increasing competition for talented employees, has made companies start strategically defining and managing their image (Robertson, Khatibi, 2012). What employees and the rest of the society thinks about the company relates to their employer brand. Every company has a brand and it is there whether the company is strategically developing it or not (Robertson, Khatibi, 2012). However, a company brand can be viewed differently if seen through the eyes of the candidate or an existing employee. Because of this, a company should focus both the internal and the external side of the employer brand (Maxwell, Knox, 2009).

A concrete way to introduce the benefits and the reality of working in a specific company, is to create an employer value proposition. The aim of this is to give a concrete understanding of what the company stands for, what it offers to its employees and what is required from the employees to have a positive relationship with the employer. Employer value proposition gives a concrete message that is communicated about the company through the brand (Eisenberg *et al.* 2001; Sullivan, 2004; Robertson et al. 2012). There has been more research done on understanding the external side of the employer brand, but less about the way how an employer brand is created within the company. However, since 2012 an increasing amount of companies are starting the employer branding process from inside of the organization, focusing on the existing employees first (Robertson, Khatibi, 2012).

Author in this thesis focuses on its employer, an IT company Pipedrive (hereinafter referred to as Pipedrive) to research more on this topic. Pipedrive is an IT company that is building a sales software that is being used by over 70 000 companies around the world. Pipedrive has been rewarded with many prizes as the top employer in Estonia, more recently winning the award for the Best Employer in 2018 based on research by Marketing Instituut. There, Pipedrive's employees voted the company to that place which reflected on the internal perspective of the brand (Unistuste tööandja 2018).

However, there has not been a clear in-depth research about Pipedrive employer brand. This topic is highly relevant due to the company's rapid growth and at the same time, not having a clear understanding on how employees view the employer brand. The topic is important as competition for top talent grows stronger. Due to this, the author has stated the research problem, to solve the situation where Pipedrive currently has not enough information on the employer brand through the eyes of its employees.

Based on the mentioned above, the author's aim is to create an employer value proposition for Pipedrive based on employees' opinions. This is relevant to the organization in order to create a strong employer brand. In order to reach the aim of this thesis, author has set research questions:

1. What are the reasons why people choose to come to work in Pipedrive?
2. Which are the benefits of working in Pipedrive?
3. Which are the differences of how employees see benefits of working in Pipedrive based on gender different office location, department, working experience and time spent in Pipedrive?

The sample for this research is Pipedrive globally with all the offices in order to analyse data to create a suggestive global employer value proposition. In order to fulfil this, the author uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Author conducts semi-structured interviews with three managers in Pipedrive to understand their perspective on employer brand value proposition in Pipedrive. The identities of the managers are kept confidential based on the request of the company. Author also sends a questionnaire out to the whole company employees to understand their perspectives in order to create an employer value proposition.

The author has stated the following research assignments to fulfil the aim:

1. Review theoretical overviews and previous research to understand the relevance of strategic internal branding and employer branding.
2. Prepare interview questions and questionnaire based on previous research and theoretical aspects of the field.
3. Make interviews with Pipedrive managers to understand their view on why employees choose Pipedrive as an employer.
4. Conduct a survey and gather responses from Pipedrive employees to understand their view on why Pipedrive is a valuable employer.
5. Analyse interview and questionnaire results.
6. Create a suggestive value proposition for Pipedrive.

From the second half of 2018, one of the strategic focuses of the company will be the creation of strategic global brand both for the product of the company and the employer brand. There needs to be a clear understanding of the employee perspective of the brand and the external market in order to develop a strategic employer brand. This thesis will focus on the internal perspective based on the request of the board of Pipedrive. Practical value of the thesis is to create a suggestive employer value proposition for Pipedrive based on the collected information. These methods can be used in other companies in the future to develop a strategic employer brand.

The author of this thesis writes in English as it was asked from the management of Pipedrive. Reason behind it is English being the working language in which all business is handled. This means that the qualitative and quantitative research must be done in English and the results together with the theoretical findings will be delivered to the Pipedrive management in English.

Thesis consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, the author will give an overview of previous research and theory in employer branding both from the internal and external perspective, showing how is connected with recruitment and success of the company and the benefits of having a strong strategic employer value proposition. In the second chapter, the author will introduce the research sample and will explain further the research methods. After that, the author will describe the two research (managers and employees) methodologies, including gathering research data and data analysis. In the third chapter of the thesis, the author shows the results of the manager and employee research. After that, author makes the discussions and suggestions based on the findings from the research.

1. OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND RESEARCH ON EMPLOYER BRANDING

1.1. Formation of the employer branding concept

Employer branding concept was first introduced by Amber and Barrow in the 1996. The reason behind this new perspective came because there was more interest towards understanding how human resources management is done and what are the strategies it is combined from. The first research about employer branding was done in the United Kingdom and resulted in finding out that branding an employee experience can lead to a stronger customer brand and success in employee management (Amber, Barrow, 1996)

Back in 1996, the main weak points of an employer brand were brought out as inefficient support from top management and weak Human Resources infrastructure to manage the situation. Further advice suggest Marketing and Human Resources departments to work together more on creating a brand that is equally relevant for the customer and employee experience. Amber and Barrow 1996 research gave a strong basis and a relevant information for companies to start focusing on it more. Things brought out in the 1996 by Amber and Barrow are issues to this day.

One other concept was strongly linked with the employer branding already then – internal marketing. The idea of internal marketing existed before the concept of employer branding was made and was linked with marketing the organization to its employees (Bennett, 1995). Internal marketing is strongly linked with a psychological contract (Argyris, 1960; Rousseau 1989). This concept was further developed by Barrow and Mosley in 2005 through considering what makes an employee stay with the company and what the reasons what make people leave are.

Between these concepts, another one started to gain more strategic recognition – internal employer branding. Internal employer branding has been acknowledged as an important factor to focus on that will increase employee satisfaction and linked with that, better customer satisfaction. When creating an employer brand, research insists that it should be done from the

inside out of the company, but there is still significantly less research done to fully understand the concept of internal employer brand (Foster *et al.* 2010).

The concept of employer branding has been developed from many angles over the years and has become more relevant with decreasing population and less qualified specialists in the market who need a new job (Bijak *et al.* 2007). Due to this, the importance of internal employer branding has been growing equally important together with the external view of an employer.

In the following sub-chapter, author will go more into more specific parts of the employer branding. After the concept of employer branding started to emerge, more emphasis was put to the external side of the employer branding, which is what the author will go more into next.

1.2. Relevance of a strong external employer brand

After theory about employer branding became more known and acknowledged, more companies started focusing on this and analysing their current situation. Whether a company has a strategic approach into managing its employer brand or not, every company has an employer brand (Robertson, Khatibi, 2012).

In the beginning of employer branding, a lot of companies firstly started focusing on viewing and analysing their existing company brand. Now, the strategy has shifted more towards creating a desired image of the company. Having a desired image through an employer brand means that when potential candidates hear about the company, they link it with a good quality employee experience, unique strong organizational culture with right values and a management that engages with its employees every day (Backhaus, 2016).

When companies started thinking whether to allocate money into employer branding or not, one of the key arguments was that by building a strategic brand in the market, it brings a higher possibility to stand out from the competitors and become unique (Backhaus, Tikoo, 2004; Knox, Freeman, 2006; Lievens, 2007; Lievens *et al.* 2007).

There are other numerous benefits for a company to establish a strong employer brand. Similarly, to product and customer marketing, the employer branding brings benefits like brand association and brand loyalty to the company (Love, Singh, 2011). If people are loyal, committed to the brand, it is what draws them to want to work towards becoming an employee

there in the future and then stay with the company (Bakanauskiene *et al.* 2017). Also, companies with stronger customer brands are more often associated with positive reputation as an employer (Brooks *et al.* 2003). Research shows that even if the material benefits are better in a company that has a poor reputation, people still prefer to work for a company that has a good reputation in the labour market (Franca, Pahor, 2012).

Benefits of a well lead organizational culture creates a company's reputation that is strongly driving the candidates' attraction during the interview process. Strong employer reputation is one of the long-term effects of employer branding. Research shows that companies who are known and whose reputation is positive can attract more candidates to the organisation (Franca, Pahor 2012). This helps reduce otherwise high hiring costs and making it easier to find great talents to employ.

For many, to get a lot of qualified people interested in a job, the first idea would be to start heavily selling the company in the labour market. Of course, employer branding's goal is to increase the interest and attraction towards the company. Instead of heavily selling the company, the goal is to become the "employer of choice" (Abimbola, Foster, 2010). This means that companies are desirable, but the image of the company is truthful (Backhaus, 2016).

As an employer brand is often seen as a broad concept which is difficult to measure and grasp, finding right ways to analyse the current employer brand is crucial. One of the more basic ways of understanding if the brand is created the right way to the external audience, is to see, if it attracts more candidates and if they are the right ones for the organization (Franca, Pahor, 2012). Key here is that being famous and desired is not enough, it is very important to be attractive to the right audience.

Now that there is more awareness about the benefits of the employer brand, more companies have seen this as an important strategy to invest in. In return, becoming an employer of choice for candidates has reduced the hiring costs and had a positive influence on customer branding as well. Author acknowledges that the importance of external employer branding grew strong faster due to this being linked to a consumer brand, bringing down costs of hiring and retaining talent. In the following part, author will cover the importance of a strong internal employer brand.

1.3. Relevance of a strategic internal employer brand

External employer brand has been seen relevant for a longer time than internal employer brand. Also, the internal perspective of an employer brand has been researched less than the external. External side has been related more to marketing and internal perspective more related to human resources. Internal employer brand shows the employer reputation through the eyes of existing employees (Wallace *et al.* 2014).

The complexity of employer branding comes from the fact, that it is not connected with just the external image of the organization, but also the internal – the existing employees' side. More and more companies are starting to create awareness of the employer branding from inside of the company (Robertson, Khatibi, 2012). An employer brand is often described as a psychological contract between an employer and its employees (Barrow, Mosley, 2007).

It is especially relevant to start the branding process from inside out, as a successful employer brand helps a company differentiate from its competitors in the labour market. The differentiation means that a company stands out and attracts candidates who feel that they relate to the company's identity. The employer brand of the company should be easily recognisable so that when the right people start looking for a job, they think about this company first (Love, Singh, 2011). The aim of it is to make sure that if an applicant is thinking about the best place for them to satisfy their professional needs, they are attracted to a certain company (Sartain, Schuman, 2008).

There are many benefits for the company to start focusing on the internal employer branding more. Strategic consistent internal brand has been seen linking positively with organizational results (Love, Singh 2011). Also, organisational identification theory says, that employees contribute more to company's success if they identify with it (Brown, Williams, 1984; Cheney, 1983; Dutton et al. 1994; Van Dick, 2001).

In addition to understanding and focusing on the employer brand, the existing employees should feel connected with it. It is especially relevant to be sure, that employees are productive and loyal to the brand. If a company is communicating out its brand one way but the existing employees feel and act differently, the image of the company seems untrue for candidates (Backhaus, Tikoo, 2004).

Organizational commitment theory suggests that being emotionally attached to a company comes if employees accept its values and the brand (Cook, Wall, 1980). To help this process of employees being loyal to the brand, managers must be aware on how to align employees' behaviour and values to the brand (Maxwell, Knox, 2009). Connected with it, internal branding is a way for managers to lead company culture (Edwards, 2005; Kornberg, 2010).

It is relevant not to just create a strategic brand while focusing on the existing employees, but also to find ways on how to engage the employees with it. Through thorough and consistent focus on communication with the employees about the brand can also make them more emotionally and intellectually engaged with it (de Chernatony, Segal-Horn, 2001; Thomson, 1999).

This is especially useful as this is a way for managers to be sure that employee behaviour is aligned with the company's brand promise at all times (Hulberg 2006; Balmer, Gray 2003). Through a strong engaging employer brand it is possible to affect employees' identities. The aim of internal branding is to make sure that brand and employees identities are aligned (Cushen, 2009; Edwards, 2005; Kornberg, 2010; Land, Taylor, 2010).

Successful internal branding aims to align all employees' behaviours, attitudes with the company's brand (Müller, 2017). An employee who is aligned with the brand could also be made to an internal branding advocate – someone, who is living the brand and the values (Bergstrom *et al.* 2002; Boyd, Sutherland, 2006; Burmann, Zeplin, 2005; Chong, 2007). After which the company can use them as role models for other employees (Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.* 2011).

After being hired to a company that communicated out its internal brand the right way, the retention rate is higher, there's less of costly turnover and lower absenteeism if people see themselves as a cultural fit to it (Lyold, 2002). Employees that stay are those, who feel more sense of value congruence with the company and are the ones keeping the culture alive (Hoffman, Woehr, 2006).

When focusing on the internal employer brand first and building the brand inside out, the key is to make sure that the existing employees relate to the brand. Author concludes from the research that if employees feel aligned and loyal to the company, there is also a bigger chance of them becoming brand advocates and showcasing the company culture with the outside world. Following, author will bring out the ways to strategically build an employer value proposition.

1.4. Creation of an internal employer value proposition

Creating an internal employer brand together with a strategic internal employer value proposition is a complex process involving organization's culture, its customer brand and understanding the competitors brands in the market. Employer brand gives organizations an opportunity to show what makes them stand out in the labour market to attract and keep the right people working with them (Love, Singh, 2011) and should be consistent with the real situation in the workplace (Backhaus, Tikoo 2004; Ambler, Barrow 1996).

As the employer brand should be basing on the psychological contract between employer and employee, it should be created honestly to ensure the trust of its employees with that. Honest transparent brand will have a stronger chance of increasing the positive engagement while working in the company. For this, creating a brand strategically and consistent throughout the company is very important (Moroko, Uncles, 2008). Successful brands are recognised by the way how the brand is constantly delivered and support by the managers of the organization. This on its own can create a unique value proposition for both an existing and a potential employees (Love, Singh, 2011).

One of the most difficult things for a company in the brand creation stage is to build and retrain multiple brands at the same time – consumer brand, employer brand, company brand and many more (Wilden, 2010). When creating these brands, cooperation between marketing and human resources department is crucial (Martin *et al.* 2005). Both, marketing representatives and the Human Resources team need to understand the plans of each brand's plan and objectives and keep them as much aligned as possible. There is not a way communicate with customers by following on brand and then turning to employees and switching the tone to another brand (Mosley, 2007). Ideally, internal branding starts from Human Resources department (Lyold, 2002).

In the first years of 2000, research showed, that in over 60% of organizations, it was unclear who should oversee building the internal brand to support the external employer brand. Since then, more and more organizations have decided that Human Resources department, should lead this process – starting from brand awareness to actively promoting the employer value proposition. Once these things are set, Human Resources team should proceed to promoting the values together with the mission and vision in the company first. This helps to differentiate from other companies by building the employer brand from inside out (Lyold, 2002).

Even though the cooperation between marketing and Human Resources departments is found to be needed, many researchers back in 2007 found that Human Resources' role is still more about communication in this topic, not as much about strategy in terms of creating the brand and ensuring that the brand promise is fulfilled (Mosley, 2007). Also, research shows that Human Resources' role should not be only about communication of the brand, as other Human Resources practises like choosing the right people through the recruitment processes, rewarding the people who are aligned with the brand and retaining them plays a far more important role in internal branding (Foster *et al.* 2010).

One of the models that is in use when analysing a brand, both in marketing and employer side, is the Keller's Brand Equity Model, also known as Customer-Based Brand Equity model. The idea behind the model is that in order to have a strong brand, company needs to understand how to shape the way how a target audience feels about them. Knowing the target audience, in this case the right group of potential applicants, you need to create a specific experience around your employer brand that your target group will have positive thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas about (Keller, 2003).
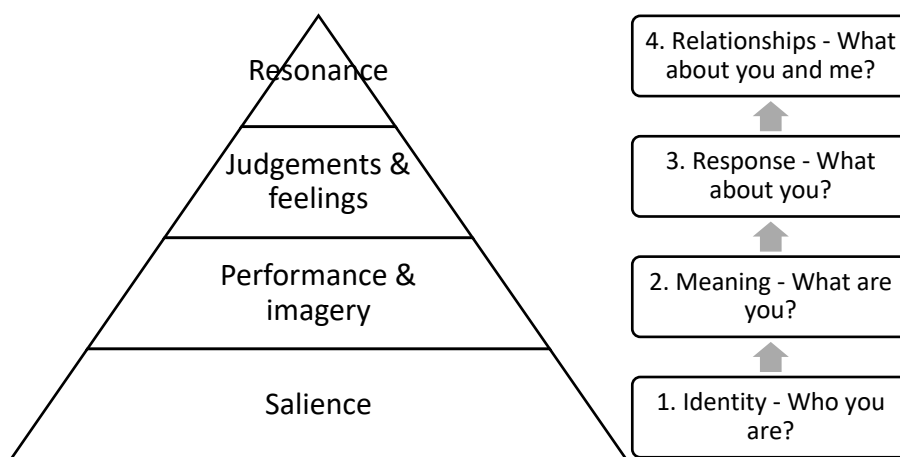
Figure 1. Keller's Brand Equity Model
Source: Made by the author based on Keller's Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2003)

The way how the brand creation is made with this model bases on having a clear understanding of the brand identity, its meaning, response and brand relationship. The most crucial part of it is to really understand, who the company is, but at the same time, to make it different from other competitors to make sure, that the company stands out. Second of it to understand, what this employer brand means to its existing and potential employees. Third step is to analyse what the potential employees might think of it and find a way to deal with the negative opinions that

might come from the audience. Lastly, it is about making the brand meaningful to the target audience, to make them feel like the company is caring about the same things as they are. These steps can help a company create a meaningful value proposition as an employer (Keller, 2003).

All brands affect each other and become effected the same time. When for example the customer brand of the company is well known, it's also easier to find potential people to take on a job in the company. If, however the product is unattractive for the customer or somehow connected with something negative, candidates might not be attracted to the company (Wilden, 2010). Research has also shown that if the employer brand of the company is attractive, then the whole organization is considered successful (Maxwell, Knox, 2009). Some of the things that are positively linked to organizational attractiveness are its working atmosphere, salary and a job that is interesting. Some things that have also shown to affect it, relate to growth inside of the company, good relationships with the management and the peers (Bakanauskiene *et al.* (2017).

There are cases where companies focus on communicating out their benefits package and a brand promise that is not aligned with the actual situation. This creates a situation for current employees who are confronted then with a double perception – on the one hand they see that actual employer promise and benefits from the inside, but the outside brand promise is not connected with that (Hanin *et al.* 2013).

As the statistics bring out that the labour force in Europe is heavily declining, many companies might face a situation where they cannot only rely on local talents, but should find out new ways of finding employees. Here is where a positive global employer brand is crucial – if the local talent is not enough, the company must be attractive for professionals from abroad (Franca, Pahor 2012).

In this sub-chapter, the author introduced the idea to create an internal brand together with an employer value proposition. One of the example ways to make it is through the Keller's Brand Equity Model. Challenge is not just to build a strong brand, but to find who is in charge of it inside of the company and how to make sure that all company brands are aligned with each other. Now that the way of creating an internal employer brand is described, the following subchapter will focus on the benefits that come with it.

1.5. Effects on strategic employer value proposition in recruitment

Strong strategic employer brand has many positive impacts on hiring. Management chooses to focus more on internal branding to receive the right candidates faster and keep them longer in an organisation. After internal brand value proposition is created, recruiters can start building the strategy for hiring that is honest and fully aligned with the internal brand (Maxwell, Knox, 2009).

Recruitment branding is a concept with a goal to aiming to become the employer of choice in targeted candidate pools. Great recruitment brand is a reflection of the organisation. Recruitment branding and employer branding are very similar concepts. The difference comes from the things that are added to the brand message, for example, informing the candidate about career development opportunities, mentoring and special programs. If a company is using stand out technology, is very innovative or its team is having great experts with long-term experience – this is something to communicate out extra as well (Carey, 2007).

Recruitment must be done cost effectively. For this recruitment must be done strategically. One part of it is knowing the target audience for each hiring process. This means that the job application should be directed to the right people through the channels that they use. It gets problematic if the chosen channel is not the one where the right professionals go to find a new job or if the job add itself is not specific enough to help a wrong candidate do an adequate self-assessment before applying. Putting wrong people through the recruitment process is costly and takes away valuable time that should be spent with the right candidates. If hiring is done based on the brand, it can also increase the offer acceptance rate (Lyold, 2002).

Making sure that the company is the right one for the candidate and a great fit for the team, is one of the key roles of a hiring process. It is not only about getting the right ones to work for the company, but it is also to keep them in the organization for a longer time and to have a small employee turnover. To achieve this, the brand must be communicated to the candidates truthfully (Carey, 2007).

Hiring team has a crucial part to play in the future relationship of the new employee and the company. When a new employee joins the company and notices that things promised to him are not actually there in the company, this could have a strong negative impact on the work relationships. Inconsistencies between the work reality and the employer brand promise can lead to violations of the psychological contract. To avoid that, the main thing for the hiring team to do

is to have the right messaging about the job. However, if brand is communicated the right way, the right messaging and setting the right expectations about the job, it can help an employee socialise and accept the organizational identity faster (Backhaus, 2016).

If company brand is understandable and attracting the right professionals, it is also possible for candidates to do self-selection. This means that those, who see that the brand, communicated out to them, is aligned with their values and beliefs, will apply and the others will have a chance to exclude themselves from the process (Lyold, 2002).

In addition to sharing the job applications the right way through accurate channels, a lot of companies have also started focusing more on word-of-mouth. If word-of-mouth is coming from employees who have no real connection to hiring, it can be very influential. This has given a lot of positive impact on people when deciding whether to apply for a job or not. This has been proven to be successful especially if there's a monetary reward in place for the person for those whose word-of-mouth a candidate was hired through (Van Hoye *et al.* 2016).

If company employees have a good understanding of the employer brand, they can be very useful in helping hiring teams find the right candidates to interview. Employee referral system has shown to be very useful in finding the right people but also helps with their job satisfaction and performance in the future. This also impacts employee turnover in a positive way (Uen *et al.* 2015). However, the referral system has a negative impact on the employee turnover when people find out that their friends recommended them due to the monetary reward (Van Hoye *et al.* 2016).

There is one other important thing to why company branding is very crucial. Many companies choose to outsource the hiring service – meaning, that hiring is not handled by people who have been working in the company. If the brand is vaguely understandable and recruitment brand does not exist, the outsourced hiring teams might communicate the job out in a different way than the management would like (Lyold, 2002).

Author recognises that an internal brand value proposition has a strong effect on the process of recruiting new people to the company. In the interview process the hiring team has a chance to introduce the company through its brand to the possible candidates. If the brand message is vague, the right candidates might not be attracted to the job. However, it is also possible that ultimately the wrong people get hired because the understanding of the company was not aligned

with the actual situation. Following subchapter introduces some of the more important research made in the field of employer branding.

1.6. Previous research on employer branding

As the theoretical aspects of employer branding suggest, the topic is rather new and has started gaining stronger interested more from this century. As the businesses change and the demand for great talents grows bigger than the available amount of potential employees, more and more companies start focusing on employer branding (Franca, Pahor, 2012). In order to research this topic further, many qualitative and quantitative research has been carried out.

Filip Lievens, Greet Van Hoye, Frederik Anseel made a research on the topic of "Organizational Identity and Employer Image: Towards a Unifying Framework" in 2007. This research focused on bridging the theory on organizational identity and employer branding. There they used two samples – 258 army applicants and 179 military employees in Belgian army in order to do a quantitative study. They focused more on analyzing instrumental-symbolic framework. The results suggest that instrumental-symbolic framework is useful for conceptualizing employer branding from the externals view, also that the framework's part competence predicted employees' identification with the employer. Their findings also suggest that employer brand should not be treated as a separate unit, but more from the aspects of actual, conceived, communicated, ideal and desired perspective.

Valentina Franca and Marko Pahor carried out a research on the topic of "The Strength of the Employer Brand: Influences and Implications for Recruiting" in 2012. They focused more on the recruiting aspects of employer branding, on the Employee Based Brand Equity model. For this, they interviewed 30 job seekers in the main areas previous experiences with employers and future career planning; process of employer image creation; and employment selection criteria. The main findings from their research brings out that employers are not visible enough for the job seekers who would wish to understand more about what the company as like as an employer.

Alan Robertson and Ali Khatibi carried out a research on the topic of "By Design or By Default: Creating the Employer Identity" in 2012. Their quantitative research of Sri Lankan companies shows that Employer Value Proposition has a significant role in order to develop an employer brand. They surveyed 608 employees from 369 companies. They used Likert 5-point scale to assess topics corporate brand, organizational personality, product brand image and

EVP/Employer brand. The results of this study indicate the importance of employer value proposition in successfully developing an employer brand. They also bring out the importance of developing both an internal and an external employer brand.

Dorothée Hanin, Florence Stinglhamber and Nathalie Delobbe made a research in 2013 on the topic of "Impact of employer branding on employees: The role of employment offering in the prediction of their affective commitment". With this research they focused more on the internal aspects of employer branding. Their research was carried out in Belgium where they surveyed 897 department managers. They used Likert 5-point scale and 15 different factors influencing people. Those 15 factors were divided into subtopics like lived employment experience, employment offering, perceived organisational support, psychological contract violation and affective commitment. Results of this research show that employment offering and lived employment experience are in interaction with perceived organisational support, psychological contract violation which leads to affective commitment.

The selected researchers bring out the more studied topics on employer branding. As the employer brand external aspect has been researched more, most of the studies carried out have been with the employer image viewed by externals and more related to the topic of recruitment.

Author of the thesis brings out that even though the concept of employer branding has been brought out as an important brand that a company should create strategically, the benefits of having one are not always understood. Companies have firstly understood the importance of external employer brand as it is strongly linked with other brands like customer brand that is important for a company to lead. Internal employer brand is gaining support and is being now more understood to be important by employers. Based on a strategically built internal employer brand a company can create an employer value proposition that gives people a good understanding of what company is about. Having a clear value proposition will bring strong results in recruitment.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the second chapter, the author explains the research methodologies, after that will follow a description and explanation of the research that was made with the managers and research done with the employees, creation of the sample and data gathering and analysis description.

2.1.   Description of the sample

Sample of this thesis is an IT company Pipedrive. Pipedrive is an IT company that was established in Estonia in 2010 which has now grown strong globally. The product of the company is a sales software called Pipedrive that is built for small to middle size sales teams and companies. Pipedrive's product is in use in over 70 000 companies in more than 155 countries. Pipedrive is a global company with offices in Estonia – Tallinn, Tartu; USA – New York; Portugal – Lisbon; United Kingdom – London.

Pipedrive as a company is in a growth phase both in terms of customers and employees so the number of both is changing rapidly. During the time of the research, Pipedrive employs globally 380 people. Out of them 296 worked in Estonia, 46 in Portugal, 32 in USA and 12 in the UK.

Pipedrive mostly employs people from technical backgrounds. The departments in the company are engineering, infrastructure, product, marketing, sales, support and GA. In Estonian offices all previously mentioned departments exist. Office in the US has more employees in sales, support and GA departments. Portugal office in Lisbon has mainly engineering, support and product departments represented. The newest office in London consist mostly marketing employees.

As Pipedrive is a global company, it has a very integrated organisational structure. Many employees work with people from other offices and it is also common to have a manager who might be working in another country than the employee is. The goal in Pipedrive is to hire the best talent and the location of the person less relevant. Because of this, as the company is global, all the research and the employer value proposition is done for the global market.

2.2. Managers research methodology description

Author uses a qualitative research method in the managers' research and conducts semi-structured interviews with three managers who are responsible in representing a Pipedrive local sites and have more power to decide on employer branding topics.

Qualitative research was done through conducting interviews with Pipedrive key leadership team members. The leadership team members were kept anonymous and in the research, they are referred as Manager A, Manager B and Manager C. Author met with all of the managers separately in person. Then interviews were scheduled a week before they took place. Interviews took place in February and March in 2018 and time wise lasted 35-45 minutes. With consent from managers, interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and later on transcribed.

When creating an employer value proposition, it is not only important that it reflects the actual situation, it should also be aligned with the future and strategies of the management of the company. To understand the strategic approach of management towards employer branding, one part of the research was about doing semi-structured interviews with the key people from the management.

Even though the organisational structure in Pipedrive is very integrated, there are key people in each site whose responsibility is to make sure that when making executive decisions, each site's people's voices are heard. These people have more power to decide over employer branding decisions locally and globally. Author chose three managers of this kind of a role to interview in this research.

Author chose the qualitative research method as it helps to get more in depth data on managers thoughts on the topic. Semi-structured interview form allows to ask follow-up or clarifying questions from the managers when needed to better understand their opinions. Author did a pilot research after which the wording and the structure of the interviews were changed in some cases. The final interview questions are presented in Appendix 1.

Interview questions for the managers are based on Keller's Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2003) together with research and theory on employer branding. Interview starts with the author explaining the meaning of the key concepts of the interviews so that the manager understands these in the relevant way for the research – employer branding; employer value proposition; and company culture. Interview questions (Appendix 1) were chosen based on the theory and

research made in employer branding. The interview was divided into sections – background questions, Pipedrive as an employer and creation of an employer brand. Background questions were aiming to understand the managers' level of involvement in everyday decision making about hiring, employees and branding to understand if there could potentially be differences in their answers depending on the role that they have in the company.

Second part of the interview focuses on understanding managers opinions of employer brand. As their vision on these factors has the executive power, their opinions and perspectives are crucial. As not all companies decide to invest into employer branding (Robertson, Khatibi, 2012) and do not find the necessity of it, it is asked from managers whether they think it is a relevant thing to focus on. There are numerous reasons to why managers decide to invest into employer branding (Backhaus, Tikoo, 2004; Knox, Freeman, 2006; Lievens, 2007; Lievens *et al.* 2007), to understand the opinions of managers on this, the author of the thesis asks about that. As research has shown that every company has a brand regardless of working on it or not (Robertson, Khatibi, 2012; Keller, 2003), there is a question about what the managers think the current brand of Pipedrive is about.

Third part of the interview is focusing on understand how managers see Pipedrive as an employer. As it is said, that truthful communication of the employer brand leads to stronger employee commitment and lower turnover (Lyold, 2002; Keller, 2003) then it is asked what managers see are the reasons people choose to apply and to stay in Pipedrive to understand their opinion on how the brand is viewed. Truthful communication affects the psychological contract that employees have with the employer (Barrrow, Mosley, 2007) so there is a question about what is the brand promise that the employer can agree upon with the employees and candidates. Fulfilling these expectations affects peoples' motivation in a company (Backhaus, 2016) which leads to a question in the interview about whether managers see Pipedrive currently fulfils employees' expectations.

The interview questions that follow are more connected with the external employer brand. It is important to find the key aspects of company's brand to showcase externally (Carey, 2007; Keller, 2003) so the managers are asked to bring out what they see are important things to show outside of the company. As well, it is important to create a unique brand that helps differentiate from others looking for people to join their company (Love, Singh, 2011; Keller, 2003) and for this managers are asked about what it could be for Pipedrive. Last question in the section about Pipedrive as an employer here focuses on targeting the right audience – it is important to be

attractive to the right people (Sartain, Schuman, 2008; Keller, 2003) so the managers are asked who they see would not be the people company brand would want to attract.

Fourth and the last part of the interview focuses on managers opinions about the creation of the employer brand. As research has shown that employer brand must be consistent throughout all parts of the company (Moroko, Uncles, 2008) and Pipedrive currently has multiple offices globally, there are more questions about managers opinions on the brand in different locations, the similarities and differences (Franca, Pahor, 2012) together with understanding whether they see it should be consistent. As it is seen that companies struggle to figure out the leader of the strategic employer branding process (Lyold, 2002), managers are asked to share their opinion on this.

Final questions block in the interview are focusing more on multiple brands that company has together with company social responsibility. As it is seen that all company brands should be consistent as they influence each other (Brooks *et al*. 2003; Franca, Pahor, 2012) it is important to see how managers see current brands affecting each other. The last question is about what the company wants to take a stand in as it is seen to be important for employees that the company brand is meaningful for them and the employer takes values and takes a stand on topics they care about (Keller, 2003).

The analysis of the interviews was based on the interview transcriptions. Author used content analysis principles where author creates categories based on interviewees' responses. Transcriptions were analysed through a cross-case analysis (Appendix 3). This helped to bring out the most important opinions from the interviews. Based on the interviews the author analyse the responses both individually and in comparison of all people interviewed.

2.3. Employees research methodology description

The aim of the employees' research is to understand their opinions about working in Pipedrive and Pipedrive as an employer. The author chose quantitative research method as it allows to research multiple people at once. Also, quantitative research helps to analyse responses through statistics methods.

Before the questionnaire was sent out, the author piloted it out with people from Pipedrive Human Resources team, IT professionals outside of the company and professional researchers –

all together 8 people from different backgrounds. Based on the feedback, the author decided to change the platform from Google Sheets to Suvery Gizmo and some of the wordings in the questions. Survey Gizmo is a platform in use in Pipedrive that helps gather data and analyse it a more automated way. Final version of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix 2.

Gathering responses took place 6-9th of March. Forecasted response time was around four minutes. Pipedrive globally an employer of 380 people during the time of the data gathering and the questionnaire was shared in channels that are accessible for all. The questionnaire was sent as a link to all employees via Pipedrive internal communication tool Slack. It was shared both in a general channel where every employee has access and then separately on each company office sites. As all employees in Pipedrive use computers as the main working tool, the author did not find a reason to distribute the questionnaire on paper. 129 people answered the questionnaire, completion rate was 75,9% as 41 people filled in the questionnaire partially and their responses were not used in the analysis.

As the perspective of this thesis is focusing on building an employer brand from inside out, one of the ways to gather data to build an employer value proposition is to survey existing employees from all sites of Pipedrive. Survey consisted of 3 bigger blocks – background questions, identifying how people choose a workplace, opinions about Pipedrive as an employer. All questions were chosen based on previous research and theoretical backgrounds in employer branding area, the biggest basis for creation of questions was Keller's Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2003). Survey was carried out in a web platform called Survey Gizmo, which is in use for Pipedrive.

Background questions consisted on finding out the respondents' gender, office and department that they are working in, the length of the professional career and the time they had been working in Pipedrive. As one of the aspects of building an employer brand in Pipedrive is identifying whether the brand should be built as a global brand, unified in all locations or targeted based on specific site and department, it was important to understand if there are differences between responders (Moroko, Uncles, 2008; Franca, Pahor, 2012).

Second part of the questionnaire was focusing on choosing an employer and more specifically Pipedrive. The first question type was a Maxdiff that helps identify the most relevant factor for the responders. For this, author gathered 12 factors that affect the most a persons' decision when choosing a job from previous research (Hanin *et al.* 2013; Lievens *et al.* 2007). Responders saw

six sets with four factors in them and they had to choose one that was the least important factor and one that was the most important factor among the four, other two were left without a rating. Factors were shown at least once and groups were automatically created and shuffled by the survey environment. This method helps understand the key relevant factors for responders.

Second half of the section about how people choose their workplace, consisted of four questions on Likert 5-point scale. Responders were presented with four arguments and they had to choose if they strongly agree with them; agree; disagree; strongly disagree or are neutral about them. The first question here was about understanding if the brand of Pipedrive was strong enough to attract them to consciously apply for the job (Lyold, 2002; Keller, 2003; Sartain, Schuman, 2008; Love, Singh, 2011). To understand if the brand was communicated truthfully (Backhaus, 2016) a question about whether employee feels that their expectations are met, is added. As word-of-mouth has a big impact on a person deciding to apply to work in a company (Van Hoye *et al.* 2016), there are questions added on how happy employee is and whether they would recommend the employer to others. The section ended with an open-ended question - the aim here was to understand responders' opinion about what makes Pipedrive a unique place to work (Love, Singh, 2011).

Last group of questions similarly to the pervious one is combined of two sections – first one uses methodology Maxdiff with six sets with four factors in them, focusing on why people stay in Pipedrive. Maxdiff question aims to understand what is keeping employees in the company. The factors are the same ones used in the previous Maxdiff question about how people choose a job, in order to see, if Pipedrive is fulfilling the brand promise why people chose to apply to work in this company (Lyold, 2002; Keller, 2003; Sartain, Schuman, 2008; Love, Singh, 2011). Last questions are 3 arguments where responders have to choose their opinion of them on Likert 5-point scale (strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; strongly disagree). First two of them is about Pipedrive solving an important issue in the world to understand if employees field that the company is doing something meaningful in their eyes (Keller, 2003). Final question is about how people see the company values being important for them (Keller, 2003; Backhaus, 2016).

The questionnaire was done in the platform Survey Gizmo that analyses automatically the data of Maxdiff questions on its own. It also helps make the data from open answer questions more visible by creating a word cloud. In order to analyse responses to the questions on the Likert 5-point scale, the author uses a   software to perform statistical analysis – SPSS.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

In the third chapter, author firstly presents the results of the manager and employee research results. After that, author presents the results together with the theoretical findings to compare the results to them. Lastly, author presents conclusions and suggestions on the topic.

3.1. Results of managers research

In managers' research, the author conducted three interviews with the key people from the management of Pipedrive who have influence on employer branding decisions both globally and locally. Managers are also more involved with decision making when it comes to employees as they care about people and it is also a part of the role that they are in, as interviews show. As the company requested that interviewees stay anonymous, they are referred to as Manager A, Manager B and Manager C. Author will bring the summaries and analysis of the interviews in the following sub-chapters. Also, cross-case analysis based on the interviews is added in Appendix 3.

3.1.1. Relevance of employer branding

All three interviewees agreed that employer branding is beneficial for a company. They agreed that the result of employer branding is that a company has a chance to influence how people see the company. They agreed, that every company has an employer brand regardless if they work on it or not.

When it came to finding benefits of having a strategic employer brand, managers brought out many important factors for them. One of the biggest ways how an employer brand influences the company is through hiring. "*So it's definitely beneficial to work on it to make sure that you have an opinion and you have a plan to influence on what people kinda thinks and say about you as an employer*" (Manager A) and finding the right people is seen important from the managers perspective as well "*Without the right talent you cannot do anything*" (Manager B).

Manager C also saw that the image of a company can be easily turned around *"example one or two people out of 200 left and had some kind of experience he shares with huge group of people and then it might give the very miss leading idea of the company"*. Manager C continues that without branding, the company cannot state their point of view on things affecting the image of themselves.

One of the ways how to create an image of a company is through an employer value proposition *"need to offer like a world value proposition for your employees, like it's not just the job and a salary (..), like your employer brand can convey so what is like the greater purpose, how can they [employees] contribute to it"* (Manager B). Employer value proposition is seen as a brand promise *"it obviously very very important that the company itself shares what they think this company is about and, and create this kind of understanding."* (Manager C).

When it comes to deciding whether Pipedrive should build a strategic employer brand, Manager A sees *"I think we are working with it every day"*. The Manager A also sees that there is a lot that the company has been focusing on already and has been building a strategic employer brand *"taking part of this award processes and writing about it a little bit, talking about it a little bit, but the major part of actually going through these emotions and making sure that we have a good hiring process and we treat people well and we train them and so forth, like all of that is part of the strategic plan of Pipedrive employer branding"*. Here, Managers B and C see that the company has not yet focused on creating a strategic employer brand. *"So yes, it's a, it's a critical for us, we need to think a bit more strategically about it. I think that we have been a little bit optimistic until now"* (Manager B) and Manager C sees that there is a lot more to be done around it.

However, all managers agree that the foundation of employer branding in Pipedrive has been created already *"we have the foundation, we have the values, we have the purpose, we have, you know, the vision, and the mission"* (Manager B). The manager adds other things that have been already done in employer branding *"So we had those values (...) we have a great leadership team, we have a great culture, people are super funny at Pipedrive"* (Manager B).

3.1.2. Current image of Pipedrive

Managers agree that a company has an image regardless if they work on it or not. When discussing about the current image of Pipedrive, managers share different views on it. However, they all agree that the external image is more related with good things *"the current image is very*

positive" (Manager B). Manager B also sees that the visibility of the brand is too small to really have an impact at this point "*like at first we need to let people know about Pipedrive.*"

Manager A sees that the current image of the company is very connected with its employees "*I think it's about the people. So whenever you ask from people why it's good to work in Pipedrive, the first answer is always people.*" Manager C sees that it is more connected with the business side "*being still a start-up or maybe on the moment kinda on the line of growing out of the start-up*". Manager B and C share that the big part of the company's external image is about that it came out of Europe and especially that it came out from a small country like Estonia.

When discussing why currently people choose to apply to work in Pipedrive then managers agree that it has a lot to do with the product and the people of the company. Manager A sees that it also very much depends on the location where a person is applying to work in "*Because, in Estonia, we kinda stand out already, we're considered, like borderline big company in Estonia, (...) In other locations such as New York for example or London, we are not known. (...) It's changing in Lisbon. It's like when we started now exactly a year ago, like no one knew about it, but now we are better known but not as well as in Tallinn.*".

When it comes to thinking why people stay in Pipedrive after being hired, managers agree that the work and the opportunities people get here, are very important. "*The possibility to see the company to go through different stages. Can be painful, all the growth and everything and the changes, but it teaches so much. You can't really have this experience when you are just in a small company with the same people for 10 or 20 years this is something that is really great to collect the experience and, and get started*" (Manager C) shows that Pipedrive as a company offers more unique opportunities that other employers cannot. "*The company is high performing, so it's nice, it's nice to be in a company where you get a chance to see like a growing numbers, like a double every year. Like a two or three offices opening like every year (...) it's a good vibe*" (Manager B). Manager A also agrees and adds the level of safety as a distinguishing factor "*So in a start-up company you can have impact. And I think...Pipedrive kinda combines....the safety that company is kinda...somewhat established.....with the excitement of a fast growing company, so you don't risk much, but you can still be part of this....exciting new growth opportunity, story, thingy, and have a big impact inside the company as well*".

In addition to having a successful company that gives people the chance to experience something that other companies cannot, Managers see that it is a lot about the great team as well "*I think it's*

mostly about the people" (Manager A), "*team spirit so you can feel that, it's like a big family*" (Manager B).

3.1.3. Pipedrive employer value proposition

Previously managers shared opinions on why people currently choose to apply to work in Pipedrive and why they decide to stay working there and their opinions were quite similar in the topics. The following question was about what they think is the brand promise that Pipedrive currently has.

When discussing about what Pipedrive can promise to new employees/candidates that they will experience when working in Pipedrive, Managers agreed that it has a lot to do with Pipedrive as a company "*be part of a this...of history. (...) we don't realize it because we live in a bubble, but very very few people are given the opportunity to be part of a...you know like a...the story of a company starts you know in a small country, double their employees and revenue numbers every year and could be coming one of the largest companies in the world*" (Manager B). Manager A also shares that the company has a chance to contribute to employees success as well "*we are fast growing company, we have high goals, you will have a lot of challenges, so we expect you to be great in what you do, and we will kinda do everything we can do make you successful.*".

In addition to the success of the company, Managers also agree that Pipedrive has a strong team that is something that the company can bring out as a promise "*I think one very very waterproof comment would be that you will be working with the top professionals and really great people*" (Manager C). Manager A adds to this idea more from the company's view as well "*It's a company, not a family, so we expect people to come in and do a lot of hard work, while at the same time we make sure that you have a really good environment while doing that work*".

Managers agree that Pipedrive fulfils employee's expectations on those promises "*yes, for the most part. I mean...nothing is perfect (...) people have different expectations in the end*" (Manager A). Manager A also shares more how Pipedrive makes sure that people come with the right expectations "*One part of this, like long interview process is ...we tend to say...usually job interview is a lot about selling, so companies is trying to sell themselves, the candidate is trying to sell themselves, aam...and then aamm.. Especially if the interview process is really short. The reality can be quite different. With the long interview process it's much harder to keep up with their appearances so even if they have amm...built up this nice story and facade, it will crumble on both sides.(...) I think we are doing pretty good job of representing the reality that will come*

after you are hired.". Manager C also agrees that in the interview process, the company already introduces the way it operates well "*And it makes the difference if we have this agreement in place from the beginning*".

In addition to that, Managers were also asked about the organisational culture aspects that they see Pipedrive should focus more on sharing out externally. Managers brought out different aspects here that they thought should be focused on communicating out more. Manager B saw that it should be about the diversity "*the fact that we are extremely diverse in nationalities. I think it's a ...it's pretty unique. But company of our size...we have like over 30 nationalities and six or seven offices, it's very rare (...) So like, the fact that we managed to grow like a ...you know a ...to that global extant, I think that we should show it.*" Manager A sees that it the way communication works should also be shared more "*like no boundaries between different levels of people in terms of communication and that really helps with spreading the ideas and yea... just having a good work environment.*"

In addition to showcasing the company externally and having a strong brand promise, it is important to have a differentiating factor from the competitors' side. On this topic, Managers have different opinions. For Manager A, the differentiating factor depends on the location "*that really depends on the location. I know what makes us different in Lisbon, we kind of take care of our people way better than most of the companies in Lisbon (...)in London, in New York (...)regular style minus the risk....in Tallinn I guess the competition is the toughest, probably....it's a very small market and everyone has a start-up...amm..so, what makes us different (...) the safety of established company where like staff is in place and it's not kinda random and chaotic and if you come to work then everything kinda works (...) so many companies have high goals and lot of challenges but internally things might not be aamm...very orderly or properly working*". Manager B also brings out that the way Pipedrive does business is important, but in addition to that, it is also that the company is originated from Europe comparing to an USA company "*there's always like a syndrome, like them and us, and you are remote (...) We have these European routes that are like very strong, and I think it brings a very interesting mix that people will be attracted to. So again, you have the best of the both worlds (...) you know the best practices from Silicon Valley and US and you still have like this routs and this ... you know like European character*."

Company brands aim to attract the right talent and not to be that appealing for people who the company is not interested in hiring. Managers opinions on who might not be a great fit has more

to do with the size and the business of the company *"who is an adverse to risk, because we are still a start-up. So someone who would like to be in a most stable environment"* (Manager B). Manager A and C also bring out that at the same time, some people would prefer to work in a smaller company *"With 200+ it's already a pretty big company"* (Manager A) *"who are missing this smaller group, and, and this knowing everyone and quick decisions and, and this environment"* (Manager C).

3.1.4. Creation of a strategic employer brand

Managers see that as Pipedrive is a global company with multiple offices, deciding who and where should focus on strategic creation of an employer brand. On the question whether Pipedrive should build a global brand, Managers agree that the difficult aspect is that every location is somewhat different. However, Manager A thinks that the company should focus on creating local brands, but Managers B and C think it should be global.

There were many reasons brought out why the Pipedrive employer brand should be global. Manager C approaches the topic from the hiring aspects *"we are after a global talent (…) it needs to be global obviously"*, Manager B sees that it is more connected with the overall brand of the company *"you know, like we created global brand, because again, brand is related to your purpose and our purpose is global. Like we want to make selling beautiful everywhere in the world. Like we want to, we want to make salespeople unstoppable everywhere in the world"*.

The main reasons of why the brand should be done locally comes from the different locations Pipedrive offices are at and the company is hiring in *"So it's already different. And aamm...and it should be different, because can't ensure people with the same promises that we do in Tallinn, like that wouldn't work in New York, because it wouldn't be true. The office is different, the size of the city is different, everything is so different, so it should be different, so apart from the core values and some of the things that are true for every location, we need to have unique selling proposition for every office"* (Manager A).

There is common ground between Managers opinions which is about the core aspects of the company being always the same, but at the same time, everything else can be targeted based on location *"There are some parts that are true for all locations. The company values are still the same. Like all of the different goals, but.... Apart from that every location is really different. So there should be like a two part plan. One is what's globally true for Pipedrive overall and then what's kinda unique about us in each location"* (Manager A). Manager B also agrees to it in

some degree *"you will give a different flavour, but you know like again the backbone of your employer brand is your purpose and your values and that should not change (…) So there will be some local flavour because sometimes you need to translate, you need to localize"*.

On the topic of deciding who should be the main person or a group of people responsible of creating and managing the employer brand, Managers opinions also differ. Manager A sees that it is difficult to decide *"Many things that the executive is deciding on, setting the strategy globally overall ....there are huge parts that HR organisation is doing globally, in terms of hiring procedures and everything we do around, like training, management training, onboarding people all of that stuff, and then in every location locally the site leader (...) and then there's the communication layer where marketing and communication amm...need to be more involved (...) all of it need to work together, but like I would say 80-90% of all of it is actually keeping these promises and then doing the right things first. Amm..so yea...too many people to say who's going to lead that effort"*.

When Manager A saw that it is something that many people are working on that have to come together to make an employer brand, Manager B sees that it is more about cooperation of two departments *"it's always like a swing between marketing and HR. Marketing because (...) brand should probably help the structure the employer (...) implementation should probably be led by HR. And there will be some communication channel that marketing will own"* Manager C however sees that it should be one person from either of the departments *"I think there has to be people involved from HR, from marketing, but who needs to be exactly the lead person I think it really depends on who is the right talent, either inside this company already or, or who we could find. Because ee...we know from other companies examples that it doesn't need to be exactly from HR or from marketing or maybe even some other areas, but it's important to ee....to have the knowledge and to have the drive to do that."*

Managers agree that in addition to deciding the scale of the brand and deciding who takes the lead role, it is also important to know that both the employer brand and the customer brand have a big impact on each other and that they are very linked in Pipedrive *"we probably we really use most of the ...customer materials for employer brand as well"* (Manager A).

When it comes to brand messaging, Managers also have a different view on what the company as a whole should take a stand in. As well the Managers agreed that this is something that has not been decided yet nobody is working on it at the moment. One of the reasons behind it is that

Manager A brings out that it is difficult to find something that goes with the business of Pipedrive *"we haven't mm...Try to be overly socially responsible because we don't think it's kinda matches our brand (...) the only thing I see that, the kinda social responsibility that fits with Pipedrive is making small business succeed"*.

Managers B and C see that Pipedrive should take a stand on gender balance *"I think there is still so much more work to be done around gender, you know like gender balance, especially in tech industry"* (Manager B), *"I personally believe that...supporting more the...woman in IT would be a really great are to invest more"* (Manager C). In addition, Manager C sees that Pipedrive is already helping IT students in their career *"supporting IT students, through internship for example, we have been, I don't have the statistics on the top of my mind, but we have had a lot of interns here, who we have helped either to help to get their career started here or, or at least they had the four months experience and, and having the great opportunity to apply to some other companies."*

Managers B and C also agree that employer branding is something that should be discussed and talked about more in the leadership team *"I can guarantee on you I will get far more involved with employer branding"* (Manager B), *"I think maybe would be...great to have more understanding from the leadership team as well, like ee...where (...) to go with employer branding, or, or brand itself. Eee...so far I think there haven't been like a ...executive team discussion about that topic"* (Manager C).

3.2. Results of employees research

At the time of the research, 380 people were employed in Pipedrive. 129 people answered to the employee research questionnaire. This means that 34% of all employees answered in this survey. Completion rate of the questionnaire was 75,9%.

Based on the gender, 80 (62%) respondents were men and 49 (38%) respondents were female. As Pipedrive employees are mostly men as well (71,62%) then the response rate is aligned with the gender balance of the organisation.

Respondents were also obliged to share the location that they are currently employed in. As the biggest Pipedrive office is in Estonia and the majority - 296 of employees are working in Estonia, this was also reflected in the response rate. At the time of the research, 46 people were

working in the Portugal office, 32 in the US and 12 in the United Kingdom. Responses based on location:

- Estonia – 99 (76,7% of all responses)
- Portugal – 19 (14,7% of all responses)
- USA – 7 (5,4% of all responses)
- UK – 4 (3,1% of all responses)

Pipedrive is a software as a service company so the majority of the employees are from technical backgrounds. Responses based on department were:

- Engineering – 47 (36,4% of all responses)
- Support & Sales – 24 (18,6% of all responses)
- Product – 23 (17,8% of all responses)
- GA (General Admissions) – 14 (10,9% of all responses)
- Infrastructure – 11 (8,5% of all responses)
- Marketing – 10 (7,8% of all responses)

Results were also compared based on time spent working in Pipedrive. Overall Pipedrive has grown over 100% each year so the bigger half of employees have joined in the recent years, with 49,6% of responders had been in the company for less than 1 year.

Table 1. Responses visualised based on respondents time spent working in Pipedrive

Time in Pipedrive (years)	Frequency (responses)	Percentage (%)
Up to 1	64	49,6
1-2	32	24,8
2-3	23	17,8
3-4	7	5,4
4-5	1	0,8
5+	2	1,6

Source: created by author

Respondents also had to share the length of their career. Even though majority of people employer in Pipedrive have started working in the company in the recent years, Pipedrive has focused on hiring senior talent which shows also in the responses where most of the people had 7 years of experience (43,4%) and least of people (7,8%) have had professional experience less than a year.

Table 2. Responses visualised based on respondents' career length

Career length (years)	Frequency (responses)	Percentage (%)
Up to 1	10	7,8%
1-3	20	15,5%
3-5	27	20,9%
5-7	16	12,4%
7+	56	43,4%

Source: created by author

All respondents had to write their gender, location, department, time spent working in Pipedrive and length of career so all responses were valid and used in the research. In quantitative analysis, all responses to the questionnaire were compared between the previously mentioned groups.

3.2.1. Reasons for coming to work in Pipedrive

Questions in this block aim to assess the current employer brand of Pipedrive through the responders' opinions. First question assesses the visibility and attractiveness of the brand, second question assesses what are the people looking for in the labour market that end up working in Pipedrive, , and the third question assesses how much the brand reflects the actual situation in the company.

First question is about whether choosing Pipedrive as an employer was a conscious decision. Responders had to answer in Likert – 5 point scale based on if they agreed with the statement. 102 people - 62 of responders strongly agreed (48,1%) or agreed (31,0%) that choosing Pipedrive was their conscious decision. 17 people (13,2%) decided to remain neutral and 10 people (7,7%) either strongly disagreed (7 responses – 5,4%) or disagreed (3 responses – 2,3%).

Author performed a t-test One-Way ANOVA to analyse the responses within different groups, to assess if there were any significant differences between groups when answering these questions. There were no significant differences found. The results were, based on location ($F=0,864$, $p=0,487$), gender ($F=0,295$, $p=0,881$), department ($F=0,733$, $p=0,571$), length of career ($F=0,809$, $p=0,522$) and time spent working in Pipedrive ($F=1,800$, $p=0,133$).

The aim on the question was to understand if the company brand was strong enough to make it an attractive workplace. Based on the results that over 79% of all responders agreed that choosing Pipedrive as an employer was their conscious decision means that brand is viewed to be attractive and the employer with that desirable.

Second question was about understanding what are the key factors for Pipedrive employees, how they look for a workplace. The question type was Maxdiff which means that responders had to prioritize shown factors based on what is more important to them when looking for a job, responders saw factors multiple times so this helped analyse the key important factors to them.

Table 3. Research question "What is important to you when you're looking for a job?

Factor	Most important (%)	Least important (%)
People I work with	51,7	5,4
Work-life balance	42,3	10,8
Challenging job	36,8	11,6
Salary	35	10,1
Career opportunities in the company	34,6	14
Flexible work schedule	23,1	21,5
My manager	16,5	17,6
Management of the company	15,7	21,6
Company reputation	9,7	26,3
Product/field of the company	16	44,4
International opportunities	6,2	55,3
Company benefits (sport benefits, events, office etc.)	4,3	54,5

Source: Created by author

Based on the answers, the most important factor how people choose their workplace is "people I work with" which was the most important factor 51,7% of the times, following with "work-life balance" which was selected as the most important factor 42,3% of the times. Author also looked into how different groups responded to this question. The most important factor – "people I work with" was the most chosen one in all groups besides people working in the USA office and people whose career has lasted 1-3 years, for whom "work-life balance" was the most important factor. For people working in the marketing department, "salary" was the most important factor when looking for a job. For people located in the UK office, "my manager" was the most important factor. And last exception was Sales & Support department who thought that "career opportunities in the company" where the most important factor.

Based on the previous results, we can draw conclusions that people who choose Pipedrive as a workplace are mainly looking for a workplace with the right type of people. As there were some

differences between results based on groups, this can be further analysed and used when attracting people to some concrete departments.

Third question in this section aims to understand if the brand is communicated out truthfully to the candidates. The statement was if Pipedrive has fulfilled their expectations. Responders were asked to choose how much they agree with the statement on Likert 5-point scale. Here, 116 of responders agreed with the statement – 72 of them strongly agreed (55,8%) and 44 agreed (34,1%). Rest of the responders either remained neutral (6 – 4,7%), disagreed (5 – 3,9%) or strongly disagreed (2 – 1,6%).

Author performed a t-test One-Way ANOVA to analyse the responses within different groups, but there was no significant difference found. The results were, based on location ($F=0,909$, $p=0,461$), gender ($F=1,217$, $p=0,307$), department ($F=0,557$, $p=0,695$), length of career ($F=0,865$, $p=0,487$) and time spent working in Pipedrive ($F=1,150$, $p=0,336$).

Based on the responses that 116 people out of 129 claimed that Pipedrive has fulfilled their expectations, means that brand is communicated out truthfully to the people when looking for a job.

3.2.2. Benefits of working in Pipedrive

The following questions were asked to understand the reasons why people choose to work in Pipedrive. The first question aims to understand if people are satisfied with working in Pipedrive, second question assesses if people would recommend Pipedrive as an employer to others, third one asks why people think Pipedrive is unique and the last question in this block aims to analyse the factors that have the biggest influence on people on staying in Pipedrive.

The first question was a statement that the responders had to assess on 5-point Likert scale whether they agree with it or not. The statement was "I am happy I am working in Pipedrive". 116 people either strongly agreed (76 – 58,9% of respondents) or agreed (40 – 30,0% of respondents) with the statement. Rest, 13 of people remained neutral (8 – 6,2%), disagreed (3 – 2,3%) or strongly disagreed with it (2 – 1,6%).

Author also ran t-test One-Way ANOVA to see if there are any differences between how different groups responded. There was a statistically significant difference between groups based on their location as determined by One-Way ANOVA ($F=4,069$, $p=0,004$). Results based on

other grouping variables – gender (F=0,743, p=0,564), department (F=0,353, p=0,841), career length (F=1,364, p=0,250) and time spent in Pipedrive (F=1,466, p=0,217). Based on these results, the majority of the people are satisfied with working in Pipedrive, however, that there are differences between depending on the location where a person is working at.

The second question was about understanding what the key factors are for Pipedrive employees that keep them in Pipedrive. The question type was Maxdiff which means that responders had to prioritize shown factors based on what is more important to them on why they are working in Pipedrive, responders saw factors multiple times so this helped analyse the key important factors to them.

Based on the results of this question, the main thing that keeps people in Pipedrive was "people I work with" which was chosen as the most important factor 55,9% out of the times. Following factor was "challenging job" that was the most important factor 42,2% of the times.

Table 4. Research question "What is keeping you in Pipedrive"

Factor	Most important (%)	Least important (%)
People I work with	55,9	2,3
Challenging job	42,2	10,4
Work-life balance	37,3	12,3
Career opportunities in the company	37,3	12,6
Salary	34,1	11,6
Flexible work schedule	25,1	18
Management of the company	15,6	24,9
My manager	12,3	25,8
Company reputation	9	31,5
Product/field of the company	10	43,9
Company benefits (sport benefits, events, Office etc.)	6,6	43,6
International opportunities	6,3	55,5

Source: Created by author

Author also looked into how different groups responded to this question. When examining groups, then majority here again chose "people I work with" as the most important factor. Exceptions based on location were responders from USA who chose "work-life balance" as the most important one and responders from UK who chose "challenging job". Based on department, the only exception was marketing, where "challenging job" was considered more

important. Based on time spent working in Pipedrive, people with over 3 years spent working in Pipedrive, "career opportunities in the company" was chosen as the most important factor. When creating a Pipedrive value proposition, based on these answers the biggest reason keeping people in Pipedrive are the co-workers which could be use when creating a brand promise.

The third question was also a statement that respondents had to assess on a 5-point Likert scale. The statement was "I would recommend Pipedrive as an employer to others". Here, 120 people said they would recommend Pipedrive to others, out of them 87 strongly agreed (67,4%) and 33 agreed (25,6%). Others, 9 people either remained neutral (5 – 3,9%), disagreed (1 – 0,8%) or strongly disagreed (3 – 2,3%).

Based on t-test One-Way ANOVA, there were no significant differences between the groups in this question. Results were based on gender ($F=0,464$, $p=0,762$), location ($F=1,781$, $p=0,137$), department ($F=0,348$, $p=0,845$), career length ($F=1,065$, $p=0,377$), time spent working in Pipedrive ($F=0,491$, $p=0,742$).

Figure 2. Research question: "What in your opinion makes Pipedrive as an employer unique?" Source: Answers created into word cloud by Survey Gizmo

Fourth question in the employee research was an open question about what in responders' opinions makes Pipedrive as an employer unique. Based on the responses, Survey Gizmo created a word cloud. Based on the responses, the main thing responders bring out about a unique factor in Pipedrive, are the people.

3.2.3. Pipedrive internal employer brand

The following statements were brought to understand employees opinions on Pipedrive's organisational culture. First statement assesses if employees think that Pipedrive is solving

important issues in the world. Second statement was about Pipedrive as an employer taking a stand on things relevant for the person and the last statement is about whether people think that it is important to be aligned with the company values.

The first question was in a form of a statement that the responders had to assess on 5-point Likert scale whether they agree with it or not. The statement was "In my opinion, Pipedrive is solving an important issue in the world". 62 people either strongly agreed (11 – 8,5% of respondents) or agreed (51 – 39,5% of respondents) with the statement. Many people decided to remain neutral in this question (45 – 39,5% of all respondents). 22 people either disagreed (18 – 14,0% of respondents or strongly disagreed (4 – 3,1% of respondents).

Author performed a t-test One-Way ANOVA to analyse the responses within different groups, but there was no significant difference found. The results were based on location ($F=1,248$, $p=0,294$), gender ($F=2,008$, $p=0,097$), department ($F=2,582$, $p=0,040$), length of career ($F=0,885$, $p=0,475$) and time spent working in Pipedrive ($F=1,365$, $p=0,250$).

The second statement was "Pipedrive takes a stand on things that I care about" and the responders had to assess it on 5-point Likert scale, 5 being "strongly agree" and 1 being "strongly disagree". 57 people either strongly agreed (13 – 10,1% of respondents) or agreed (44 – 34,1%) with the statement. 54 people decided to remain neutral that made out the biggest percentage – 41,9% of people. 18 people either strongly disagreed (3 – 2,3%) or disagreed (15 – 11,6%) with the statement.

Author performed a t-test One-Way ANOVA to analyse the responses within different groups, but there was no significant difference found. The results were based on location ($F=0,891$, $p=0,472$), gender ($F=1,931$, $p=0,109$), department ($F=0,386$, $p=0,818$), length of career ($F=1,201$, $p=0,314$) and time spent working in Pipedrive ($F=0,990$, $p=0,416$).

The last statement was about company values to understand how important people consider them to be. The statement was "It is important for me to be aligned with the company values (no excuses, reach for greatness, team first, don't ruin other peoples days, internal drive, teachability)" and responders had to assess on 5-point Likert scale whether they agree with it or not. 119 of responders either strongly agreed (73 – 56,6% of responders) or agreed (46 – 35,7%) with the statement. 6 people decided to remain neutral (making out 4,7%). 4 people either strongly disagreed (3 – 2,3%) or disagreed (1 – 0,8%) with the statement.

Author performed a t-test One-Way ANOVA to analyse the responses within different groups, but there was no significant difference found. The results were, based on location ($F=2,033$, $p=0,094$), gender ($F=2,556$, $p=0,042$), department ($F=0,177$, $p=0,950$), length of career ($F=1,692$, $p=0,156$) and time spent working in Pipedrive ($F=1,512$, $p=0,203$).

Based on the answers in the internal brand area, there is no significant difference between people from different genders, locations, departments and neither the length of their career and time spent in Pipedrive.

3.3. Discussion and suggestions

The author will now bring the conclusions based on the results of the research. The conclusions are presented based on the research questions. Also, the author of the thesis will bring together these findings with the theoretical and research part and brings suggestions to the management on employer branding and a suggestive employer value proposition for Pipedrive.

The first research question of this thesis was "What are the reasons why people choose to come to work in Pipedrive?"

Managers had similar ideas when it came to understanding why people choose to apply to work in Pipedrive. They saw that the current image of the company is positive but rather small as every company has an employer brand whether they work on it or not (Robertson & Khatibi, 2012), the managers assessed that the foundation for a strong brand is set and now there is a need for more strategic planning. Especially the managers brought out there is more need to work on brand visibility in some countries where the offices are like the UK, USA and less in Portugal as well. The visibility of Pipedrive as an employer in Estonia is stronger. Being more visible and associated with a positive brand brings also more candidates and helps the company grow (Franca & Pahor, 2012).

Based on the Managers' research in this thesis, the main reasons why people choose to come to work in Pipedrive in their eyes, is because of the people already working in the company. Based on the employee research, the main reasons why people choose to work in Pipedrive is the same as the Managers' opinion was – because of the people that work in the company. If people are loyal to the company and happy with the employee experience there as well, it draws more candidates to apply to that company (Bakanauskiene et al. 2017).

The other parts of Pipedrive, in the eyes of the potential employees, were different from manager to manager, but the main things pointed out were also about Pipedrive being a successful start-up company that gives people the possibility to decide on their own, but gives also the feeling of a financial sustainability. Managers saw that the brand was communicated out truthfully and the brand promise fulfilled once people started to work in the company as well. The biggest support here through their eyes was the long thorough selection process that every employee goes through.

The following factors, that the employees also found relevant, were the challenging job that they get in the company together with a good work-life balance. Applying for the company was mainly employees conscious decision which means that these aspects of the employee experience were communicated out well. The important factors that managers and employees brought out in addition to "people" as a reason why candidates choose to apply to work in Pipedrive, vary. This could be a potential issue as if the brand message that managers communicate out to the candidates, is different from the actual situation in the workplace through employees' eyes, it could negatively affect employees engagement and loyalty (Lyold, 2002; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Hanin et al. 2013). It is especially important to have the same idea of a brand to make sure that the word-of-mouth in the market is aligned with the company goals (Uen et al. 2015).

Managers saw that the main reasons why people are not interested in choosing Pipedrive as an employer, are more connected with the fact that the company was already big in terms of employees and at the same time, not as stable as some other companies, due to the company still being a start-up. From the employee research, the less important things what people were looking for before starting to work in Pipedrive were connected with company benefits, international opportunities and product/field of the company. These are important things to know, as it is important in branding to become the employer of choice for the right target groups (Lyold, 2002; Backhaus, 2016; Love & Singh, 2011). Based on Keller's Brand Equity Model, it is important that an employer brand is prepared for the negative opinions on what candidates could bring out and based on this, managers seem to be prepared (Keller, 2003).

The second research question of this thesis was "Which are the benefits of working in Pipedrive?"

Managers see that peoples' expectations are mostly fulfilled when they start working in Pipedrive. Some of the reasons behind it are connected with a lengthy honest interview process that helps to understand what the company is about. Here, 89,9% of the employees also agreed that Pipedrive has fulfilled their expectations, in addition, 89,9% of people agreed that they are happy working in Pipedrive. Previous research shows as well the importance of being a desirable employer but at the same time, creating an image of the company that is truthful (Abimbola & Foster, 2010; Backhaus, 2016). As the employees think highly of the employer it means, that the internal employer brand is successful (Wallace et al 2014).

In order to build a successful brand, based on Keller's Brand Equity Model, it is important as a first stage of building an employer brand, to be sure that the company has a differentiating factor (Keller, 2003). When discussing about things that people definitely will experience while working in Pipedrive, managers brought out the success of the company, especially the story behind it in combination with a good team environment. When asking the question from employees about what makes Pipedrive as an employer unique, they also brought out "people". It is seen that a successful brand should be created with support from both managers and employees, as both sides bring out the same unique thing about the company which is its people, this could be successfully used as a differentiating factor about the company (Love & Singh, 2011).

Managers saw that the main benefits that influence employees' decision to stay working in Pipedrive, are about the challenging work experiences that people get. The main reasons connected with it were the possibilities to see a successful company grow from small to global. In addition, managers also pointed out the people and a great team. Employees also shared their opinion on what keeps them in Pipedrive and the most important thing was the people of the company, followed by challenging job and the work-life balance. Here, the managers and employees opinions are similar and with that, the main things that are keeping people in Pipedrive are the co-workers and the challenging job. Based on Keller's Brand Equity Model, the second step in building a successful employer brand is understanding what the employer brand means to the employees (Keller, 2003). Based on this, seems like a Managers are quite aware of what the company's employer brand means to its employees.

When asking from employees about if they see that Pipedrive is solving an important issue in the world, 48% of employees agreed with it. In addition to that answer, when asking the employees whether in their eyes, Pipedrive is taking a stand on things that they care about, 44,2% of them agreed with it. Managers also saw that the company so far has not taken a stand on certain topics. One manager brought out that it is especially connected with the fact that there is no clear thing that would go with the company brand. However two managers saw that they felt the company should take a stand on gender balance and supporting women in technology. Based on Keller's Brand Equity Model, it is important to make the company and its brand meaningful for its employees and to take a stand on the topics that employees care about (Keller, 2003).

When asking from the employees if they see that it is important for them to be aligned with the company values, 92,3% of respondents agreed with it. Bakanauskiene saw in 2017 research that if employees are loyal and committed to the brand of the company and its values, it increases the possibility that other people become interested in working there as well. This also shows that employees are emotionally attached to a company which means that that managers have been successful in aligning employees' behaviours and values to the brand (Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

The third research question of this thesis was "Which are the differences of how employees see benefits of working in Pipedrive based on gender, different office location, department, working experience and time spent in Pipedrive?"

Based on the Manager research, they saw that the current employer brand of Pipedrive is not consistent throughout locations. They saw that the things similar in all locations are connected with the company values and goals. The differentiations come when looking at each location separately due to the different markets. They agreed that one of the biggest differences between locations are the current visibility of Pipedrive's employer brand.

When analysing the way how employees answered in different departments, locations with different time spent working overall and in Pipedrive, there were not many differences. However, the differences came when seeing what people are taking into consideration when choosing a job – in Estonia and Portugal it was "people I work with", in the USA it was "work-life balance", in the UK it was "my manager". Based on this seems like people find Pipedrive when they are looking for different things in the location they are in.

Also, when employees were asked if they are happy working in Pipedrive, there was a significant difference based on locations. In addition, when people were asked to bring out what

is keeping them in Pipedrive, people in Estonia and Portugal answered "people I work with", employees in the USA answered "work-life balance" and people in the UK answered "challenging job". Based on location, seems like people value different things in Pipedrive, which could support the idea of localising the employer brand for location or creating a separate employer brand based on location. Managers did not agree whether Pipedrive wants to aim towards creating a global employer brand, creating a global brand and localizing in small amounts to different locations or to keep the values of the company the same and focus on creating local employer brands.

There were not many differences based on gender, departments, working experience and time spent in Pipedrive. Majority of people answered to when they are looking for a job, the most important factor for them is "people I work with", however, for those whose career has lasted 1-3 years, chose "work-life balance" to be the most important one. Based on department, people employed in marketing chose "salary" as the most important factor when looking for a job and Sales & Support department chose "career opportunities in the company".

In the question of what keeps people in Pipedrive, majority of employees chose "people I work with", but the differences in addition to location were connected with department – people employed in marketing chose "challenging job" to be the most important factor and for people who had worked in Pipedrive over 3 years, it was "career opportunities in the company". When looking into differences based on department, gender, and time spent in Pipedrive, time working, there are some differences that could potentially take into consideration when targeting a specific kind of a professional.

Based on the discussions, the author now brings **suggestions** to the management of Pipedrive.

- The aim of this thesis was to create an employer value proposition for Pipedrive. Based on the findings the author suggest to bring out people/team and challenging work as the key factors to communicate out externally as the most important things about the employer brand in Pipedrive;
- When starting to focus on building a strategic employer brand, there should be a decision made about who is running the process and what are the responsibilities of parties involved (HR and marketing departments and the leadership team). Author suggests that roles between each of the parties involved to be clarified and decision made about who takes the lead role in employer branding;

- Author suggest the management of Pipedrive to make a decision about how consistent Pipedrive wants to keep its brand and how much localisation should be done based on office locations as the findings show that there a differences between offices when it comes to employer brand;

- It is relevant to build up a strategic brand that is truthfully communicated out to the candidates and reflects honestly the work in Pipedrive. If it is decided that there will be more separate brands built up in each location, author suggests that the overall brand to be consistent and follow the same basis together with values and goals of the company;

- Author suggests the management of Pipedrive to decide on what are the things the company wants to take a stand on – as managers and employees of the research do not have a common understanding on what the fields should be connected with it, there should be further research done to clarify the field of it

In addition to the suggestions, author brings out that Pipedrive employees brought out that Pipedrive has fulfilled their expectations. This means that the brand was communicated out to them truthfully. As well, the employees bring out that they are happy working in Pipedrive and would recommend Pipedrive as an employer to their friends. This can been seen as a connection between Pipedrive winning the award for Best Employer in Estonia, where also employees themselves were the ones who voted the company to win it.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to create an employer value proposition for Pipedrive based on employees' opinions. In order to achieve the goal, author stated three research questions to find answers through this thesis.

1. What are the reasons why people choose to come to work in Pipedrive?
2. Which are the benefits of working in Pipedrive?
3. Which are the differences of how employees see benefits of working in Pipedrive based on gender different office location, department, working experience and time spent in Pipedrive?

As a summary for the theoretical overview, the author found that companies have started putting more efforts into employer branding as it is a way to affect the opinions that people have towards a company. Even though the competition for the top talent has grown rapidly over time, it is still a topic that has been researcher less about. External employer branding became more important before internal employer branding. As research shows, it has become more relevant to build an employer brand from inside out. The best way to communicate out what company offers for its employees and what makes it different from competitors, is to create an employer value proposition.

This thesis was focusing on the internal employer branding aspects more as currently Pipedrive does not have a strong understanding of its employees on why they chose Pipedrive as an employer, what keeps them in Pipedrive and what in their eyes makes the company unique. In addition to that, it was asked from the management of Pipedrive side to focus on the internal side of employer branding as an external agency will be working on the external employer branding side.

The object of thesis was an IT company Pipedrive where the author is an employee as well. Pipedrive is a global company that employed 380 people at the time of the research in its offices in Estonia, Portugal, USA and in the UK. In order to get a clear understanding of the managements' plans on employer branding, the author chose three key managers who have

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impact in employer branding decision making both globally and locally in at least one of the office sites in Pipedrive. In addition to that, a questionnaire was sent out to all of the employees to get an understanding of what their opinions are in the topic of employer branding.

The Managers research shows employer branding was a relevant topic for them. All of the people interviewed saw that it is important to focus on creating a strategic brand and the foundation for it is already built. There was not common understanding on some of the topics like who should be responsible for leading the employer branding efforts or what are the roles of other departments and people involved in it. In addition, also the question of scope of strategic employer branding was not agreed upon – whether it will be localised more in each of the offices or will be more unified in all of them.

Managers saw that the most important factors about Pipedrive's employer brand are about the team and the people of Pipedrive. In addition they also saw that as the company is quite unique since it was started in a small country in Europe and is rapidly growing and overall successful which could be a very interesting experience for everybody involved. Overall managers felt that Pipedrive has been doing well in employer branding efforts, but the brand lacks visibility in the market.

Research made with employees of Pipedrive shows similar results with the managers as employees as well brought out that the main thing that is unique about Pipedrive and what is keeping them working in the company, are the people they work with. As well they brought out that their challenging job is another important factor for them. There were some differences in how people saw the brand of Pipedrive that mainly came from being in different Pipedrive offices. This might suggest the relevance of either focusing on keeping the brand more consistent or moving towards having more separate localised brands.

Based on the research results, the author of the thesis found that the employer value proposition of Pipedrive should be connected with people/team and a challenging work as some of the most important things that are connected with employee experience in Pipedrive. Based on the research done with the managers and the employees, both brought out people as the thing that makes Pipedrive unique and employees also chose "challenging job" as the second most important factor keeping them in Pipedrive.

In addition, based on employees research it can be said that Pipedrive employer brand so far has been communicated out truthfully as employees brought out that Pipedrive has fulfilled their

expectations. Also, employees answered that they are happy working in Pipedrive and would recommend it as an employer to their friends. This is something that can be connected with also Pipedrive winning the award for Best Employer in Estonia in 2018, where also the employees themselves vote Pipedrive for this prize.

In addition to the suggestive employer value proposition, the author of the thesis also brings out some suggestions about the employer branding efforts in Pipedrive. First one is connected with deciding about the people involved with the employer branding process in Pipedrive, who takes a leader role and what other roles people have. Second one was about consistency of the brand – there should be a decision among management on whether they see that the employer brand should be built up separately in each locations, unified in all locations or it should be a mixture of both. The final suggestion was about taking a stand on what the company cares for as this could potentially increase the strength of the brand.

This thesis focused more on the internal aspects of strategic employer branding. So far, there has been less research done in this perspective in comparison with the external perspective of employer branding. Future research could go more in-depth with the internal branding, especially as there is little research available for creation an employer value proposition from inside of the company. Also, the methodology used here could be used to create an employer value proposition in a local company that does not have offices globally. For future research, it would be possible to go more in-depth into understanding managements' ideas if the interviews were done with everybody in the management team.

The goal of this master's thesis has been achieved and the suggestive employer value proposition has been created. There have already been multiple presentations about the results found on this research and implementation of this strategic employer branding through the employer value proposition is in progress. With this, the author confirms that this thesis gives a good model for other to follow when creating a strategic employer brand from inside of the company.

Author brings out the limitations of this thesis. One the limitations comes for the lower amount of answers from people in offices other than Estonia which could had been avoided by keeping the questionnaire open for a longer time. Also, the question about "When I was looking for a job, choosing Pipedrive was my conscious decision" might had been understood in different ways and in the future researches, the questions wording should be corrected.

KOKKUVÕTE

SISEMISE TÖÖANDJA BRÄNDI VÄÄRTUSPAKKUMISE LOOMINE KUI STRATEEGILINE VIIS TÖÖANDJA BRÄNDI ÜLES EHITADA IT ETTEVÕTTE PIPEDRIVE NÄITEL

Kristiine Kukk

Eesti rahvastik on vähenemas ning samal ajal konkurents kvalifitseeritud töötajate järele kasvab. See on tekitanud olukorra, kus ettevõtted saavad vähem valida endale heade kandidaatide seast töötajaid ning peavad hakkama võistlema selle eest, et endale õigeid töötajaid leida. See on loonud olukorra, kus üha enam keskendutakse sellele, millisena potentsiaalsed kandidaadid ettevõtet näevad. Teisi sõnu, ettevõtted on hakanud rohkem tähtsustama enda tööandja brändi.

Olukorras, kus konkurents aina kasvab, on oluline luua tööandja väärtuspakkumine, et tutvustada potentsiaalsetele töötajatele seda, mida saab ettevõte pakkuda ning millised võimalused töötajatel on. Varasemad uuringud näitavad, et oluline on ehitada üles tööandja bränd ettevõtte seest poolt, et lõplik bränd kuvaks ettevõtet ausalt nii olemasolevate kui ka tulevaste töötajate jaoks. Antud magistritöö on läbiviidud IT ettevõttes Pipedrive juhtkonna soovil, et lahendada probleemi, kus ettevõttel pole piisavalt informatsiooni selle kohta, millisena näevad olemasolevad töötajad tööandja brändi.

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärgiks oli luua sisemine tööandja väärtuspakkumine, mis tugineks olemasolevate töötajate ning juhtide arvamusele. Selle eesmärgi saavutamiseks püstitas autor järgnevad uurimisküsimused:

1. Mis põhjustel valivad inimesed Pipedrive'i enda tööandjaks?
2. Mida hinnatakse Pipedrive'is töötamise puhul kõige olulisemaks?
3. Milliseid erisusi tuleb ette sooliselt, asukohaliselt, osakonniti, tööstaaži ning Pipedrive'is tööl oldud ajast lähtudes teemal tööandja olulisuse nägemine?

Magistritöö raames viis autor läbi nii kvalitatiivse kui ka kvantitatiivse uurimuse Pipedrive'is. Selleks, et saada aru, milline on juhtide perspektiiv tööandja brändingu osas, viis autor läbi kolm intervjuud võtmeisikutega juhtkonnast, kellel oli rohkem otsustusõigust töötajate ja tööandja brändi teemadel nii globaalselt kui ka kohaliku üksuse tasandil. Ühtlasi kasutas autor töötajate perspektiivi aru saamiseks kvantitatiivset uurimusmeetodit läbi küsimustikku, mis saadeti globaalselt kõigile töötajatele.

Magistritöö tulemusena selgus, et nii töötajatel kui ka juhtidel on sarnane arusaam sellest, mis on Pipedrive'i kui tööandja väärtuspakkumine. Kõige olulisemana Pipedrive'is töötamise puhul tuli mõlemast uuringust välja asjaolu, et Pipedrive'i teeb unikaalseks head inimesed/meeskonna kaaslased ning väljakutsete rohke töö. Need olid ühtlasi ka põhjused, mis töötajaid kõige rohkem Pipedrive'i kandideerima toovad ning ettevõttes töötajatena ka hoiavad.

Kuna Pipedrive on globaalne tööandja, tuli aruteluks ka see, kuivõrd oluline on luua tööandja bränd, mis oleks järjepidev ja sarnane igas riigis, kus Pipedrive esindatud on. Sellele teemal ei olnud intervjueeritud juhtidel kindel üksmeel ning kohati nähti, et bränd peaks põhinema samadel väärtustel, kuid muidu asukoha järgi kohandatud, täiesti eraldi üles ehitatud või siiski sama globaalselt. Asjaolu, et inimesed näevad erinevates asukohtades Pipedrive'i väärtust tööandjana erinevalt, ilmnes ka töötajate uuringus. Näiteks, eesti ja portugali töötajate jaoks oli kõige olulisem väärtus Pipedrive'is töötamise juures „inimesed", kui New Yorkis oli selleks „töö-eraelu tasakaal" ning Londonis „väljakutsete rohke töö". Autor soovitab juhtkonnal otsustada, kas bränd ehitatakse üles erinevates kohtades iseseisvana, kuna strateegiliselt tööandja brändi üles ehitades on oluline, et tulemus oleks aus ning järjepidev olenemata riigist, kus Pipedrive'ist kuuldakse.

Lisaks sellele, et otsustada selle osas, kas tööandja bränd peaks olema sarnane igas asukohas, lisas autor soovitusena ka sellel, et on vaja otsustada selle osas, kes või mis osakond peaks võtma juhtrolli tööandja brändi strateegilises ülesehitamises. Juhid siin kohal nägid selle lahendamist erinevalt. Ennekõike nähti, et see peaks olema tehtud juhtkonna või turunduse-, personaliosakonna poolt, kuid kindlat otsust sel teemal ei selginenud. Autor soovitab täpsustada iga osakonna rollid ning leppida, kes asub juhtrolli.

Töötajate uuring aga näitas, et senine tööandja bränd on kõnetanud õigeid inimesi ning töötajate näevad, et nende ootused on ettevõttesse tööle tulles täitunud. Juhid näevad, et üheks selle saavutamise viisiks on olnu põhjaliku intervjuu protsessi läbi viimine, mis näitab tööandjat

ausana ning võimaldab ka kandidaatide ausa tundma õppimise. Lisaks sellele, on enamus Pipedrive'i töötajatest õnnelikud, et nad on just Pipedrive'i enda tööandjaks valinud. See oli kooskõlas ka ettevõtte senise eduga näiteks Eestis, saavutades ka Unistuste Tööandja tiitli aastal 2018.

Inimesed on ettevõttesse rohkem pühendunud, kui nad tunnevad, et ettevõte hoolib samadest väärtustest milledest nemad hoolivad. Autor soovitab juhtkonnal otsustada, mis on need teemad-valdkonnad, millega tahetakse rohkem seotud olla. Töötajate uuringust tuli välja, et hetkel näeb 44,1% töötajatest, et Pipedrive võtab sõna teemadel, mis neile on olulised. Juhid ise nägid, et sel teemal ei ole piisavalt ette võetud ning potentsiaalsete valdkondadena nähti IT tudengite toetamist karjääri üles ehitamisel, sõna võtmine soolise tasakaalu teemadel IT ettevõtetes ning väikeste ettevõttete edu tagamisel.

Magistritöö eesmärk, luua Pipedrive'ile strateegiline soovituslik tööandja väärtuspakkumine, on saavutatud. Väärtuspakkumise soovitus oli, et see peab olema seotud inimeste ning tähendusrikka-väljakutsuva tööga. Autor on sel teemal vestelnud ka ettevõtte juhtkonnaga ning saab väita, et töö strateegilise tööandja brändi üles ehitamisel, on alanenud. Autor kinnitab, et kasutatud läbitud protsess toimib hästi strateegilise tööandja brändi loomiseks ettevõtte siseselt.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions

The aim is to understand your as a manager opinion on topics related to employer brand and other topics from the author's thesis called: Creation of an internal employee value proposition as a strategic way of building an employer brand in Pipedrive.

Your responses will be recorded and written down later, but you will be referred to as a manager a/b/c, not by name or title to ensure your anonymity. Participating is voluntary and you can stop the interview at any moment you want.

Some things to define before:

Employer brand is organization's reputation as an employer, and its value proposition to its employees; supports the attraction, engagement and retention of talented candidates and employees. An employer brand doesn't strictly belong to the employer: it is shaped and driven by its employees and other stakeholders (active and passive candidates, clients, customers and other key stakeholders).

Employer branding is the strategy and actions an organization takes to influence internal and external perceptions of the organisation as an employer; it is integral to business strategy and a critical part of recruitment strategy.

The employer value proposition (EVP) is a unique set of offerings, associations and values to positively influence target candidates and employees. A company needs a unique employer offer. The EVP gives current and future employees a reason to work for an employer and reflects the company's competitive advantage.

Company culture is the sum of values, attitudes and behaviours (consistent, observable patterns of behaviour e.g. "how we do things") as well as the organizational policies, processes and incentives (monetary and non-monetary rewards, recognitions, advancement and sanctions) that shape these attitudes and behaviours.

Background questions

- How involved are you with questions related to employees and hiring? Are you more involved in a specific location or globally?
- Why have you decided to be/not to be involved?
- Opinion on employer brand

- In your opinion, is employer branding beneficial for a company?
- What in your opinion are the benefits of having a strategic employer brand?
- Do you think Pipedrive should have a strategic employer brand? Why?

Pipedrive as an employer

- Research has shown that every company has an employer brand, regardless if they work on it or not. What in your opinion is Pipedrive's current employer brand about?
- What in your opinion are the main reason why people choose to apply to work in Pipedrive?
- What in your opinion is the main reason why people choose to stay in Pipedrive?
- What can Pipedrive promise to new employees/candidates that they will experience when working in Pipedrive?
- Do you think Pipedrive fulfill's people's expectations when they come work in Pipedrive? Why?
- What are the aspects of Pipedrive's organisational culture that you think we should showcase externally?
- What makes Pipedrive different from competitors who are hiring the same talents like we?
- What do you think, what is the main reason why a person would consciously decide not to apply for Pipedrive?

Creating an employer brand

- Do you think Pipedrive should focus on creating a global employer brand, that is unified in all locations where our offices are?
- Do you think that the employer brand is different at the moment in various locations? What in your opinion are the biggest differences and similarities?
- Who in your opinion should take the lead role in building employer brand in Pipedrive?
- What impact in your opinion is having our customer brand to our employer brand and vice-a-versa?
- Research has shown that one way of attracting the right people to join a company is to care about the same things as they do? For example, actively taking a stand on world issues. What do you think are the topics that Pipedrive takes or wants to take a stand on?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

The actual questionnaire was built in a different format, but as that was not possible to download in the existing format, the questions are brought here to show what they were. On questions 6 and the attributes are showed automatically in random 4 pairs in 6 sets.

Dear colleague,

This survey is created by Kristiine Kukk, Talent Hunter in Pipedrive Estonia offices who's also a Masters student in Personnel and Development at Tallinn Technical University. This survey is created as a part of the thesis on the topic - "Creation of an Employer Value Proposition as a strategic way of building Employer Brand in Pipedrive"

Later on, this data will be used by Pipedrive Communications & HR teams in order to build the Employer Brand of Pipedrive. This research is focusing on Pipedrive globally.

The survey will take less than 5 minutes to fill in.

Responses to the questionnaire will be kept anonymous.

Participation is voluntary but highly appreciated.

Thank you for your contribution!

Kristiine Kukk

I Background questions

1. Gender
    a. Male
    b. Female
2. Where are you working?
    a. Estonia
    b. USA
    c. Portugal
    d. UK
3. In what department are you working in?
    a. Engineering
    b. Infrastructure
    c. Marketing
    d. Product

e. GA
        f. Sales
        g. Support
    4. How long has your professional career lasted?
        a. Up to 1 year
        b. 1-3 years
        c. 3-5 years
        d. 5-7 years
        e. 7+ years
    5. How long have you been working in Pipedrive?
        a. Up to 1 year
        b. 1-2 years
        c. 2-3 years
        d. 3-4 years
        e. 4-5 years
        f. 5+ years

II Choosing workplace

    6. What is important for you when you're looking for a job?

You will be presented with 6 sets of 4 possible things affecting your decision to apply for a job.

Choose:

- Most important for you when choosing a job
- Least important for you when choosing a job

2 factors will be left without a rating

Then click "next" to advance to the next set.

Attributes:

- Salary
- Company benefits (sport benefits, events, office etc.)
- Career opportunities in the company
- Challenging job
- People I work with
- My manager
- Management of the company
- International opportunities
- Flexible work schedule
- Work-life balance

- Company reputation
- Product/field of the company

III Choosing Pipedrive as an employer

7. When I was looking for a job, choosing Pipedrive was my conscious decision

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

8. Pipedrive has fulfilled my expectations

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

9. I am happy I am working in Pipedrive

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

10. I would recommend Pipedrive as an employer to others

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

11. What in your opinion makes Pipedrive as an employer unique?

IV Reasons for working in Pipedrive
12. What is keeping you in Pipedrive?

You will be presented with 6 sets of 4 possible things affecting your decision to apply for a job.

Choose:

- Most important for you when choosing a job
- Least important for you when choosing a job

2 factors will be left without a rating

Then click "next" to advance to the next set.

Attributes:

- Salary
- Company benefits (sport benefits, events, office etc.)
- Career opportunities in the company
- Challenging job
- People I work with
- My manager

- Management of the company
- International opportunities
- Flexible work schedule
- Work-life balance
- Company reputation
- Product/field of the company

V Company

13. In my opinion, Pipedrive is solving an important issue in the world

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

14. Pipedrive is taking a stand on things that I care about

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

15. It is important for me to be aligned with the company values (no excuses, reach for greatness, team first, don't ruin other peoples days, internal drive, teachability)

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

16. Anything you would like to add?

Appendix 3. Cross-case analysis

Question	Manager A	Manager B	Manager C
How involved are you with questions related to employees and hiring? Are you more involved in a specific location or globally?	• Involved globally and locally • Hiring • Manager • Discussions about trainings • External image discussions	• Involved globally and locally • Hiring • Manager • Planning and decision making	• Involved globally and locally • Hiring • Manager • Branding
Why have you decided to be/not to be involved?	• Comes naturally • Cares about people	• Role requirement • Cares about people	• Role requirement • Comes naturally
In your opinion, is employer branding beneficial for a company?	• Yes • Exists regardless of company actions • To influence people's opinion	• Yes • Employee experience connection to company purpose	• Yes • Influence people's opinion
What in your opinion are the benefits of having a strategic employer brand?	• Control over the external image	• Hiring right talent • Keeps employees engaged with company purpose	• Control over the external image
Do you think Pipedrive should have a strategic employer brand? Why?	• Already have it • Part of everyday work • Presence externally in awards and media exists already • Good hiring process exists • Good employee experience exists • Training people	• Yes • Foundation built • Values, purpose and mission set, great leadership, culture, people, swag • External communication about them to be built • Framework to be built on employer branding • Strategic approach needed • Company brand has grown organically	• Yes • Foundation built
Research has shown that every company has an employer brand, regardless if they work on it or not. What in your opinion is Pipedrive's current	• People – mostly in internal brand • Hiring process • Training people • Result – great colleagues	• Positive image • Little visibility • Product and company both • Known in Estonia • Global focus on brand awareness	• Growing out of start-up face • Estonian founders • Most of the company in Estonia

employer brand about?			
What in your opinion are the main reason why people choose to apply to work in Pipedrive?	- Location dependent - Borderline big company - New York, London – not known - Estonia – inbound interest, media, word of mouth - Other locations – headhunting - Lisbon – getting more known – startup angle, small exciting growing company with safety	- Interesting job - Belief in the product - People	- Great talent in the company - Product - Work
What in your opinion is the main reason why people choose to stay in Pipedrive?	- People - Company values - Few people problems - Challenging work	- Culture - People - Nice work environment - Team spirit - Big family feeling - High performance	- Challenging work - Experiencing company through growth phase - Learning possibilities
What can Pipedrive promise to new employees/candidates that they will experience when working in Pipedrive?	- Company, not a family - Good promise - Hard work - Self-motivating employees - Growing company - Challenges - Company invests into people's success - Growth opportunities - Rewarding work	- Being part of history - Company from a small country with rapid growth - Unique company growth - Company culture - Shared values - Humble company	- Great people - Top professionals - Possibility to decide, improve and try out things
Do you think Pipedrive fulfills people's expectations when they come work in Pipedrive? Why?	- Yes, for the most part - Process in place - Employee's individual expectations - Honest about work life via long interview process	- Yes - Positive feedback	- Yes - Role/department dependent
What are the aspects of Pipedrive's organizational culture	Strict hierarchy with flat communication	- Diverse in nationalities - Global growth	Values

that you think we should showcase externally?	structure • Everyone reporting to someone • Procedures in place • Transparent boundaries in different levels in communication • Great environment	• Values • Empowering employees • Impactful work • Fun events • Product	
What makes Pipedrive different from competitors who are hiring the same talents like we?	• Location dependent • Lisbon - take better care of people than most companies • London, New York – growing company • High goals • Established company – safety • Estonia – people, good work environment	• Global company • Originated from Europe	• Long specific hiring process – finding the right people
What do you think, what is the main reason why a person would consciously decide not to apply for Pipedrive?	• Not interested in sales • Big company • Changing things	• Startup risk • Less stability • Young people	• Big company • Changes, growth • Less stability • Bad word of mouth
Do you think Pipedrive should focus on creating a global employer brand, that is unified in all locations where our offices are?	• Difficult • Location differences • Same company values • Some part globally, some locally	• Yes • Global purpose • Localizing brand	• Yes • Global hiring • Location specific things
Do you think that the employer brand is different at the moment in various locations? What in your opinion are the biggest differences and similarities?	• Yes • Lack of visibility • Different promise by location • Different size offices • Same core values • Unique selling proposition based on location	• Lack of visibility • Different employee experience • Local heads in offices • Lack of coming ground between locations • Lack of consistency • Common values	• Location specific lobbying • Office size • External image

Who in your opinion should take the lead role in building employer brand in Pipedrive?	• Don't know • Multiple layers • Executive level – global decisions • HR – hiring, procedures, trainings, onboarding • Communication	• HR & Marketing • Marketing – branding structure, communication channels • HR – implementation	• Driven person with knowledge and background • HR & Marketing to be involved
What impact in your opinion is having our customer brand to our employer brand and vice-a-versa?	• Linked • Shared materials	• Linked • Bad experience in one affects the other	• Great product • Good feedback • Strong position • Employer branding location dependent
Research has shown that one way of attracting the right people to join a company is to care about the same things as they do? For example, actively taking a stand on world issues. What do you think are the topics that Pipedrive takes or wants to take a stand on?	• Haven't focused on it • Specific brand • Connected with making small business succeed?	• Yes • Gender balance to be dealt with in tech industry • Should take stand on diversity (cultures, nationalities)	• Supporting IT students - internships, • Women in tech.
Anything to add?	• Selling people's brainpower online • People are most important	• Want to dedicate more on employer branding.	• Needed to get leadership team perspective