



# THE POWER OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

Ipsos Hong Kong  
Thought Piece  
2014



## Job market trends in APAC

With unemployment rates in most APAC countries under 5%<sup>1</sup>, employees' confidence in their ability to easily find another job is predictably high.

Ipsos latest polls across APAC do confirm this trend across industries and functions. A few examples:

- Nearly 80% of Hong Kong employees who changed job in the past year found their new position in less than 3 months, 93% in less than 6 months.
- 82% of potential job switchers in India expect a move in the coming 6 months. Scores are comparable for their counterparts in China and Singapore.

Above results are characteristic of **candidate- dominated job markets**: jobseekers have a wide range of options, they turn down offers, and salaries are on the rise. Employers have difficulties filling in vacancies due to labor supply lower than demand<sup>2</sup>.

## LinkedIn's global mobile traffic is expected to exceed 50% in 2014



There are, of course, a few exceptions in the region:

- Thai employees' optimism is impacted by the current civil unrest.
- Japan results are structurally low compared to the rest of the region.

When it comes to job search, smart phones are a game changer worldwide:

- LinkedIn's global mobile traffic reached 41% in 2013 and is expected to exceed 50% in 2014<sup>3</sup>. jobsDB currently reports 48% of mobile traffic in Hong Kong.
- More than 40% of smartphone owners in China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam used their device to search for job offers. This increased by 70% in the past 2 years<sup>4</sup>.
- Taiwan is under 30% in this regard, in line with North America. The score is down to 20% in Japan, which is comparable to most European countries.

The surprise comes from the frequency of job-related searches in APAC: 24% of smartphone owners in India say they checked job offers **in the past week**, 21% in the Philippines, between 15 and 20% in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. This doubled on average in the past 2 years. Japan, Korea, and Taiwan scores are between 5% and 10%.

Mobile access to the Internet becoming the norm in Asia, online job offers have never been so easy to scan -including at work. Employees' confidence is obviously boosted by the number of opportunities available.

Another trend appears to be the convergence of the search for talent: **MNCs and local companies compete more openly** for the same talent, with leading industries trying to attract the same pool of graduates. This is illustrated in employer rankings where local companies climb up year after year. Global and regional rankings

tend to be somewhat misleading in this regard because they don't account for national champions' performance. Internet giants Alibaba and Tencent are now very well positioned in China. The same applies to Commonwealth Bank, Bank of China, ICICI, CIMB, Maybank (to name just a few) in their respective markets.

Based on Ipsos studies, less than 20% of employees across APAC express a strong preference in working for a foreign company in 2014. Scores range from 4% in Japan to 33% in Singapore.

Although no longer seen as the only or necessarily best springboard for successful careers, MNCs still tend to be associated with good training and positive working conditions. But they are associated with instability as well: headlines about MNCs restructuring and operations shutting down in emerging markets have strongly impacted potential and current employee perceptions. Luxury remains the only industry where MNCs still have a clear edge.



## Recruitment tools and tactics

In this fast changing and highly competitive environment, employers look for **improved ways to attract the best candidates**:

- Advanced social media strategies help create more personal relationships and generate engagement with talent pools, especially millennials.
- Videos, story-telling techniques and gamification have become common practice.
- New tools including mobile apps and augmented reality make recruitment more appealing (from the initial information stage to the job application).
- Referral systems are refined to allow employers to tap into their staff networks, in hopes of higher conversion rates.
- Employers are starting to pay more attention to the entire candidate experience so as to

avoid losing the best of them at the very end of the process.

- Pranks are even used by some employers to promote their career sites!

The most well-known prank case study<sup>5</sup> in 2013 was Heineken's reality show inspired job interviews (requiring candidates to provide medical assistance and choose whether to lend a hand to a fire rescue). The campaign, simply entitled "The Candidate", generated 5.5M views and 25K likes on YouTube, as well as a 300% increase in both traffic on Heineken's HR sites and number of CVs submitted.

What it does clearly illustrate is how high the stakes are for employers to attract top talent, and the lengths they are willing and must go to accomplish that. Beyond short term visibility, such initiatives make sense if they are aligned with corporate identity and values. The significant increase in the number of touch-points with candidates generates a risk of inconsistent recruitment

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messaging. The solution lies in an explicit employer promise and effective branding.

### **Best practices in employer branding**

At the core of all talent attraction strategies should sit the organization's **Employee Value Proposition (EVP)**.

The EVP refers to the 'employment deal', that can be

summarized in simple questions: 'What's on offer' and 'Why would I want to work there?'

It is not as easy as it sounds. A well-designed EVP covers key internal dimensions as well as external ones, mainly staff engagement and retention. The key questions here are: 'Why should I strive to perform better', 'Why should I stay with my employer?', as well as 'Why should I recommend to others to work here?'

The recommendation aspect is actually twofold:

- When the employer promise delivery is a strategic priority, staff are more inclined to recommend and act as brand ambassadors.
- When the employer promise is articulated in a clear manner, staff are in a position to deliver a more consistent and compelling message to potential candidates.

There is no single recipe to

become an employer the best people would choose to work for and stay with. Compensation and benefits are important in APAC, but there is a lot more at play. Best-in-class employer branding strategies start with **market intelligence**:

- To understand what makes a top employer in APAC vs. other parts of the world.
- To understand what makes an industry or a specific company attractive.
- To understand candidates' expectations and decision-making process.

Based on Ipsos research globally, trust in the future of the company has become a top attribute everywhere. In the aftermath of the financial crisis, candidates pay extra attention to business outlook and practices as well as long term prospects offered by potential employers.

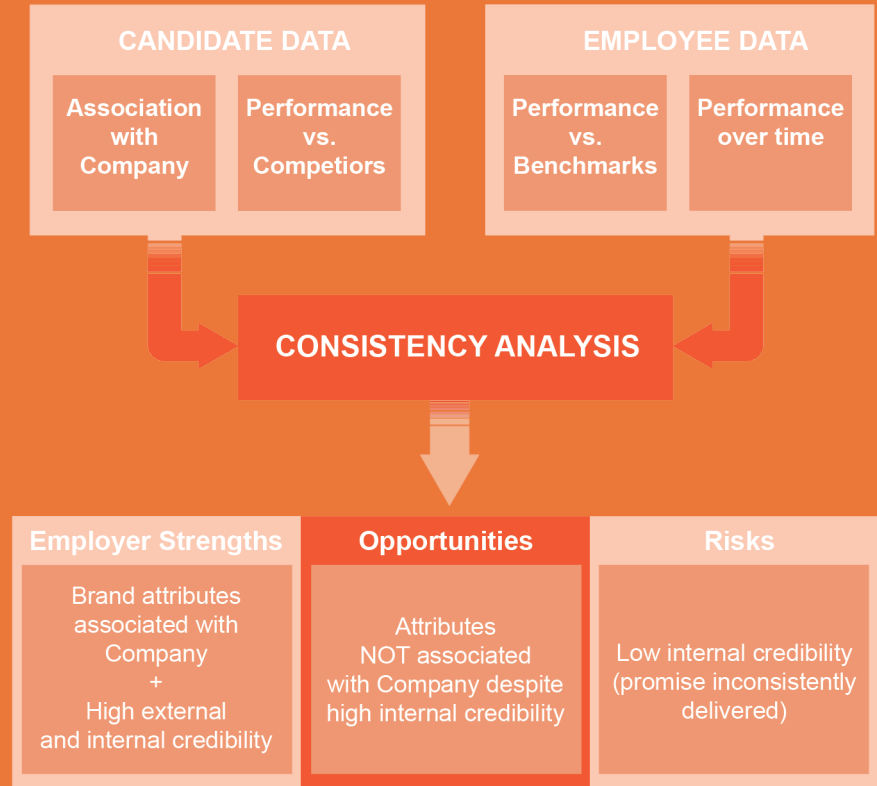
When it comes to APAC specificities,



training and management practices rank much higher in the employer selection process than in other parts of the world. Likewise, employers underestimate the role of families in Asia at their peril. Some recruiters have formally integrated parents and spouses in their tactics, in recognition of the powerful influence these stakeholders have on the candidate's ultimate decision. After collecting market data, the design of an Employee Value Proposition involves **comprehensive staff opinion knowledge** to assess which aspects of the employer promise are fully delivered and which ones are truly distinctive.

This exercise represents a tremendous opportunity to review and align the corporate culture, HR policies and leadership practices. Multiple data sources - from new joiner surveys to exit interviews - can be combined to identify strengths, opportunities and risks.

The chart opposite summarizes the recommended approach:







**Consistency is imperative** in employer branding. There is no long term benefit in over-promising or copying competitors' recruitment campaigns for several reasons.

First, social media and dedicated websites such as Glassdoor make it easy for candidates to get insider information. Glassdoor describes itself as "the world's most transparent career community"<sup>6</sup>, offering millions of company reviews written by employees: background checks are not limited to employers anymore.

Second, alignment between experience and expectations is a top retention factor. Ipsos research clearly shows miscommunication about what the company and the job are going to be like lead to high turnover risk. The best approach to loyalty actually starts before employees join the company, managing their expectations and ensuring the employment deal is the right fit.

## REFERENCE

<sup>1</sup>Source = ILO, Australia, NZ and the Philipines being the exception with rates between 5 and 7.5%

<sup>2</sup>Manpower's 2013 Annual Talent Shortage Survey found that 51% of Asia-Pacific employers had difficulty filling job vacancies due to a lack of available talent vs. a global average of 35%

<sup>3</sup>LinkedIn 2014 Company Presentation at the Morgan Stanley Technology, Media & Telecom Conference in San Francisco, delivered on March 3, 2014

<sup>4</sup>Source = Our Mobile Planet, Google's reference survey about smartphone adoption and usage across 48 countries conducted by Ipsos

<sup>5</sup>The full video is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5FTu3NbivE>

<sup>6</sup>[www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)



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## About Ipsos Candidate And Employee Research:

Is it time to revisit your recruitment strategy? Ipsos offers a unique combination of HR and marketing expertise, benchmarks as well as an exclusive Employer Brand Framework to design, to refresh or to localize your EVP.

## About Ipsos:

Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has grown into a worldwide research group with a strong presence in all key markets. In October 2011 Ipsos completed the acquisition of Synovate. The combination forms the world's third largest market research company. With offices in 87 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across six research specializations: advertising, customer and employee research, marketing, media, public affairs research, and survey management.

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