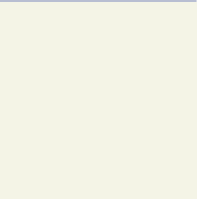# Smart Resourcing in SMES

Integrating Employer Branding,
Social Responsibility,
and HR

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Diana Medrea-Mogensen
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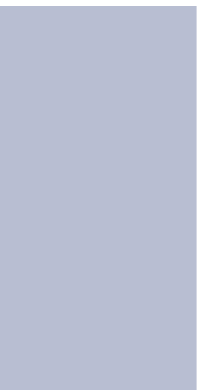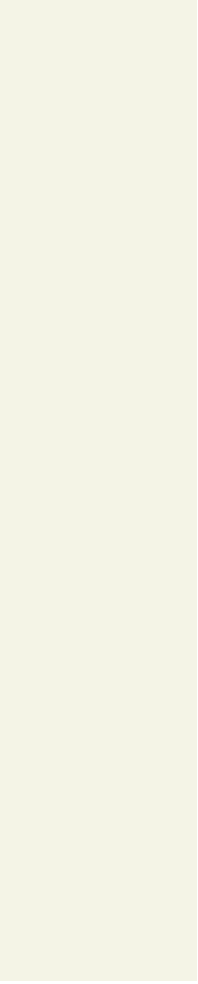
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Contents

Introduction

In the dynamic and growing landscape of small and medium-sized firms (SMES), integrating employer branding, social responsibility, and human resource management emerges as vital to attaining long-term growth and preserving a competitive advantage. *Smart Resourcing in SMES: Integrating Employer Branding, Social Responsibility, and HR,* written by a team of European academics and professionals, dives into these complicated interrelationships, particularly emphasising their applicability in the SME setting.

This monograph is meticulously structured into four compelling parts, beginning with 'Theoretical Backgrounds,' which explores contemporary theories and practices in recruitment, social responsibility policies, talent management, and their evolving roles in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This part sets the scenario by underlining the shifting paradigms of HR practices and their implications for SME operations, making the research highly relevant to the current business environment.

Moving on to 'Resourcing from the HR Experts' Point of View,' the story becomes more detailed as it reveals empirical data gleaned from interviews and surveys with HR professionals. This section assesses the present state of HR strategy in SMES, providing insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating social responsibility and employer branding with human resource management.

In 'The Hiring Approaches in SMES,' the monograph delves deeper into recruitment methodologies, the integration of social responsibility into HR policy, and the complexities of implementing effective employer branding initiatives in SMES. This part provides a critical evaluation, reinforced by the findings of a thorough survey of SMES, demonstrating how these businesses can expertly manage the complexities of people acquisition, retention, and development in a fiercely competitive landscape. The study results illuminate current practices, problems, and new tactics SMES use to manage the intricacies of aligning human resources with long-term business goals. It emphasizes the importance of incorporating employer branding and social responsibility into HR policy to attract, engage, and retain talent in a way that promotes both organisational growth and ethical business

practices, providing the reader with practical insights and strategies.

The scholarly work concludes with 'Case Studies,' which exhibits a selection of real-world events and effective practices. These illustrated case studies highlight successful techniques organisations use to move resources toward social responsibility, health and wellness, talent management, and employer branding projects.

'Smart Resourcing in SMES' is a crucial resource for SMES that want to combine employer branding, social responsibility, and human resource management. It provides a complete analysis, practical insights, and strategic frameworks. It promotes the idea that innovative resourcing techniques are essential for establishing resilient, socially responsible, and brand-aware businesses.

Research Methodology

Purpose and Objectives of the Activity

The empirical research on which this monograph is partly based aims to identify the areas of interest among HR professionals, consultants, SME support organizations, and entrepreneurs and link the findings with the relevant literature. The areas of interest include HR practices in small companies, especially those related to resourcing. In the research, the key areas of resourcing will be investigated from several points of view, such as employer branding, social responsibility, and the changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodological Approach

The research was conducted in three steps. In the first step, desk research was implemented as a literature review. Then, the topics were divided among partners and collected in this report.

In the second step of the research, a series of interviews were conducted among consultants and internal experts in the HR area. Altogether, 39 individuals were involved in the interviews (6 from Denmark, 6 from Greece, 7 from Italy, 13 from Spain, 3 from Slovenia, and 4 from Norway). The interviews were conducted between December 28, 2022, and March 6, 2023. The questionnaire used in the interviews was developed based on a previously shown literature review.

In the third step of the research, a qualitative online survey was conducted in all project countries. An online tool called 1KA One-click Survey was used to execute the survey. The questionnaire was developed based on the findings from the interviews. The survey was conducted

between February 1, 2023, and March 14, 2023. Altogether, we received responses from 84 individuals (11 from Denmark, 21 from Greece, 10 from Italy, 17 from Spain, 20 from Slovenia, and 5 from Norway). For statistical analysis, we used SPSS software. Several statistical methods were applied, including descriptive statistics (calculation of mean values and standard deviation), the Kruskal-Wallis test for checking the difference in responding between the countries, as well as correlation analysis and linear regression analysis for testing the relationships between recruiting practices, social responsibility measure in the HR function and employer branding.

Key Conclusions from the Empirical Research

Overall, the respondents feel positive about various HR practices related to job analysis, recruitment, selection, onboarding, succession planning, and record-keeping, with the highest mean rating for 'interviewing and selection of job candidates' and the lowest for 'succession planning and talent management.'

While these HR practices are generally viewed positively, there is still room for improvement in certain areas, such as sourcing and attracting job candidates and maintaining accurate employee records, to ensure a more consistent and positive employee experience.

Statistically significant differences between the countries exist in various HR practices, such as 'interviewing and selection of job candidates,' 'onboarding and orientation of new employees,' 'succession planning and talent management,' and 'maintaining accurate and up-to-date employee records.'

The companies are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and follow fair hiring practices. In addition, they are taking measures to ensure their employees' physical safety and well-being. The companies promote employee well-being, equal employment opportunity, and sustainable practices, which contribute significantly to building an attractive employer image. However, there is still room for improvement in some areas.

Building a positive company culture that aligns with employer brand values is the most effective strategy among those listed, followed by developing a clear and consistent employer brand message and image. 'Implementing an employee recognition and rewards program that supports the employer brand' received the lowest mean score.

Statistically significant differences between the countries exist in

the case of various employer branding strategies, such as 'developing a clear and consistent employer brand message and image,' 'building a strong online presence through social media, website, and other digital platforms,' 'offering competitive benefits and compensation packages to attract top talent,' 'creating employee-centred branding initiatives, such as referral programs and employee advocacy,' 'building a positive company culture that aligns with employer brand values,' and 'implementing an employee recognition and rewards program that supports the employer brand.'

In recruiting, smaller businesses use digital technology mainly for introductory interviews with candidates and posting job offers online. The respondents' most frequently mentioned digital media platforms are videoconferencing platforms, social media (LinkedIn and Facebook), and some local/national job platforms.

Organisation of the Monograph

The monograph *Smart Resourcing in SMES: Integrating Employer Branding, Social Responsibility, and HR* covers theoretical foundations and practical implementations in small and medium firms through a carefully structured narrative. It starts with a comprehensive look into HR practices' theoretical origins, the recruitment process, its evolution, and the substantial impact of external circumstances like the COVID-19 epidemic. This section discusses European social responsibility policies, including their effects on onboarding, integrating the European Pillar of Social Rights into workplace policies, workplace mental health, well-being, and talent management.

After theory, the story presents empirical findings from HR professional interviews and surveys. This section examines small company recruiting rules, discusses pandemic-related HRM trends, and describes SMES' recruitment practices. It describes job recruitment, selection, and onboarding strategies, showcasing SMES' natural obstacles and creative solutions.

The monograph examines SMES' employment practices using extensive survey data. This report critically examines recruitment processes, HR policy integration of social responsibility, and employer branding initiatives, showing how SMES master talent management.

The narrative, through case studies, shows how organisations have integrated social responsibility, health and wellness, talent management, and employer branding strategies using innovative resourcing

strategies. These real-world examples illustrate the monograph's concepts by revealing best practices and successful techniques.

Smart resourcing in SMES is defined by the seamless flow from theoretical investigation to practical consequences and real-world applications. Academics, practitioners, and SMES will benefit from its thorough understanding of employer branding, social responsibility, and HR management integration issues and opportunities.

Part One

Theoretical Backgrounds

Recruitment Process

Definition

Taking its origin from historical wars, the term 'recruiting' refers to the selection and recruitment of personnel that can be conducted by the company itself or outsourced to an external employment agency. In the latter case, human resources professionals search for and select candidates by interfacing with the sector managers where the candidates will be placed. Therefore, the objective of recruiting is to follow the candidate's recruitment process from the launch of the job offer to the actual deployment of the personnel in the company (Hunity, n.d.).

The Recruitment Process over Time

The recruitment process goes back a long way. As early as the third century, the Han dynasty emperor in China used to select civil servants by assessing their knowledge, intellectual abilities, and moral integrity. The first evolution of the recruiting process (Di Pasquale, n.d.) came during the industrial revolution. At that time, the exponential rise of large factories combined with new production methods and the radical increase in population intensified the need to 'recruit' new human resources.

During the First World War, in Germany, a tool was used for the first time, and it became firmly established in the world of selection: The Assessment Centre. The Assessment Centre is an evaluation methodology that uses various tests (such as exercises, tests, and assessments) to find out whether candidates, in specific situations, possess the personal skills and competencies required for a particular job position. Initially, this method was used to recruit new soldiers in the German army. Still, it was later transferred to the civilian sphere as well. From 1940 onwards, England used this method to select administrative employees and the United States for the internal evaluation of employee potential. From 1950 to 1980, there was a shift from an approach based exclusively on subjective criteria set by the recruiter himself to a competence-oriented approach that sought to make the process as objective as possible. However, these two approaches turned out to be too unbalanced.

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For this reason, in the 2000s, companies began to move towards a new way of approaching selection that was somewhere in between the subjective and the objective methods. Indeed, today, recruiters focus on a mix of technical, behavioural, and potential skills of the individual because only these can ensure the success of companies over time with effective responses to the demands of society.

The way of looking for work has also changed: In the 1990s, this process significantly differed from the personnel selection we know today. Companies and recruitment companies used to buy space in newspapers, and candidates could apply by sending their CVS by post or fax. The companies received the CVS and proceeded to contact the most suitable candidates. Digital tools have gradually replaced this approach, including social media (such as LinkedIn and Indeed) and web portals.

The Recruitment Process after COVID-19

An important aspect is to analyse how the recruitment process changed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. According to an official EU study entitled 'How COVID-19 Radically Changed Selection Processes' (EURES, 2021), the pandemic has led to profound changes in the world of work, particularly in selection and recruitment processes.

Virtual Job Interviews Are the New Normal

Virtual job interviews were only used as a last resort before the pandemic. Indeed, face-to-face interviews were preferred, so some recruiters rescheduled or cancelled an interview rather than do it online. However, many employers realise virtual selections are more efficient than in-presence ones and represent the way forward. Online job interviews save time and money for both employer and candidate and make the selection process quick and effective. On the one hand, each candidate knows precisely when their interview will start, limiting unnecessary waiting. Still, on the other hand, there is less direct contact, which is more reliable and constructive.

Location Is No Longer a Crucial Factor

Thanks to new labour policies that are much more flexible than before, companies have access to an ever-wider pool of candidates, allowing them to choose the most suitable person for the position required.

The Labour Market Shows a Transformation in Demand

Due to the uncertainty created by the pandemic, job seekers are more likely to apply for positions in larger, more stable companies that can provide secure employment. Other sectors, however, have experienced substantial growth, such as IT.

Companies Must Generate the Interest of Job Seekers

Companies must now actively 'sell' themselves to job seekers to stand out by offering increasingly popular benefits such as flexible working, health and wellness packages and sick leave policies.

Recruitment Phases

The recruitment process is crucial to a company's growth and operational effectiveness. It consists of a number of painstakingly organised processes, each aimed to expedite the selection and hiring of the most qualified individuals. These stages ensure that the recruitment process is not only efficient, but also effective at attracting and retaining top talent. Beginning with a thorough job analysis and ending with the successful placement and onboarding of a candidate, each phase is critical for aligning the company's needs with the talents and goals of new workers. This section describes the sequential phases involved in the recruitment process, emphasising the significance of each phase and its role in the overall strategy for acquiring the finest talent (Hunity, n.d.):

- *Phase 1: Job Analysis.* First, it is necessary to make an in-depth internal analysis of the company to identify the job profile you want to look for in the labour market. In this sense, job analysis makes it possible to analyse a specific job position's characteristics, requirements and methodologies using various techniques.
- *Phase 2: Publication of Job Offer.* As mentioned, the job analysis clarifies the job position you want to seek. The next step is to create a clear and effective job advertisement without making mistakes that would waste the company's time and money.
- *Phase 3: Curriculum Screening.* At this stage, the recruiter has to skim the resumes received and decide which, among all those analysed, are worthy of a personal interview.
- *Phase 4: Candidate Placement.* The chosen candidate is introduced to the company in this last phase, and the 'Onboarding' phase be-

gins. By this term, we mean the process by which the new employee acquires all the skills, information, knowledge, and behaviour to become part of the company.

The Recruitment Process of Small Enterprises

Whether a small company or a large multinational, the recruiting world is changing fast. Therefore, it becomes crucial for a recruiter to be continuously updated on the latest trends and resources. Additionally, knowing the latest strategies and tactics will be essential to find and recruit the best candidates on time.

The recruitment process changes depending on the size of the company for several reasons (Academy Que, n.d.). First of all, large companies have a human resources department dedicated to recruitment, or, in any case, they have the economic strength to delegate this task to an external company; on the other hand, small companies very often have no one in charge of this task, and for this reason, it is the entrepreneur himself who has to carry out this difficult work. Small business owners thus have to take on too many responsibilities at once and make choices alone and in a brief time. The most common mistakes he might commit are (Di Pasquale, n.d.):

- ineffective recruitment resulting from an incorrect or incomplete description of the job offer,
- incorrect grading of employees based on the real needs of the company,
- inconsistent policies or practices that have not been updated,
- lack of necessary documentation (they prefer to speak only verbally),
- insufficient training for the new employee, especially in the first months of their onboarding.

Conclusions

As we have seen, the recruitment process is of fundamental importance for any company. However, as far as small companies are concerned, which have more difficulties in this area, the ideal solution could be either to invest in human resources to ensure recruitment in line with their needs or to train themselves in HR to be able to make the right decisions in an informed and confident way. Recruitment refers

to identifying, attracting, interviewing, selecting, hiring, and onboarding employees. In other words, it involves everything from identifying a staffing need to filling it, such as:

- identify the hiring need,
- devise a recruitment plan,
- write a job description,
- advertise the position,
- recruit the position,
- review applications,
- phone interview/initial screening,
- interviews,
- applicant assessment,
- background check,
- decision,
- reference check,
- job offers,
- hiring,
- onboarding.

In HRM practice, several types of recruiting may be identified, such as:

- internal recruiting,
- retained or contingency recruiting,
- staffing recruiting,
- outplacement recruiting,
- reverse recruiting.

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Chapter Two

The External Environment in the Recruiting Process

Recruitment is one of the essential tasks the HR management department must perform very carefully. They have to understand the need for the vacant position, know the qualifications of the candidate for the required position, etc. There are quite a few factors that influence HR management's recruiting efforts; however, every organisation has to engage in recruiting activities (Francis, n.d.a). It is an overly complex task, and we will summarise external factors influencing the hiring process.

These are identified external factors:

1. Supply and Demand
2. Labour Market
3. Goodwill/Image of the Organisation
4. Political-Social-Legal Environment
5. Unemployment Rate
6. Competitors

Supply and Demand

The availability of the workforce, both within and outside the organisation, is an essential determinant in the recruitment process. If the demand for the applicant is high and the applicant's supply is deficient, the organisation will not meet the requirements of the position. Therefore, supply and demand are factors that influence the recruitment of any organisation (Francis, n.d.c). If there is a considerable supply of applications for a vacant position, the organisation can fulfil it to their desired standard. Suppose the supply of applications for any vacant position is low. In that case, the human resources management department of the organisation has to get ready to negotiate the applicant's demand and look forward to a good salary and other benefits packages.

Suppose the company has a demand for more professionals, and there is a limited supply in the market for the professionals demanded

by the company. In that case, the company must depend upon internal sources by providing special training and development programs (Francis, n.d.c). Undoubtedly, fundamental shifts are taking place in the labour market. The pandemic has accelerated pre-existing trends, such as automation and digitisation, flexible and remote work, and the growing mismatch between employers' needs and the skills available in the workforce. The most immediate result is the widespread talent shortages felt by organisations up and down the countries (De Smet et al., 2022).

Labour Market

Employment conditions in the community where the organisation is located will influence the organisation's recruiting efforts. For example, if there is a surplus of the workforce at the time of recruitment, even informal attempts at recruiting, like notice boards displaying the requisition or announcement in the meeting, etc., will attract more than enough applicants (Francis, n.d.b).

The labour market is one of the constant factors influencing the recruitment efforts of any organisation made by the human resources management department. Suppose the labour market, where an organisation is established, is not as big as it needs to be. In that case, the organisation has to look forward to bringing labour from other places, giving some extra benefits, and providing housing and other required things. On the other hand, if there is a good flow of labour in the organisation's market, the human resources management will not put any extra effort into recruiting the position (Francis, n.d.b).

According to a survey conducted among staffing and recruitment professionals, almost 50% of the respondents indicated a talent shortage impact on the labour market as the main challenge for staffing firms in 2022. COVID-19-related effects on jobs remained a significant issue, with just over 40% of respondents citing this as their main challenge (Statista, n.d.b). What is more remarkable, though, is the rate at which people leave their jobs to find new ones. In a recent survey, McKinsey's global research found that around 40% of people who left their jobs did so without a new position (De Smet et al., 2022). Moreover, for those still speculating about quitting, the proportion of those considering it without a new job offer was even higher, at 60%. The implication of these trends is clear: Employees are re-evaluating their relationships with their employers, and many are not liking what they

see. In some cases, work demands have significantly risen due to the pandemic, leading to increasing burnout levels – a trend that pre-dates the pandemic. In others, working arrangements during the pandemic had raised hopes of newfound flexibility, which may have been dashed. For example, in the United Kingdom, data from the Office for National Statistics show that in January 2022, fewer than 20% of employees in the United Kingdom worked in businesses that intended to use home-working as an ongoing part of their business model (Allas, 2022).

Goodwill and Image of the Organisation

The organisation's image is another factor influencing the organisation's recruitment process. This can work as a potential constraint for recruitment. An employer with a positive image and goodwill find attracting and retaining employees easier than an organisation with a negative image (Francis, n.d.b). The image of a company is based on what the organisation does and is affected by the industry. Managerial actions like good public relations and rendering public services like building roads, public parks, hospitals, and schools help earn image or goodwill for the organisation.

The size of an organisation is one factor that influences the recruiting efforts made by human resources management. An organisation with one hundred thousand employees will find itself recruiting potential applicants much more often than one with one hundred employees. Big organisations with many employees will find a massive pool of applicants when they need to fill a vacant position. Conversely, an organisation with fewer employees must outsource or advertise for the vacant position. A small organisation finds it more difficult to attract applicants than a bigger one. The overall size of the organisation is one factor affecting the recruitment efforts made by the HR management department for any organisation (Statista, n.d.a).

Also, statistics display the average time-to-hire for job applicants worldwide in 2017, broken down by company revenue. During the survey, the average time-to-hire for companies with an annual income of less than five million US dollars was 41 days. The lower the income, the longer the hiring process (Statista, n.d.a).

Political-Social-Legal Environment

Various government regulations prohibiting discrimination in hiring and employment directly impact recruitment practices. For example,

the Government of India has introduced legislation for reservation in employment for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, physically handicapped, etc. (El Hadidi, n.d.). Trade unions also play an important role in recruitment. This restricts management's freedom to select those whom it believes would be the best performers. If the candidate cannot meet the union's criteria, union regulations can restrict recruitment sources. The environment of the organisation is also an influencing factor for recruiting. An organisation has a sound political, social, and legal environment. If an organisation has an excellent political climate, it can attract many candidates. The organisation should have a good social image. They have to pursue social and ethical policies. An organisation should have the least legal cases against them. The HR management department of an organisation with an excellent political, social, and legal environment will attract a good and desired candidate (El Hadidi, n.d.).

Unemployment Rate

One factor that influences the availability of applicants is the growth of the economy (whether the economy is growing or not and its rate). When the company is not creating new jobs, there is often an oversupply of qualified labour, leading to unemployment. Therefore, the unemployment rate plays a significant role in influencing recruiting efforts (De Smet et al., 2022). Any organisation's HR management must consider the unemployment rate influencing recruitment. HR management has to look after the unemployment rate of the area where the organisation is located; if the unemployment rate is high, human resource management will easily find a suitable candidate with a lower salary. HR management has many recruitment options. They will get many applications with high qualifications and do not have to negotiate the salary with the candidate they offer. They do not have to give extra benefits to the employees. However, if the unemployment rate is low where the organisation is located, it will cause big trouble for its human resources management. In such a situation, human resources management will not find the option in the form of an applicant and must pay more than they deserve. Human resources management has to compromise with the candidate's qualifications, knowledge, and experiences. They have to offer them a benefits package. The unemployment rate is one of the crucial factors influencing recruiting efforts (De Smet et al., 2022).

According to the Bank of England's long-term statistics, starting in 1948, unfilled vacancies as a proportion of the UK's total labour force were already elevated pre-pandemic. In 2019, the average vacancy rate was 2.4%, compared to the 70-year long-term average (from 1948 to 2018) of 1.5%. Such tight labour market conditions reflected record levels of employment as well as increasingly pressing skills mismatches. Now, sometime after the COVID-19 pandemic, labour shortages appear even more acute. Comparing two measures of labour market conditions – the unemployment rate and the vacancy rate – shows that the fourth quarter of 2021 was the first period since detailed records began in 2001 when the vacancy rate – an indicator of labour shortages – overtook unemployment (De Smet et al., 2022).

Competitors

The competitors' recruitment policies also affect the organisation's recruitment function. To face the competition, organisations often have to change their recruitment policies according to the policies being followed by the competitors (Francis, n.d.b).

Competitors always look forward to growing up and having quality employees who can maximise their profit margin and growth rate. Competitors are one of the factors influencing recruiting efforts made by the HR department of any organisation – how to see the offers the competitors give for the positions they are looking for. HR management has to constantly update their knowledge regarding the offer and benefit to the applicant. So that they can offer more or negotiate with the candidate regarding the salary and benefits packages for the opening position (De Smet et al., 2022).

In many organisations, candidates with the knowledge and experience of their competitors' preferences are often hired or used to fill positions of their competitors. This enables organisations to gain insights into the strategies and plans of their competitor organisations and try to overcome their drawbacks (Caballero at al., 2022).

We need to mention the newest trend – the quitting trend. People are switching jobs and industries, moving from traditional to nontraditional roles, retiring early, or starting businesses. They take time out to tend to their personal lives or embark on sabbaticals. The Great Attrition has become the Great Renegotiation. Competition for talent remains fierce. However, the barriers to switching employers have dropped dramatically for specific categories of workers. In the United

States alone, there were 11.3 million open jobs at the end of May – grown substantially from 9.3 million available jobs in April 2021. Even as employers scramble to fill these positions, the voluntary quit rate is 25% higher than pre-pandemic levels. At the current and projected pace of hiring, quitting, and job creation, openings likely will not return to normal for some time. Like their global peers, Europeans think more about leaving, exacerbating a high job vacancy rate and a skills gap (Caballero at al., 2022).

The analysis, which includes a survey of more than 16,000 respondents in nine European countries, shows that one-third of respondents expect to quit their jobs in the next three to six months. While that slice of the workforce is lower than the 40% in our global survey from April, it is a remarkably high churn rate for Europe, where labour protections and cultural factors – not to mention a likely economic slowdown – tend to favour remaining in a job. So, companies that believe attrition is a problem limited to the United States should understand that one in three workers may quit soon (Caballero at al., 2022).

Nevertheless, high attrition is just one of the challenges facing European employers. The job vacancy rate doubled to 3% in June 2022 from 1.6% in June 2020, making it harder for companies to fill open positions. Organisations also face a skills gap across industries; many retirees are unlikely to return to the workforce (Caballero at al., 2022).

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Chapter Three

Social Responsibility Policies

Social responsibility policies in European businesses outline a company's commitment to operating ethically and sustainably, which considers the impact of its operations on society and the environment. Many European companies have adopted corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental issues and to address stakeholders' expectations, such as employees, customers, and investors (European Commission, 2023; Unilever, n.d.). Some examples of CSR policies in European businesses include initiatives related to environmental sustainability, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions or conserving water and energy. Other CSR policies may focus on diversity and inclusion, ethical business practices, or supporting local communities (BP, n.d.; SpareBank 1, n.d.).

Impact on Onboarding

Social responsibility policies can have several impacts on hiring processes within a company. Some companies may incorporate their social responsibility values into their hiring criteria, either by explicitly stating these values in job descriptions or by using them to evaluate candidates during the hiring process. For example, a company that values sustainability may prioritise candidates who have demonstrated a commitment to environmental protection in their work history (Indeed, n.d.; Cultivating Capital, n.d.). Incorporating social responsibility values into hiring can help a company ensure that its workforce is aligned with its mission and values and can also be a way to attract and retain top talent who are drawn to organisations that share their values (BP, n.d.).

On the other hand, some companies may take a more formal approach to integrate social responsibility into their hiring processes by implementing diversity and inclusion policies. These policies may outline specific goals and targets related to diversity and inclusion and may require the company to track and report on its progress in meeting these goals. By prioritising diversity and inclusion in hiring, a com-

pany can create a more representative and inclusive workforce, which can have several benefits, including improved decision-making, innovation, and employee satisfaction (European Commission, 2023).

The European Pillar of Social Rights

The European Parliament, The Council, and The Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017 at the Gothenburg Summit. The Pillar sets out 20 fundamental principles representing the beacon guiding us towards a strong social Europe that is fair, inclusive, and full of opportunity in the 21st century (European Commission, 2023). An important aspect of the key principles and action plan is maintaining and improving one of the world's highest standards in working conditions and broad social protection. Those key principles are concrete initiatives that institutions, national, regional, and local authorities, as well as other businesses, shall look to when writing or upgrading workplace policies (European Commission, 2023). Below are 10 sections that summarise these guiding principles:

1. *Education, Training, and Life-Long Learning.* Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training, and life-long learning to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successful transitions in the labour market.

2. *Gender Equality.* Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment, and career progression. Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

3. *Equal Opportunities.* Regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public. Furthermore, equal opportunities for under-represented groups shall be fostered.

4. *Active Support for Employment.* Everyone has the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects. This includes the right to receive support for job search, training, and re-qualification. Young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship, or a job

offer of good standing within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. Unemployed people have the right to personalised, continuous, and consistent support. In addition, the long-term unemployed have the right to an in-depth individual assessment at the latest 18 months.

5. *Secure and Adaptable Employment.* Regardless of the type and duration of the employment relationship, workers have the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection, and training. The transition towards open-ended forms of employment shall be fostered. Following legislation and collective agreements, the flexibility for employers to adapt swiftly to changes in the economic context shall be ensured. Innovative forms of work that ensure quality working conditions shall be fostered. Entrepreneurship and self-employment shall be encouraged. Occupational mobility shall be facilitated. Employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions shall be prevented by prohibiting the abuse of atypical contracts. In addition, any probation period should be of reasonable duration.

6. *Wages.* Workers have the right to fair wages that provide a decent living standard. Adequate minimum wages shall be ensured in a way that provides for the satisfaction of the needs of the worker and their family in the light of national economic and social conditions whilst safeguarding access to employment and incentives to seek work. In-work poverty shall be prevented. All wages shall be set transparently and predictably according to national practices and respecting the autonomy of the social partners.

7. *Information About Employment Conditions and Protection in Case of Dismissals.* Workers have the right to be informed in writing at the start of employment about their rights and obligations resulting from the employment relationship, including during probation periods. Before any dismissal, workers have the right to be informed of the reasons and be granted a reasonable notice period. In addition, they have the right to access effective and impartial dispute resolution and, in case of unjustified dismissal, a right to redress, including adequate compensation.

8. *Social Dialogue and Involvement of Workers.* The social partners shall be consulted on developing and implementing economic,

employment, and social policies according to national practices. They shall be encouraged to negotiate and conclude collective agreements in relevant matters while respecting their autonomy and the right to collective action. Where appropriate, agreements concluded between the social partners shall be implemented at the level of the Union and its Member States. Workers or their representatives have the right to be informed and consulted in good time on matters relevant to them, in particular on the transfer, restructuring, and merger of undertakings and collective redundancies. Support for the increased capacity of social partners to promote social dialogue shall be encouraged.

9. *Work-Life Balance.* Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements, and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to unique leaves of absence to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them balanced.

10. *Healthy, Safe, and Well-Adapted Work Environment and Data Protection.* Workers have the right to the protection of their health and safety. Workers have the right to a working environment adapted to their professional needs, which enables them to prolong their participation in the labour market. Workers have the right to protect their personal data in employment.

Examples of Various Social Responsibility Policies

Workplace Policies

Workplace policies are guidelines, rules, and procedures established by an employer to ensure employees' safety and well-being and establish a fair and productive work environment. These policies can cover a wide range of topics, including:

- Attendance and punctuality
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Harassment and discrimination
- Health and Safety
- Use of company equipment and resources
- Performance expectations and evaluations
- Leave policies (e.g., vacation, sick leave)

It is vital for employers to communicate their workplace policies to employees clearly and to enforce them consistently to maintain a positive and professional work environment. The European Parliament, The Council, and The Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017 at the Gothenburg Summit. The Pillar sets out 20 fundamental principles representing the beacon guiding us towards a strong social Europe that is fair, inclusive, and full of opportunity in the 21st century (European Commission, 2023). An essential aspect of the fundamental principles and action plan is maintaining and improving one of the world's highest standards in working conditions and broad social protection. These fundamental principles are concrete initiatives that institutions, national, regional, and local authorities and businesses should use to design workplace policies. Examples of social responsibility policies are provided below to illustrate how organisations can implement these principles.

- *Attendance.* An attendance policy addresses various issues related to attendance, such as tardiness, early leave, and absence without advanced notice. Attendance policies typically define these terms and describe or point to disciplinary actions. For example, an organisation might define tardiness as arrival over five minutes after the start of a shift or the end of lunch and go on to describe a progressive discipline scheme.
- *Harassment.* Harassment broadly refers to actions that cause others to feel belittled or threatened. A workplace harassment policy defines harassment and may provide examples. This kind of policy usually addresses both harassers and the harassed, pointing to disciplinary action and suggesting avenues for recourse.
- *Equal Opportunity.* Equal opportunity is an anti-discrimination policy that prevents employers from mistreating employees or job candidates based on age, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, or other personal attributes. This policy is essential because it promotes fair treatment of all individuals by managers and colleagues. It also allows an organisation to comply with federal U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regulations.
- *Health and Safety.* Health and safety policies aim to prevent illnesses and injuries in the workplace. For example, these policies may require employees to wash their hands regularly and provide instructions in a food service setting. They are also likely to de-

scribe protocols for using potentially hazardous equipment, such as deep fryers, meat slicers, knives, and other common kitchen tools.

- *Security.* A security policy relates to the physical safety of an organisation's people or the information found in an area within a facility. Security policies typically outline procedures for entering and exiting the workplace or a room inside the building. For example, they may note the use of an ID card or fingerprint scanner and qualify the types of personnel permitted entry into classified areas.

- *Cybersecurity.* Cybersecurity relates to the protection of an organisation's networks and digital property. Cybersecurity policies often address various areas of concern, including but not limited to:

  - Password strength
  - Password changing
  - Use of personal computing devices
  - Identifying illegitimate emails and attachments
  - Copy and transfer guidelines for digital files

  Measures such as these help prevent undesirable events such as data loss and compromise.

- *Acceptable Use.* An acceptable use policy is a set of rules that dictate the appropriate use of an organisation's computer network and devices. This can be seen as an extension of cybersecurity and the code of conduct. For example, such policies often prohibit behaviours such as downloading certain file types, uploading unauthorised files to the network, and using certain forms of communication via email or messaging applications.

- *Bring Your Own Device.* Bring your own device, also known as BYOD, which allows employees to use their personal computing devices, including mobile devices, for work. This is an acceptable use extension; personal devices could potentially increase cybersecurity risks. BYOD policies usually include restrictions concerning uploading to the company network and requirements relating to antivirus software.

- *Social Media.* A social media policy, commonly considered another acceptable use extension, dictates how and when employees can access their personal social media accounts during work hours. Many employers might worry that browsing social media

could decrease productivity, so social media policies often restrict access to certain times, such as breaks. These policies may also limit what kinds of employer-related information employees share to prevent leaking sensitive information.

- *Privacy.* A company's privacy policy defines how much it collects employee data and monitors employee activity. For example, a typical privacy policy informs employees that certain types of personal information-addresses, phone numbers, social security numbers-are collected to document. It may also be noted that company correspondences are subject to monitoring, but employees are assured of their right to privacy concerning their personal belongings, personal correspondences, and conversations.

- *Paid Time Off.* Paid time off, also known as P T O, refers to vacation days, personal days, and holidays during which the employee continues to earn their regular compensation rate. A P T O policy usually mentions how many vacation and personal days an employee has, how these days accrue, and how many holidays the organisation acknowledges per year. The policy might also address what happens when one of these holidays falls on the weekend, or employees do not use all their vacation days during a business year.

- *Sick Leave.* Some employers have a sick leave policy separate from the P T O policy. Sick leave refers to days away from work due to illness or injury. Salaried employees typically receive paid sick days, while hourly employees usually do not receive compensation for sick days. A sick leave policy typically includes the number of days allowed per year. In addition, it outlines associated protocols, such as acquiring a doctor's note or finding a colleague to cover your work.

- *Leave of Absence.* A leave of absence, or L O A, is an extended period away from work. This differs from P T O because of the length of the time off and the various circumstances under which an employee might request leave. There are two categories of leave-paid and unpaid-and numerous types, including but not limited to:

  - Parental leave is for those who have recently had a child through either birth or adoption.
  - Bereavement leave applies to individuals who have recently experienced the death of a loved one.
  - Medical leave is for individuals with ongoing severe medical conditions or are responsible for caring for someone who does.

An LOA policy typically notes the types of leave the organisation allows, the time permitted, and adjustments to the compensation rate, if any.

- *Flexible Work.* Flexible work policies refer to allowances for employees working outside the traditional work environment and schedule – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in a central location such as an office. Examples of flexible work include:

  - *Work-from-home or remote.* The employee may work part of the time or entirely from a remote location, usually their residence.
  - *Flex time.* On a given day, the employee may arrive and leave as they wish, provided they meet the required number of hours per day or week.
  - *Compressed schedule.* The employee works longer hours per day but fewer total days per week-typically 10 hours per day for four days.

- *Code of Conduct.* A code of conduct policy relates to employee behaviour. This kind of policy commonly addresses issues a broad range of issues, including:

  - Appropriate and inappropriate manners of dress
  - Confidentiality about company activities or projects
  - Interpersonal relationships and behaviours
  - Intoxication on the job
  - The use of communications devices or social media during work hours

  A code of conduct policy may also warn against infractions of the policy, noting that violations may lead to disciplinary action. These policy aspects help others understand the issues' seriousness and encourage adherence to the policy.

- *Payroll.* A payroll policy assures employees of their compensation. In the policy, the employer guarantees payment of wages or salaries on a specified date or regular interval. It often also includes mention of deductions such as federal and state taxes.

Environmental Policies

Environmental policies are guidelines, rules, and regulations that protect the environment and natural resources. These policies can address a wide range of environmental issues, including air quality, wa-

ter quality and management, waste management and recycling, biodiversity and habitat conservation, climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, and the use and management of natural resources, such as forests and minerals (Info Entrepreneurs, n.d.; Wallace, n.d.).

These policies aim to preserve and protect the natural environment from harm while supporting the sustainable use of natural resources (Info Entrepreneurs, n.d.). The following list contains examples of statements that can be used as a checklist or inspiration for businesses to help them draft an environmental policy appropriate to their business activities (Wallace, n.d.):

- Comply with environmental legislation and other requirements, such as approved codes of practice.
- Importance of environmental issues to your business.
- Assess the environmental impact of all historical, current, and likely future operations.

Continually seek to improve environmental performance, e.g., by doing a regular walk-around survey of your business to see if you are using energy and water efficiently and whether measures to reduce waste and pollution are effective (Wallace, n.d.).

- Reduce pollution, emissions, and waste, such as emissions from transport, oil leaks and spills, and excessive noise, heat, or vibration generated by your business activities.
- Reduce the use of all raw materials, energy, and supplies.
- Raise awareness, encourage participation, and train employees in environmental matters.
- Expect similar environmental standards from all suppliers and contractors.
- Assist customers in using products and services in an environmentally sensitive way (Info Entrepreneurs, n.d.).
- Consult with the local community.
- Participate in discussions about environmental issues.
- Communicate environmental aims and objectives to employees and external stakeholders.
- Agree to commit to environmental principles and continual improvement at the highest level in your business (Wallace, n.d.).

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- *Recycling Programs*
  - Small businesses can get started with a kick-off campaign to educate employees about the benefits of recycling, its goals, and methods.
  - Medium- to large-size companies might consider hiring a part-time recycling coordinator or enlisting the help of a staffer who would enjoy helping the business contribute to a cleaner environment.
  - Companies should post measurable goals and objectives in a central location to increase employee motivation. Even environmentally apathetic employees might participate if collection containers are conveniently located throughout the building.

  Complying with all applicable environmental legislation and sustainability commitments. Promoting and continuing to invest in technologies that provide alternatives to business travel.
  Pursuing a programme of continuous improvement by reviewing our Environmental Management System and related objectives and targets, policies, and practices.
  Provide relevant information and advice, e.g., to our consumers and customers on the environmental impacts of our products.

- *Energy Conservation Plans*
  - Businesses can allow a professional energy rater to audit their energy usage and offer advice on reducing waste, saving money, and minimising environmental impact.

– Businesses can get a quick start on energy conservation by changing all incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs and encouraging employees to shut down and unplug computers and other equipment before leaving for the day.

– Owners should consider swapping out old wall insulation for more modern and efficient materials if the building is older.

Measuring and analysing the carbon footprint of our business activities in conjunction with other climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Adopting a procurement programme which considers the environmental impact of products and services and supports the purchase of sustainable products. We use lifecycle assessment in new product design and on existing products to help us understand our products' environmental impacts and identify opportunities to reduce these impacts.

Embed environmental risks into our broader risk identification and mitigation processes.

Externally report our environmental performance annually.

- *Promote Telecommuting and Carpooling*

  – Companies can implement telecommuting and carpooling policies to encourage employees to reduce fuel consumption.

  – Some companies reward employees who commit to carpooling with discounts to local fitness clubs or other green businesses.

  – Employees whose duties do not require their constant presence at work, such as some executive assistants, human resources staff or computer network managers, can telecommute.

  – Companies with telecommuting employees typically provide a laptop or desktop computer and pay for necessary services, such as a dedicated phone line and Internet connectivity.

Preventing pollution and reducing consumption of resources with waste management strategies that promote waste minimisation re-use, recovery, and recycling, as appropriate.

Ensure our staff are aware of the environmental impacts of their work activities and encourage them to minimise those impacts through regular awareness and training.

Refresh our materiality assessment periodically, which includes considering current and future environmental issues.

Work in partnership with others to scale up action on environ-

mental issues worldwide, e.g., through private sector groups and coalitions.

- *Reduce Product Packaging*
  - Businesses that produce products requiring plastic or Styrofoam packaging can reduce this packaging and its contribution to the overfilling of landfills by switching to biodegradable packaging.
  - Alternative packaging may make products more attractive to a consumer base increasingly demanding environmentally friendly products.

Incorporating energy efficiency measures into the firm's facilities and promoting efficient energy use in all areas of business activity. Promoting the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystems through employee awareness programs and stakeholder engagement.

Engage with our suppliers to reduce environmental impact.

Locally sourced food for staff and guests.

Marketplace Policies

Marketplace policies are guidelines, rules, and regulations put in place by the owners or operators of a marketplace (such as an online marketplace or a physical market) to govern the transactions within the marketplace and ensure the fair treatment of all participants. These policies can cover a wide range of topics, including seller eligibility and registration requirements, prohibited or restricted items, pricing and payment policies, customer service and dispute resolution, privacy and data protection, intellectual property rights, and advertising and marketing rules (Koneqt, 2022; Cameron, 2022).

Marketplace policies are designed to create a fair and trustworthy environment for buyers and sellers to interact and to protect the integrity of the marketplace. Therefore, it is essential for marketplace operators to communicate their policies to all participants clearly and to enforce them consistently (Koneqt, 2022). A company can build a solid foundation of trust amongst customers, stakeholders, partners, and employees by publishing transparent, honest, and inclusive marketplace policies (Indeed, n.d.).

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Summit. The Pillar sets out 20 fundamental principles representing the beacon guiding us towards a strong social Europe that is fair, inclusive, and full of opportunity in the 21st century (European Commission, 2023). An essential aspect of the fundamental principles and action plan is maintaining and improving one of the world's highest standards in working conditions and broad social protection. These principles shape workplace and environmental policies and extend to marketplace practices. The following section provides examples of marketplace policies businesses can adopt to ensure fair and transparent transactions.

- *Data Entry and Management.* Establish guidelines for customer data entering into a CRM system, including data accuracy, completeness, and security rules.
- *Access and Security.* Establish rules for who has access to customer data in the CRM system and establish protocols for protecting this data from unauthorised access or misuse.
- *Customer Interactions.* Establish guidelines for how customer interactions should be tracked and managed in a CRM system, including phone calls, emails, and meetings.
- *Sales and Marketing.* Establish guidelines for how a CRM system should manage sales and marketing efforts, including lead generation, customer acquisition, and follow-up.
- *Data Analysis and Reporting.* Establish guidelines for using a CRM system to analyse customer data and generate reports that provide insights into customer behaviour and preferences.
- *Training and Support.* Establish a plan for training employees to use a CRM system and protocols for providing ongoing support and resources to ensure their proficiency.
- *Review and Update.* Establish a process for regularly reviewing and updating the CRM policies and procedures to ensure they are relevant and effective.
- *Payment.* Establish guidelines for when payment is expected (date), charges and interest rates for late payments, forms and methods of accepted payment, online payment options, deposit policy, etc.
- *Communication.* Establish a guideline for using email, social media, and other digital platforms to communicate with customers and stakeholders.

- *Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).* Establish a plan for how you want your business to be visualised online.

Community Policies

Local community policies are guidelines, rules, and regulations put in place by companies to govern their interactions with and impact the local community in which they operate. These policies can cover a wide range of topics, including community engagement and involvement, environmental protection and sustainability, social responsibility and philanthropy, employee involvement in the community, partnerships with local organisations and businesses, and support for local economic development (Cultivating Capital, n.d.; Unilever, n.d.). Local community policies aim to foster a positive relationship between the company and the community and ensure that the company is a responsible and contributing community member (SpareBank 1, n.d.). Local community policies can take many forms, from formal policies and procedures to informally established practices and values. Therefore, companies need to engage with and listen to the needs and concerns of the local community to develop effective and meaningful policies (BP, n.d.). The section below outlines specific examples of community policies businesses can implement to support their local communities effectively:

- *Community Service Program.* A formal program through which a company commits to giving back to the community includes paying employees to volunteer off-site to increase employee engagement. By clearly defining the policies of their community service program, companies can ensure that it is well-organised, well-supported, and effective in positively impacting the community.
- *Innovation Program.* This includes setting up programs or funds to donate to local/regional innovation initiatives that have the potential to help the community grow.
- *Youth Program.* Establish plans and methods for supporting youth work and activities, such as sponsoring local sports teams, establishing a talent grant, funding sports and culture events, etc.
- *Ethical Trade and Human Rights.* It details how the company ensures that the people and communities providing the products and services it buys and sells are treated fairly and that their fundamental human rights are protected and respected.

- *Promoting Diverse Suppliers.* Actively making the supply chain more diverse by reaching out to people from groups who have been under-represented – simultaneously unlocking innovation, agility, and opportunity – within suppliers' businesses.
- *Future Workforce.* Working with like-minded partners and governments to create employment skills in people from 15 to 24 years old. To help them find and keep meaningful work. Furthermore, it encourages them to take a purposeful approach to their future.
- *Promoting Culture.* Establish plans and methods for supporting cultural activities and growth in society.
- *Sustainable Livelihoods.* Supporting the community to build greater resilience and more sustainable livelihoods. To focus on social investment in support of sustainability aims.

Company Values

Company values are the guiding principles that shape an organisation's culture, behaviour, and decision-making processes. These values are typically communicated to internal and external stakeholders and reinforced through employee training to ensure alignment with the company's mission and goals. Clear company values help create a consistent work environment and build trust and accountability (Unilever, n.d.; BP, n.d.).

Many companies across various industries have established core values that reflect their business philosophy and commitment to excellence. For example, Siemens Mobility Global emphasises *Responsibility, Excellence, and Innovation* as core tenets of its operations (Siemens, n.d.). Similarly, Volvo Group upholds *Customer Success, Trust, Passion, Change, and Performance* as its foundational values (Volvo Group, n.d.).

Other companies, such as Lego, promote *Creativity, Imagination, Learning, Fun, and Quality* as essential elements of their corporate culture (Lego, n.d.). Ericsson focuses on *Passion, Respect, Integrity, and Discipline* to foster a solid ethical foundation within the organisation (Ericsson, n.d.).

Daimler AG highlights *Honesty, Integrity, and Respect for People,* showcasing the company's dedication to ethical business practices and its workforce (Daimler, n.d.). Shell Global has a detailed list of values, which include a patient-centred business approach, striving for excellence, accountability for financial, environmental, and social per-

formance, innovation, stakeholder relations, respect for everyone, focus on performance, healthy working environments, operational simplicity, and an unwavering commitment to quality and business ethics (Shell Global, n.d.).

Meanwhile, Novo Nordisk is driven by values such as *Respect, Achievement, Renewal, and Challenge,* reflecting its pursuit of constant growth and improvement (Novo Nordisk, n.d.). Finally, the Nokia Corporation also strongly emphasises responsibility, focusing on creating value through respect and a drive for innovation (Nokia, n.d.).

These examples illustrate how leading companies integrate their core values into their operations, shaping their organisational culture and fostering long-term success.

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Chapter Four

Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being

Essentials of the Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being

Focused on the worker's voice and equity, these five essentials transform workplaces into engines of well-being. Each essential is grounded in two fundamental human needs shared across industries and roles. By involving all workers in creating and implementing these components, companies can reimagine their workplaces as spaces that actively support well-being. Below are the five essentials for promoting workplace mental health and well-being (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Protection from Harm

The first essential is Protection from Harm, based on the core human needs for safety and security. Workplace safety means ensuring that all workers operate in a safe and healthful environment, protected from physical harm, injury, illness, and death. This involves continuously reducing occupational hazards, physical violence, and psychological harm, such as bias, discrimination, hostility, bullying, and harassment. Security extends beyond safety to include financial and job security, given the significant adverse effects of layoffs and job loss on workers and their families (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Key components of this essential include:

- Prioritising physical and psychological safety in the workplace
- Ensuring adequate rest for employees
- Normalising and supporting mental health
- Creating norms and policies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and programs for work-life harmony

Connection & Community

The second essential is Connection and Community. Organisations that foster social connection and build a sense of community can sig-

nificantly improve the health and well-being of their employees. These essential aspects meet two basic human needs: social support and belonging (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Key components of this essential include:

- Creating cultures of inclusion and belonging
- Building trusted relationships
- Promoting collaboration and teamwork

Work-Life Harmony

The third essential, Work-Life Harmony, addresses the balance between professional and personal responsibilities. Conflicts between these roles can affect well-being, and organisations can help by providing employees with autonomy and flexibility in their work. By giving workers control over when and how they work, organisations can create environments that foster long-term retention and success (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Key components of this essential include:

- Increasing autonomy in how work is done
- Offering flexible and predictable schedules
- Expanding access to paid leave
- Respecting boundaries between work and personal time

Mattering at Work

The fourth essential, Mattering at Work, reflects the human need for dignity and meaning. Workers who feel respected and valued in the workplace experience enhanced well-being. Conversely, feeling disrespected or undervalued can lead to increased stress, cynicism, and disengagement. Providing meaningful work that aligns with the broader mission of the organisation also fosters a sense of purpose (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Key components of this essential include:

- Providing a living wage
- Involving workers in decision-making processes
- Building a culture of gratitude and recognition
- Connecting individual roles to the organisational mission

Opportunity for Growth

The fifth and final essential is Opportunity for Growth, which addresses the fundamental human needs for learning and accomplishment. Learning involves acquiring new knowledge and skills in the workplace and providing opportunities for intellectual, social, professional, and emotional development. It enables employees to meet deadlines and achieve work goals while fostering positive social interactions. Without opportunities for learning or working towards shared goals, workers may feel stagnant, frustrated, and ineffective (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

While learning is the process that drives growth, accomplishment is the tangible result of meeting objectives and making an impact. Achieving goals instils a sense of competence, which helps reduce stress, anxiety, and self-doubt. By offering more opportunities for learning, accomplishment, and career advancement, organisations foster an environment where employees feel more confident in their abilities and more enthusiastic about contributing to the company's success (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Key components of this essential include:

- Providing quality training, education, and mentoring
- Ensuring clear and equitable pathways for career advancement
- Offering relevant and constructive feedback

Conclusion

Workplace well-being encompasses all aspects of working life, from the physical environment to how employees feel about their work and workplace culture. Effective measures for workplace well-being should complement occupational safety and health efforts, ensuring that workers are safe, healthy, satisfied, and engaged (Kelly et al., 2021).

Key steps to enhance workplace well-being include giving employees more control over how they perform their work, stabilising work schedules, and offering opportunities for employees to identify and solve workplace issues. Additionally, encouraging managers to support employees' personal needs and promoting a sense of social belonging among employees are crucial strategies for fostering a positive and healthy work environment (Kelly et al., 2021).

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Talent Management

Due to various external factors such as persistent changing demographics, skill shortages, work-life balance concerns, increased diversity, globalisation, emerging economies, and the rise of knowledge workers, talent planning and management strategies have needed to adjust over the last decade (Pilbeam, 2010). Consequently, companies should consider the following overall directions:

- Talent should be targeted at all levels, not just 20 per cent of top performers.
- Developing multiple value propositions is crucial because there is no longer a single way of selling the employer brand.
- Rotating talent across a company's units is beneficial for businesses.
- HR should have a more decisive influence on business strategy.

Talent consists of those individuals who can make a difference in organisational performance, either through their immediate contribution or, in the long term, by demonstrating the highest levels of potential (Pilbeam, 2010). It is a subset of HRM focusing on your most valuable employees (Pauker, 2022). It is a methodically organised, strategic process of getting the right talent onboard and helping them grow to their optimal capabilities while keeping organisational objectives in mind (Spiceworks, 2021). It is the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention and deployment of those individuals with high potential who are of particular value to an organisation (Pilbeam, 2010) or a comprehensive and integrated set of activities to ensure that the organisation attracts, retains, motivates and develops the talented people it needs now and in the future.

Talent Planning

Talent planning refers to a combination of HRM processes employers use to recruit and retain talent. These processes aim to create and maintain a high-performing workforce and are typically tailored to the

needs and overall objectives of the business (Morris, 2022). Talent planning means identifying the gaps in the human capital requirements and formulating job descriptions for the necessary vital roles to help guide sourcing, selection and developing a workforce plan for recruitment initiatives (Spiceworks, 2021).

There are three approaches identified in practice – exclusive, inclusive and hybrid. A complete approach to talent management focuses only on high performers and critical positions for succession planning, which usually means forming only one talent pool. On the other hand, the inclusive approach assumes that there are talents at all levels, which generally leads to multiple talent pools (Pilbeam, 2010). Talent pools are dynamic since business needs and talent supply change. Assigning an employee to a talent pool creates expectations for the employees, and not delivering those expectations may lead to employee frustration. A strategic talent management approach informs the qualitative and quantitative HR forecast to align closely with the organisation's business direction.

Attracting Talent

Talents are in demand, so thorough consideration is needed to attract them. Becoming an 'employer of choice' means creating a strong employer brand. Multiple value propositions showing a range of opportunities for employees may significantly contribute to attracting talented individuals. A strong employee brand influences the creation of a psychological contract between the company and employees, setting up employees' expectations. Of course, it is crucial to fulfil those expectations since talent management strongly influences brand performance. Besides, the brand could be damaged by any mismatch between the brand identity, employees' perception of the brand, and its reputation (Pilbeam, 2010).

In attracting talents, several channels may be used, such as job portals, social networks, and referrals, and as already said, employer brand also plays an important role. Selection procedures applied in talent management are the same as general HRM selection practices, such as written tests, interviews, group discussions, psychometric testing, and in-depth analysis of all available information (Spiceworks, 2021).

Retaining Talents

A reward is a critical issue if an organisation is to retain talent. Two types of talent are identified in the literature, requiring different reward

strategies. 'High performers' now contribute to the success of an organisation at the very moment, and 'high potentials' are expected to be key contributors in the future. For the first talent group, a competitive financial reward is crucial; however, for the second group, since they are less attractive to the competitors, the use of intrinsic rewards together with bonuses or long-term incentives would be more appropriate. Pilbeam (2010) summarised that a new mindset is required to challenge the reward strategy for talented individuals. In Spiceworks (2021), the following examples of rewarding talented individuals are listed: promotions and increments, offering growth opportunities, encouraging involvement in special projects and decision-making, training for more evolved roles, and rewards and recognition programs.

It is necessary to analyse the reason for this to prevent the loss of talented individuals. The literature identifies push and pull factors. Push factors relate to less desirable dimensions of a job or organisations pushing employees to search for another job, such as a level of pay, supervision, the potential for progression, lack of training opportunities, limited availability of flexible working, absence of employee voice mechanisms, etc. On the other hand, pull factors are the ones that make an employer more attractive, such as a desirable working environment, convenient geographical location, range of employer's benefits, or employer brand (Pilbeam, 2010).

Developing Talents

Membership in a talent pool creates expectations of structured, individualised, and formal development processes (Pilbeam, 2010). The practices may include, e.g., onboarding programs, opportunities for enhancing skills, aptitude, and proficiency, enabling growth through counselling, coaching, mentoring and job-rotation schemes (Spiceworks, 2021).

From an organisation and employee brand maintenance viewpoint, transitioning is essential. The activities related to this aspect may include providing retirement benefits, conducting exit interviews, and effective succession planning (Spiceworks, 2021).

Changes in Talent Management due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The use of technology and mobility significantly impacted how talented people are managed in an organisation and how the work is done. At least three significant changes happened during the last three years (Pauker, 2022):

- The pandemic has accelerated the geographical dispersion of talent through technology and remote work. Before the pandemic, an organisation would bring talent to work; nowadays, an organisation may take work to talent. Through technology, an organisation can take work to a talented person, develop that person, and retain that person.

- Employees, especially the talented ones, have more control over their work now – how and where they work. Talented individuals, either high-potential employees or high performers, can control the interaction and conversation and dictate the terms. Employers are now the ones who are listening.

- Before the pandemic, the organisational culture had been people together in meetings and in the same buildings. However, this view of the culture has been disappearing recently. The pandemic has proven that we can and must build culture from living rooms and home offices across the country. Leaders can focus on building culture anywhere by refraining from micromanaging, getting over the politics of presentism, and learning to measure what each employee produces and contributes to the organisation with as much objectivity and data as possible. Above all, by nurturing trust and fairness in employee relationships, leaders can upgrade the company culture even in a virtual-only world (Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020).

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Part Two

Resourcing from the HR Experts Viewpoint

Chapter Six

Analysis and Discussion

Overall Recruitment Policies in Small Companies

The analysis explores the recruitment process in small companies and the various approaches used for staff recruitment. The first part of the analysis discusses the methods used for recruitment, which include online portals, employment agencies, external recruiters, internships, collaboration with universities, and training centres. The companies also rely on their employees for referrals and social media platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook. The approach used for recruitment varies based on the skills required, the number of employees, and the need analysis.

The second part of the analysis explores who manages staff recruitment in the company. For example, external HR consultants, employment agencies, or internal services such as the CEO, COO, HR managers, and hiring managers manage the recruitment process. In addition, the director, business secretary, and department manager engage in the selection process in smaller companies.

Overall, small companies use a combination of approaches for recruitment and rely on internal and external resources for hiring. The recruitment process is flexible and varies based on the specific requirements of the job position.

Consideration of HRM Trends and Changes Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Based on the findings of the analysis, small businesses have changed their resourcing process due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of IT technology has increased, and online interviews are conducted more frequently than before, even if people are based in the same city. The companies have adopted different interview platforms such as Zoom and MST eams and are using more technological tools to reach out to candidates and meet with them. Remote work has also increased, and a two-phase selection process has been implemented, which includes written offers/requests, interviews via Zoom, and a 60-minute interview for promising candidates. However, personal data protection has

become a more significant concern due to increased billing and personnel turnover.

To keep up with recruitment trends and adopt the latest strategies and tactics, small businesses are turning to in-house or external HR specialists who manage the training and updating of companies in this regard. Some companies hire external recruitment consultants and attend career fairs to stay updated with the latest recruitment trends. As a recruitment agency, companies regularly update employment practices by cooperating with external specialised agencies, applying a digitally supported selection process, collaborating with universities and career centres, and attending career fairs. The use of online platforms, such as LinkedIn, and activities and collaboration with other companies in the sector have also increased.

Overall, small businesses have been adapting to the changing environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and are leveraging IT technology to keep their resourcing activities running. The focus has been on employer branding and using measures to reach candidates effectively.

Typical Recruitment Activities in Small Companies

Based on the analysis, small companies acquire candidates through job postings, screening, 2–3 interviews, and online tests. They seek open-minded, reliable, precise candidates who are eager to learn and contribute and possess computer knowledge, languages, and more specific studies adapted to the position. The candidates' geographic location is also considered, as the preference is to recruit locally or nationally, and cultural fit and curiosity are highly valued. In addition, the companies expect the candidates to be flexible and available, willing to learn, able to collaborate, responsible, highly professional, and digitally literate.

Small companies also tend to focus on candidate retention, as it can be more challenging for them to retain candidates due to the highly competitive market. Therefore, they offer a relaxed and familiar environment, monetary bonuses for achieved goals, and greater labour flexibility. Management and HR departments try to motivate staff weekly and individually. Small companies tend to assign more demanding tasks and design additional rewards to retain exceptionally talented individuals. However, small companies do not have a systematic talent management plan, and only more talented employees are given extra work and involved in more demanding job posts.

However, the role of employment seekers seems to become increasingly crucial in resourcing, primarily due to competition and lack of workforce. This means that small companies must consider the job seekers' expectations. Regarding the sectors and industries that new job seekers prefer to be employed in, IT, marketing, environmental improvement sectors (consulting and engineering), pharma, banking, and stable sectors are desirable. Moreover, job seekers prefer larger companies, the public sector, and organised, inclusive, and international companies. The expectations of job seekers today are not only about the wage but also the development expectations and working environment (material and non-material). The candidates seek flexible work practices, work from home, adequate technical support, free days, training, progress, and learning opportunities. They also seek stable employment rather than constant change, as they would in large and multinational companies.

Attracting Job Seekers in Small Companies

Based on the analysis, smaller companies can attract new employees by using various methods to inform the public and potential job seekers about their staffing needs. These methods include advertising through employment agencies, sharing information on social media and online platforms such as LinkedIn and job boards, collaborating with external associations, posting posters, and announcing vacancies in local media. Additionally, smaller companies can improve their image as attractive employers by providing good working conditions, competitive salary policies, training opportunities, free days, and frequent team bonding activities. They can also maintain a positive online image by having a straightforward website, updating social media pages, presenting the company's work, and participating in contests. Moreover, some smaller companies offer new technologies and I+D, publish activities, organise sports events, and select Recruitment Ambassadors among colleagues to attract new employees. Finally, smaller companies can attract new employees by offering attractive compensation packages, fostering a positive work environment, and maintaining a solid online presence.

Selection of Employees in Small Companies

Based on the analysis, it seems that smaller companies conduct candidate selection through a combination of screening, interviews, and

tests. Of course, the exact process can vary from company to company. Still, most companies conduct a pre-selection based on CVS received, followed by one or more interviews (either online or face-to-face), and often include psychometric testing and knowledge tests as part of the selection process.

It is also interesting to note that smaller companies focus more on quality than quantity, meaning they may have more selection steps and take more time to get to know the candidates. This may include acquainting the candidate with different sectors of the company and their managers in depth. Additionally, some smaller companies may execute psychological tests or special assignments for key personnel such as managers and experts. Overall, the selection process for smaller companies is designed to achieve quality and evaluate risks.

Onboarding of New Employees in Small Companies

Based on the analysis, small companies take different approaches to ensure new employees become familiar with the company and acquire the necessary knowledge and behaviour. For example, some companies provide extensive training, including on-the-job training and information on policies, technical infrastructure, quality, and ISO procedures. In contrast, others rely on more informal training in the field and encourage teamwork and social interaction to create cohesive and well-functioning teams.

In many cases, small companies assign a mentor, tutor, or a designated person to whom new employees can turn if they have any questions about their conditions or functions. Some companies also prepare induction programs for new employees, organise training courses, and provide video content to help new employees learn the organisation, rules, and instructions. In addition, some companies use welcome kits/letters to provide new employees with valuable job tools and interactive guides on various sectors and history. However, organising employees' first days in small companies can be challenging, especially when no HR area exists in a company. Therefore, relying on external consultants to take care of the onboarding process can be helpful as employees are supported in their first steps in the company.

Building an Image of an Attractive Employer

Based on the analysis, small companies take care of their image as attractive employers by providing good working conditions, competitive

salaries, training opportunities, frequent team bonding activities, and offering a hybrid work model. They also maintain their online image by having a clear and straightforward website and regularly updating their social media pages. Additionally, small companies offer new technologies and I+D that others may not have and participate in contests to select the best employer. They also organise various initiatives among employees, such as sports events, and have chosen recruitment ambassadors from among their colleagues.

However, it is essential to note that small companies have limited resources and prioritise hiring project managers first. In the future, they would like to structure a communication area that can promote job opportunities in cooperation with the recruiting manager. Small companies also ensure they apply national and contractual rules and do not overlook respect for people's needs and health.

Social Responsibility Measures for Better Employer Brand

Based on the analysis provided, small companies can implement various measures of social responsibility to make themselves more attractive to job seekers. These measures include workplace policies that promote flexible working hours, work-life balance, autonomy at work, and prevention of discrimination. Additionally, smaller companies focus on providing health and well-being benefits to their employees, including health insurance, reimbursement of public transport expenses, and job coach services.

Ergonomics is another aspect that can be emphasised to attract job seekers. For example, home office setups and other ergonomic arrangements can promote employee well-being and satisfaction. In addition, social inclusion and non-discrimination policies can make small companies more attractive to job seekers. This can include employing disabled people and promoting diversity and inclusion.

Moreover, promoting volunteering, involvement in the local community, and environmental awareness can also be considered. This includes implementing environmental procedures, recycling events, and applying for sustainability certifications such as ISO 14001. Other policies that make a small company more attractive to job seekers include promoting a plant-based cantina lunch, clear communication of the company's services and offerings, and providing institutions and companies with low-cost educational products.

To summarise, small companies can take various measures of social

responsibility to make themselves more attractive to job seekers. These measures include providing workplace policies that promote work-life balance, health and well-being, autonomy at work, and prevention of discrimination, as well as focusing on environmental awareness and community involvement.

Chapter Seven

Summary of Findings

The study delves into the complexities of recruitment processes in small businesses, offering light on the various techniques these entities use to attract employees. Initially, it dives into recruitment tactics ranging from web portals and employment agencies to social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The required talents, company size, and job position-specific needs all influence the recruitment approach chosen. When managing the recruitment process, various internal and external parties are often involved, including HR managers, CEOS, and external HR consultants, emphasising the flexibility and versatility of the strategy based on the job's demands.

As the discussion unfolds, it becomes clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally transformed the recruitment landscape for small enterprises. There has been a noticeable movement towards IT technology, with online interviews becoming more popular, even among local candidates. This digital revolution has resulted in a greater emphasis on employer branding and various technical tools to improve candidate interactions. Remote employment has also increased, causing businesses to implement a two-stage selection procedure to handle recruitment better.

The research focuses on normal recruitment procedures and highlights the attributes desired in candidates, such as open-mindedness, dependability, and job-specific competencies. Small businesses prefer to recruit locally, prioritising cultural fit and flexibility. Despite the obstacles of keeping talent in a competitive market, many organisations seek to establish an appealing work environment through monetary incentives and labour flexibility.

To attract job searchers, small businesses use a variety of strategies, including social media advertising and local media announcements. They want to boost their image as desirable employers by providing competitive salaries, training opportunities, and a strong web presence. These organisations use rigorous selection processes, including screenings, interviews, and testing, to ensure a great recruit.

Onboarding new employees involves a variety of tactics, ranging

from extensive training programmes to informal mentorship, to ensure that newcomers fit in well with the company culture. Furthermore, small businesses strive to improve their image as desirable employers by providing competitive perks and participating in community and environmental projects.

Finally, the paper discusses how social responsibility measures, such as flexible working hours, health benefits, and a focus on diversity and environmental sustainability, might help some companies recruit potential employees. These efforts highlight small businesses' adaptation to a changing recruitment climate, as they use technology and ethical methods to attract and retain people in a post-pandemic world.

Part Three

The Hirinig Approaches in SMEs

Chapter Eight

Analysis and Discussion

In this section, we delve into the findings from the analysis of recruitment practices, social responsibility in recruitment policies, and employer branding within small businesses. By examining quantitative data, we aim to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of these practices across different regions, as well as their interrelations. The following analysis presents key trends and statistical relationships identified through mean scores, standard deviations, and statistical tests. Through this discussion, we also highlight areas for improvement and explore the connection between recruitment practices, social responsibility initiatives, and employer branding, which are crucial for attracting and retaining talent in today's competitive landscape. The detailed analysis is divided into several subsections that each focus on specific elements, starting with recruitment practices in small businesses.

Recruitment Practices in Small Businesses

Table 8.1 provides information on the average ratings and standard deviations of various HR practices related to job analysis, recruitment, selection, onboarding, succession planning, and record-keeping. The mean ratings suggest that, overall, the respondents feel positive about these HR practices, with the highest mean rating for 'Interviewing and selection of job candidates' (4.15) and the lowest for 'Succession planning and talent management' (3.34). However, the standard deviations suggest that there is a significant variation in how the respondents rate these practices, especially for 'Sourcing and attracting job candidates' and 'Maintaining accurate and up-to-date employee records,' which have the highest standard deviations (1.177 and 1.197, respectively). This implies that some respondents may have had significant negative experiences with these practices while others may have had highly positive experiences. Overall, this table suggests that while these HR practices are generally viewed positively, there is still room for improvement in certain areas, such as sourcing and attracting job candidates and maintaining accurate employee records, to ensure a more consistent and positive experience for all employees.

TABLE 8.1   Frequency of Recruitment Practices

Items	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Job analysis and job design to determine job requirements and responsibilities	73	3.62	0.995	0.080
Sourcing and attracting job candidates through job postings, employee referrals, and recruitment events	73	3.41	1.177	0.990
Screening and shortlisting of job candidates	72	3.90	1.128	0.170
Interviewing and selection of job candidates	73	4.15	0.861	0.030
Onboarding and orientation of new employees	73	4.04	0.920	0.020
Succession planning and talent management	71	3.34	1.082	0.010
Maintaining accurate and up-to-date employee records	72	3.57	1.197	0.000

NOTES   Column headings are as follows: (1) number, (2) mean (1 – not at all … 5 – to a great extent), (3) standard deviation, (4) significance (asymp. significance of Chi-Square Kruskal Wallis test, test is statistically significant at sig. < 0,05).

Kruskal Wallis test suggests that statistically significant differences between the countries exist in the case of 'Interviewing and selection of job candidates,' 'onboarding and orientation of new employees,' 'succession planning and talent management,' and 'maintaining accurate and up-to-date employee records.' Based on the data, the lowest frequency of these four HR practices seems to take place in Norway and Denmark, but on the other hand, these four activities seem to be rather frequent in Slovenia (especially 'maintaining accurate and up-to-date employee records') and Greece (especially 'onboarding and orientation of new employees').

Social Responsibility Integrated into Recruitment Policies

'Ensuring equal employment opportunity and compliance with anti-discrimination laws' has the highest mean score of 4.03, indicating that this is an area of strength for the organisation. In addition, it suggests that the organisation is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and follows fair hiring practices. 'Providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees' has the second-highest mean score of 4.35, which is also a positive sign. It shows that the organisation is taking measures to ensure its employees' physical safety and well-being. 'Encouraging work-life balance for employees' has a mean score of 3.9, indicating that the organisation is somewhat successful in promoting work-life balance among its employees, but there is room for improvement. 'Promoting employee well-being and preventing burnout' has a

TABLE 8.2   Frequency of Social Responsibility Measures in Recruiting

Items	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ensuring equal employment opportunity and compliance with anti-discrimination laws	70	4.03	1.090	0.080
Implementing fair and transparent selection procedures	70	4.01	1.083	0.010
Encouraging diversity and inclusion in the recruitment process and workplace	68	3.75	1.111	0.140
Implementing environmentally friendly and sustainable practices in the workplace	69	3.75	1.049	0.040
Providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees	69	4.35	0.837	0.280
Promoting employee well-being and preventing burnout	70	4.01	0.893	0.004
Providing training and development opportunities for all employees	69	3.93	1.075	0.020
Encouraging work-life balance for employees	69	3.90	0.942	0.420

NOTES   Column headings are as follows: (1) number, (2) mean (1 – not at all … 5 – to a great extent), (3) standard deviation, (4) significance (asymp. significance of Chi-Square Kruskal Wallis test, test is statistically significant at sig. < 0,05).

mean score of 4.01, which suggests that the organisation is aware of the importance of employee well-being but may need to take additional steps to address burnout. 'Implementing fair and transparent selection procedures' and 'Providing training and development opportunities for all employees' have mean scores of 4.01 and 3.93, respectively. These scores suggest that the organisation is committed to providing equal opportunities for all employees and investing in their development. 'Encouraging diversity and inclusion in the recruitment process and workplace' and 'Implementing environmentally friendly and sustainable practices in the workplace' have mean scores of 3.75, indicating that the organisation may need to take additional steps to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as sustainability. The table suggests that organisations promote employee well-being, equal employment opportunity, and sustainable practices. However, there is still room for improvement in some areas.

Kruskal-Wallis test suggests statistically significant differences between 'implementing fair and transparent selection procedures,' 'implementing environmentally friendly and sustainable practices in the workplace,' 'promoting employee well-being and preventing burnout,'

and 'providing training and development opportunities for all employees.' In most cases, the highest frequency of the activities seems to be present in Spain and Greece; however, the listed aspects are less frequently present in Norway and Denmark and, in some cases, also Italy and Slovenia.

Employer Branding in Small Companies

Table 8.3 presents the mean and standard deviation scores for various strategies related to employer branding. The highest mean score was for 'Building a positive company culture that aligns with employer brand values,' with a mean of 3.72, indicating that this is the most effective strategy among those listed. The most effective approach is 'Developing a clear and consistent employer brand message and image,' with a mean score of 3.79. On the other hand, 'Implementing an employee recognition and rewards program that supports the employer brand' received the lowest mean score of 3.01, indicating that this strategy is perceived to be less effective in building a strong employer brand.

Regarding variability, the strategies 'Offering competitive benefits

TABLE 8.3   Frequency of Employer Branding Measures

Items	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Developing a clear and consistent employer brand message and image	68	3.79	1.001	0.010
Building a solid online presence through social media, website, and other digital platforms	68	3.43	1.213	0.030
Offering competitive benefits and compensation packages to attract top talent	67	2.79	1.122	0.060
Creating employee-centred branding initiatives, such as referral programs and employee advocacy	67	2.66	1.238	0.003
Developing partnerships with industry influencers and organisations	67	2.73	1.250	0.006
Participating in industry events and job fairs to increase employer brand awareness	68	2.75	1.098	0.270
Building a positive company culture that aligns with employer brand values	68	3.72	0.975	0.090
Implementing an employee recognition and rewards program that supports the employer brand	68	3.01	1.264	0.000

NOTES   Column headings are as follows: (1) number, (2) mean (1 – not at all … 5 – to a great extent), (3) standard deviation, (4) significance (asymp. significance of Chi-Square Kruskal Wallis test, test is statistically significant at sig. < 0,05).

and compensation packages to attract top talent' and 'Creating employee-centred branding initiatives, such as referral programs and employee advocacy' had the highest standard deviation scores, indicating a more significant variation in responses for these strategies. This suggests that these strategies may not be universally effective for all organisations and may require customisation based on each organisation's unique needs and circumstances.

Kruskal Wallis test suggests that statistically significant differences between the countries exist in the case of 'developing a clear and consistent employer brand message and image,' 'building a solid online presence through social media, website, and other digital platforms,' 'offering competitive benefits and compensation packages to attract top talent,' 'creating employee-centred branding initiatives, such as referral programs and employee advocacy,' 'building a positive company culture that aligns with employer brand values,' and 'implementing an employee recognition and rewards program that supports the employer brand.' In Norway, the respondents signalled lower frequencies of 'developing a clear and consistent employer brand message and image' and 'building a solid online presence through social media, website, and other digital platforms,' and in Denmark, the respondents stressed that 'developing partnerships with industry influencers and organisations' and 'implementing an employee recognition and rewards program that supports the employer brand' are less frequently present in companies. The countries that report more frequent use of the listed practices are Greece and Spain.

Table 8.4 presents the results of a survey conducted with 68 respondents. The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with four statements related to recruitment practices. The ratings were made using a Likert scale with values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates strong disagreement, and 5 indicates strong agreement.

The first statement, 'Competition for well-qualified talents has increased over the last three years,' has a mean of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.984. The mean score is above the midpoint of the scale (3), indicating that the respondents, on average, agree that competition for well-qualified talents has increased. However, the standard deviation suggests some variability in the responses, with some respondents strongly agreeing and others strongly disagreeing with the statement.

The second statement, 'We are seeing fewer applicants for each post than we did a year ago,' has a mean of 3.41 and a standard deviation

TABLE 8.4   Changes in Recruitment Policies in the Last Years

Items	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Competition for well-qualified talents has increased over the last three years	68	3.68	0.984	0.350
We see fewer applicants for each post than we did a year ago	68	3.41	0.950	0.110
We are recruiting talent from a much wider geography compared with three years ago	68	3.60	0.964	0.650
In the last three years, we have increasingly relied on online tools and platforms for recruitment purposes	68	3.76	0.979	0.490

NOTES   Column headings are as follows: (1) number, (2) mean (1 – not at all … 5 – to a great extent), (3) standard deviation, (4) significance (asymp. significance of Chi-Square Kruskal Wallis test, test is statistically significant at sig. < 0,05).

of 0.95. The mean score is also above the midpoint of the scale, but it is slightly lower than the mean score for the first statement, indicating that the respondents, on average, are somewhat less convinced that there are fewer applicants for each post. Again, the standard deviation suggests considerable variability in the responses, with some respondents strongly agreeing and others strongly disagreeing with the statement.

The third statement, 'We are recruiting talent from a much wider geography compared with three years ago,' has a mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 0.964. The mean score is above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that the respondents, on average, agree that the organisation is recruiting talent from a more expansive geography. However, the standard deviation indicates some variability in the responses, with some respondents strongly agreeing and others strongly disagreeing with the statement.

The fourth statement, 'In the last three years, we rely more and more on the use of online tools and platforms for recruitment purposes,' has a mean of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.979. The mean score is the highest among the four statements, indicating that the respondents, on average, agree that the organisation is relying more on online tools and platforms for recruitment purposes. However, the standard deviation indicates some variability in the responses, with some respondents strongly agreeing and others strongly disagreeing with the statement.

The table suggests that the competition for well-qualified talents has increased over the last three years. As a result, organisations rely

more on online tools and platforms for recruitment. However, some responses vary, indicating that not all respondents share the same perception of these trends.

The Kruskal-Wallis test suggests no statistically significant differences between the countries included in the research.

Relationships between Employer Branding, Recruitment Practices and Social Responsibility

We also performed correlation and linear regression analysis as a part of the qualitative analysis. This way, we wanted to examine dependencies between the three main concepts in the focus of the ReCrew Project – employer branding (EB), recruitment practices (RP) and social responsibility (SR) measures integrated into the HR function (as a part of corporate responsibility policy). The variables EB, RP and SR were calculated as mean values of corresponding measurement scales. We also checked the scales' Cronbach alpha to measure internal consistency. The alpha values were from 0.792 for RP to 0.891 for SR. The alpha value for EB was 0.844. Therefore, all the alpha values were considered acceptable or good, which means the measurement scales are reliable.

A growing body of literature suggests a positive relationship between recruiting practices, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and employer branding. Recruiting practices are the methods and strategies companies use to identify and attract job applicants. CSR refers to a company's voluntary actions to improve social, economic, and environmental outcomes beyond what the law requires. Employer branding refers to a company's reputation as an employer and the perceived value of working for that company.

Studies have shown that CSR initiatives can positively impact a company's employer branding, as these initiatives can help enhance the company's reputation as a socially responsible employer. This, in turn, can make the company more attractive to job seekers and improve the effectiveness of its recruiting practices. Furthermore, companies that engage in CSR initiatives are more likely to attract and retain employees who value social responsibility and ethical practices. This can lead to a more engaged and committed workforce, further enhancing the company's employer branding and recruiting practices. In addition, some studies have suggested that recruiting practices can impact a company's CSR initiatives and employer branding. For example, com-

TABLE 8.5   Correlations between RP, SR, and EB

Item	RP	SR	EB
RP	1.000	0.526**	0.483**
SR	0.526**	1.000	0.665**
EB	0.483**	0.665**	1.000

NOTES   ** $p < 0.001$.

panies with strong employer branding may be better able to attract candidates who align with their CSR values and are more likely to support these initiatives. The literature suggests a positive relationship between recruiting practices, CSR, and employer branding. Companies with CSR initiatives and strong employer branding will likely have a more engaged and committed workforce, attract and retain top talent, and enhance their overall reputation as socially responsible employers.

Based on the findings from the literature, we first performed a correlation analysis. As can be seen from Table 8.5, the correlations between the three variables are all significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), indicating a strong relationship between each pair of variables. The correlation between RP and SR is 0.526**, which shows a strong positive relationship between the two variables. The correlation between SR and EB is 0.665**, indicating an even stronger positive relationship. Finally, the correlation between RP and EB is 0.483**, again indicating a positive relationship but slightly weaker than the SR-EB correlation. The analysis suggests strong positive relationships between RP, SR, and EB; however, correlation does not imply causation.

Another analysis we did was identifying possible mediating relationships between the variables. Namely, from the literature review, we suspected that the social responsibility measures might mediate the cause-effect relationship between recruitment practices and the employee branding variable. For this reason, we performed the PROCESS algorithm authored by Andrew F. Hayes. However, the analysis showed that we could not imply the mediation effect. For this reason, we concluded our investigation with a simple linear regression analysis in which only two predictors (RP and SR) and one dependent variable (EB) were included. The analysis indicates that the overall model is statistically significant in predicting EB ($F(2, 65) = 28.199$, $p < 0.001$), with an R-squared of 0.465 and an adjusted R-squared of 0.448. This means the predictors together explain 46.5% of the variance in EB.

The coefficients table shows the unstandardised and standardised coefficients for each predictor. For example, SR significantly affects EB ($B = 0.579$, $p < 0.001$), with a standardised coefficient 0.570. This means that for every one-unit increase in SR, EB increases by 0.579 units, holding all other variables constant. Conversely, RP is not a significant predictor of EB ($B = 0.204$, $p = 0.106$), with a standardised coefficient of 0.176. On the other hand, the ANOVA analysis shows that the regression model explains a significant amount of variance in EB ($p < 0.001$), with a regression sum of squares of 19,098 and a residual sum of squares of 22,011. The standard error of the estimate is 0.58192, representing the average distance that the observed values deviate from the predicted values by the regression equation.

Chapter Nine

Summary of Findings

The following concluding thoughts can be noted if we summarise the quantitative analysis. Respondents view HR practices positively, with 'interviewing and selection of job candidates' receiving the highest mean score and 'succession planning and talent management' receiving the lowest. However, standard deviation scores suggest a significant variation in how respondents view certain practices, particularly 'sourcing and attracting job candidates' and 'maintaining accurate and up-to-date employee records.'

The analysis also shows that organisations generally promote employee well-being, equal employment opportunity, and sustainable practices, but there is still room for improvement in some areas.

Regarding employer branding strategies, 'building a positive company culture that aligns with employer brand values' is the most effective strategy, while 'implementing an employee recognition and rewards program that supports the employer brand' is perceived to be the least effective. Standard deviation scores suggest that some strategies may not be universally effective for all organisations and may require customisation based on unique needs and circumstances.

The analyses investigating relationships between the variables measuring recruitment practices, social responsibility in HR function and employer branding emphasised the importance of introducing social responsibility measures in recruiting practices. Namely, those two variables synergistically, since they are strongly correlated, influence employer branding (which shows the regression analysis), thus increasing the chances of attracting talent. The model is visualised in Figure 9.1.
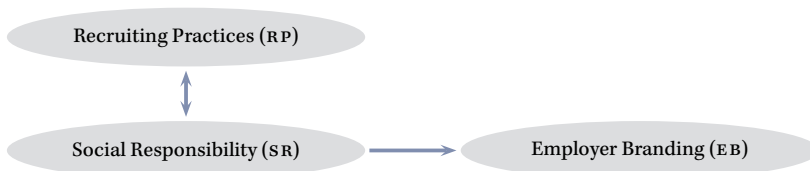

FIGURE 9.1   Model with Dependencies between RC, SR, and EB

Kruskal Wallis test results show statistically significant differences between countries for several HR practices and employer branding strategies, with Norway and Denmark reporting lower frequencies for some practices and strategies than other countries.

Part Four

Case Studies

The collection of case studies presented in this part of the monograph provides a comprehensive examination of various companies' approaches to core aspects of human resource management, corporate social responsibility (CSR), talent management, and external communication. Each case study illustrates how businesses in different sectors and regions adapt their strategies to meet internal needs and external expectations while fostering sustainable growth, employee engagement, and community support. Below is an overview of the key themes covered across the case studies:

- *Social Responsibility Policies.* Several companies have embraced social responsibility as a fundamental aspect of their operations, integrating environmental sustainability and community engagement into their corporate strategies. The companies highlighted showcase efforts to align with global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS), engage in environmentally friendly practices, support local communities, and promote diversity and inclusion. CSR policies are demonstrated as ethical imperatives and as means to enhance brand reputation, employee satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

- *Workplace Health and Well-Being.* Health and well-being in the workplace emerged as a central focus for companies that aim to improve employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Case studies show how organisations have adopted health initiatives ranging from physical well-being programs to mental health support and work-life balance efforts. These initiatives are tailored to foster a healthy work environment, reduce stress, and prevent burnout, reflecting a broader commitment to caring for employees' overall well-being.

- *Talent Management and Development.* Talent management practices are emphasised as vital for organisations looking to attract, retain, and develop skilled employees. Companies featured in the case studies have implemented various strategies such as mentoring programs, employee training, succession planning, and per-

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formance evaluation to nurture talent. These efforts are crucial for building a competent workforce and aligning talent development with organisational goals, ensuring long-term success.

- *Recruitment and Selection.* The recruitment and selection processes described in the case studies highlight the importance of hiring practices that align with a company's values, culture, and operational goals. From traditional methods to more innovative approaches like the use of technology and video submissions, companies have tailored their recruitment strategies to ensure they attract the right candidates. Transparent recruitment processes and detailed onboarding programs are crucial to hiring the right people and fostering a sense of belonging.

- *External Communication and Employer Branding.* Several companies have leveraged effective external communication to strengthen their employer brand, create a positive public image, and engage with key stakeholders. This includes building a solid online presence, engaging in social media campaigns, and maintaining transparency in business operations. By showcasing their commitments to sustainability, diversity, and employee well-being, these companies have successfully attracted top talent and gained the trust of their customers and the wider community.

- *Innovation in Business Practices.* Innovation, particularly in how businesses approach recruitment, talent development, and corporate responsibility, plays a pivotal role across the case studies. Companies have adopted cutting-edge techniques and tools to streamline recruitment, develop employee potential, and drive sustainable practices. Whether through mentoring for leadership development or digital tools for recruiting, these innovations ensure that businesses stay competitive and forward-thinking in today's rapidly changing environment.

In summary, the case studies highlight a shared commitment among businesses to integrate socially responsible practices, promote employee well-being, and innovate in human resource management. By doing so, they contribute to their organisation's success and positively impact the broader society and environment. These examples demonstrate that sustainable and socially responsible business practices are achievable and essential for long-term growth and competitive advantage.

Chapter Ten

Social Responsibility Policy (Spain)

Introducing the Company

960 Pixels Comunicación SL Unipersonal (https://960pixels.es) is a communication agency with different fields of work, with expertise in creating communication strategies and focused on brand and project identity. Initially, the company started performing in digital-related areas, essential in the existing market. Despite being a more usual business characteristic nowadays, since its inauguration, 960 Pixels Comunicación SL Unipersonal has been setting a good example in terms of a company that combines both media communication and digital sector aspects in its services, which was not very common in the region of Aragon back in 2008 when companies usually chose between these two sectors as their primary focus (Inicio—960 Pixels, n.d.).

What Has the Company Achieved by Using a Particular Model or Technique?

Since it was first inaugurated as a company, 960 Pixels Communication has constantly been launching projects related to sustainability in general, directly or indirectly. As a result, the company has been receiving several different accreditations since it was born, such as the Sello de Calidad Comunicativa, which is a seal of communication quality awarded by the Colegio de Periodistas de Aragon, an association of Aragon's journalists, and the Sello Huella Fiscal, a seal given by Knowcosters foundation to promote transformative consumption habits and to certify the payment of taxes.

In terms of social responsibility primarily, the company has been awarded, for the first time in 2014, with the Sello del Plan de Responsabilidad Social de Aragón (RSA), a seal of social responsibility given by Aragon's government alongside other organisations to promote corporate social responsibility through the celebration of Aragonese companies and businesses that incorporate socially responsible practices and adopt values such as transparency, social and environmental commitment in their services (Lasian, 2022).

960-pixel Communication: Social Responsibility Policy

Since its birth in 2008, the company 960 Pixels Comunicación has launched various projects related to what can be denominated Corporate Social Responsibility. This is because it recognises businesses and entrepreneurship as essential elements of social development (Inicio—960 Pixels, n.d.).

The company has created a concrete plan for CSR, also known as Corporate Social Responsibility, through which initiatives with social purposes have been boosted. The company also prioritises responsible brands and sponsors inclusive initiatives, measures that helped it achieve Aragon's Seal of Social Responsibility.

Furthermore, the company seeks to adapt their actions and characteristics to the Sustainable Development Goals, also known as SDGS. For example, more than 95% of the displacements related to the company's services are in the form of active mobility, and the workplace is in a coworking space built with recycled materials and bioconstruction. Both aspects are seen as elements to help make cities sustainable, which reflects the content of SDG 11. In other words, the company has always tried to guide its development through sustainable criteria, not only for pure and hard work but also for all the actions that have to do with the corporate identity, including looking for suppliers with the sustainability commitment label (Inicio—960 Pixels, n.d.).

With the passing of years, those actions have been expanded. Two other projects faithfully reflect how 960 Pixels Comunicación has tried to develop a socially responsible identity. The first project is the sponsorship of El Gancho Club de fútbol, a football club with a very social purpose. Through sponsorships, the club covers registration fees of athletes, regardless of gender or age, whose families could not afford to pay for a federation card. 960 Pixels Comunicación collaborates on this project by financing some cards for the women's club and helping athletes practice their labour.

Another vital social project is the children's digital story library. It publishes illustrated stories for children on sensitive topics, gender issues, and many environmental issues. One of these stories was written and co-published by the company and talked about the responsible use of technology by parents and children. This also highlights the educational aspects of 960 Pixels' Communication's social responsibility (Inicio—960 Pixels, n.d.).

In the future, 960 Pixels communication will reinforce its actions, al-

ways guided by the SDGS. Especially in one action in particular: the CSR that has to deal with the clients. Because of its size, there is a limited number of clients, and relations are solid and confident. However, it is essential to take a step back and let the client give feedback on the quality of the company's service. The seal of social responsibility given by Aragon's government will help the company to achieve this goal.

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Lasian. (2022, November 29). *Qué es el sello RSA y cómo conseguirlo.* https://lasian.es/sello-rsa/

Chapter Eleven

Health and Well-Being at the Workplace (Spain)

Introducing the Company: Grupo Azafrán

Inaugurated in 1994, Grupo Azafrán (Grupo Azafrán, n.d.) is a formation centre and European project development centre. They work on projects related to the sectors of gastronomy, food, and culinary arts.

Within this training line, one of their specialities is gastronomy, cooking, and hospitality training. They also have a program open to the outside world, a proposal called gastro-health, which is related precisely to healthy eating in general and for companies. In addition, the company provides cooking training for the general public, especially for catering professionals.

Within the education line, the company has a cooking and catering school, and it offers cooking courses and workshops for various target groups (unemployed, amateurs, professionals).

What Has the Company Achieved by Using a Particular Model or Technique?

Traditionally, the company would use mutual accident insurance as their primary model of employers' health and well-being. Nevertheless, the company has taken further and essential steps to improve its employees' health and well-being. These changes have transformed the company, and, for that, they have become part of a state foundation, La Fundación Restaurantes Sostenibles, and they have also been integrated into the Aragonese Network of Healthy Companies, which is also known by its acronym RED RAES.

In principle, on the part of belonging to the network of healthy companies, there have been no concrete outcomes yet because it has been a short time since the process of being integrated with the RED RAES was finalised, as the COVID-19 pandemic significantly delayed it.

Nonetheless, as a member of this particular network, the company has finally been awarded the designation and recognition as a member of a healthy company. Its directors are planning to keep adapting their

models and techniques to improve their staff's health and well-being, as it can be safely assumed that this is an area where there will be more to be done.

Grupo Azafrán's Health and Well-Being

Although the mutual accident insurance company is maintained, other measures were taken to improve the company's employees' health and well-being, as it seemed appropriate for the company to be part of a club where other companies also follow the same principles in some way.

Therefore, along with the use of mutual accident insurance, which provides annual periodic check-ups for personnel who so wish, and the offering of talks, activities and workshops related to prevention itself – and within the prevention, sporadically, including those related to food – the company has hired licenced health professionals for the team. It is also equipped with tools for the team, such as a kitchen.

Together, those improvements have allowed the company to hold meetings throughout the year with its employees to discuss topics regarding healthy eating habits.

This is one of a few voluntary measures taken by that company that improves the whole work environment. First, it serves as a group dynamic exercise for the employees, but it also helps the company spread the ideas of healthy and sustainable eating habits worldwide.

In the future, the company will see how its health programme continues to evolve and adapt to what the Government of Aragon will indicate to them. Furthermore, there are also healthy national companies, a certain dynamism that Groupo Azafrán will follow, more in occupational risk prevention from the industrial point of view rather than healthy eating. However, it can be assumed that this area will be developed.

References

Grupo Azafrán. (N.d.). https://elazafran.com/grupoazafran/

Chapter Twelve

Talent Management (Italy)

Introducing the Company

Human Company (Performant, 2020), a Florentine group active in the hospitality and catering sectors and leader in Italy in open-air tourism, was founded in the 1980s as E C V Group from the entrepreneurial spirit of Cardini Vannucchi, a Tuscan family originally active in the textile sector in Prato. The turn towards the world of tourism came in 1982 with the acquisition of the first Il Girasole campsite in Figline Valdarno. The structure, transformed from a campsite of pitches for tents and caravans into an ultra-modern village set in more than 31 hectares of greenery with comfortable mobile homes, immediately became the winning formula replicated over the years in each of the group's villages.

Thanks to courageous acquisitions and investments and more than 35 years of experience, the group is now the leader in Italy in the outdoor accommodation sector with a wide and diversified tourist offer. Human Company has ten outdoor facilities, including villages and campsites in towns in Tuscany, Veneto, and Lazio, joined by the three latest-generation Plus Hostels in Florence, Berlin and Prague and the 'Villa La Palagina' resort in the Chianti hills around Figline Valdarno.

Over the years, Human Company has diversified its business, flanking the hospitality sector with the catering sector and participating, among others, in developing the innovative 'Mercato Centrale' format. Launched in 2014 in Florence in the historic San Lorenzo market and then replicated in Rome at Termini station, inside the Palafuksas in Turin in the heart of the historic Porta Palazzo district and the 'I Gigli' shopping centre in Campi Bisenzio in the 'Ai Banchi di Mercato Centrale' formula, Mercato Centrale represents a winning formula for enhancing Italian food and wine excellence. The idea came from Umberto Montano, a catering entrepreneur who has been involved in quality food for over forty years, who, together with the Cardini Vannucchi family, has generated a new language in the food sector that makes simplicity its greatest strength.

What Has the Company Achieved by Using a Particular Model or Technique?

'Timonieri di Human Company' is one of the most recent cases of companies that have focused on Talent Management in Italy by adopting Mentoring for the Management of internal resource development. This testifies that many companies still have to start with the basics of Mentoring. The program started in 2017 due to the company's need to train future facility managers (campsites), conducting training and talent management internally because of an expansion of staff due to the opening of new facilities throughout Italy.

There are many applications of corporate mentoring, and in recent years, mentoring programmes have emerged in Italy to manage many talent management situations. However, when it comes to traditional applications, one sometimes risks seeing them as banal and uninteresting. Instead, before using Mentoring for science fiction, it is good to appreciate it in its most classic and powerful application.

When the company started the Mentoring programme for future executives, it was simultaneously planning to carry out a 're-branding' from 'Elite Club Vacanze' to its current name of 'Human company,' precisely in order to emphasise internal and external (customers) human capital and to vigorously renew the company's image around the historical organisational values from which it originated. A family-run company to which Mentoring was suggested as an appropriate methodology to preserve the continuity of the corporate culture and values, which are the main glues of the sense of belonging to a group, in future top Management, particularly in the ability to cascade the 'why of the company' and expected behaviour at all levels, even before specific know-how.

Phases in Talent Management

This case study is divided into different phases aiming at talent management through mentoring activities:

1. Elaboration of a shared 'Vision, Mission, Values' document and description in behavioural terms of expected and desirable practices through Focus Groups.
2. Identification of Mentors and Mentees: done by HR Department.
3. Mentor training (initial and itinerary): Facility Managers (6 initial days, 2 in itinerary, 1 final).

4. Training of Mentees (high potentials identified by internal assessment tools) (1-day initial project orientation, 1 day in itinerary on good practice management and project realignment).

5. Project Orientation of Mentors and Mentees.

6. Matching (Mentees chose Mentors): experiential training and action learning with sports games.

7. One-to-one initiation and itinerary evaluation assistance with 'Mentoring Project Tutors.'

8. Mentor and Mentee community of practice management: in the presence and via the company intranet platform.

9. Final evaluation (through qualitative and quantitative evaluation system: Mentoring impact on Mentor, Mentee and Organisation).

The objectives of this case study are:

- Enhance talent management skills through the training of the mentor figure.
- Train a group of managers to be used as 'Mentor' trainers.
- Train young people and promote talent within the organisation.

This case study also aims to develop 'identity' content and 're-branding' and improve organisational communication, transmit mission values and managerial models, and create and develop internal professionalism and a sense of ownership.

Strengths and Achievements

Having a mentoring programme within an organisation is not easy. This must keep the company's routine intact. That is why it is always recommended that this programme is administered during quiet periods rather than stressful ones. In particular, this case study highlights many strengths from both the Mentor and Mentee perspectives, namely:

1. From the Mentors' point of view:
    - Mutual trust – understanding – fairness in the relationship – self-esteem that reinforces my motivation to work
    - A pleasure to teach/pass on
    - Enthusiasm – ideas that can help the company with projects outside the company

- Empathy – esteem stimulus – personal history fundamental to understanding job aspirations
- Questioning
- Improved listening skills and focus on topics
- Usefulness towards the Company
- Mentor kit used to understand what to follow in one-to-one
- In addition to the possibility of career development, other aspects that enhance professionalism emerged in the course
- Valuing in-house experience by transferring it to other company contexts

2. From the Mentee's point of view:
- Attitude of mentors
- Relationship transparency, trust, respect, and empathy
- Dedicated time and complicity
- Ability to manage difficult moments
- Overcoming hierarchies
- Direct and open relationships, specific to work problems

An ex-post questionnaire was submitted to Mentors and Mentees on several typical evaluation variables on the impact of Mentoring.

On the part of the Mentees, the most significant result was that knowledge of company values increased considerably. Equally significantly, awareness of their role skills, leadership skills, role performance, personal and job satisfaction, work motivation, sense of belonging to the company, and organisational communication increased.

What is even more surprising is that almost the same results are recorded for Mentors, with a particular emphasis on the ability to transmit the company's mission, vision, and values. On awareness of one's own role skills, awareness of leadership skills, awareness of the exercise of the role, personal and job satisfaction, work motivation, sense of belonging to the company, feeling of having been given value for one's professional experience and organisational communication.

Conclusions

In this case study, it is reported that Mentoring is a methodology with great potential to 'systemise' internal expert competencies. However, even more so, it is effective in significantly increasing awareness and decreasing doubts.

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Health and Well-Being in the Workplace (Italy)

Introducing the Company: Mediaset Italia

Mediaset Italia is the Italian-language television channel that broadcasts the best programmes of the main Mediaset channels abroad (Canale 5, Italia 1, Rete 4 and La5). The channel is aimed at more than 60 million Italians living abroad and all those who love Italy, its culture, and its beauty. In addition to the main prime-time programmes, the schedule offers all the best of entertainment, drama, entertainment, news, and sports programmes shortly after the Italian broadcast. Mediaset S.p.A. is Italy's leading private media company (SustainCase, 2019).

The Goals of the Case Study and the Stakeholders

Each Company in the Mediaset Group has established a different corporate welfare system, always putting the needs of the employees at the forefront. Mediaset made the following actions to advance the welfare and well-being of its employees:

- Encourage employees to balance work and life
- Protect maternity leave, encourage postpartum employment, and provide benefits to employees
- Encourage workplace adaptability

Mediaset listed several important topics in its 2018 Sustainability Report (GRI, n.d.), including financial performance, customer happiness, ethical supplier management, and intellectual property protection. Promoting staff welfare and well-being stand out as a crucial practical concern for Mediaset among these.

In order to determine a company's most significant impacts, stakeholders must be contacted, and their reasonable expectations and interests must be considered. This is a crucial tenet of appropriately reported CSR/sustainability. In this respect, Mediaset has been in contact with various stakeholders (Table 13.1).

TABLE 13.1   Key Stakeholder Groups Mediaset Engages with

Investors, shareholders and financial community
Users and Customers
Employees
Suppliers, subcontractors
Artistic resources, business partners, Content suppliers
PA government and control bodies
Trade unions
Sectoral organisations
University and research centres
Local Community
Media and opinion leaders

NOTES   Adapted from SustainCase (2019).

The Actions Taken by Mediaset to Promote Employee Welfare and Well-Being

To ensure employee welfare and well-being, Mediaset has taken different actions.

Promoting Work-Life Balance for Employees

To help employees better manage their personal and professional lives, Mediaset's Mediacenter has been operating at the Milan and Rome headquarters for more than ten years. A section of the corporate grounds known as Mediacenter contains several practical services for enhancing the quality of life of Group employees. Mediacenter, which has a 3,000 square meter space, is regarded as one of Italy's most helpful and welcoming charity stores. The services are managed by outside providers chosen for their expertise in the relevant fields, and they include things like the following in the context of caring for people:

- medical centre, which provides the medical services of specialists from the San Raffaele Hospital to employees, free of charge;
- fitness centre;
- mini market;
- laundry/tailoring repair services;
- bank;
- post office;
- bookshop;

- travel agency;
- parapharmacy;
- shopping area;
- catering.

Safeguarding Maternity and Return to Work after Childbirth

Thanks to a significant corporate program called the Nursery, which has been open to employees' children up to the age of 3 since 2004, Mediaset protects maternity leave and postpartum employment. With this approach, parents can leave their kids in the care of qualified teachers while at work, saving them the time and money they would have otherwise spent on childcare.

Offering Employee Benefits

Social security and welfare payments are the primary types of perks planned for Mediaset Group employees in Italy. A supplemental health care plan, a 24-hour injury insurance policy, and a supplemental pension fund are available to all employees. Mediaset also ensures that all its employees will get mandatory maternity pay. In addition to these advantages, senior managers may also be eligible for corporate automobiles, life insurance, and permanent disability benefits due to illness.

Promoting Workplace Flexibility

By the demands and opportunities that define the television industry, Mediaset has consistently identified and put into place specific tools that make it easier to balance the time spent on personal and professional obligations. As a result, trade union organisations have developed, in agreements, various working hours that flexibly suit the demands of the company and the workforce. In particular, most employees can start working between 9.00 and 10.30 unless organisational units demand them to start earlier for operational reasons. At the same time, some staff in production sectors have a 7-hour rather than an 8-hour workday. A decrease in working hours is also typically granted to employees who seek it in all business areas, provided that the technical and organisational requirements are met and the job permits it from an operational perspective. 85% of the 332 Mediaset Group employees who have received part-time contracts are women. Female employees who request a reorganisation of their working lives after returning from

maternity leave frequently request reductions in working hours so they can have a few extra hours each day to devote to their personal lives.

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Chapter Fourteen

External Communication (Slovenia)

Company Description

Telekom Slovenije (https://www.telekom.si/) is the leading supplier of communication solutions in Slovenia and Southeast Europe. They also work on digital and multimedia content, system integration, the building and upkeep of telecommunications networks, cybersecurity, and other services like financial services, insurance, smart homes, smart cities, industrial solutions, and e-mobility, in addition to fixed and mobile communications and ICT solutions. While maintaining the most extensive and fastest network in Slovenia, the company works to create and apply cutting-edge technologies.

Human Resources Activities

As part of its hiring and talent acquisition processes, Telekom Slovenije employs a variety of human resources activities. These actions consist of the following (Brajlih et al., 2023):

- *Workforce Planning.* The business determines the kinds of positions and the number of people needed to fulfil them to achieve its objectives.
- *Posting of Jobs.* Telekom Slovenije posts job openings with comprehensive requirements and conditions on its website and recruitment portals, enabling interested applicants to apply for the positions.
- *Process for Selection and Recruiting.* The business's HR department handles selection and recruiting. This entails conducting interviews, using behavioural and HR questionnaires, and determining whether or not individuals are qualified for the position.
- *Upkeep of Unselected Candidate Records.* Telekom Slovenije keeps a list of unemployed candidates for potential future employment chances. This makes it possible for future workforce requirements to be filled more quickly.
- *Contract Preparation and Administrative Steps.* Following the selection of a candidate, the business creates the proper employ-

ment contract and completes all required administrative steps, including enrolling the employee in the social security system and creating payment documentation.

- *Onboarding.* New hires go through an onboarding process after being hired. The employee will be trained for job performance during this phase, which also involves familiarising them with their duties and the company's policies and procedures.

Telekom Slovenije also uses a method for awarding its staff members, which entails the following actions:

- *Cash Incentives.* The organisation offers cash incentives to employees based on their contributions, skills, and duties. Monthly incentives, commissions, or bonuses are just a few examples of financial incentives that might be given.
- *Non-Financial Rewards.* Besides financial incentives, the organisation uses non-financial incentives like praise for accomplishments, gratitude, and personal growth. These benefits encourage employee motivation and support increased commitment and satisfaction.

Telekom Slovenije tracks the number of key performance indicators (KPIS) to evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of its HR procedures. For various HR procedures, some key performance indicators are as follows:

- *Recruitment Process.* Number of applications received, number of recently signed contracts, the time elapsed between the posting of a job and contract signature, and rate of successful onboarding.
- *Process for Rewarding.* Employee productivity, new client acquisition rate, customer satisfaction, and the number of individual employee actions.
- *Process of Training and Development.* Error reduction, employee engagement in training initiatives, training time allotted, and the average number of sessions per employee. The process for employee development includes employee evaluations, yearly performance reviews, career plans, identifying essential personnel and those with high potential, and idea recognition.
- *Employee Turnover.* The number of departing employees and the average estimated workforce.

Practises for Corporate Social Responsibility

Telekom Slovenije is dedicated to CSR and employs several strategies that support long-term growth and care for the environment, workers, community, and society. Some special CSR procedures used by the business include:

- *Environmental Protection.* Telekom Slovenije works to lessen its influence on the environment by putting in place measures to save energy, cut greenhouse gas emissions, encourage resource efficiency, and guarantee ethical waste management. Additionally, they aid initiatives to protect cultural and ecological heritage, such as the Sečoveljske Soline Landscape Park.

- *Social Inclusion and Diversity.* Telekom Slovenije encourages social inclusion and diversity among its employees and business areas. The business strongly emphasises equal opportunities and fosters a diverse workplace that values differences in gender, race, age, and handicap. Additionally, they back policies and projects that advance equality and social harmony.

- *Digital Inclusion.* Telekom Slovenije is dedicated to closing the digital divide and ensuring everyone has access to the benefits of digitisation. Particularly in disadvantaged areas, they invest in infrastructure and programmes that offer access to digital technology and skills. Furthermore, the company also provides educational programmes to improve digital literacy among different populations, such as children, seniors, and underserved communities.

- *Community Involvement.* Telekom Slovenije actively participates in regional communities through various projects and alliances. They support social welfare initiatives, sporting events, cultural activities, and educational endeavours. In addition, the business promotes community involvement and volunteerism among its staff members to help them develop a sense of responsibility and belonging to society.

- *Ethical Standards.* Telekom Slovenije upholds high ethical standards in all aspects of its business operations. An ethics code governs their behaviour and relationships with stakeholders. The business actively supports anti-corruption policies and fair competition because it values honesty, openness, and accountability. Additionally, they guarantee adherence to pertinent rules and legislation.

Employer Brand-Strengthening Strategies

Telekom Slovenije thoroughly approaches corporate social responsibility and human resources initiatives. The organisation attracts and keeps exceptional people while promoting social progress and sustainable growth, from hiring and talent acquisition through rewarding procedures and CSR practices. Telekom Slovenije is a leader in the telecommunications sector, prioritising employee development, environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and ethical business practices. In addition, Telekom Slovenije uses several techniques to enhance its employer brand and attract top people. It uses a range of HR initiatives, including workforce planning, open job advertising, a strict hiring procedure, talent pool management, efficient onboarding, and ongoing employee development. These initiatives demonstrate the business's dedication to fostering a supportive work environment and allowing staff members to advance their careers.

Telekom Slovenije continually monitors several key performance indicators (KPIS) to assess the efficacy of its HR practices. These KPIS include turnover rates, staff appraisals, training and development, employee awards, and hiring procedures. As a result, the business receives important insights into the effectiveness and impact of its HR activities by keeping an eye on these metrics.

Telekom Slovenije has also established a procedure for recognising and awarding staff. This includes giving financial rewards depending on contributions, aptitudes, and work output. The organisation also strongly emphasises non-cash incentives like appreciation, personal development, and acknowledgement since they help employees stay motivated and committed to their jobs.

Moreover, as already indicated, Telekom Slovenije shows a significant commitment to CSR. The business prioritises environmental conservation by implementing policies to conserve energy, cut emissions, and advance moral waste management. Additionally, it prioritises digital inclusion, community involvement, social inclusion, and ethical business practices. These CSR programmes support long-term development, environmental protection, and a favourable reputation within the sector.

By building a positive work atmosphere, offering chances for advancement, and exhibiting a dedication to CSR through these tactics, Telekom Slovenije presents itself as an employer of choice. In addition,

these initiatives strengthen the employer brand, attracting talented people who share the company's values and objectives.

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Chapter Fifteen

Finding Company Fit (Slovenia)

Description of the Company

One of the biggest manufacturers in Europe, BSH Home Appliances Ltd. is a market leader in the manufacture of home appliances. The organisation works to enhance people's lives worldwide with its top brands, cutting-edge goods, and excellent solutions. The business prioritises the requirements of each user and works to develop resource-efficient, ecologically friendly solutions (Brkovi et. al, 2023).

The company's users are at the core of its operations, and this serves as its ambitious concept. Their primary goal is to improve users' lives everywhere by creating cutting-edge home products. They use cutting-edge technology to produce products of the highest quality while using fewer resources. In order to accomplish these objectives, the company's personnel are essential. They are outstanding people who value innovation, are globally connected, are not afraid to take risks, and are prepared to learn from their errors.

The foundation of the company culture is the idea of 'One team,' which refers to creating a cohesive team culture. The business wants its employees to work together, be friendly, have excellent attitudes, and be committed. In addition, the organisation wants to be the top choice for customers, and they do this by offering excellent goods and services.

The company's ideals have a significant role in inspiring personnel. All personnel in the organisation are taught to uphold values, including commitment, accountability, pragmatism, ambition, positivism, teamwork, trust, generosity, and respect. These principles are the cornerstone of the business's success and help foster a supportive work environment.

Around 2,000 people work for BSH Home Appliances Ltd., including 250 indirect workers who provide production support services. Three departments comprise the company's organisational structure: the director of technology, the director of business administration, and the director of sales, marketing, and customer support. Within the company, each sector is responsible for, administers, and leads its own job.

The corporation has several divisions: technology departments, busi-

ness administration, sales, marketing, and customer support. Product development, quality control, environmental protection, and technical support are the main priorities of the technology department. The business administration division has planning, logistics, human resources, operational management, and control divisions. Product promotion, marketing, customer services, and customer support are within the purview of the Sales, Marketing, and Customer Support Departments.

BSH Home Appliances Ltd. collaborates with partners, suppliers, distributors, and other value-chain players to achieve its objectives. As a result, the company expands its market potential and maintains its position as a leader in the home appliance industry thanks to its innovation and vision.

Overview of the Hiring Procedure

In the organisation, recruitment and selection are crucial procedures that guarantee the proper choice of job candidates and their fit for their positions. The selection and recruitment process includes the essential actions and strategies listed below.

- *Understanding Job Needs and Criteria.* It is essential for the business to precisely describe the needs and requirements for a particular position before starting the selection process. This includes determining the duties, obligations, skills, and qualifications required for effective job performance.
- *Job Posting and Advertising.* The organisation posts job openings via relevant channels, including social media, business websites, internal message boards, and online job boards. The job description and business information are both presented explicitly in the advertisement.
- *Application Review.* Following the application deadline, the business examines the papers submitted supporting the applications, including resumes, cover letters, references, etc. Candidates that do not fit the bill are disqualified at this point.
- *Interviewing.* Individual or group interviews with the shortlisted candidates may be conducted. The candidate's competencies, motivation, work history, personality qualities, etc., are assessed during the interview. It is critical to ask pertinent questions that help learn more about a candidate's skills and fit with the organisation. In this process, the candidate's prior employers or other pertinent

contacts are contacted to confirm facts, gain more insight, and evaluate the candidate's past performance and behaviour.

- *Evaluation and Selection.* The Company examines applicants' suitability for the position based on interviews, reference checks, and other assessment procedures. This assessment considers the candidate's credentials, abilities, experience, cultural fit, and alignment with the business's values. The best-qualified applicant for the position is chosen in the end.

- *Offer and Negotiation.* The employer makes a job offer after choosing a candidate. This offer includes information about the position's salary, benefits, start date, and other pertinent terms and conditions. At this point, negotiations may occur to reach a mutually agreeable conclusion.

- *Onboarding and Integration.* The onboarding procedure starts when the candidate accepts the offer. This entails acquainting the new hire with the business's rules, practises, expectations, and culture. Next, the person is welcomed into the team, given the required tools and resources, and assisted in adjusting to their new position and the company.

- *Continuous Improvement and Performance Evaluation.* BSH Home Appliances Ltd. understands the value of continuous improvement and performance evaluation to support the development and success of its workers. The organisation offers professional promotion, skill development, and lifelong learning opportunities. In addition, regular performance reviews and feedback sessions are held to evaluate employee performance, establish goals, and pinpoint areas for development.

- *Engagement and Retention.* The business places a high priority on keeping its brilliant team happy and motivated. Several tactics are used, such as work-life balance initiatives, recognition and awards programmes, opportunities for growth, competitive pay and benefits packages, and a supportive workplace culture that encourages collaboration and innovation.

Employer Branding Strategies

BSH Home Appliances Ltd. uses a thorough hiring procedure to find, hire, and keep staff members who share its values, are qualified and skilled, and are committed to helping the business achieve its objec-

tives. The business emphasises the value of teamwork, a healthy work environment, and cultural fit in building a thriving organisational culture. BSH Home Appliances Ltd. works to create a skilled and motivated workforce that fosters innovation and provides first-rate goods and services to its clients all over the world through efficient recruitment and selection procedures, ongoing training, and employee engagement programmes. By doing this, BSH Home Appliances Ltd. uses several tactics to enhance its employer brand and guarantee the hiring of skilled and devoted personnel. The business puts the interests of its customers first and concentrates on developing modern, resource-conserving household appliances. It encourages risk-taking, creativity, global connectedness, and the ability to learn from mistakes in its employees. The company's culture is based on the idea of 'One team', which promotes a cooperative and welcoming workplace. The ideals upheld by BSH Home Appliances Ltd. direct staff behaviour and foster a friendly environment. The organisation uses a thorough hiring process that includes understanding job requirements, posting jobs, reviewing applications, conducting interviews, checking references, evaluating candidates, and making a final decision. New personnel undergo an entire onboarding procedure and ongoing performance review after being chosen. Through initiatives to promote work-life balance, recognition programmes, career development opportunities, competitive pay, and a positive workplace environment, BSH Home Appliances Ltd. strongly emphasises engagement and retention. With these tactics, BSH Home Appliances Ltd. hopes to find, keep, and grow a talented and enthusiastic workforce that will help it succeed in offering high-quality goods and services to customers worldwide.

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Chapter Sixteen

Recruitment Process (Greece)

Introducing the Company

Apivita (n.d.) is a company created by two pharmacists, pioneers in sustainable development, offering effective natural products for the face, body, and hair.

What Has the Company Achieved by Using a Particular Model or Technique?

Apivita got certified as a 'Great Places to Work' in an institution that officially certifies the company's professional experience and working environment as an excellent choice in the market and, above all, in the conviction of its own employees.

Apivita's commitment to regularly considering its stakeholders' and employees' expectations and needs is paramount. Following are mentioned the activities made by Apivita for its employees:

- Performance appraisal process, annually.
- Induction process for new recruits, whenever there is a new employee hired.
- Meetings (project teams, skip level meetings with the CEO, general assembly, etc.), daily/weekly/monthly/annually.
- Telephone contact/email daily.
- Employee satisfaction survey/employee stress survey, annually/ every two years.
- Newsletter, monthly.
- Interviews with departing employees, as applicable.
- IDEA Bank Project is open year-round.

Meritocracy and transparency in making objective decisions are particularly important to Apivita and constitute the foundation of the company's operation. All decisions are based on documented policies developed according to the company's culture and needs.

Policies and procedures are communicated and accessible to all Company employees, thus ensuring objectivity and high-level internal

communications. All the policies are available on File Server, a shared folder accessible to all employees since it functions as an intranet for the organisation. In particular, the following policies and procedures are in place:

1. Policies:
   - Recruitment & selection policy
   - Salary & benefits policy
   - Performance evaluation policy
   - Training policy
   - Absence management policy
   - Expense report policy
   - Company vehicle policy
   - Mobile phone policy
   - Remote work policy
2. Procedures:
   - Recruitment & selection procedure
   - Performance evaluation procedure
   - Training procedure
   - Annual leave application procedure
   - Sick leave procedure
   - Expenses report procedure
   - Remote work procedure

To achieve the above, the Human Resources Department should be comprised of experienced executives with academic education and a specialisation in human resources.

The Hiring and Recruiting Processes

The new employee search, selection, and recruitment procedure is an actual test for Apivita. Therefore, the following procedure is in place to ensure transparency and to strengthen the successful recruitment indicator.

With the opening of a job vacancy, whether this constitutes the creation of a new position or the replacement of an existing position, the head of the department in question must fill in the form 'Job Vacancy Filling Form,' stating the reasons for the filling, the required qualifications, the job specifications, and the time within which it needs to be

filled. Once this form is signed by the head, the COO, and the human resources manager, the recruiter will prepare the advert and post the job. To better manage the 'Recruitment & Selection Procedure,' Apivita has invested in the Workable tracking platform. This tool operates as an application submission and CV retention database and a vital reference tool for the whole process.

Aiming to access highly qualified candidates, Apivita has created a multichannel search and selection network. A job vacancy can be filled in four different ways:

- Candidate's response to an advert (via Apivita Career Page, LinkedIn, Justjobs, kariera.gr, Glassdoor, Careerjet, Jooble).
- Employee's referral via the Referral Program.
- Internal transfer: Apivita Rising Star Bees.
- Career Fairs (Career Fair 4All, Job Fair Athens, iMBA, Athens University of Economics and Business Career Fair).

Regardless of the source the candidates come from, they are all treated with the same objective criteria, which concern the avoidance of discrimination to gender, religion, and sexual orientation, but are related to the basic criteria for filling the respective job vacancy.

Every job position comprises a three-step interview. One interview was with the recruiter, one with the line manager, and a final interview with the department manager. The interviews were structured according to the competency-based model, which the company created based on basic skills necessary for each Apivita employee, and the respective skills were defined according to the job position based on literature. To this end, a complete interview guide follows based on the specific skills per job vacancy and the skills we would like all Apivita employees to have. Indicatively, but not exhaustively, Apivita mentions some of the skills that are also considered in the annual performance evaluation:

- Communication
- Team spirit
- Programming & Organisation
- Initiative
- Adaptability

At the end of each evaluation stage, the evaluator evaluates the candidate on a balanced scorecard based on the above skills.

The employee's annual performance evaluation is also considered in case of an internal transfer. If a candidate is selected through the Referral Program, it is considered that the employee made a successful referral and is rewarded by the company. Upon completion of the procedure, a Collaboration Proposal is forwarded to the candidate, which states the salary package and the desired starting date. The journey of joining the company begins upon acceptance of the collaboration proposal.

Apivita has created a structured recruitment program. Upon the employee's recruitment, he/she receives the following from the Human Resources Department:

- Required recruitment documents (recruitment notification form, work contract, job description, forms for inclusion in the group insurance plan, and work regulations).
- The welcome gift is comprised of an Apivita product package.
- Induction kit material (which includes information about all the organisation's benefits, useful telephone numbers, etc.).

This is followed by corporate and product training, which lasts one week. On the first day at the company, the employee learns about its history, philosophy, values, and activities; the employee is toured through the company's modern facilities, the laboratories, the botanical garden, and the beehives; he/she comes in contact with the Human Resources Department and is informed about all the company's actions and receives detailed information about the company's benefits. Once the employee has completed the corporate training, they receive an in-depth, four-day training course on all the product categories.

Having completed the Induction Week, the employee is inducted into a team where he/she will receive structured on-the-job training, filling in a training form handed over to the Human Resources Department upon completing the on-the-job training. The employee is now officially a member of the Apivita family. Important details concerning the selection-induction procedure include the following:

- The selection procedure is done internally by the Human Resources Department. Headhunters are not involved.
- 99% of the organisation's contracts refer to indefinite-term contracts.

- 99% of the Apivita employees are employed under a full-time scheme.
- All employees are paid a salary that is above the national base salary.

Throughout the entire employee selection and induction procedure, Apivita places great emphasis on the Candidate Experience; this is why it provides comprehensive feedback to candidates who are rejected for a job position, which includes accurate rejection reasons, while those who arrive at the company's headquarters receive an Interview gift and Thank you card following the interview to show how vital each candidate is for the company and to thank them for the time that they dedicated to visiting the facilities.

Apivita's Internal Grading System and Training
Benefits – Provisions

The salaries and benefits provided to Apivita employees are based on the position level of our internal grading system, thus ensuring meritocracy and transparency for all. This system has been developed following the diligent and detailed mapping of the company's existing work roles and the thorough combined research for the benefits of the same roles in companies of similar activity.

The salaries and benefits provided to Apivita employees are independent of any form of distinction and fall under two major categories: basic and those concerning the working environment and career opportunities. The Human Resources Department's strategic goal is to expand the list of benefits that address all employees constantly. For example, by renovating the company's restaurant, Management committed to providing a monthly meal card for 2020 for those based at the Apivita headquarters. Concerning the basic benefits, these include:

- Competitive salary package.
- Private group insurance package.
- Discount policy for all the Apivita & Uriage products.
- Company bus for the employees' arrival and departure.
- Free parking.

In addition, a plethora of career and working environment benefits are provided:

- Continuous education and training.
- Career development.
- Movement opportunities in Greece and abroad.
- Flexible working hours (flexible arrival time 8:30–10:30)
- Ability to work remotely.
- Coffee stations.
- Participation in Corporate Social Responsibility activities.
- Corporate Events (Christmas & Summer Party, children's events).
- Personalised birthday present and company welcoming gift.
- Gift vouchers for baby items when an employee has a baby and a bodysuit with a specially designed logo by the Company's Art Director.
- New Year's raffles and good luck charms.
- Easter candles.
- SPA and hair salon services.
- I took a trip to Greece and abroad as a reward for participating in a corporate idea bank competition.
- Summer Camp for the employees' children.
- Corporate sports teams.
- Gifts to celebrate special days worldwide (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Women's Day, Book Day, etc.).
- Gift vouchers for school items.
- Team Bonding activities.

In cases where the company role or position (grade) justifies it, additional benefits such as monthly or annual target achievement bonuses, corporate care, travel expenses, mobile phone, laptop, tablet, meal cards, etc., are provided.

Education/Training

The employees' lifelong learning and growth were their priority in 2019. Overall, 11,631 training person-hours were conducted for in-house and external training, with all employees from all departments participating. At Apivita, training comes under the 'BEE Better' umbrella and is encountered in all aspects of everyday life. It starts with a thorough Induction, as described above.

Besides this basic training, numerous individual training programs are organised annually. The design of the annual training plan starts with the training needs that emerge during the performance evaluation procedure and from the one-on-one meetings conducted with team leaders at the beginning of the year. Our training actions usually concern:

- On-the-job seminars, workshops, or conferences.
- Long-term programs (postgraduate study programs, specialisation diplomas).
- Learning foreign languages.
- Strengthening of IT skills.
- Personal self-improvement training (time and stress management, project management, etc.).
- Training on team management issues (providing feedback, goal setting, dispute management, motivation, etc.).
- Training on health and safety issues (building evacuation, fire safety, provision of first aid).
- Well-being Training Seminars (dietary advice, yoga sessions, quitting smoking).

Depending on the type and topic of the program, it may be conducted internally by the corresponding training team, in collaboration with an external associate, or via their e-learning platform. Regarding general interest and topic training programs, Apivita encourages employees from the company's various departments to get to know one another better, exchange opinions, and learn from one another.

The company fully funds all the programs its employees participate in, while colleagues receive extra compensation for participating in training programs outside their working hours. To ensure the best outcome, both its Markopoulo facilities and the Experience Store in Kolonaki have specially designed training rooms with all the necessary audiovisual equipment.

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Social Responsibility Policy (Greece)

Introducing the Company: Papastratos

Papastratos (n.d.) is the largest tobacco products company in Greece.

What Has the Company Achieved by Using a Particular Model or Technique?

The company contributes to the Greek society and the country. Its corporate social responsibility program, representing an expenditure of more than EUR 1.5 million through 2009–2016, aims to provide vulnerable social groups relief from the economic crisis. Papastratos has implemented programs in collaboration with various NGOS such as Apostoli, Praksis, Desmos, and Shedia.

The people of Papastratos are critical to its success. Through constant investment in employees' career development, Papastratos provides competitive salaries and benefits, international career opportunities, and a modern working environment. Papastratos has been recognised as a Great Place to Work by the Great Place to Work Institute Hellas for three years (2012–2014) and as a Top Employer by the Top Employers Institute (2015, 2016). Papastratos also received two golden awards for employees' development plans from the HR Awards.

Papastratos' Social Responsibility

There are three main social responsibility pillars of Papastratos:

- Society
- Environment
- People

Papastratos implements many social responsibility programs. One of them that is of utmost importance and manages to attract employees is the one towards diversity and inclusion.

At Papastratos, talent, career, and skills are genderless, and stereotypes have no place. Something that is confirmed by the company's female factory workers who claim that in Papastratos, clichés and work

in the traditionally 'male-dominated' field of production are overcome. All employees need to grow and build their dream career is a willingness to learn, problem-solving skills and the ability to get his/her 'hands dirty'. This is the central conclusion from talking to employees at Papastratos' state-of-the-art factory in Aspropyrgos. Gender does not seem to play any role in the equation, as it should in any workplace.

Employees at Papastratos find an inclusive working environment that allows them to show and develop their skills, for which the company is consistently awarded annually. At the same time, they are a living example that opens the door wide for the following women who wish to work in the industrial sector. This mentality is a natural result of a universal culture of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Papastratos is the first company in Greece to receive the 2018 international certification of equal salary, ensuring equal opportunities and pay between men and women, which this year was updated for the third consecutive year. It is a culture in which male workers/employees at the factory firmly believe, from the very first moment, embracing women workers/employees as equal team members and making sure to help them organically integrate into the new environment.

This proves that ensuring equal opportunities for all employees at every stage, from recruitment and skills development to career progression, has been the cornerstone of Papastratos' working environment for years and is why it is consistently an employer of choice. The reality of being a female worker at the Papastratos factory in 2021 has nothing to do with outdated notions that physical strength or stamina plays a role in how well anyone can do their job.

Equality, as is evident from the above, is a fundamental principle that not only the company but also its employees themselves believe deeply in and serve consistently. Equality extends to the issue of remuneration, as Papastratos is the first Company in Greece to receive the international Equal Salary certification already in 2018. A fact for women employees in production is not only essential and fair but also self-evident, always based on the company's general philosophy. An employee must be judged based on gender, neither in terms of salary nor in terms of general development in the organisation. Both female and male employees take this for granted based on Papastratos' philosophy and working practices.

It is worth noting that Papastratos sets specific targets for the representation of women at all levels of the organisation. In addition, it

ensures that the gender balance of candidates for each new position is respected, designs development programmes intending to achieve balanced participation of male and female employees and implements programmes to combat prejudice. At Papastratos, not only do careers and ambition have no gender, but they also have no limits. Papastratos is always ready to welcome new members based solely on their value.

References

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Talent Management (Norway)

Introducing the Company: FuglesangDahl

2007 was the year Erling Fuglesang and Sten Rudi Dahl founded FuglesangDahl, one of Innherred's largest contractors today (Arbeidstilsynet, n.d.). They pride themselves on broad experience and a high level of professional expertise. They have worked on many large turnkey contracts but also learned to take good care of individual customers, both large and small, private and public. Today, there are over 100 employees in administration, carpenters, painters, concrete workers, and warehouse/logistics. They offer all types of carpentry and joinery work, including new builds and extensions and renovating houses and cabins. They also take care of smaller jobs, such as replacing windows and doors and interior and exterior painting. FuglesangDahl also has Miljøfyrtårn® (n.d.) certification, which means they actively work towards a sustainable, greener future, incorporating environmental policies into their company vision.

What Has the Company Achieved by Using a Particular Model or Technique?

FuglesangDahl's talent management strategy is defined by its commitment to apprenticeships and employee development. They believe in nurturing their workforce, focusing on internal talent growth, and providing opportunities for their employees to learn and advance in their respective fields.

The Different Phases

FuglesangDahl aims to become Innherred's preferred contractor, ensuring all employees work towards a common goal and making daily meaningful, comfortable, and predictable. Most of their employees come through job boards, postings, and apprenticeship programs.

1. Onboarding with company values, rules, routines, safety system, administration information and documentation, and meeting key people at FuglesangDahl.

2. Get the necessary work clothes, protective gear, tools, and whichever special adaptations the new hire needs.

3. Get familiar with the project the new employee will be working on, visit the project site and your teammates/coworkers working on the same project.

4. Six months' trial period with two sets of follow-up conversations, where the employer evaluates the new hire, and the new hire has their evaluation of their efforts and the onboarding process.

It is crucial to FuglesangDahl that the employees have all the courses and skills they need to work safely and securely on their construction sites. Together with the employee, they review all the skills and courses the employee already has and assess which courses they need to complete soon after starting work. Safety on construction sites is a high priority to the business, and they make sure that the employees are offered updates and maintenance of their courses and skills so that they always have the newest skills when they go to work during the day.

They are heavily invested in their employees' safety and health as part of their environmental policies. They look to the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 3. All employees at FuglesangDahl are followed up by Bedriftshelsetjenesten (Occupational Health Services), which provides courses and tests to identify the employees' needs and provide healthy, balanced foods at the workplace.

Strengths and Achievements

They make sure to reward efficient employees with a financial bonus. A good bonus program should be positive for the company and the employee. It encourages everyone to pull in the same direction, towards better results and development, in the short and long term. The bonus ensures a smooth workflow in all processes at the facility and works as a great motivator.

FuglesangDahl makes sure that employees have opportunities to develop themselves professionally and personally.

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Chapter Nineteen

Finding the Company Fit (Norway)

Introducing the Company: NTE

NTE is a Trøndelag-based renewable and telecommunication company with 567 employees. The company serves 73,000 telecom customers in Trøndelag alone and about 93,200 electricity customers. It is owned by 19 municipalities in former Nord-Trøndelag, reflecting a strong local commitment. NTE operates in four business areas: Energy, Market, Telecom, and Electrical Services (NTE, n.d.).

NTE has a strong EVP that focuses on creating a future-oriented work environment, engages with the local community, and is committed to sustainability. The company's promise of making Trøndelag 'climate-neutral and digital' resonates with employees who are enthusiastic about renewable energy and technological innovation. Their values of being 'open, close, and reliable' also play into the type of candidates they seek.

What Has the Company Achieved by Using a Particular Model or Technique?

NTE relies on a multi-pronged talent acquisition strategy centred around its EVP. With a commitment to making Trøndelag 'climate-neutral and digital', the EVP serves as a cornerstone in identifying skilled candidates who align with the company's ethics.

Before launching any recruitment drives, they focus on identifying its needs, challenges, and opportunities regarding employee alignment. This involves thoroughly evaluating the skill sets required across different business units and understanding how these align with their broader sustainability and innovation goals.

Based on the initial assessment, targeted recruitment drives, and internal programs are launched. These include:

1. Campus drives focusing on engineering, technology, marketing, economics, and leadership majors/education.
2. Partnerships with local organisations for mid-career reskilling programs.

3. Internal mentorship programs to align current employees with evolving company goals.

They then use a series of metrics to evaluate the success of their approach:

- *Skill Alignment.* NTE relies on quantitative measures like qualifications and certifications to assess technical competency. By aligning such metrics with their EVP, NTE ensures the candidates are technically fit and coordinated with the company's future-forward and sustainability-oriented approach.
- *Cultural Fit.* During the hiring process, NTE employs various assessment tools, like personality and situational judgment tests. Interviews often include scenario-based questions that give insights into a candidate's problem-solving capabilities, team spirit, and alignment with the company's values of being 'open, close, and reliable.'
- *Retention Rates.* By tracking the longevity of new hires, NTE can assess if employees are indeed a good 'company fit' beyond just initial impressions and qualifications. A high retention rate indicates that employees are engaged, committed, and well-aligned with the company's values and goals.

Strengths and Achievements

By aligning these metrics with its EVP, NTE has succeeded in recruiting candidates who are not just technically proficient but also culturally and socially aligned with the company's vision. Some of the results can be shown in the 6.1% sick leave the company has.

- Tangible Benefits
  1. Lower turnover rates
  2. High employee engagement scores
  3. Alignment with sustainability goals, as evidenced by increased participation in company-led sustainability initiatives
- Intangible Benefits
  1. Improvement in company culture
  2. Strengthening of the NTE brand image among prospective hires and the broader community

NTE's approach to its EVP has made its talent acquisition more efficient and meaningful. The candidates they bring on board are not merely employees but become ambassadors for NTE's vision for a more sustainable and connected Trøndelag, maintaining its good reputation.

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Chapter Twenty
Recruitment Process (Denmark)

Introducing the Company

Established as a beacon of travel ingenuity in the Nordic region, Amitylux Tours offers more than just sightseeing – it promises genuine experiences. With a reputation for transforming classic tours into extraordinary adventures, this multi-award-winning agency crafts tailor-made experiences for travellers in iconic cities like Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, and Helsinki (Amitylux, n.d.).

Whether unveiling architectural marvels, navigating quaint streets and alleys, or providing opulent experiences with private jets and drivers, Amitylux ensures that every journey is distinctive. It is not just about seeing the Nordics but about immersing oneself in its soul. Moreover, to achieve this level of unparalleled service, the company's recruitment strategy plays an undeniable role.

The Challenge: Efficient Recruitment Across Borders for Micro-Companies

Amitylux, a nimble micro-company operating seasonally across major Nordic cities, finds itself in the competitive landscape of hiring diverse roles – from freelance tour guides to marketing support. The unique challenges posed by international operations and the constant drive to uphold the brand's esteemed reputation make every recruitment cycle crucial.

Competing in a Dominant Market: More prominent organisations with substantial budgets primarily monopolise the recruitment space. These giants have the advantage of extensive reach and resources, which often overshadow smaller companies like Amitylux. The art is finding suitable candidates and ensuring the brand's gold standard is consistently reflected in every hire across borders.

The Essential Role of Technology and Automation: For Amitylux, whose recruitment undertakings are chiefly steered by the company's founder, the tools of automation and standardisation are not mere conveniences – they are indispensable. Micro-companies operating internationally face an array of challenges:

1. *Diverse Cultural Nuances.* Different regions have their own cultural, linguistic, and operational norms. Leveraging technology helps bridge these gaps, ensuring uniformity in the recruitment process.

2. *Time and Resource Constraints.* Unlike their larger counterparts, micro-companies often operate with limited resources. Automation significantly reduces manual efforts, ensuring that the process remains seamless and efficient even with a tight budget.

3. *Standardised Evaluation.* Implementing technology ensures a standardised evaluation method, enabling fair and consistent assessment of candidates from various backgrounds and regions.

The Power of Visual Evaluation – Tour Guide Video Submissions: Introducing video submissions in the recruitment process, especially for roles like tour guides, offers multiple benefits:

1. *Personality Insight.* Videos provide a deeper insight into a candidate's personality, communication style, and enthusiasm – vital traits for roles that demand high interpersonal skills.

2. *Skill Demonstration.* Tour guides can display their knowledge, storytelling abilities, and approach to managing groups, giving recruiters a clearer picture of their potential fit.

3. *Efficiency.* Videos allow for quicker initial evaluations. Recruiters can assess multiple candidates in a shorter time frame, ensuring the process is both rigorous and efficient.

In conclusion, for micro-companies like Amitylux operating internationally, embracing technology and innovative recruitment methods is more than just keeping up. It is about thriving, ensuring that despite their size, they can attract and retain talent that aligns with their brand's lofty standards.

Tackling Recruitment, the Amitylux Way:

1. *Effective Job Descriptions.* Every seasonal or permanent role begins with a well-crafted job description. It ensures that only the genuinely interested and aptly qualified candidates apply.

2. *Leveraging Modern Recruitment Tools.* Partnering with platforms like thehub.io, Amitylux streamlines its recruitment process. From promoting job openings to quick screenings via video presentations, the initial stages are both efficient and effective. Automation

ensures timely responses to all applicants, keeping the brand's image respectful and considerate.

3. *Innovative First Screening.* Moving away from traditional first screenings, Amitylux uses a mix of video submissions and impromptu calls. This evaluates the candidate's skills and assesses adaptability and on-the-spot problem-solving – critical traits for roles like tour guides.

4. *Task-based Evaluation.* Candidates are given a job-related task before an in-person interview. This practical evaluation highlights the candidate's commitment, punctuality, and quality of work – factors often hard to judge in a standard interview.

5. *Smooth Onboarding for Retention.* Recognising that the end of recruitment is the beginning of retention, Amitylux invests in a standardised yet personal onboarding process. Automation ensures that all necessary training and materials are provided, setting the employee up for success from day one.

Conclusion

Amitylux Tours is a paragon of Nordic travel innovation, striving to offer more than just sightseeing – it provides soulful experiences. At the heart of this brand's promise lies its people and, by extension, its meticulous recruitment strategy.

In a world dominated by larger corporations, the challenges faced by a micro-company like Amitylux, especially in international recruitment, are multifaceted. However, Amitylux's unique approach is characterised by innovation, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to the brand ethos. By harnessing modern technology and automation tools, the company ensures a streamlined process that addresses cultural nuances, budget constraints, and the need for standardised evaluations.

Their innovative introduction of video submissions for tour guide candidates encapsulates the brand's forward-thinking approach, prioritising personality insight, skill demonstration, and recruitment efficiency. This, coupled with well-defined job descriptions, the use of contemporary platforms, task-based evaluations, and a focused onboarding process, paints a picture of a brand that is as deeply committed to its recruitment as it is to its customer experiences.

Amitylux's recruitment journey, in essence, mirrors its service ethos

– it is not just about hiring; it is about finding the right fit who can truly immerse travellers in the Nordic soul. As the company continues to set industry standards, its recruitment processes will remain pivotal, ensuring every traveller's journey with Amitylux is sculpted by experts chosen for their skills and passion, adaptability, and alignment with the brand's esteemed vision.

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Chapter Twenty-One
External Communication (Denmark)

Introducing the Company

The Coffee Collective is a Copenhagen-based micro roastery with eight coffee shops, wholesale partnerships, and an international webshop that sells online to private customers in over 40 countries (Coffee Collective, n.d.). A robust set of values powers their overall purpose: To create exciting coffee experiences that bring better returns to the farmer. Through long-term relationships with farmers, they work to create financial sustainability with transparency in pricing at the core. Dealing directly with farmers with annual visits, paying higher prices, and publishing those prices directly on the bags have been vital to creating transparency in a non-transparent market. At the other end of the chain, their baristas are part of a union agreement (3F), and wind energy powers their coffee shops, reducing the CO_2 footprint by up to 40%.

Their yearly Sustainability Report was the first step towards B Corp Certification, and the next step is to continuously improve their impact on the world in general and coffee in particular. The company was B Corp certified in 2019, which means it meets the highest social and environmental impact standards (B Lab, n.d.). Overall, the Coffee Collective pursues to be sustainable in a broad sense. It derives from their belief that it is crucial to show respect to farmers, their employees, and their customers, as well as the environment and society in general, to conduct business responsibly.

Having one collective and clear goal helps The Coffee Collective to build strong external communication through various channels: branding and visual design, website, social media, media relations, customer service, community engagement and partnerships. Solid and powerful company messages and values that are equally shared by management and employees contribute to EVP and attract talents from various cultures and backgrounds.

What Has the Company Achieved

The Coffee Collective has successfully built trust with its employees and customers by creating clear values, transparency in all facets of the

company, education, employee benefits, and enabling social interactions. The company got B Corp certification, which is rare in the coffee industry. It implies high standards in coffee sourcing policy and in evaluating the company's contributions to its employees' financial security, health and safety, wellness, career development, and engagement and satisfaction. In addition, this section recognises business models designed to benefit workers and those that have workforce development programs to support individuals with barriers to employment.

Being certified as a B Corp, The Coffee Collective has an Impact Business Model, intentionally designed to create a specific positive outcome for one of its stakeholders – workers, community, environment, or customers. It also means the company can protect its mission and formally consider stakeholders in decision-making through its corporate structure or governing documents.

The company is well-presented on social media, having 126,000 followers on Instagram and more than 1,000 followers on LinkedIn, and it is successfully delivering its message through these channels. The website's monthly visit growth in Denmark is 278% (FLTR, 2023).

How Was it Done?

The value of the company is the following:

> The dream that drives The Coffee Collective is to explore and unfold exceptional coffee experiences in a manner that gives better living conditions to coffee farmers across the globe.

Everyone in the company knows and feels this proclamation. To work for The Coffee Collective is to know the names of the farmers, to know exactly how much they are paid, to recognise a problem with how coffee is traded elsewhere, and to know why it should be changed. This message is strongly supported by the brand's new visual design, updated in 2020 (Bjergegaard, 2020). The brand identity was revitalised, and sales had raised among their most sought-after coffee beans while putting an even bigger focus on the coffee farmer (you can find the exact price The Coffee Collective is paying to the farmer/producer on the packaging). Their famous triangles brought The new visual identity to life by creating a dynamic algorithm. Since then, they have produced even more sustainable coffee bags in mono-material plastic.

The quality of their coffee goes up every year because they visit the farms/mills, pay at the very least 25% over fair trade price, build rela-

tionships with the same farms year in and year out, and provide stability in a volatile market for their partners at the coffee origin place. This is also shown via social media: videos and engaging interviews directly from farms and with farm owners contribute to the company's value. Teaching employees about the company's core values creates respect/trust among everyone. As a result, it is easy for the company to attract enthusiastic professionals who stay in the company long-term. The team is growing steadily, and the quantity of the coffee shops is increasing.

Another way to build trust is through education programs for employees filled with workshops throughout the year that focus on various topics. If employees are driven to compete in coffee competitions, the company provides facilities, equipment, and knowledge to share. This contributes to the fact that some baristas are becoming Champions at such competitions, building an even stronger brand.

The company is arranging meetings, talks, and specific Origin nights to share knowledge and experiences about the coffee origin farms. All of this sharing lets the baristas draw closer to the experience of their colleagues, which opens up the opportunity to relay some of that information to customers. As owners of The Coffee Collective invite the farmers from Kenya or Bolivia to their HQ in Copenhagen, the opportunity to learn about the coffee baristas work with from the very people who grow, harvest, and process it creates a sense of unity among the team and trust + curiosity from the customers. Once a year, the company holds a management workshop on creating a better environment for employees to give good service (FLTR, 2023).

Human resources director Mikaela Gervard is practising self-growth discussions, where everyone from the team can arrange a meeting with HR director managers. Everyone in the company has these discussions for 6 months and then once a year after that. This is a way to create social capital among all players, contributing to the company's success.

As employees share, they want the company to succeed because they feel the mutual benefit that will be blanketed on their fellow baristas, managers, roasters, administration workers, owners, and especially the farmers they work so closely with. Employees feel taken care of by being a part of one of the best service industry unions and having private insurance, which includes free physical therapy, massages, chiropractic visits, and psychiatry.

The overall feedback from the employees, whether an experienced

barista or an intern, is the feeling of trust amongst the colleagues because they feel valued in our work and have one collective and clear goal.

Opportunities that the employees have:

- Get to work with some of the best-tasting and transparently sourced coffees in the world
- A chance to build a long-term career in coffee
- Good union-regulated working conditions, pension, six weeks of vacation per year
- Work for a B-Corp-certified company
- Continuous chance to participate in our Barista Development Programme, talks and other social activities
- A chance to get trained for coffee competitions if you are driven to do so (we have facilities, equipment, and knowledge to share)

Image on the market for potential employees:

We are a workplace that cares about our staff and the work environment. We aim to be a transparent and honest employer that fosters passion and dedication to one's craft – whichever department or role you join.

By joining us, you immerse yourself with a team of committed colleagues who care about their craft and expertise to a high degree (the team is composed of 14 nationalities). Our overall group of staff consists of approx. one hundred thirty employees of various backgrounds, nationalities, and skills, and what unites us is our desire to have a great work environment, quality products, and sustainable operations.

Conclusion

The Coffee Collective has built a solid brand on the market by formulating powerful and sincere messages and values delivered to the potential audience, potential and current employees, and customers via Social media, website, media releases, customer service and community engagement channels. The fact that the owners of the company treat each member of their team, starting from farmers and up to baristas at the coffee shops and customers, as a valuable and most prominent asset in customer relations, invests back in the employees and creates new

challenges and opportunities to grow – creates an additional value for the company in long term perspective and allows each member of the chain grow sustainably and steadily.

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Chapter Twenty-Two
Conclusions from the Case Studies

The case studies provide thorough insights into firms' approaches to addressing social responsibility, workplace health and well-being, talent management, external communication, and recruitment. Each case study exhibits distinct strategies and accomplishments adapted to the specific company's aims, values, and operational situations.

Social Responsibility and Workplace Health and Well-Being (960 Pixels) In Spain, Comunicación and Grupo Azafrán emphasise sustainability and employee well-being. 960 Pixels demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility through projects that align with the Sustainable Development Goals. It has received numerous accreditations for its efforts, including the Sello del Plan de Responsabilidad Social de Aragón. Grupo Azafrán, which focuses on health and well-being, has joined the Aragonese Network of Healthy Companies, emphasising the necessity of employee health efforts in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Talent Management: Human Company in Italy and FuglesangDahl in Norway prioritise employee development and apprenticeships. The Human Company's management mentorship programme exhibits a dedication to preserving corporate culture and values while also improving talent management abilities. FuglesangDahl places a premium on employee development, notably through safety and skill training, as part of their overall commitment to sustainability and employee well-being.

Telekom Slovenije and The Coffee Collective in Denmark demonstrate efficient communication techniques. Telekom Slovenije uses a variety of HR initiatives and CSR measures to position itself as a telecommunications leader by emphasising employee development, environmental stewardship, and ethical business practices. The Coffee Collective's focus on sustainability, B Corp certification, and open communication procedures improves its brand and recruits professionals who share its ideals.

Apivita in Greece and Amitylux Tours in the Nordic region use unique recruitment strategies. Apivita's organised recruitment programme emphasises meritocracy, transparency, and a positive candidate expe-

rience, contributing to its status as a 'Great Places to Work.' Amitylux uses technology and innovative approaches such as video submissions to traverse recruitment hurdles, assuring the selection of applicants who share the company's values despite operating in a competitive industry.

Finally, these case studies demonstrate that implementing personalised strategies for social responsibility, employee well-being, talent management, external communication, and recruitment may dramatically improve firm performance, employee happiness, and brand reputation. Whether focused on sustainability, health, skill development, communication, or innovative recruitment, each company's strategy demonstrates a dedication to economic success, employee well-being, and societal contribution.

Smart Resourcing in SMEs: Integrating Employer Branding, Social Responsibility, and HR explores how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can integrate employer branding, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and human resource (HR) management to enhance competitiveness and sustainability. Written by a group of academics and professionals under the EU-funded project ReCrew, the book is based on extensive research, including interviews and surveys with HR experts across multiple countries. The primary reason for writing this book is to help SMEs navigate the complexities of modern HR practices while leveraging employer branding and CSR to attract and retain talent. Given the increasing importance of ethical business practices and workplace well-being, the book argues that SMEs must move beyond traditional HR strategies and adopt more holistic approaches that align with contemporary workforce expectations. It provides frameworks, strategies, and case studies illustrating how SMEs can integrate social responsibility into their HR policies to build stronger employer brands. Readers should engage with this book because it not only presents a theoretical analysis of HR, employer branding, and CSR but also offers real-world examples of SMEs successfully implementing these strategies. Including case studies makes it particularly useful for those looking for practical solutions and best practices. The book is a valuable resource for SMEs looking to strengthen their employer brand, attract and retain top talent, and build a resilient, socially responsible organization.

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