

## **Employee Branding Strategy: A Proactive Approach to EFCA**

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**Given today's volatile state of the economy and the lowest employee satisfaction rate (45%) in over twenty years, the restaurant and other service industries are more vulnerable than ever to the possible impacts of EFCA (About.com, 2009).**

While only 8% of the private workforce is currently unionized, passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) could possibly increase unionized workplaces to 20% (Lee, January 2009). In sum, the EFCA seeks to amend the National Labor Relations Act (aka the Wagner Act) to more readily allow unionization of organizations through "card checking". As an alternative to secret ballot elections, "card checking" mandates that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) must certify and an employer must recognize a union if it has obtained signed authorization cards from 50% or more of the relevant collective bargaining unit. Although the fate of EFCA's passage is still pending, what can service industries such as restaurant, healthcare, government, and retail, do to prepare for ERCA but not violate labor laws?

### **Is your brand attracting loyal employees?**

A proactive measure for consideration may be to develop or review your employee branding strategy beginning with the recruitment and hiring/selection processes. An effective employment branding strategy appropriately manages expectations, image, and reputation by seeking and targeting applicants who will be the best organizational fit (Sullivan, January 2009). Employment branding is reflective of the organizational culture and seeks to attract and hire those who are likely to be highly engaged in contributing to organizational success. For example, everyone is familiar with Southwest Airlines. Southwest Airlines' employee brand targets extremely outgoing individuals who are willing to place customer needs above their own (Sullivan, January 2009). Disney and Google also have very defined employee brands. Applicants who are attracted to these types of work environments apply, and those who don't, don't. Like dating, the entire recruitment and hiring processes of the employee branding strategy are both a matter of the applicant and employer finding a mutually suitable partner that "fit" in the organization.

In order to facilitate the "right match", many organizations utilize a variety of recruitment and hiring tools such as advertising collateral, screenings, and assessments to target desired applicants that are a good fit or match for their organization and promote those aspects of the organization culture and climate that differentiates itself for a competitive advantage.

### **Are you screening in applicants less likely to be susceptible to union activities?**

To help their clients clearly define and develop their employee brand strategy, Batrus Hollweg International (BHI) has recently completed studies on four new predictors of hourly

performance, among them an engageability index. This BHI Engageability Index looks at predictors related to job attitudes, job commitment, job satisfaction, and work initiative. Studies have found that individuals with low self-esteem, little belief in their abilities, and a negative perspective of their world are more susceptible to joining unions (K. R. Parkes & T. D. Razavi of the University of Oxford, November 2003). Key attitude predictors of this index relate to self-esteem, belief in one's ability, trust of others, and optimism (Hollweg, February 2009). These same factors that predict high engagement have also been found to predict voluntary non-union voting. While the BHI Engageability Index is not assessing whether an applicant is pro-union or not, the Engageability Index does identify factors related to high performance, identify positive preferences related to high engagement on the job, and increases the possibility to "screen in" applicants less likely to be susceptible to union activities. While it has always been the best practice of recruitment and hiring to identify and select candidates who are the best fit, an employee branding strategy is an innovative and proactive yet legal approach to neutrally manage challenges presented by possible passage of EFCA.