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## AN ANALYSIS OF BRANDING HR DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES FOR STRATEGIC VALUE CREATION

Catherine Giunta, Seton Hill University

*This study explored Human Resource Executives' (HREs) perceptions of HR branding actions and found that branding human resources creates organizational value. Additionally, the company and human resource alignment appeared to affect human resource branding. Many participants described HR programs and services that were implemented in their companies. Most examples provided, though, did not include branding, per se, of those HR activities. This finding strongly suggests that human resource branding is in an early stage of development. The study revealed that HREs perceive that branding is a beneficial tool to facilitate the demonstration of human resource strategic value creation.*

### INTRODUCTION

Ulrich and Brockbank note that "ideally a firm should be responsive to differences in individual customer preferences (regarding the number and type of contact points) ...HR practices should reflect and reinforce target customer value propositions" (2005: 65). They also recommend that companies "create the substance of the brand, then communicate it" (2005: 127). Yet, do HR companies accomplish this for the HR brand itself? Do they create the substance of the brand of HR practices and communicate it? If they do, do they then follow Ulrich and Brockbank's next recommendation to "communicate the brand image and then work to sustain it"? (2005: 127). The authors later suggest that companies should "develop the most powerful identity in the minds of consumers" (2005: 158). Yet, do the HR departments implement this strategy for the HR practices brand and for the companies' brand as an employer of choice?

This study explores Human Resource Executives' (HREs) perceptions in the branding of their departments. There is little to no empirical research today concerning these issues. Specifically this study focused upon these issues and partially filled this research gap. A qualitative research design and exploratory method were used in order to perform this study. In the absence of empirical research in this area, no hypotheses were offered. The following questions guided the study: 1) What, if any, actions does your HR function complete to facilitate branding your HR activities? 2) What strategic contributions are made by your HR department? 3) Is there a value proposition offered by your HR department?

### Literature Review

Martin, Beaumont, Doig and Pate (2005) contend that employer branding offers an opportunity for the human resource function to create organizational value. Indeed, Ulrich and Brockbank define this branding as the development of the "most powerful identity in the minds of the consumers" (2005: 158). Furthermore, Sartain (as cited in Losey, Meisinger, Ulrich) describes that "the brand attaches meaning, the lifestyle, the transformation, the potential....and the fulfillment of the product. The message engages....and compels the customer to give the product a chance" (2005: 181). Yet, this latter depiction does not refer to the HR department's branding

of its products. This study concentrates on that perspective. It uses **branding** to denote the identity of HR and its programs, including what actions it conducts, how it implements them, why it conducts them, and how these programs and services benefit its clients.

Kantor describes the impact of a company's reward system upon its value proposition and its subsequent brand in the talent market (as cited in Effron, Gandossy, Goldsmith, 2003: 166). Additional research demonstrates the significance of branding as one of the main sources of competitive advantage (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Ulrich and Brockbank noted that "the best brand is one that works both inside and outside the company, sending consistent messages about what the company stands for...The quality of employee and customer communications may be measured by the percentage of both employees and customers who feel that the company hears and responds to their needs" (2005: 64). HREs need to be involved in these value creating branding actions that incorporate marketing strategies. These activities consider customers', including internal clients' needs (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

Sartain maintains that "HR can borrow the lessons and principles from product branding to extend their branding efforts internally. Branding...helps keep the many parts [of HR] moving smoothly, but it also gives HR a way to tie our programming directly to the business...Internal branding will change the way you design, deliver, and communicate HR products and services" (2005: 182, 3). Tosti and Stotz define internal branding as occurring when "decision makers align the brand by coordinating marketing efforts with the principles of change management" (2001: 30). Given the change agent role of HR in the twenty-first century, implementing HR branding techniques becomes a needed competency for HR success in the twenty-first century.

Christensen (2006) states that HREs are responsible for aligning internal customer needs with business strategy and organizational goals. Moreover, HR needs to treat employees like internal clients and include a customer service element in its actions (Witchger, 2005). This client-orientation necessitates HREs' incorporating the branding paradigm into their competency base and continuously demonstrating a customer consciousness (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003). A deficiency in this necessity is no longer tolerated in many companies, yet HR has traditionally been seen lacking a customer service mindset

(Christensen, 2006). Colteryahn & Davis (2004) observe that HR's internal clients may find other providers of HR services if the internal HR function does not promote itself. These authors see HREs' visible business alignment as an essential ingredient in HREs' value creation. Consequently, it is essential that HREs recognize the need for branding and infuse that strategy into the HR organization.

Few researchers have surveyed HREs about their perceptions of relevant issues. The documented literature investigates current organizational issues without interviewing the HR decision makers who will oversee implementation of branding strategies of the HR function. Until this occurs, there will be incomplete knowledge about HREs' perceptions of this value creation activity.

### Research Methodology

This study ascertains "what is" through research questions that asked the sample what their perceptions are of Human Resource Executives' (HREs) branding related to strategic value creation. Although interviews were the primary element of the research, observation and document review were also conducted. Therefore, this study's findings interpreted the information gained through phenomenological inquiry of human resource executives in their workplaces. The research result was narrative and interpretive, and the findings discussed whether the research results of this study can be transferred to theory about HREs' perceptions about branding and value creation.

For content validity, a social science professor who is familiar with qualitative research studies and research interests, reviewed the interview questions. A pilot test was conducted to assess the questions' length and clarity as well as the ability of the interview questions to obtain the concepts necessary in response to the research questions.

### Validity and Reliability

Using the Maxwell and Loomis (cited in Tashakkori, Teddlie, 2003) definitions for these types of validity, this study offered validity through rich descriptions of settings in which the research occurred. Additionally, this study offered valid statements about the participants' reported perceptions. Merriam (2002) notes that flexibility in this research approach suggests that "the design will emerge and develop during data collection." Although the design was preplanned, the use of semi-structured interviews necessitated the need for the design process to emerge during data collection of HREs' interviews.

### Sample

"An early design decision concerns the population from which the sample of respondents is to be drawn" (Robson, 2002: 240). Since this decision is governed by the research questions and the available resources, this study's population was human resource executives. Robson notes that it would be unusual to deal with an entire population, so a sample, that is, a selection from the population, must be delineated. This author also states that the sampling frame is the "the source of the

eligible population from which the survey sample is drawn" (2002: 240). Qualitative research implemented purposeful sampling (Maxwell & Loomis, cited in Tashakkori, Teddlie, 2003) because judgment used to achieve a specific purpose (Robson, 2002) of gaining more knowledge about HREs' perceptions of marketing actions necessary for success and value creation within 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations.

The research population was Human Resource Executives (HREs), director level and above, of mid- and large-sized firms with revenues at least \$50 million in the manufacturing and service sectors. This sample frame was chosen because the organizations that house these HREs will develop strategic plans. The sample was regional. It follows that since there are few studies about HREs' perceptions of branding actions and how they influence value creation, this sample group was appropriate.

### Data Collection

Data triangulation were utilized to offset threats to validity (Robson, 2002) and to build a coherent substantiation for themes (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, this study implemented the three traditional sources of data collection in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002): interviews; observation; and document review from the companies that employ the HREs sample group. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. The personal qualitative interview is optimal for gathering reason for an individual's perceptions and actions (Patton, 2002). Interview questions were reviewed and revised by a small focus group. Interviewing was accompanied by observation and followed by document review.

Document review included primary and secondary material. Consistent with qualitative research, feedback was sought from the informants of this study. Implementing the Creswell procedure for observations, the researcher completed field notes on the behavior and activities of the HREs at the research site. The qualitative approach combines observation of behavior with observation of attitudes and perceptions.

### Data Analysis

Since this study implemented the phenomenological research data analysis process, notations of significant statements that led to the generation of meaning units and the development of "essence" descriptions were made (Moustakas, 1994, cited in Creswell: 191). Qualitative research reports are narrative, interpretive and descriptive (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 2003). The coding of this data is quasi-deductive or inductive as well as selective and analytic (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The research used the following data analysis procedures: open coding, closed coding, and axial coding. As Miller and Salkind (2002) observe, open coding can be used to identify themes found in the data. Closed coding was used to refine themes. Axial coding was used to facilitate content analysis. The information was grouped using the syntactical and thematic approaches (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). For more complex questions, stemming was allowed when that occurred during this study's interview process. As an analytic procedure, a contrast/comparison feedback loop

between the researcher and the participants (also termed member-checking by Creswell, 2003) was conducted to determine if the participants believed the data was accurate. Subsequent descriptive statistical analysis was conducted.

## Findings

The research questions addressed were: 1) What, if any, actions does your HR function complete to facilitate branding your HR activities? 2) What strategic contributions are made by your HR department? 3) Is there a value proposition offered by your HR department?

**Finding 1:** When participants were asked what, if any, action their human resource functions completed to facilitate branding their human resource activities? Many participants described human resource programs and services that were implemented in their companies. Most examples, though, did not include branding, per se, of those human resource activities.

The results appeared to reveal that when branding is implemented - even to a limited degree - the actions led to favorable outcomes for the human resource function and their employers. These outcomes included employees' satisfaction, talent retention, and respect for the human resource department by employees. Additionally, 39% of the participants remarked that the delivery on financial objectives was a beneficial outcome of human resource utilization of the marketing mix.

As one participant reported, "HR has to be the first to get things in order" that demonstrate an alignment within the organization. Another HR leader also cited beneficial impacts, "We have created demand for our services." From an organizational standpoint, that participant continued by stating, "We're doing the right things; we're helping managers to be better managers. That will translate into more efficient and a more effective workforce. A net of that will be the execution of the strategy of the business."

This finding was strongly supported by document review. Organizational materials, such as annual reports, company brochures, memos, and business performance summaries

demonstrated a limited use of the full scope of branding tools. Observation offered mild support of this finding about branding implementation. Human resource materials that fully utilized branding techniques were not evident in the participants' workplaces.

In summary of this finding, there was a general underutilization of the full scope of branding by the sample HREs. The findings infer a lack of conscious and knowledgeable implementation of branding techniques.

## Branding Methods

When asked what, if any, actions the human resource department completes to facilitate branding the human resource activities, the most frequent goal stated was that HR must have common themes with the mission and vision of the organization. One human resource executive noted that "When you look at the company vision and the company philosophy, the culture, the environment; a lot of people see that they are associated with the HR programs. How the Company behaves is the company and HR is a major influence on how people behave in the company. It includes policies that are established, trainings that are offered, the communication and what the company desires for behavior."

Reported methods of Human Resource branding were numerous. The variance of responses was statistically significant. (See exhibit 1 below). The responses included talent development programs, total rewards, training actions, publication of an HR brochure, use of an HR logo, implementation of a recruiting package, utilization of email, use of an HR bulletin board on site, and employee engagement and alignment actions. Branding actions were perceived to be beneficial for the organization's employee relations. One HR manager reported that this process facilitated employee "identification with the company [and]...that influences the culture." Additionally, another participant mentioned that, as a result of branding, "the team building, with the middle manager teams is important, to reinforce the culture and to drive the culture."

**Exhibit 1: Responses to a Research Question**

Descriptive Statistical Test	Reported Branding Methods
Mean	0.62103
Variance	2.015118*

Significance: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.001, \*\*\*p<0.0001

In analyzing the participants' responses, it appears that three different types of branding were perceived. First, some respondents discussed branding their companies' actions to external clients; second, some discussed branding HR actions to external clients; and third, others discussed branding HR departmental actions to internal clients/employees and managers. In no instance did the participants articulate a deliberate categorization of different branding actions implemented.

Branding of HR actions may occur indirectly through the HR department's actions rather than through a deliberate branding campaign. As one HR director reported, "I guess our branding has happened as we have kind of become that

business partner but it is still doing those difficult functions and is sometimes looked at as the person who is terminating or changing things all the time, continually changing things all the time." Therefore, HR Departments need to be aware of the brand image that they convey, even if it is not an intentional action.

**Finding 2:** Results indicated that HR branding can demonstrate the value created by HR practices. Despite limited utilization of human resource branding, there was a favorable perception of the impact of these efforts upon the human resource function by 38% of the participants. One HR officer, who had utilized human resource logos in the past, noted that

"the effect of some kind of branding says that there's a strategy behind all of this that keeps it together; we're not just doing things. But that we have an integrated strategy. And people see the overall people processes." Another respondent projected improved HR processing and results when stating, "This will make things easier for HR in a lot of ways. People will know they can contact HR because they have a need and they have heard of a program ...and they think that it may be helpful to their employees. It will make the recruiting process a lot easier". These remarks show the participants' commitment to making strategic contributions to the organization, thereby creating value.

Moreover, the strategic focus of Human Resources was emphasized by a number of participants. One HR director noted, "I had a voice in major decisions that impact our business....I continue to be seen as a resource and continue to add value and credibility to the organization." All respondents reported that they create or at least partially create value for

their corporations. One HRE observed that Human Resources needs to be charged with the mission and needs of employees, including how they change and the speed of changes occurring. The results of this question were statistically significant. When drilling down into the data, the mean of whether the HREs perceived that they created value was significant at the .00001 level. The variance among the variables was significant to the .0001 level for the Levene test (variance of the absolute difference of the mean). (See exhibit 2 below.) This appears to support that most respondents believed that creating value was meaningful for HR departments. Correspondingly, all participants believed that their HR departments made strategic contributions to their organizations. The responses to how this is accomplished were statistically significant. This verified that the HR departmental actions need to be linked to corporate strategy. This supports the need for increased HR branding to promote to clients the strategic value created by HR actions.

Exhibit 2: Responses to a Research Question

Descriptive Statistical Test	Is Value creation Provided? (Yes or no)	Reported Strategic Contributions
Mean	2.7375	33.38105***
Variance	8.295455	24.56506***

Significance: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.001; \*\*\*p<0.0001

Therefore, the findings revealed that to be effective, human resource branding needs to reflect organizational vision, mission, and branding alignment. As one participant stated, "the (human resource) branding fits with the overall branding for the company. So we have a consistent message. So, HR is trying to support the strategic mission, the goals, and the mission effectiveness." Another senior executive noted that HR branding is "about HR influencing."

Correspondingly, another HR officer remarked, "This notion is how we can align all of our key initiative around a common theme, so that there is some connectivity and momentum." An impact of branding actions is management improvement and a focus on the internal as well as the external customer. The participants' commitment to a client/customer

focus was demonstrated (see exhibit 3 below). The mean and the variance were statistically significant. This appears to support that most respondents believed that a customer orientation was meaningful. This might influence how, with limited time, managers would emphasize or demonstrate this focus at the workplace through branding actions. "HR has to be providing a high level of service to our internal clients, our managers and our employees," reminded one HR officer.

This perceived connection between internal client alignment with the mission and subsequent employee productivity was supported by document review. Specifically, 77% of the corporate Internet websites displayed a connection between employee performance and organizational success.

Exhibit 3: Responses to a Research Question

Descriptive Statistical Test	Customer Orientation Results
Mean	4.106838***
Variance	11.78579***

Significance: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.001; \*\*\*p<0.0001

An emerging theme that evolved during this study was the impact human resource branding could offer businesses. However, this required flexibility by the human resource staffs to revise their branding to ensure it was aligned with organizational changes. As exemplified by one participant, "as we have evolved, we needed to be aware of where we were going as a business, and to change our marketing and branding strategies to link up with that." It was perceived that if this was accomplished, it could enhance the company's image as an "Employer of Choice". An HR director stated that, "As part of this HR transformation, this is something we are working on." An HR executive stated that, "The organization should be able

to make a comparison and say, 'Do I want to go outside and get better service than what our HR team is bringing to the company?'"

Another HR leader reported that "Some other functions want to leverage some of the things we've (HR) done...We've (HR) made progress, but we're not there yet." Therefore, the lack of effective branding could inhibit human resource's full value realization. This could negatively impact organizational attainment of key talent and subsequent revenue generation. As stated by one respondent, "We talk about building this mutual workforce, let's say we lay out the plan, the pieces, and let's show how our staffing and talent and utilization plan all comes

together. Unless we do it for them they will not get it. And then they will not leverage the tools as they would otherwise. I guess I'm saying that HR is beginning to think about it that way, but we're not there."

Additionally, due to a lack of these efforts, an entire HR department or one particular HR program may be underutilized by the workforce due to ineffective branding actions. Indeed, one executive remarked, "Without the right orientation, without the right approach, you are under performing; this is negative momentum that's hard to overcome." As another participant observed, a successful human resource program could have been even more effective.

The workforce is probably not as knowledgeable of everything that is available at this time. There's not an immediate recognition. Some programs...everybody knows what it is. But there are other programs out there that we talk about them, and we mention the name. The associates or the managers would not know what it is. They wouldn't readily say, 'I know what it is'...HR would have more value or impact if we did that. HR is losing that impact because we haven't done a very good job (of branding).

**Finding 3:** Results indicate that there is an evolutionary nature of HR branding. Another emergent theme was that branding human resources appears to be an evolutionary element of the human resource function. Indeed, 13% of the respondents noted that their HR departments do not brand their actions to other employees. As stated by one HR director, "I don't think we do a very good job or do a lot of activities per se in the true sense of branding." This was seen as an area for development by the HREs, when an HR manager noted, "There is an opportunity for me to articulate more what we do, how we do it, and how we add value." Another participant credited the HR department with branding the technical aspects of HR programming, but not the strategic aspect. A respondent showed concern when stating, "Until we get them truly aware of what is available, we're offering, until we brand those things, the program didn't take off as quickly as it probably could have. The people didn't know what was available to them through HR. We try, but I think we didn't do as good a job as we could have at this." Another reason for the lack of branding was reported as a limited HR staff.

Therefore, since branding is evolving in HR departments, the outcomes vary. When implemented effectively, branding provides an opportunity for HREs to demonstrate value creation. However, the lack of effective human resource branding impedes non-human resource employees' awareness and possible utilization of human resource programs.

Additionally, One HRE highlighted a distinction between stages of human resource branding conducted. Specifically, this executive observed that "I think we branded the technical side; we haven't branded necessarily the strategic side....I still think we can do a better job." As observed by another manager, "But as we had evolved, we needed to be aware of where we were going as a business, and to change our (human resource's) marketing and branding strategies to link up with that." Another participant felt that human resources wants the non-human resource professionals "to see us as a positive, not as a

negative mindset. Branding needs to be more meaningful, with more substance than just a symbol." If this does not occur, it was stated that productivity and employee morale may be lowered.

An HRE also saw a connection between human resource branding and the company's image. This participant stated, "I think that when you look at the company vision and the company philosophy, culture, the environment, a lot of people see that they are associated with the HR programs. How the company behaves is the company, and HR is a major influence on how people behave in the company." Although it was not a research question, it was noted by 23% of the participants that whereas their human resource branding was limited, they also perceived that their corporations had not done enough branding of their corporate images. Therefore, effective human resource branding appears to enhance the organization's image. Yet, the findings suggest that, in contrast to when effective corporate branding exists in an organization, when limited corporate branding exists, it may be more difficult for the human resource function to effectively brand human resource initiatives.

When used most effectively, branding Human Resources mirrors the themes and logos of corporate marketing. In several organizations human resources works with corporate marketing departments to develop human resource related marketing plans, but not full branding campaigns, per se. This appears as an opportunity for HREs to work more with their marketing counterparts to expand human resource's branding efforts.

Document review of company brochures, newspapers, and websites strongly supported this finding about branding. One participant shared an award card that is distributed to employees when they display exemplary performance. This card included a special name for the program that appeared to be the brand name for the program. Additionally, although all organizations had Internet sites, and most had a human resource link, there was variation of use of this medium as an information site rather than as an informative marketing site that created an employer brand image. Few websites demonstrated human resource brand identification on their Internet site. It is interesting, though, that half of the sites linked employee performance to organizational goal setting and results attainment. Leadership and talent development were discussed on 46% of these web sites. Few sites emphasized employee value-added as a component of human resource branding. Observation moderately supported that human resource branding is minimally implemented. One participant displayed an artifact delineating how human resources could assist employees. Otherwise, little, if any, human resource branding was visible.

In summary, this finding strongly suggests that human resource branding is in an early stage of development. It needs to be aligned with corporate branding that reflects organizational mission and goals. If human resource branding increases, it could lead to a favorable outcome as organizations market themselves as good working environments. This could lead to increased employee revenue generation and the acquisition of quality human capital.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

This study explored Human Resource Executives' (HREs) perceptions of branding their department's actions. There is little to no empirical research today concerning these issues. Specifically this study focused upon these issues and partially filled this research gap.

A knowledge gap regarding branding techniques became evident among participants in this study. As a result, many branding-related comments revolved around implementation of human resource functions and programs, not the branding, *per se*, of those actions or offerings. This appeared to be influenced by the participants' lack of in-depth understanding or implementation of these methods. That deficit corresponded with limited sophistication of branding actions.

Correspondingly, a number of the research participants were concerned about the potential inhibiting impact of not branding human resource programming and contributions. The participants' comments concurred with the view that if this gap is not corrected, this could threaten the strategic recognition of the human resource function by other business units. Conversely, if this is corrected, it could provide additional strength to a company's portfolio. This study's findings demonstrated the evolutionary nature of this aspect of the branding competency. Participants in this research stated that their branding efforts can facilitate the employer's image as a good place to work.

If HREs knew branding methodology better, they may be able to work more effectively with non-human resource professionals to design an influential Human Resource brand campaign. This would include a human resource branding effort that would enhance the company's image as a good place to work, and possibly even as an employer of choice. It became evident in this study that HREs need to assess, with the assistance of their marketing departments or a marketing consultant, whether the human resource department's branding actions can be improved. As noted by Smith, J., Blomqvist, K. (2005), if business value is to be offered, the HR and marketing departments need to work together seamlessly. This would lead to action plans for enhanced brand recognition efforts.

Therefore, it appears that it would benefit human resource executives if they strive to effectively brand the human resource function within their organizations. As Sartain (cited in Losey, et al.) suggests the benefits to HR "by providing branded HR products and services (compensation, benefits, career opportunities, learning experiences, internal communications), branded processes (hiring, on-boarding, promotion, exiting), and branded infrastructure (self-service, HRIS) to support the experience" (2005: 185). If the human resource department offers products and services for sale outside of their organization, the HREs need to also brand these deliverables. HREs need to assess, and as necessary, increase the branding of their departmental actions to enhance their organization's image as an "Employer of Choice".

Several participants recognized the urgency of human resources being seen as an important differentiator in the marketplace. This heightened the corporate expectation of the human resource staff. It became evident during this research

that HREs need to provide tangible, branded evidence of the value of their strategic contribution to the organization, including their ability to develop the organization's human capital for maximum business value and goal attainment.

In this study the participants had a perception that they did create value for their organizations. Most of the participants believed that their organizations were aware of this contribution. This need for strategic partnering was supported by the realization that the importance of human capital is now paramount to an organization's success. This was often evidenced by research participants' involvement in strategic planning and other key decision making endeavors. It is not surprising that it was perceived that this recognition of human resource's value-added enhanced their performance.

Clearly there is a high expectation that Human Resources facilitate the development of a value proposition (Martin & Ernst, 2005). Although it may not be articulated in a formal statement, all research participants perceived that there was a value proposition offered by their HR departments. They cited examples of recognition and appreciation by management and other employees due to human resources assisting them with their individual growth and with overall corporate development. This was aligned with larger strategic human resource initiatives that benefited client needs. This research finding contradicted the view that HREs have been criticized for not demonstrating "how they create value for their organizations" (Becker, Huselid, & Ulrich, 2001: 2). However, the lack of sophisticated branding actions can inhibit HREs ability to promote the value they perceive they create for their employers.

There is very limited research that distinguishes the three types of branding, i.e., branding the corporation, branding the HR actions to external clients, and branding HR actions to internal clients. The study's participants described branding actions, yet these encompassed branding to the external marketplace for the company, branding HR actions to entice talented recruits, and branding HR actions internally for managers and employees. As Tosti and Stotz propose, the Marketing Department can work with managers who focus upon employees' performance for improved internal branding. They delineate four major goals of internal branding that align with HR strategic needs. These include to "clarify the brand proposition, or promise of value to customers [including managers and employees], establish the brand character that will best deliver value, translate brand characters into values and behavioral practices - both for company leaders and the company as a whole, analyze current practices (including human capital systems) to determine their compatibility with the brand promise" (2001: 30). These steps can be used by HR to internally brand the corporate image to employees and to brand HR practices as part of the corporate brand.

## Suggestions for Future Research

### Organizational structure and revenue

1. Do the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)/ Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI)

certification preparation materials, SHRM and other HR public seminars and workshops provide sufficient branding coverage to prepare HREs to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

2. Correspondingly do human resource undergraduate and graduate curricula include branding instruction?
3. If asked, would corporate marketing departments be receptive to assisting HREs in the marketing of their departments?

### Branding Competencies

1. How can HREs influence companies to develop training programs to enhance HREs' possession of a customer and market focus that would influence future branding expertise and implementation?
2. How can HREs build a greater knowledge base of branding techniques?
3. How can HREs articulate the different branding they need to develop to accentuate strategic value creation?
4. How can the findings of this research be extrapolated to other support departments?

### Conclusions

A purpose of this work was to explore human resource executives' (HRE) perception of branding as related to value creation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a dearth of research addressing how human resource executives' perceptions of how branding influences their ability to create organizational value. This study uncovered several possible human resource-related relationships and influencers. Through the investigation of these issues, human resource executives delineated how the manifestation of branding favorably influences human resource's ability to create organizational value. This study's participants voiced that internal clients may not perceive human resource's full quality-offered to the business if limited HR branding occurs.

By researching the perceptions of HREs towards branding, this study may facilitate human resource professionals improving their value added. As is evident through these research findings, the study's participants were involved in value delivery and there was a strong awareness of client needs and a conscious interaction with internal clients. However, the participants did not appear to consistently implement strategic branding actions to enhance the value creation of the human resource function.

This study may provide valuable insights for non-HREs who interact with human resource executives. These results may offer chief executive officers useful insights for directing HR activities development, education, and training. In a time of growing HRE obligations, the emergence of information about human resource executive perceptions about HR branding issues establishes a foundation for future evaluation of human resource executives' value creation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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