

human forward.



Your employer brand may not reflect the real you. This has been the challenge facing Siemens. From revolutionizing manufacturing through automation and digitalization to creating greener and more resilient cities, the company is reimagining how the world lives and works. “I think what we do and how we do it is really innovative and exciting,” says Christoph Knorn, Global Director of Employer Branding. “But we haven’t told this story well when it comes to our employer brand. When I ask potential recruits how they see us, their image tends to be a rather stuffy and old-fashioned business.” How are Christoph and his team seeking to shift perceptions and boost talent acquisition by creating an employer brand that reflects the real Siemens?

What is the real Siemens?

We want to help make the future. As part of our move from being a heavy industrial to a digitally-focused business, our research teams are harnessing the power of data and connectivity to create totally new solutions and services. We’re also enabling manufacturers to merge the physical and virtual worlds in a new generation of production facilities.

In turn, innovation is transforming longstanding areas of our business such as electrification through greater efficiency and use of renewable energy. For instance, we’re working on a project that aims to boost power generation in Egypt by more than 40%. This isn’t just a feat of modern engineering, but also a milestone in local partnership and consultation. The local training and skills development that come with projects like this are also making a difference. From reducing outages in homes, businesses and hospitals to greater access to the internet, think how more reliable electricity supply can change people’s lives for the better?

To make this innovation possible, we’ve created a culture that prizes curiosity and experimentation, and an environment that encourages people to work flexibly, collaboratively, and in ways that suit them. Everything we

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do also has a human dimension – we call this “making real what matters”. While data is our tool, we know that data alone can’t provide solutions. We bring customers, creators and developers together, so we can learn and collaborate.

Why is the public perception so different from the real Siemens?

We’ve changed so much and so fast that most people don’t know who we are or what we stand for anymore. We want to be known as the engineering company of the future – with engineers, yes, but also with data scientists, cloud architects, robotics research scientists and consultants – a company that offers a wide variety of highly attractive jobs. Yet, talent often still sees the Siemens of the past.

Part of the problem is that most people’s image of us comes from the Siemens-branded washing machines, coffeemakers and other appliances they see in the shops, even though we’ve sold this part of the business.

Because of our long history, a lot of people also assume that we don’t like change and operate in an inflexible and bureaucratic way. When I tell students that we’re keen to promote flexible working, for example, they’re quite surprised. Such perceptions make talent acquisition harder, especially when we’re competing against seemingly fresher and cooler American tech companies.

How is your employer brand transformation program seeking to shift these perceptions?

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In the past, we've been too reserved about communicating the magic of Siemens. If we want to be one of the best companies to work for, we should be more forceful in getting our story out there. At the same time, we need more than just a marketing campaign – people won't see a lot of pictures and messages coming out of the head office as authentic. To show the real Siemens, our employer brand should belong to the employees and be projected from the inside out. That's why we refer to the transformation as a program rather than a campaign.

A big part of how we involve our employees is giving them the opportunity to share their stories. You don't have to be a 'love brand' that consumers connect with every day to have stories that are worth hearing and sharing. Similarly, although a lot of what we do in areas such as energy or transport goes on behind the scenes, this can still have a huge impact on people's everyday lives.

To get our people talking and encourage them to take part, we've taken 360 cameras and made a trip around the globe to record how our people work, how they interact with colleagues and customers, and how they develop new ideas. We're now selecting some of these stories for our publicly available Future Makers Siemens 360 app. From exploring the solar system to bringing education to poor communities in India, the immersive videos transport viewers into the worlds our people are transforming. Our people are the guides, conveying their motivation, and their passion. In a second stage we now encourage and enable our people to tell their story with the help of a central editorial team. These stories are conveyed as articles, podcasts or film and give an intimate and unfiltered view of what it really means to work at Siemens and what great and diverse set of people are already working here.

To change external perceptions, it's also important to engage in different ways. For example, rather than just visiting students in colleges, we invite them to what we call a 'student-brunch'. This setting is typically an unexpected downtown environment such as an old factory or a nightclub,

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which we hire for the day to give students a chance to talk to our people. The style of location and the informal interaction can all help to change their image of us as a company.

Your program is customized for and co-created with your local operations. What is the thinking behind this and how does the co-creation work in practice?

We've created a common 'manifesto' built around "making real what matters". But to make this more than just a slogan, our people on the ground need to interpret and apply it locally. What are the pressing priorities that matter to a township in South Africa or a rural community in Sweden, for example, and how can we provide solutions?

What is the involvement from your board and how do you ensure sufficient resources?

If we want to be one of the world's most attractive employers, we need appropriate investment. We work closely with the board to develop the employer branding program, ensure it's aligned with Siemens' strategic priorities, and make the business case for resources.

The investment includes the support of an agency in developing our Future Makers videos, social media profile and other aspects of our program. We also invest in a professional production, where appropriate, to show our appreciation of the stories being told. This ensures that the employees who contribute feel properly valued. The quality of the production also encourages people to share their stories and help them reach a wide social media audience. A basic philosophy of the program is that there must

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always be something in it for both the company and the employee who tells his or her story.

Your program is highly data-led. How do you measure progress, and how do you act on the results?

Measurement enables us to see what's working, and what isn't, so we can adjust and intervene. It also enables us to gauge, and to demonstrate return on investment. This includes monitoring quantitative metrics such as staff engagement and applications per post. We also look for qualitative feedback to create a more rounded 'human' picture of brand perception. For example, when we host our brunch events for students, we ask them about their image of Siemens when they arrive, and then whether this has changed as a result of the time they've spent with us.

What progress have you made and how long will the program last?

We're about two years into a three-year program. We're beginning to move the needle, but there's still more to do. While a lot of the investment to date has been internally focused, we're looking to increase our media spend over the coming year. While the program may be extended beyond the three years, I think it's important to have a fixed time frame to keep people focused and hold them to account.

Knowledge base: What we can learn from Siemens?

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- transforming an employer brand is a program not a campaign, which should reflect strategic and local realities
- people prize authenticity. That's why employees are the best people to project the employer brand
- not all companies can be 'love brands', but they can all have a compelling story to tell.

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