

Quantifying Workplace Image

Recruiting the best talents to build and maintain a high-quality workforce depends on an effective collaboration between Marketing and Human Resource departments within an organization. The first step of a successful recruitment process is to create an interesting job announcement so that the ad gets attention from the talents who are currently in the market. This article recommends the concept of "workplace image" to Talent Acquisition and Marketing managers as a form of supplementary information that should be leveraged to create attractive and compelling job advertisements.

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About the Author

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Executive Summary

The image of an entity, be it a product or a person or a company, is its intangible asset. For example, the reliability (hence a high resale value) of a used car stems from its positive image as a dependable vehicle among car users. For a political candidate a favorable image is the most critical selling point that helps the candidate win an election. Similarly, the corporate image of an organization is one of its greatest assets and a strong positive image accounts for about half of the market value of a company.

In selecting a company as a viable workplace, the age of Internet provides an unique opportunity to the job seekers (talents) to look for an organization's culture, image, and reputation as critically as the proposed career opportunities and wages. Companies, therefore, should proactively use its (positive) image to attract the best talents from the job market. This article suggests an effective method to use public and private data not only to promote a company as a brand but also to help job seekers obtain a detailed picture of the work environment, i.e., workplace image within the company.

To quantify workplace image, this article recommends Talent Acquisition and Marketing managers to share information about the following aspects of their organization: 1) culture and values, 2) career opportunities, 3) total compensation, 4) work-life balance, 5) recommendation of the employer to friends, 6) workplace inclusiveness, 7) senior leadership roles, and 8) social and environmental responsibilities.

Table of Content

❖ Image: The Concept	page 5
❖ Workplace Image: The Definition	page 7
❖ Workplace Image: The Measurements	page 9
❖ Workplace Image: The Collaborations	page 13
❖ Conclusions	page 15
❖ References	page 17

Image: The General Concept

An image is a mental picture. It is a notion that we have about things such as an object, a person, a group, an organization, or a nation. It is our impression about something that is not physically present around us. Quite often we develop a concept or a belief about something not necessarily by directly interacting with it or by carefully studying that thing. This belief, which is a form of knowledge that we obtain indirectly, is known as image [1].

Effects of an Image:

An image has a powerful influence on our perception and reaction to things around us and it acts as a filter by which we evaluate information about entities. It has cognitive (related to our thoughts), emotional (related to our feelings), and behavioral effect and thus shape our attitudes towards objects [1,2,3].

Effects at Individual Level:

Most of us do not have any direct contact or interaction with Hilary Clinton, Edward Cruz, Marco Rubio, Bernard Sanders, or Donald Trump. However, we have a mental picture, a.k.a, an image, about each of these individuals. We develop this image by gathering information from various sources such as TV, radio, newspaper, and a myriad of platforms in the internet. We combine information from these desperate sources along with our observations about their professional roles and responsibilities to decide whether or not the person, as a presidential candidate, appears convincing (this is the cognitive part of the impacts of a person's image).

Our perceived knowledge or the image about each of these individuals plays a critical role not only to guide us to rate them in the opinion polls but also to cast our vote for or against those individuals (this is the behavioral part).

The emotional part is what drives us to travel thousands of miles merely to join the inauguration ceremony of our preferred candidate knowing the fact that we will be standing in the chilling cold and no one will be

waiting for us with a hot cup of coffee at the end of the inauguration speech!

Effects at Organization Level:

Similar to our behavior to people, we have images about organizations and most often we create this image without any direct involvement with them. For example, when we hear the names such as NASA, IBM, Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Intel, Goldman Sachs, Exxon-Mobile or BP we think about creativity, innovation, growth, challenge and rewards as well as dubious activities and debacles (this is the cognitive part of the impacts of an organization's image).

A positive image of an organization can have such a deep effect on us that we ignore the pain waiting on a queue for an entire night just to have the latest product released by the company (this is the behavioral part). At the same time note that we buy products from the company that has a high value in our mind knowing the fact that it is making more than thousand percents profit for their products and that it is not fair (this is the emotional part). Of course, a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment from previous experience are the key factors that drive people's emotion.

Creating an Image:

An image has a persuasive appeal on us and our perception of images about things are constantly being created, shattered, and restored. At the individual level, for example, a political candidate creates his or her image with the help of the media. An organization, be it a for-profit or a non-profit, creates its image through extensive advertising, mission statements, newsletters etc. Organizational image creation also involve informal, charitable activities such as financial contributions (Microsoft, Google), competitions (Netflix prize), holiday parties etc. The latter cases are, of course, different forms of advertising [1].

Workplace Image: The Definition

The goal of this article is to recommend a guideline to Talent Acquisition and Marketing managers to improve job advertisements. This refinement can be achieved by incorporating information about the workplace image of the company. We suggest that the information should be used in job announcements so that job seekers can obtain a comprehensive picture of the roles, responsibilities, requirements as well as the work environment within the company. An advantage of this method is that it promotes a company itself as a brand.

To define workplace image it is necessary to make distinctions among concepts such as organization identity, culture, image, and reputation. These are different but related notions that have been widely studied in organization studies and marketing literature. An understanding of their differences is necessary to select appropriate variables for their measurements [4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11].

Identity is a visual representation of a company. It usually takes the form of a symbol or logo and makes the visual distinction between a corporation and its competitors (Nike vs. Adidas). Identity, in essence, is the self-perception of an organization. Culture of an organization is the values, beliefs and practices that are guided by senior leaders and shared by employees. It is an internal phenomenon that directly impacts employees' behavior, attitudes, and overall performance of the organization (Google vs. Apple). An organization's culture is the origin of identity, image, and reputation.

Image is the perception of a company hold both by outsiders (consumers or general public) and by internal members (employees). Since an organization is perceived by different groups of people who have different types (direct or indirect) of interactions with the company, it is important to note that an organization does not have one particular image. Rather it possesses a set of images. This set of images can be divided into horizontal and vertical dimensions [5,10].

In the former case a company can be viewed concurrently as an employer, an investor, a buyer, a seller, a supplier, a pension provider, or a bank etc. In the latter case the country of origin, company itself, and company's product form the top-down hierarchy. As an example, the

elements of the vertical dimension could be Japan, Toyota motor company, and Lexus (see Figure 1).

In this article we focus on the employer image of a company. Our definition of workplace image combines insiders' (current employees and ex-employees) views about the company culture and image along with the company's external perspective held by the general public. People outside a company can also have their opinions about the company for its various social roles, e.g., environment friendliness.

Reputation is people's feeling such as authenticity, honesty, and integrity that evoke from their perception of a corporate image [5]. The identity and culture act as antecedents in organizational processes. The image and reputations are the outcomes. In this article we have used corporate image and reputation interchangeably.

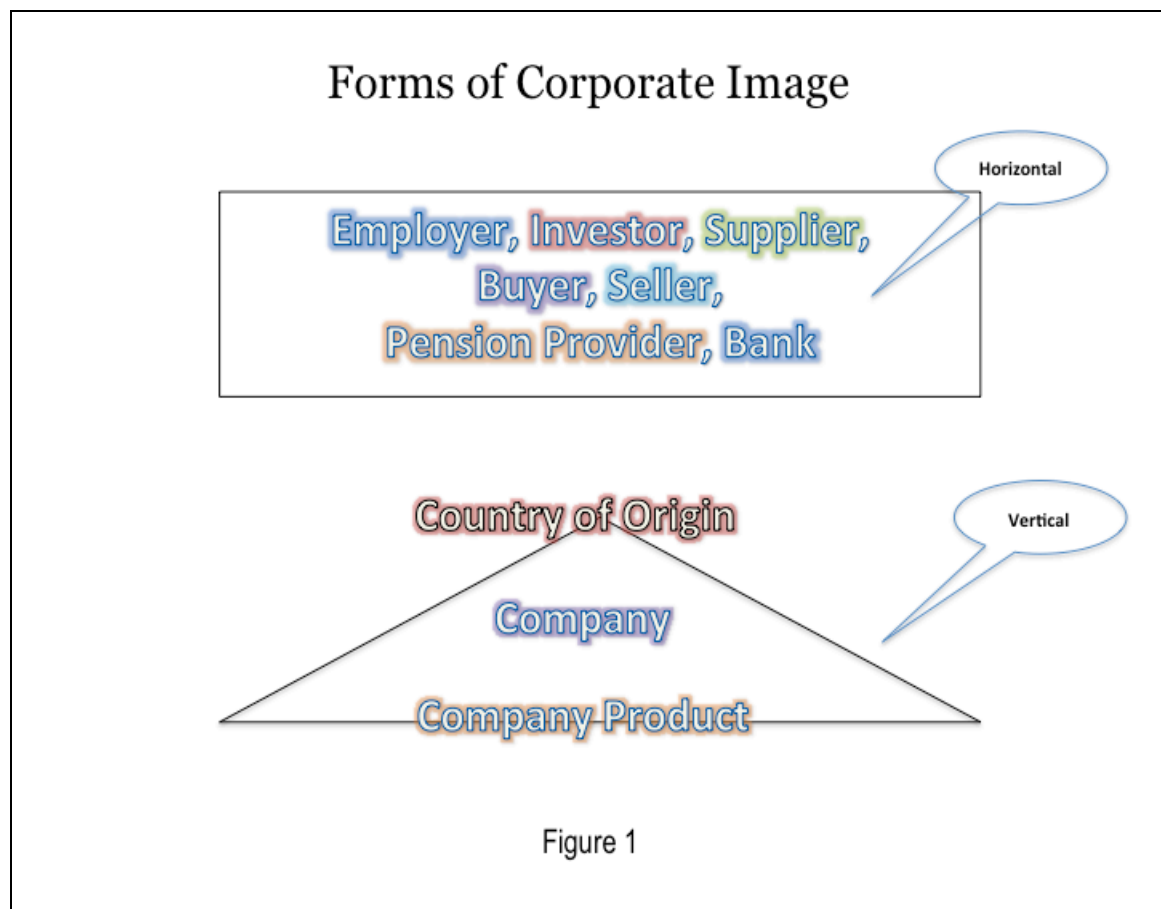


Figure 1: The horizontal and vertical forms of a corporate image.

Workplace Image: The Measurements

Our definition of workplace image contains people's perception of company culture and image because these are the two important aspects that job seekers critically look for in a potential workplace [4,5]. To construct workplace image we should collect, analyze, and share information on the following aspects of an organization:

1. Culture and values maintained and practiced within the company
2. Career opportunities with respect to peer organizations
3. Compensation and benefits with respect to peer organizations
4. Work-life balance enjoyed by employees
5. Recommendation of the employer to friends
6. Workplace inclusiveness experienced by employees
7. Senior leadership roles experienced by employees
8. Social and environmental responsibilities of the company

Note that the features of workplace image that we have mentioned above are only a representative set of attributes. We can add more information depending on other characteristics of the organization such as its mission, goal etc. provided that they are publishable and that they give competitive edge among its peers [see Figure 2]. These information are essential to create workplace image metric because an image is not the individual traits or qualities but rather a collective view about an entity [3].

The information can be obtained from surveys that are internal to the organization such as exit survey and culture survey or it can have an external source such as Glassdoor website (other websites such as Indeed also provide similar information but to a lesser extent). An organization's internal survey generally contains a number of well designed questions or items related to each of these aforementioned features. From survey data a metric is usually constructed by combining a set of correlated items. A company can either provide information about these individual features or can provide a holistic view by creating a single metric using statistical method such as factor analysis [For a simple recipe on how to create metrics from measurements see [12]].

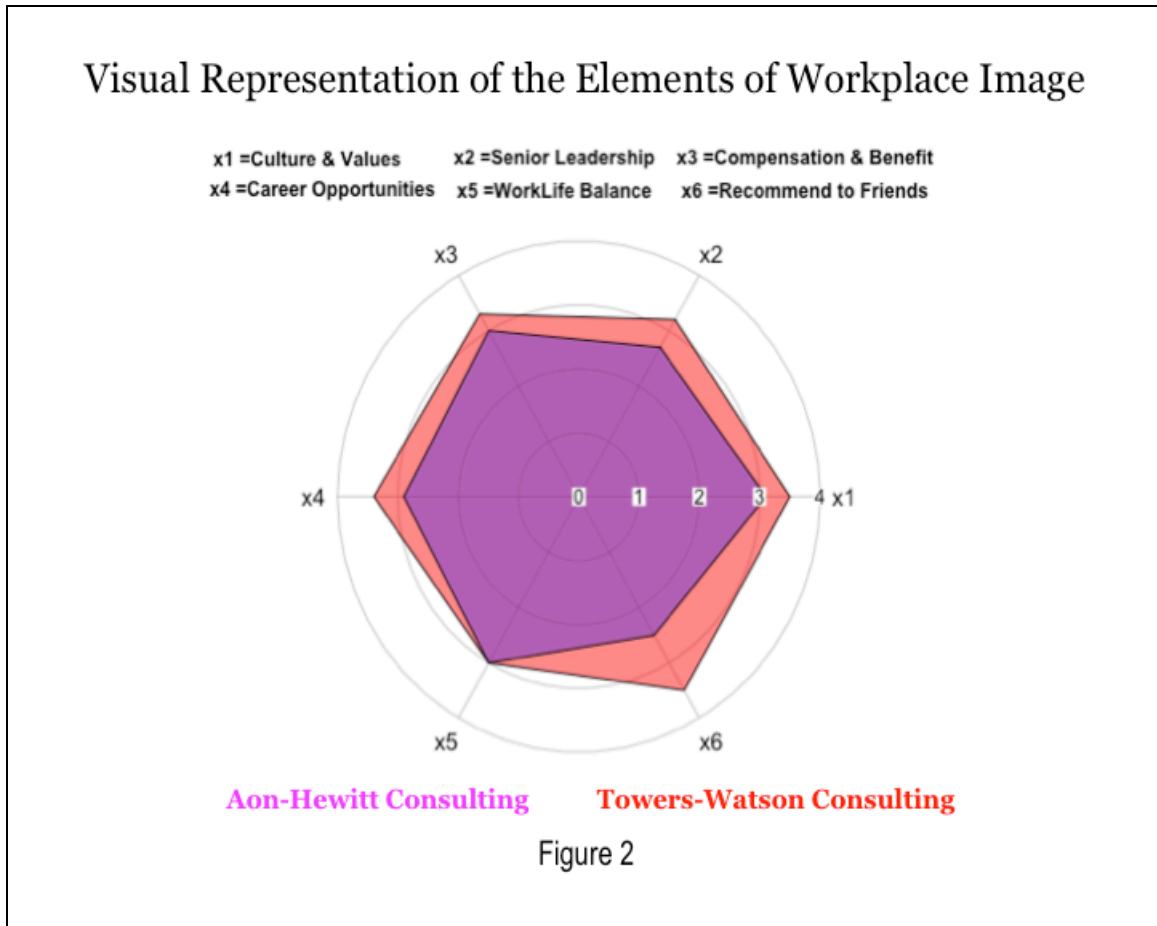


Figure 2: The elements of workplace image of two consulting companies are highlighted using Glassdoor data. A total of six features (items) that can be obtained from the website are shown in the figure. Features such as workplace inclusiveness and social responsibilities are not available in the data. Glassdoor rating scale of each of these items ranges from 0 to 5. The figure shows the range in between 0 to 4 since none of the items had been rated beyond 4.

We want to stress here that Figure 2 is not intended to provide a benchmarking between Aon-Hewitt and Towers-Watson. It shows, instead, the convenience of presenting various attributes of workplace image using spider plot.

The observed differences in the rating of different attributes of these two companies may be due to the intrinsic differences in workplace culture maintained within the respective work environments. We can not isolate the effects of corporate culture from the data that are publicly available

in Glassdoor website. It involves a detailed analysis which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Constructing Workplace Image using Public Data:

Glassdoor website is playing a pioneering role in shaping people's perception of organizations as viable workplaces. It is a realtime continuous online survey and collects people's views and ratings on most of the features we have recommended. One can obtain Glassdoor data using API provided by the company. The data contain both cross-sectional and temporal part. This two dimensional property of the dataset can be used to 1) benchmark workplace image and to 2) track variations of people's view of the image with time.

People take part in the survey anonymously outside a corporate environment. As a result it is likely that people may feel comfortable to provide ratings that they truly believe in about the company. This is an unique advantage of Glassdoor data. However, the website provides only the aggregate (mean) values of these features which can not be used to construct a single metric because the aggregate data prohibits internal consistency checks among features or items. Using this data we can not tell whether or not the items are correlated and hence can be combined to create a single metric.

Constructing Workplace Image using Internal Data:

There are several caveats in using public data. First, the data may contain repeated multiple ratings provided by one single person. Although a case like this may be rare, however, it is not possible to tell whether or not a single person is responsible for multiple reviews of the same organization. Second, it is challenging to group the existing reviews by business units. Third, both current and ex-employees can contribute to the public survey and it is hard to distinguish between the two groups. Finally, the data may have self-selection bias (an employee who has a grudge about the employer may want to give an opinion).

The use of internal data can avoid these difficulties altogether. Organization-wide surveys are the sources of internal data which is

usually conducted by the Human Resources department. The data contain valuable information about the workplace environment contributed both by the current and ex-employees of a company.

We note here that the Talent Acquisition team may not have the necessary tools and expertise to take full advantage of the data. In this case the workforce/people analytics team can play a vital role to help achieve the desired goal. We also note that the public view about the company can be obtained from the external surveys conducted by the analytics team of the Marketing department.

An advantage of this data is its flexibility. It can be dissected at any level including employee job role, tier, age, gender, and tenure etc. As a result this data can be used to tailor announcements for specific jobs. For example, to hire an asset manager the Talent Acquisition team can incorporate the overall view of the workplace image held by the existing asset managers currently working for the company.

There are two important issues job seekers need to keep in mind when they see information such as workplace image provided by a company. First, the internal data do not necessarily represent unbiased views of the employees. People may conceal their true feelings because of the fear of “loosing their jobs” (a feeling may be held by current employees) or not to “burn the bridges” (a feeling may be held by ex-employees). Second, the data can be manipulated by the company to boost its workplace image. The job seekers, therefore, should use all possible sources of information to learn more about the company.

Workplace Image: The Collaborations

The main goal of this article is to provide a direction to improve job announcement for the benefits of the job seekers (talents) who are in the market. Our proposed method will require collaborative efforts between different groups to successfully measure workplace image and to work for the subsequent developments of job advertisements.

Collaboration in the Industry:

For paid premium members LinkedIn search engine shows job announcements along with various statistics including job seeker's overall strength among other applicants (in percents), the number of alumni who work for the company, the LinkedIn connections who also work for the company etc [see appendix]. Although these statistics are very useful the webpage does not reveal anything about the work "environment of the company". However, if one searches for a job advertisement on the Glassdoor website we s/he finds a lot of information regarding the company responsible for the ad. The information collected and provided by Glassdoor can help a job seeker develop a mental picture of the company but it provides no information about the applicants [see Figure 3 for these two types of ads].

The reason of this difference is pretty obvious: LinkedIn has the profiles of the talents which is used to create the statistics. Glassdoor does not have any such repository of data. This is where we see a great opportunity to have a collaboration between the data analysts of the two companies. The combined effort would create a holistic picture combining both the applicant and the workplace environment. Any such effort is worth pursuing since it will be useful for the job seekers and make the paid memberships more attractive.

Collaboration within an Organization:

Companies use various outlets to put job advertisements including their own websites. The announcements typically are very mundane which include standard items such as minimum skills, preferred skills,

preferred education, and roles and responsibilities. These ads do not provide any interesting information about the company except an EEOC policy statement. To make attractive job announcements we see a great opportunity of collaborations between the analytics team of Human Resources and Marketing departments sharing data with each other.

One can assert that anyone who needs extra information can get it from external websites such as Glassdoor, so why bother changing the status quo currently maintained by the Human Resources department? In response to this line of thought, we want to point out that because of various quality issues of the public data mentioned earlier, people would rely more on the information provided by the company itself.

Job Advertisement: Glassdoor vs. LinkedIn

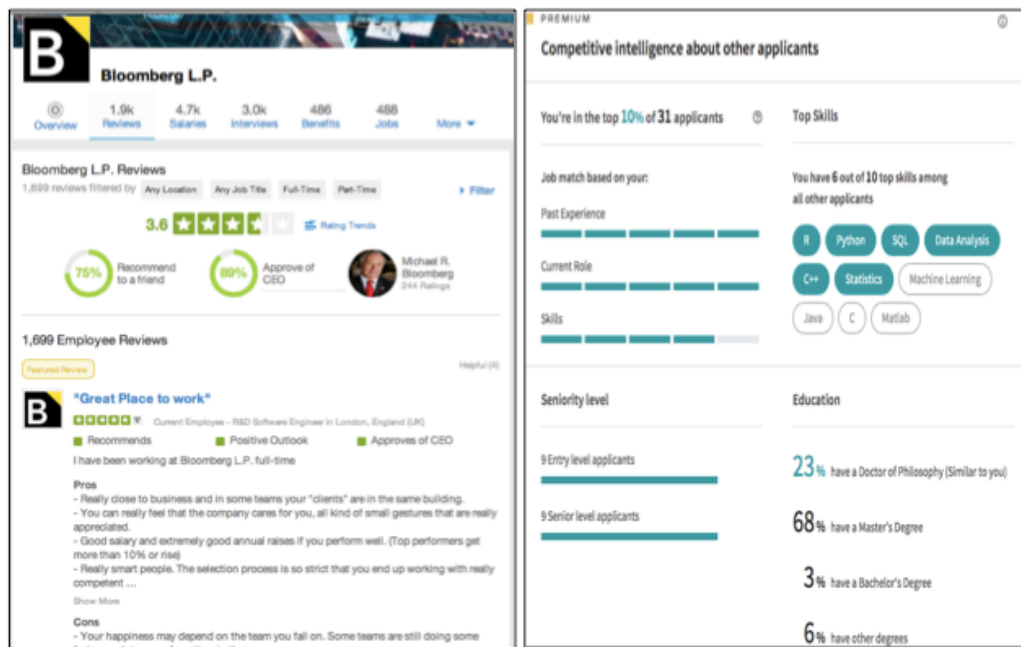


Figure 3

Figure 3: A part of one particular job advertisement that appeared in both Glassdoor (above left) and LinkedIn (above right) websites. Despite a typical job description, a job seeker can obtain two types of useful information from the websites : Glassdoor provides a partial picture of workplace image and LinkedIn provides statistics about the applicants.

Conclusions

Organization and Marketing research studies suggest that a positive corporate image of an organization should be used in all business activities [2,5]. It is, therefore, worth exploring the ways to exploit the positive image of a company in its talent recruiting process.

The age of Internet provides an unprecedented opportunity to the job seekers to look for an organization's culture, image, and reputation as critically as the proposed career opportunities and wages to choose the company as a potential workplace. To succeed in recruiting process, therefore, organizations should take active measures to share, promote, and highlight information of their corporate images and reputation as much as possible.

However, most of the organizations are lagging behind to take such initiative. A common practice in a traditional organization is to place job ad in various career websites and provide a description that include roles and responsibilities as well as requirements such as educational background, work experience, technical skills, and social skills. They also include the EEOC statements to be consistent with industry rules and regulations.

The job seekers can obtain information about a company from a multitude of online sources which may or may not have the true reflection of a company's image and reputation. This could lead to confusion among job seekers which, in turn, could result in a risk for the company in attracting the best talents from the market. To avoid such unwanted situation, the traditional approach of job advertisement should be substantially revised, if not replaced, by data driven methods to make job descriptions more appealing to the job seekers.

Since the Talent Acquisition team work in tandem with the Marketing department to create job ads, we provide the concept of "workplace image" to the managers of the respective departments and recommend a method to incorporate this information to make effective job descriptions. This additional information will help job seekers in creating a holistic picture not only about the job ("what are the things

they must have?") but also about the image of the organization ("what would it be like to be there?") they are interested in.

For its successful implementation our suggested method requires a close collaboration between workforce analytics and marketing analytics teams within an organization. This teamwork brings an opportunity to create values for the Human Resources and Marketing departments as effective business partners.

Employment websites can also benefit from utilizing this method. For example, an effort to create a comprehensive picture incorporating workplace image and a talent's professional skills is worth pursuing by companies such as Glassdoor and LinkedIn because it will make the paid memberships more attractive to the job seekers.

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