NIGEL WRIGHT
RECRUITMENT

nigel wright recruitment
employer branding survey

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ABOUT NIGEL WRIGHT RECRUITMENT

Nigel Wright Recruitment is a leading name in the recruitment industry across Europe. Our consultants solve business problems for clients every day through the provision of effective recruitment solutions. The business specialises in a range of industry sectors and professionally qualified disciplines, nationally and internationally. The teams are able to handle executive and senior management roles, through to junior and entry level for permanent, temporary and contract roles. Nigel Wright Recruitment is structured around four key industry sectors; business support and professional services, consumer, industrial and manufacturing, public and third sector.

executive summary

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Like many innovations in management practice rather at lot is claimed for 'employer branding'. Many commentators suggest that employers should sell the prospect of employment within their organisation like they sell their products: by creating a brand for their 'employment proposition'. Organisations need to think: what are we selling to potential recruits, and how can we get these people to join us?

The employer branding process makes use of marketing techniques to create powerful positive expectations among possible recruits of, for example, dynamic work projects, exciting career paths, supportive colleagues and inspiring leaders and managers, and a 'fun' culture. This is regularly portrayed as the cure for key organisational problems such as skill shortages, retention difficulties, effective talent management, etc. However many of these claims for the benefits of employer branding are based on very little hard evidence.

Drawing on a survey of over 1,000 managers and professionals, this joint research project between Nigel Wright Recruitment and Durham University Business School provides a large data-set with which to understand in more depth how employees respond to 'employer brands', and to evaluate the claims made for employer branding. The results presented here are not just how many people said what; there are statistically significant findings with major implications for how employers can manage their 'employer brand' and win employees' loyalty.

The findings suggest that employer branding does indeed have some real positive benefits for organisations. For example, employer branding is significantly associated with increasing employees' sense of self-esteem at work and their performance of 'going the extra mile' behaviours. However, there are also some concerns with the impact of employer branding on some employee behaviours and attitudes. For example there is evidence that employer branding is positively associated with employees feeling rather let down by what the employer actually provides and hence a feeling of psychological contract violation.

We also compare the impact of the 'employee-focused' employer branding to that of the more generally focused 'perceived external prestige' of the organisation (i.e. how outsiders in general judge the status and image of the organisation). We assess whether organisations gain more by building their images and reputations in general rather than focusing more narrowly on potential candidates via employer branding. Our findings on this suggest that perceived external prestige is indeed also important for organisations, for example it is positively associated with employee engagement in general. The results suggest that this debate is not an either/or one. Building both the employer brand and the general prestige of the organisation have positive but also in some respects different benefits for the organisation.

1. introduction

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The labour market for high-quality managerial and professional employees is often described in hyper-competitive terms: Watson Wyatt first coined the phrase, a 'war for talent'. This trend appears to be intensifying. 'Employer branding' has recently been seen as one effective recruitment and retention strategy for winning the 'war'. But what is employer branding? What does the brand consist of? Does it work? And, if it does, how?

Researchers from Durham University Business School conducted a study of managers and professionals registered with Nigel Wright Recruitment. An online survey examined views about their attitudes to their work, their jobs, and their organisation. A key emphasis of the survey was on what attracts scarce and highly talented managerial and professional employees to particular organisations.

Specifically, we asked them about their experiences of 'employer branding', and about attitudes toward work such as their commitment to their employer; levels of cynicism and trust they have regarding their employer and, crucially, how they behave at work, particularly putting in extra unpaid effort on behalf of the employer – which can make all the difference.

This report summarises the main findings of the survey. The appendices, page 26, provide further information about the survey sample. We mainly report the question responses in the form of tables. The sample comprises 1008 usable responses from managers and professionals.

2. employer branding

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There are various competing definitions of employer branding, but all have at their core creating the impression of the organisation as a 'great place to work' in the minds of current and perspective employees, as well as other key stakeholders (e.g. clients). In this study we operationalised the employer brand construct as consisting of five key dimensions or 'values' to the potential applicant:

1. **Interest value** – the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides an exciting work environment, has novel work practices, and makes use of its employees' creativity.

2. **Social value** – assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides a working environment that is fun, happy, and provides a supportive team atmosphere.

3. **Economic value** – assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides above average salary, an attractive overall compensation package, and job security and promotion opportunities.

4. **Development value** – assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides recognition, self-worth, and confidence coupled with career-enhancing experiences and a base for future employability.

5. **Application value** – assesses the extent to which the employer provides an opportunity for the employee to apply what they have leaned and to develop others in a customer orientated and humanitarian environment.

Table 1, page 7, reports the results of respondents' perceptions of employer branding in their current organisation. We asked "How important were the following to you when considering a position at your current employer?" The most important features, according to the average response, are at the top; the least important are at the bottom.

The results show that social value factors dominate people's job-choice decisions: the top five most important features of an employer are all about relationships and feeling respected. 85% of respondents reported that having a good relationship with colleagues was important to them; 81% said that having a good relation with their boss was important. Economic values were also important: receiving an attractive overall compensation package was rated highly for importance by 79% of respondents in their choice of employer. But it came in 8th in the list of priorities.

Lowest in the branding ratings was the application value. Just 16% reported that being able to apply what they had leaned at college was important to them in the consideration of their current employer. Working for a 'humanitarian' organisation was unimportant to 39% of respondents.

The things that people rate highly in an employer brand are social factors: relationships at work, the prospect of enjoying work, and work as a boost to self-esteem. Employers may want to think about tailoring their employer brand toward these messages...

table 1
employer branding

	Very unimportant to me						Very important to me	Mean score (out of 7)
Having a good relationship with your colleague	2	3	4	7	22	41	22	5.62
Having a good relationship with your superiors	2	3	5	9	22	35	24	5.55
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for the organisation	2	3	3	7	21	40	23	5.54
A fun working environment	2	4	3	7	20	37	26	5.53
Working for an organisation that both values and makes use of my creativity	3	3	3	8	21	39	24	5.53
A happy working environment	2	3	4	9	24	38	21	5.46
Working for an organisation that produces high quality goods or services	3	3	4	11	22	36	22	5.41
An attractive overall compensation package	2	4	4	11	22	33	24	5.38
An above average basic salary	2	4	3	15	25	31	20	5.32
Working in an exciting environment	2	2	3	7	23	38	25	5.20
Working for an organisation that I felt I could belong to	3	4	6	12	24	36	15	5.17
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for the organisation	3	4	7	15	24	30	18	5.14
Working for an organisation in which I would be accepted	2	5	6	15	24	35	13	5.12
Working for an innovative employer with novel work practices and forward thinking	2	4	5	14	28	32	15	5.10
Gaining a career-enhancing experience	3	4	7	16	23	33	15	5.09
Working for an organisation that is customer orientated	4	5	8	15	20	31	18	5.03
Good promotion opportunities within the organisation	4	5	7	15	24	28	17	5.02
Working for an organisation that would provide me with job security	4	6	9	14	21	26	19	4.99
A springboard for future employment	2	5	8	20	32	25	10	4.90
Opportunity to teach others what I have learned	4	8	13	19	26	23	8	4.57
Working for an organisation would give me hands on inter-departmental experience	5	8	12	20	23	23	9	4.52
Opportunity to apply what I learned at college	14	15	17	22	16	13	5	3.68
Working for a humanitarian organisation – one that gives back to society	8	11	20	25	20	11	5	3.89

3. perceived organisational prestige and fit

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First was 'perceived external prestige': this assesses respondents' beliefs about how outsiders judge the status and image of their organisation. It can, therefore, be interpreted as reflecting the social value assigned by employees to their employer's identity and image in general. Table 2, page 9, reports what people thought about their employer's perceived organisational prestige. The higher the mean for the positively-worded statements, the higher the perceived prestige; the lower the better for the negatively-worded statements.

Respondents generally reported high levels of perceived organisational prestige, with 42% agreeing that people in their community thought highly of their organisation and 54% thought that their organisation was considered one of the best in its sector. Only 12% felt their employer had a poor reputation in the community; over half disagreed.

The second concept closely related to employer branding is 'perceived organisational fit'. We asked respondents about the level of congruence, or 'fit', between their values and needs and those of their employer organisation.

Here the results of Table 3, page 9, show a more varied picture. 42% of respondents disagree that their organisation is a good overall match for them; only 30% agree that their values match the organisation's values and culture.

This suggests that very few people have a powerful sense of affiliation with their employer. For as many as two in five employees they are not working for their ideal employer, in terms of aligned values.

table 2
perceived organisational prestige

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
People in my community think highly of this organisation	5	9	12	32	23	14	5	4.20
This organisation is considered one of the best in its sector	4	6	10	17	26	23	15	4.84
It is considered prestigious in my community to work for this organisation	8	16	15	26	18	13	5	3.90
People from other organisations look down at this organisation	17	28	17	21	8	6	3	3.06
When other organisations are recruiting new staff, they would not want staff from this organisation	32	29	12	15	5	4	2	2.54
This organisation does not have a good reputation in my community	26	30	13	20	5	5	2	2.72

table 3
perceived organisational fit

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organisation values	13	18	16	25	16	9	3	3.52
My personal values match my organisation's values and culture	14	15	17	23	16	11	3	3.57
My organisation's values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life	13	17	16	24	17	11	3	3.59
My personality matches my organisation's personality	14	17	15	25	17	10	3	3.55
My organisation fulfils my needs	13	18	15	18	22	11	3	3.64
My organisation is a good overall match for me	12	15	15	19	21	14	4	3.78

4. realistic job previews and met expectations

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Given, as we saw above, that certain aspects of the employer brand are important to respondents in considering their current position and whether to move on, how accurately employees are able to evaluate branding campaigns is an important question.

In the survey we asked about the extent to which respondents were able to accurately evaluate key aspects of the post to which they were hired prior to them joining. Here we are assessing whether respondents got a 'realistic job preview'. Realistic job previews are a way by which organisations can help prospective employees get a balanced picture of the positive and negative aspects of the work they will be doing, and of the general feel of the place (the 'organisational climate'), prior to the offer of a position. This is especially important in situations where people may not have full information about the tasks and responsibilities of the job they are applying for.

We asked to what extent respondents knew what they were getting when they took up the post for which they were initially hired in their current organisation. We then asked about the extent to which their expectations before they were hired matched up to their post hiring expectations. Tables 4a and 4b, page 11, have the results.

The results are equivocal. They suggest that employers have some way to go in providing realistic job previews to potential applicants. 35% of respondents disagreed that they knew the good and bad points of the job before being hired; 38% disagreed that job content information was accurate. Almost half (48%) disagreed that they were told about the positive and negative aspects of the job before being employed.

Around a third (34%) of employees also felt that their job had not turned out to be what they expected it to be prior to being hired.

When we ran tests to see if offering realistic job previews are associated with employer branding efforts, we found that they were, significantly and positively. This means that most employers who engage in major branding efforts are also offering realistic job previews. They tend to go hand in hand. It appears those employers who spend effort in developing their brands are also effective at making potential employees aware of this. This makes sense: if your company truly can offer an enticing job and career and a fulfilling work environment, you would want to tell prospective recruits all about it, even show it to them at the interview stage.

Firms with an employer brand they are proud of, and can back up, also make sure new recruits get to see it before joining (with a realistic job preview).

table 4a
realistic job previews

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
I knew what the good points and bad points of this job were when I was hired	7	11	17	21	20	16	8	4.15
I had a clear understanding of what this job entailed before I accepted it	3	9	12	18	28	22	8	4.59
The information concerning the content (i.e. duties and responsibilities) of my job was accurate and complete	6	12	20	18	22	16	5	4.06
The information concerning the qualifications needed (i.e. skills, knowledge, experience) for my job was accurate and complete	3	7	9	15	28	28	10	4.82
I was told about all the positive and negative aspect of the job before being employed	11	18	19	20	16	12	5	3.66

table 4b
met expectations

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
The good points and bad points of the job were pretty much as I expected when I was hired	7	12	17	17	23	18	6	4.15
I did not know what to expect when I came to work for this organisation	16	20	19	18	14	10	3	3.38
My job has pretty much turned out to be what I expected it would be like	9	12	13	18	22	20	6	4.15

5. psychological contracts

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We asked respondents about the nature of their 'psychological contracts' with their organisations. The psychological contract is a simple idea: it's about the set of expectations an employee has about what it is going to be like working for an organisation, and what they expect the employer will deliver. But it's not about what is written down in the legal employment contract; it's about the other stuff – career progression, fair treatment, support, ethical policies...

If these expectations are fulfilled, employees have been shown to respond in kind: to work harder and better, to be more loyal, to remain with the firm. But if the expectations are violated, employees can feel disillusioned, bitter and cynical, may reduce their effort levels and diligence, and may turn to the jobs pages to look for somewhere else to work. The reciprocity is simple to understand: getting the psychological contract right is vital.

Tables 5a and 5b, page 13, provide views on their expectations about employer obligations in relation to the various elements that make up the psychological contract, and reports the extent to which they feel their employer fulfils those same obligations. The bigger the difference between these two scores (reported in the final column), the greater the breach in the employee's psychological contract – particularly if the sign is negative.

We found that respondents reported the greatest violations in the areas of training, pay based on performance, and the balance between work and home life – in that order. At the same time, employers exceed expectations in some areas (e.g. promotion and high pay), though this is only a modest effect.

The most commonly violated employees' expectations are in the area of training, getting rewarded for their own performance and work-life balance.

We wanted to know what effect employer branding has on psychological contract violation. It is significantly positively associated. Here it seems that employer branding efforts over promises, resulting in unmet expectations on the part of the employee and thus feelings of psychological contract violation.

Interestingly, having realistic job previews is negatively associated with psychological contract violation. Knowing upfront what the job is going to be like means that your expectations are likely to be more accurate, and hence less likely to be confounded.

The suggestion here is that employer branding may inflate the expectations that employees have in terms of their psychological contract with the employer, whilst realistic job previews may act to dampen such expectations.

table 5a
psychological contract obligations

I think my employer is obliged to provide me with...	Not obligated at all				Very obligated	Mean score (out of 5)
promotion and advancement	21	19	31	20	9	2.75
high pay	17	21	37	18	6	2.74
pay based on my current level of performance	4	4	12	44	36	4.04
competitive employment benefits	6	9	24	42	19	3.59
training	8	8	18	36	30	3.72
long-term job security	18	24	31	20	8	2.76
opportunities for career development	10	11	24	40	16	3.41
a satisfying job	8	10	28	35	19	3.47
sufficient authority and responsibility	4	6	18	45	28	3.87
the opportunity to have an appropriate balance between work and home life	6	6	18	31	39	3.93

table 5b
fulfillment of psychological contract obligations

My employer has fulfilled any obligations to provide me with...	Not obligated at all				Very obligated	Mean score (out of 5)	Discrepancy between perceived and fulfilment
promotion and advancement	18	18	33	22	9	2.75	+ 0.1
high pay	13	17	34	27	9	2.74	+ 0.28
pay based on my current level of performance	14	19	28	27	13	4.04	- 0.98
competitive employment benefits	14	17	30	28	10	3.59	- 0.54
training	23	22	24	20	11	3.72	- 0.98
long-term job security	23	18	30	20	8	2.76	- 0.04
opportunities for career development	22	21	27	21	8	3.41	- 0.65
a satisfying job	10	14	30	33	14	3.47	- 0.2
sufficient authority and responsibility	11	15	23	34	17	3.87	- 0.56
the opportunity to have an appropriate balance between work and home life	13	16	26	27	18	3.93	- 0.73

6. organisational commitment

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Employees' commitment to the organisation is much sought after, and yet can be so elusive. One reason is that commitment can take many forms, or have different 'bases', which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Tables 6a and 6b, page 15, have the results.

Staff may have 'affective' commitment, in the sense that they personally identify with the organisation. There is an emotional attachment there. Overall, our respondents have rather modest levels of affective commitment to their current organisations. Only around a quarter of respondents (27%) say that they would be very happy to spend the rest of their career with their organisation. Rather more people (38%) agree, however, that the organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to them.

Staff may have a sense of commitment not because of any bond of loyalty to the firm, but simply because they feel that the costs of leaving the organisation would be too great: this is so-called 'continuance' commitment.

There are two sub-dimensions of continuance commitment. Firstly, an individual can feel trapped in an organisation by the lack of alternative job/career opportunities. A sizeable minority of our survey – one in four – do feel trapped by a lack of alternatives: 26% say they have too few options to consider leaving. 39% feel that they could not leave their organisation even if they wanted to because of few available alternatives. The other dimension of continuance commitment concerns the high personal costs involved in changing jobs. These can 'anchor' employees in their current job, even if they might prefer to leave. More than one in five (21%) of people feel they have invested too much in their organisation to consider working elsewhere. In short, a significant number of staff feel tied to the organisation for these reasons.

Interestingly, both employer branding and perceived organisational prestige are positively associated with affective organisational commitment: the more that firms engage in employer branding the stronger the bond of commitment employees feel, and the higher the organisations' perceived prestige the higher the commitment levels of employees. This makes sense: people who seek and then find a good job and a compatible organisation to work for actively engage with the organisation.

Employer branding is also positively associated with people reporting few alternatives, and the high-sacrifice dimensions of continuance commitment. This makes sense: people who seek and then find a good job and a compatible organisation to work for may find alternatives wanting, and may have invested a significant part of themselves in their work.

Perceived organisational prestige is negatively associated with low alternatives. This also makes sense: employees already working for highly-rated organisations tend to regard rivals as inferior options.

The implications of these latter findings are that employer branding may act as a strong retention device with high levels of both forms of continuance commitment, but employees may feel 'trapped' in the organisation.

table 6a
organisational commitment: affective

Affective commitment	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organisation	14	23	16	12	10	13	11	3.66
I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own	14	15	13	19	18	15	6	3.80
I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organisation	16	24	14	16	10	10	9	3.49
This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me	14	17	14	18	18	13	7	3.77
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation	29	16	12	16	12	9	6	3.14
I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation	15	21	15	17	10	10	13	3.67

table 6b
organisational commitment: continuance

Continuance commitment	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire	16	16	11	14	13	17	13	3.96
I believe that I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation	27	22	10	16	9	9	8	3.16
If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere	24	25	15	16	8	6	7	3.05
Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation right now	32	27	10	8	8	10	6	2.87
It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to	32	24	13	10	8	7	6	2.84
One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives	20	20	11	12	12	14	13	3.70

7. organisational identification

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A related concept to organisational commitment is that of organisational identification. Organisational identification is a form of an individual's attachment to an organisation. Organisational identification is the degree to which a member defines him/herself by the same attributes that he/she believes define the organisation. It is about when an individual's beliefs about an organisation become self-defining. When people identify with their employer, being one of its employees is an important part of their identity. People think of themselves in terms of your membership in the organisation; they see themselves bound up with its successes and failures.

The results in Table 7, below, report some fairly high levels of organisational identification among our respondents. Nearly three-quarters (72%) agree that they usually say 'we' rather than 'they' when talking about their employer, and nearly half (47%) agree that when someone criticizes their organisation it feels like a personal insult.

As we might expect, both employer branding and perceived organisational prestige are positively associated with organisational identification: people who identify themselves with their employer tend to work in firms that have engaged in employer branding, and are firms with high levels of prestige. The opposite may also be true:

table 7
organisational identification

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
When someone criticises my organisation, it feels like a personal insult	12	14	11	17	21	17	9	4.09
I am very interested what others think about my organisation	6	9	9	18	22	24	11	4.56
When I talk about my organisation, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'	6	6	5	10	14	28	30	5.22
If a story in the media criticized my organisation, I would feel embarrassed	14	15	12	14	18	18	9	4.00
My organisation's successes are my successes	10	10	12	20	21	21	10	4.24
When someone praises my organisation, it feels like a personal compliment	11	12	11	20	21	17	8	4.11

8. perceptions of organisational support

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'Perceived organisational support' is a way of measuring employees' perceptions of a favourable social exchange with their employer: essentially it asks questions about the extent to which the organisation values their employees, looks out for their interests and well-being, and provides help when employees need it. Table 8, below, reports the results.

Respondents generally do not feel very positive about the amount of support they receive from the organisation. Only slightly more than a quarter (28%) think of their employer as caring about their well-being; rather more, 40%, feel that their organisation cares about their opinions. More feel that help is available from the organisation if they have a problem (42%). Yet almost half (47%) feel the organisation would take advantage of them if given the opportunity.

Interestingly, employer branding has no significant relationship with perceived organisation support but perceived organisational prestige is significantly positively related. Employees working in well respected organisations by the community respond to this respect as a sense of being supported by the organisation which has invested time and effort in gaining its reputation.

table 8
perceived organisational support

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
My organisation really cares about my well being	19	17	16	21	16	9	3	3.34
My organisation cares about my opinions	15	14	13	18	20	14	6	3.80
Help is available from my organisation when I have a problem	13	13	14	18	23	13	6	3.86
My organisation is willing to help me when I need a special favour	10	9	13	22	21	17	9	3.53
My organisation strongly considers my goals and values	16	16	17	21	16	11	4	3.49
My organisation shows very little concern for me	17	21	17	14	12	10	9	4.91
My organisation would forgive an honest mistake on my part	5	5	8	16	23	30	14	4.44
If given the opportunity, my organisation would take advantage of me	8	13	12	16	15	18	14	4.20

9. organisational-based self-esteem (OBSE)

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There is a long-standing view in organisational behaviour research that an employee's self-esteem in the workplace, formed around work and organisational experiences, plays a significant role in determining their motivation and effecting work-related attitudes and behaviours. We asked respondents about the messages they picked up about their standing in the organisational from the attitudes and behaviours of senior managers towards them.

The results in Table 9, below, show respondents generally reported high levels of 'OBSE' with around two-thirds (67%) agreeing that they were taken seriously. Around the same proportion of people (68%) felt that they were seen as valuable.

Both employer branding and perceived organisational prestige were positively associated with strong feelings of self-esteem realised as a consequence of one's work.

Employees working for firms that have worked hard on their 'employer brand' tend to feel better about themselves, as a result of working for such a diligent employer. It feels good to work for an employer that delivers on its promises of a 'great place to work'.

table 9
organisational-based self-esteem (OBSE)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score (out of 7)
I count around here	6	10	10	16	26	22	11	4.56
I am taken seriously around here	4	7	9	14	26	28	13	4.86
I am important around here	6	10	12	22	22	19	9	4.38
I am trusted around here	2	3	5	9	23	37	22	5.46
There is faith in me around here	2	4	6	13	24	34	17	5.23
I can make a difference around here	5	5	7	12	21	30	20	5.08
I am valuable around here	4	5	8	16	24	30	14	4.93
I am helpful around here	2	1	3	8	20	42	25	5.69
I am efficient around here	1	1	4	11	25	41	17	5.49
I am cooperative around here	1	1	3	8	20	41	27	5.74

10. organisational trust and cynicism

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We asked respondents about their levels of cynicism, which is defined as an attitude resulting from a sceptical appraisal of the motives, actions, and values of the employing organisation. Organisational cynicism is thus an evaluative judgment stemming from an individual's organisational experience. Cynicism levels were surprisingly low overall. Tables 10a and 10b, below, have the results.

We also asked how much trust people had in their employer, defined as having confident positive expectations about how the employer is likely to act in the future. These expectations cover the organisation's benevolence (i.e. kind motives toward the respondent) and the organisation's integrity (i.e. how honest and fair it is).

Employer branding was not significantly associated with either trust or cynicism but perceived organisational prestige was negatively associated with organisational cynicism and positively with organisational trust.

table 10a

organisational cynicism	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
I have confidence that the organisation will do what's right when interacting with staff	17	15	17	17	18	13	4	3.56
I wonder about the real purpose behind this organisation's decisions	12	20	13	16	13	15	10	3.84
There is no doubting this organisation's integrity	9	13	14	24	15	18	8	4.06
I've suspected this organisation's public statements reflect more spin than reality	13	23	13	19	14	11	8	3.60
I suspect this organisation is deliberately evasive in things it says	18	24	14	18	10	9	7	3.30
I have misgivings whether this organisation is forthright regarding its actions	18	23	14	20	10	9	6	3.33

table 10b

organisational trust								
I believe my employer has high integrity	8	10	14	23	17	20	9	4.28
I can expect my employer to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion	7	9	10	19	23	24	7	4.42
My employer is not always honest and truthful	14	24	13	17	12	11	9	3.58
In general, I believe my employer's motives and intentions are good	5	8	9	21	21	27	10	4.66
I don't think my employer treats me fairly	21	21	15	20	8	9	6	3.96
My employer is open and upfront with me	10	12	15	22	16	18	8	4.04
I'm not sure I fully trust my employer	15	19	11	16	13	14	12	3.82

11. employee growth need strength (EGNS)

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'Employee growth need strength' is like a need for achievement. It is a measure of an employee's need to develop personally through their job and work. Some people have it; others don't. Employees with high growth need strength tend to respond more positively to enriched jobs that have high levels of skill variety, task significance and autonomy.

Given that our respondents were predominantly professionals and middle-senior managers, it was not a surprise to see them report very high levels of EGNS: fully 96% agreed that they personally would prefer jobs with stimulating and challenging work, while almost as many (94%) said that they would prefer jobs that provided opportunities to learn new things from their work.

Employer branding was positively associated with employee growth need strength. But perceived organisational prestige had no effect. Table 11, below, has the results

table 11
need for achievement/ growth need strength

	Would like having this only a moderate amount or less						Would like having this very much	Mean score (out of 7)
Stimulating and challenging work	1	0	1	3	12	40	44	6.19
Opportunities to learn new things from my work	1	1	1	3	14	40	40	6.09
Chances to exercise independent thought and action	1	1	1	3	12	40	42	6.12
Opportunities to be creative and imaginative in my work	1	2	2	8	16	36	35	5.85
Opportunities for personal growth and development in my job	2	2	2	6	14	33	42	5.95
A sense of worthwhile accomplishment in my work	1	1	1	4	10	32	52	6.21

12. leadership

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It is often said that people join an organisation, but they leave a leader; in other words, people's experience of their immediate manager or their impressions of the senior management team are the factors that push them toward the job pages.

So we asked employees about their attitudes to their immediate supervisor or boss, and their leadership style. Specifically, we asked a series of questions about their boss' so-called transformational leadership capabilities. Transformational leadership is based on the notion that effective leaders are in a sense 'charismatic' individuals, who transform the basic values, beliefs, and attitudes of their 'followers' (i.e. the people who work for them) so that they are willing to perform beyond minimum levels for the organisation. They do so by providing a compelling vision for their work group to unite around and strive for; by 'leading from the front'; by providing an inspirational example, and through effective use of praise, encouragement and intellectual stimulation. Table 12, below, reports the findings on leadership style for the bosses of our respondents.

Leaders are reported as being strongest in seeking new opportunities, with 60% agreeing that their managers do this. Leaders also complement individuals for outstanding work on a regular basis. Respondents report their leaders as being weakest in leading by example (only 42% agree that their manager does this) and providing a good role model to follow (50% agree).

table 12
leadership

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
Is always seeking new opportunities for the organisation	6	9	8	17	21	25	14	4.65
Leads by 'doing', rather than simply by 'telling'	13	16	12	14	18	18	10	4.01
Gets the group to work together for the same goal	11	14	11	17	20	18	9	4.13
Develops a team attitude and spirit among employees	15	13	12	16	18	17	9	3.94
Fosters collaboration among work groups	12	13	12	18	19	18	7	4.00
Gives me special recognition when my work is very good	11	10	13	16	21	19	10	4.24
Commends me when I do a better than average job	9	10	10	17	23	20	9	4.33
Paints an interesting picture of the future for our group	12	12	13	17	19	18	9	4.10
Inspires others with his/her plans for the future	17	15	14	18	14	15	6	3.68
Leads by example	17	14	11	17	17	18	7	3.85
Personally compliments me when I do outstanding work	11	10	11	16	20	21	13	4.38
Frequently does not acknowledge my good performance	16	24	15	14	11	12	9	3.49
Has a clear understanding of where we are going	11	10	12	18	22	19	9	4.22
Provides a good model for me to follow	21	10	12	18	22	19	9	3.63
Encourages employees to be 'team players'	13	12	13	15	20	20	8	4.09
Always gives me positive feedback when I perform well	12	12	12	18	19	19	9	4.15
Is able to get others committed to his/her dream	15	15	15	19	18	14	6	3.70

13. job satisfaction and life satisfaction; intention to quit; perceived stress levels

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Finally, we asked some questions about general attitudes, such as overall satisfaction with jobs, and with life as a whole.

table 13a work attitudes: job satisfaction	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
All in all, I am satisfied with my job	9	13	12	16	22	22	6	4.18
In general, I like working here	7	9	10	16	24	25	8	4.49
In general, I don't like my job	24	27	13	11	8	9	8	3.08

We found only a modest level of job satisfaction amongst respondents. Most employees appear to like their jobs (Table 9, page 18). 57% say that they like working at their organisation; exactly half (50%) are satisfied with their job.

table 13b work attitudes: life satisfaction	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
All in all, I am satisfied with my life as a whole	2	4	7	12	26	37	12	5.16
I am generally happy with my life	2	3	6	11	25	39	14	5.27
Although I have my ups and downs, in general I feel good about my life	2	4	9	13	30	32	11	5.05
I lead a meaningful and fulfilling life	1	3	6	16	29	31	13	5.15

Respondents' life satisfaction is rather higher, with more than three-quarters of our survey (78%) declaring themselves satisfied with their lives as a whole. Nearly three-quarters (73%) agree that they lead a meaningful and fulfilling life.

table 13c work attitudes: quit intent	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
I often think of quitting this job	19	15	9	13	13	15	16	3.96
There isn't much to be gained by staying in this job	18	21	11	12	12	14	12	3.68
I expect to stay with this organization until I retire	54	14	8	11	6	4	4	2.27

The level of quit intention, however, is also quite high. Forty-four percent of respondents agree that they often think about quitting; more than a third (37%) feel that there is not much to be gained by staying in their current job.

Quit intent is predicted negatively by perceived organisational prestige and perceived organisational fit, which makes sense: people who work for highly-regarded firms where they feel they belong are unlikely to be looking for a new job. But, interestingly, our respondents' intention to quit can be predicted positively by employer branding. In other words, more effort on employer branding seems to predict employees' greater willingness to leave their employer. But this effect is not so keenly felt by prestigious employers.

These findings raise some further concerns with employer branding raising expectations that organisations cannot always deliver and giving rise to increased stress levels amongst employees. What this means is that firms with strong employer brands may be creating unrealistic expectations that they cannot deliver on and are, therefore, to some extent creating their own employee turnover problems.

table 13d work attitudes: stress	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean score (out of 7)
I feel a great deal of stress because of my job	23	22	17	11	11	11	4	3.16
Very few stressful things happen to me at work	1	1	3	6	17	40	33	5.90
My job is extremely stressful	1	0	1	4	15	45	34	6.01
I almost never feel stressed at work	1	2	2	7	14	42	32	5.85

Additionally, stress is also positively associated with employer branding, so working for firms with a strong employer brand is stressful. But people who work for organisations with high prestige report less stress, perhaps because that prestigious reputation comes from being an effective, well-run organisation with happy and health staff – or, intriguingly, very successful and popular organisations may not be pushing their staff that hard!

14. behaviour at work

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So far we have only looked at employees' attitudes, and what they think about their employer. But we are also interested in how they behave at work, and what they do.

In our analysis of employee work behaviour, we identify two key dimensions of so-called 'organisational citizenship', whereby employees exhibit helpful behaviour which goes beyond the strict job definition. Here there are behaviours focused on helping the organisation – which we label 'organisational citizenship behaviour – organisation' (or 'OCB-O') and those directed at individual colleagues – which we label 'organisational citizenship behaviour – individual' (or 'OCB-I'). Table 14, page 25, shows the results.

The citizenship behaviour directed primarily at work colleagues is fairly extensive. For example, 26% of respondents claimed that they help new recruits to settle into the job at every available opportunity; 33% said that they take time to listen to work colleagues problems or worries at every available opportunity.

Behaviours focusing specifically on improving efficiency and quality and reducing waste appear to be even more common, with only a tiny minority in each case saying that they never perform such behaviours.

We also identified an 'in-role' set of behaviours were employees perform the tasks expected of them for their job. Here we found high levels of in-role behaviour.

Further analysis suggests that employer branding is positively associated with all three of these forms of behaviour at work – having a strong employer brand that employees can believe in leads to employees to work harder - but perceived external prestige is only related to in-role behaviours.

table 14
behaviour at work

How often do you do the following...?	Not at all				At every available opportunity	Mean score (out of 5)
OCB-I (extra effort on behalf of colleagues)						
Help new people to settle into the job	2	5	16	52	26	3.96
Help others who have heavy workloads	2	6	19	55	19	3.85
Help others who have been absent	2	9	28	44	17	3.64
Take time to listen to work colleagues' problems or worries	1	4	14	50	33	4.10
Help colleagues who have personal or domestic problems	3	12	23	39	24	3.71
Assist your manager with his or her work	3	7	18	48	24	3.82
OCB-O (extra effort on behalf of the employer)						
Suggest ways to reduce waste	3	13	22	38	24	3.67
Suggest ways to improve quality	1	5	15	46	34	4.07
Make innovative suggestions to improve work procedures	1	5	16	43	37	4.10
Go to work even if you do not feel particularly well	1	4	8	34	54	4.37
In-role behaviour						
Work overtime or extra hours when asked	2	2	5	30	62	4.48
Perform according to your supervisor's requirements	0	2	8	46	43	4.31
Perform all the tasks that are expected of you	0	2	6	42	50	4.40
Put off until tomorrow things that should be done today	26	39	20	13	3	2.28
Adequately complete assigned duties	1	2	9	47	40	4.23
Meet formal performance requirements of the job	1	1	7	39	52	4.40
Fail to perform essential duties	76	19	3	2	1	1.33

appendix 1. characteristics of survey respondents

Position	Number of respondents
Top/board level management	90
Senior management (below board level)	295
Middle management	256
First line management/supervisor	105
Professional	223
Administration/support	31
Other	8

Contract	Number of respondents
Permanent	877
Temporary	131

Highest level of education	Number of respondents
NVQ	15
GCE/O	31
GCE/A	54
HND/C	107
Professional qualification	205
BA/BSc	302
Postgraduate	280
No formal qualification	8
Other	6

Gender	Number of respondents
Male	726
Female	282

Marital status	Number of respondents
Married or living as married	781
Single	227
Other	0

Sector	Number of respondents
Private-sector manufacturing	527
Private-sector services	343
Public sector services	103
Other not for profit	29
Other	2

	Modal year range
Age	40-49
Tenure in job	Less than 2 years
Tenure in organisation	Less than 2 years

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