



EMPLOYER BRANDING AND JOB POSTINGS
FOR IMPROVING CANADIAN FEDERAL RECRUITMENT
PRACTICES

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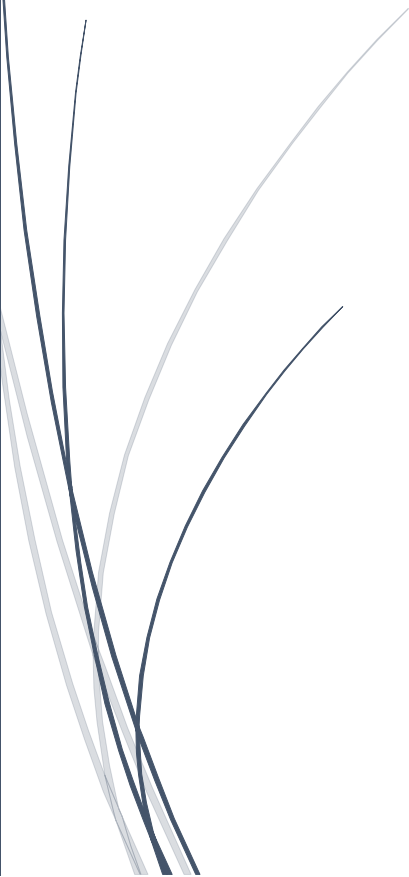


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I. BACKGROUND

Public and private organizations in Canada today are facing a labour shortage (Dubé, 2015). Workplaces are experiencing challenges with attracting and retaining labour in various sectors including health care, as noted in the 26th Annual Report of the Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet (ARPS, 2019).

The combined impact of mass retirements and budget cuts is making it difficult to hire new employees, attracting and retaining candidates; this has become a major strategic issue for public and private organizations (Rinfret, Bernier, Houlfort, Lemay, & Mercier, 2010). Some organizations, especially public organizations, advertise favourable working conditions in their job postings, including measures for work-family balance (Russell & Brannan, 2016). Job postings could be an effective way for organizations to promote their *employer brand*. Charbonnier-Voirin, Marret and Paulo (2017) define employer brand as a set of benefits communicated in reference to an organization to make the workplace attractive. It is considered a proposal of values and unique job promises in the form of relational marketing closely related to organizational attractiveness.

Since employees under 35 years of age currently represent only 15.7% of the workforce (TBS, 2019), and the Canadian government has adopted a public service modernization plan, it would be strategic for any organization to position itself as an employer of choice (Garreau & Perrot, 2016).

The situation in the private sector is no better. Pélissier (2018) estimates that there are 117,700 job vacancies in the private sector in Quebec—a 4.1% rate compared to the 3.3% Canadian average, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB, 2016). This means that labour shortages are now surpassing records set before the 2008 financial crisis.

In this context, this essay discusses ways to improve online recruitment practices (e-recruitment), which is the term used by academics and human resources professionals to define the online recruitment process. The process of posting job advertisements on platforms dedicated to job postings is discussed, as is computerized management of the other stages of recruitment.

II. KEY QUESTIONS

In light of the problematic context described above, we developed a study during the Master's induction course in human resources management at the École nationale de l'administration publique. This study adopted a comparative qualitative analysis of the differences and similarities between private and public sector job postings in terms of the employer brand presented by the federal public service, the healthcare system, education and municipal government in Canada. The study was conducted by collecting 1,888 job postings from four selected job portals, including Job Bank Canada.

The results of our database revealed that federal public service job postings focus solely on aspects concerning *professional development, equality programs* and *benefits*. 67.8% of job postings neglected to advertise pension programs, work-family balance measures (WFB) and quality of work life (QWL) which contradict the government priority mentioned in the ministers' mandate letters issued in December 2019 and 2015 (PMM, 2019). The government is also focusing solely on medical insurance and increasing the federal minimum wage (MLM, 2019).

This led us to frame the key questions of our essay by asking: *How can the design of job postings based on the various aspects of employer branding improve federal recruitment practices? What is the effect of advertising employer branding aspects on organizational attractiveness, particularly in public organizations?*

III. TOPIC IMPORTANCE AND KEY FACTORS

The summary above provides key indicators of the importance of this topic in the Canadian federal public service modernization plan. Key factors for unattractive job postings for new candidates stem mainly from a *lack of awareness of the employer branding concept* and its role in an organization's relationship marketing. Federal public organizations are still committed to the traditional definition of employer branding that focuses on functional and economic benefits (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). New definitions of employer branding have recently been developed and need to be considered in federal public service organizations. Cavalio and Malakif (2017) offered their own employer brand model, which involves combining the employee's personality and positioning by offering a dynamic and stress-free work environment. This thinking was reaffirmed in the U.S. consulting firm Hewitt Associates' new definition, which aligned recruiting practices with

the transactional marketing of employment promises in honouring the psychological employment contract (Hewitt, 2016).

This psychological contract, in our opinion, is more effective and long-lasting than the physical contract of employment. This approach involving enhancing an employee's psychological state was made a priority in the Prime Minister's Minister of Labour Mandate Letter after the last elections (MLM, 2019), but how can this be put into practice?

IV. PROPOSED APPROACHES, PRACTICES AND IDEAS

The solution to the job postings attractiveness problem takes on two dimensions, which must be developed in parallel to increase organizational attractiveness.

The first dimension of the solution involves developing and advancing the advertised aspects of employer branding to meet the requirements and demands of new candidates for public sector positions. Simply put, we need to know and realize what people are looking for in the job posting and to be able to provide something similar. This means that a job posting must be an up-to-date integration of organizational identity, organizational dynamism and a practical translation of the psychological contract of employment.

The *second dimension* of our solution revolves around developing recruitment practices aligned with the public service's rapid transition to the digital age. As a result, developing online software applications has become essential to make online recruitment procedures more accessible and efficient.

V. WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION

The two-pronged solutions can be easily implemented if the federal public service adopts the aspects of employer branding and employer of choice today. Based on a study on 56 individuals between the ages of 25 and 35 applying for new jobs in Canada's federal public service, the following aspects need to be considered in *designing a job posting* in the federal public service:

- 1) clearly indicated salary and benefits
- 2) information on the ongoing training system
- 3) indication of a friendly and welcoming work environment
- 4) flexible working hours and sick leave
- 5) indication of the pension plan
- 6) partial tuition reimbursement

- 7) information on the nearest daycare
- 8) recognition of leadership and teamwork
- 9) indication of criteria for the promotion and bonus system
- 10) possibility of doing some work from home

These ten aspects of employer branding are partially absent in most federal public service job postings, which still focus on presenting benefits only.

In terms of recruitment practices, the *Job Bank Canada* portal needs to be updated to facilitate online recruitment procedures. In many job postings on the site, there is no procedure for applying for the position, either through an open competition or simply by submitting a resume by email. The *Recruit UK* employment website provides a good example in terms of upgrading job application software by having candidates fill out a preliminary checklist of what they expect from the job. Through automatic job requirement processing, the software can then present the best job postings to the candidate (Recruit UK, 2020). This advanced approach to artificial intelligence can make recruitment practices more efficient, effective and successful.

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