

Bindung und Anwerbung von Mitarbeitern: Beiträge zum Behavioral Branding und Employer Branding

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Die Universität St. Gallen, Hochschule für Wirtschafts-, Rechts- und Sozialwissenschaften sowie Internationale Beziehungen (HSG), gestattet hiermit die Drucklegung der vorliegenden Dissertation, ohne damit zu den darin ausgesprochenen Anschauungen Stellen zu nehmen.

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Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende kumulative Dissertation ist im Themenfeld Behavioral Branding und Employer Branding angesiedelt. Sie beschäftigt sich sowohl mit der Bindung und Motivation bestehender Mitarbeiter als auch mit der Anwerbung neuer Mitarbeiter. Hintergrund ist die Erkenntnis, dass der Erfolg eines Unternehmens wesentlich davon abhängt, Arbeitskräfte zu rekrutieren und zu binden, die sich mit ihrem Unternehmen, seinen Mitarbeitern und Marken identifizieren.

Beitrag 1 geht der Frage nach, wie es gelingen kann, die Identifikation von Mitarbeitern bei Unternehmensversagen aufrechtzuerhalten. Dabei wird zwischen Managementreaktionen, die zukünftiges Versagen verhindern sollen (Präventionsreaktionen), und Managementreaktionen, die positives Organisationsverhalten in anderen Bereichen betonen (Promotionsreaktionen), unterschieden. Drei experimentelle Studien zeigen, dass der Erfolg der beiden Strategien von situativen Faktoren wie der Art der Opfer, der Anzahl der verantwortlichen Mitarbeiter und der Ursache des Versagens abhängt.

Beitrag 2 beschäftigt sich mit der Attraktion neuer Mitarbeiter. Konkret geht es um die Frage, inwiefern der wahrgenommene Fit zwischen Bewerbern und Mitarbeitern die Arbeitgeberattraktivität erhöht. Zwei Experimente demonstrieren, dass ein hoher Fit sich vor allem dann positiv auswirkt, wenn Jobsucher eine grosse zeitliche Distanz zum Eintritt in die Organisation empfinden. Instrumentelle Leistungen wie ein hohes Gehaltsniveau sind hingegen wichtiger, wenn Jobsucher eine grosse zeitliche Nähe empfinden.

Schliesslich befasst sich Beitrag 3 aus konzeptioneller Sicht mit der Bindung und Anwerbung von Mitarbeitern. Basierend auf einer Analyse der Rekrutierungs- und Corporate Social Responsibility-Literatur wird erörtert, wie das Employer Branding sowohl aus ökonomischer Sicht effektiv als auch aus normativer Sicht sozial verantwortlich gestaltet werden kann.

Summary

This cumulative dissertation concerns the topics of behavioral branding and employer branding. It is about retaining and motivating existing employees as well as about attracting new employees. It builds on the finding that a company's success depends strongly on the recruitment and retention of employees who identify with their company, its employees, and its brands.

Article 1 addresses the question how organizations can maintain the identification of employees after organizational failures. The article differentiates between management responses that try to prevent future failures (prevention responses) and management responses that emphasize positive organizational behavior in other areas (promotion responses). Three experimental studies show that the success of these strategies depends on contingency factors such as type of victims, number of employees responsible, and reason for failure.

Article 2 deals with the attraction of new employees. Specifically, it concerns the question to what extent perceived fit between applicants and employees has an effect on employer attraction. Two experiments demonstrate that fit has a positive impact when job seekers perceive high temporal distance to the event of joining an organization. In contrast, instrumental benefits such as high pay level gain greater relevance when job seekers perceive high temporal proximity.

Finally, study 3 deals with the retention and attraction of employees from a conceptual point of view. Based on a review of the recruitment and corporate social responsibility literature, the article discusses how employer branding can be managed efficiently from an economic perspective as well as socially responsible from a normative perspective.

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Beitrag I

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Management Responses after Organizational Failure: The Impact of Contingency Factors

Benjamin von Walter, Daniel Wentzel and Torsten Tomczak

Although organizational failures represent a serious threat to organizational members' identification with their organization, little is known what management can do to help organizational members to cope with failure. In this research, we differentiate between management responses that prevent similar failures in the future and management responses that promote positive organizational behaviors. In particular, we argue that the effectiveness of these response strategies depends on contingency factors such as type of victims, number of employees responsible, and reason for failure. Three experimental studies with employees provide converging evidence for this prediction.

Imagine working for a company that is responsible for an incident of organizational failure, that is, for a major negative event, which severely harms the well-being of one or more stakeholders (Anheier, 1999; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). For instance, imagine working for BP after the explosion of the oil platform Deepwater Horizon and having to watch your company struggling to stop one of the largest marine oil spills in history. Or imagine working at Siemens finding out that your company had bribed customers around the world, or being an employee at Chiquita reading in the newspaper that your employer had paid a terrorist group to protect its banana-growing operations in Colombia. What would you feel and think? And how would failure affect your identification with your organization?

According to research, organizational failures represent a serious threat to an individual's social identity as organizational member. That is, organizational failures call into question beliefs about an organization's legitimacy, status, and other highly valued attributes with which much of a member's self-concept is inextricably bound (e.g., Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Harrison, Ashforth, & Corley, 2009). This may manifest in feelings of dissonance and uncertainty, prompt organizational members to reconsider and alter their identification, and motivate withdrawal and opposition behavior (e.g., Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gutierrez, Howard-Grenville, & Scully, 2010; Sutton & Callahan, 1987).

Although it seems important to mitigate such effects, there is little research that examines what management can do to reduce social identity threat after organizational failures. As such, organizations responsible for an incident of failure are expected to accept responsibility and apologize, which makes management action directed towards employees even more necessary (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). Research indicates that apologies may further increase social identity threat because they involve an acknowledgement of guilt (e.g., Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004; Schlenker, 1980).

To address this issue, we conducted an extensive literature review comprising work on corruption, legitimacy, crisis communication, trust repair, and social identity

affirmation. Based on this review, we identified two fundamental response strategies which may be used to reduce social identity threat: the introduction of measures that prevent similar failures in the future and the promotion of positive organizational behaviors not related to the failure (hereafter referred to as prevention responses and promotion responses). For instance, a company responsible for an accounting fraud may introduce new monitoring systems and sanctions to avoid future transgressions or it may display beneficial conduct in other areas such as donating money to charities or demonstrating commitment to the environment.

Importantly, prevention and promotion responses may not be equally effective for all types of organizational failures. Drawing on research about social identity threat and attribution (e.g., Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Reeder & Brewer, 1978), we propose that the effect of prevention and promotion responses depends on contingency factors such as type of victims (internal versus external stakeholders), the number of employees responsible for the failure (small number versus great number), and reason for failure (lack of ability versus lack of integrity).

Our work includes three experimental studies and extends past research in several ways. First, whereas past studies have mainly investigated short-term management responses such as apologies and denials, our research responds to the call for more research on substantial management action (e.g., Pfarrer, Decelles, Smith, & Taylor, 2008). Second, we identify and examine three contingency factors that moderate the impact of prevention and promotion responses. These findings specify under which conditions prevention and promotion responses are most effective. Third, our findings contribute to research on social identity threat and causal attributions by investigating what can be done when threat arises from the failure of the in-group. Finally, to the best of our knowledge, our research is one of the first that empirically investigates the sensitive matter of organizational failures within an employee-company context.

BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars describe management reactions to failures and transgressions as multi-stage processes (e.g., Harrison et al., 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2008). Most previous research has focused on the early stages of these processes by investigating the effects of apology, denial, and different types of accounts (e.g., Elsbach, 1994; Kim et al., 2004; Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004). In contrast, there is a paucity of research that examines more substantial management responses at later stages.

Specifically, the question of what an organization should do after it has accepted responsibility and apologized for an incident of failure has not been answered so far (like other researchers we do not consider denial and shifting blame to others as legitimate responses when an organization is responsible for an incident of failure). Management action seems particularly important in this case as apologies may be regarded as signals of an organization's guilt and may further increase social identity threat (e.g., Kim et al., 2004; Schlenker, 1980).

To identify substantial management responses after organizational failure, we conducted an extensive literature review over a mixed body of knowledge comprising work on corruption (e.g., Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Pfarrer et al., 2008), legitimacy (e.g., Suchman, 1995), crisis communication (e.g., Fearn-Banks, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998), trust repair (e.g., Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005), and social identity affirmation (e.g., Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, & Fugate, 2007; Derks, van Laar, & Ellemers, 2009). These works suggest that there are two basic categories of management responses which may reduce social identity threat and help to restore the relationship between the individual organizational member and his or her organization.

On the one hand, researchers have identified measures such as changes and revisions of operations, structures, and policies, the removal of culpable parties, the introduction of new rules, monitoring processes, and sanctions, voluntary participation in audit processes, or training and mentoring for employees (e.g., Gillespie & Dietz, 2009;

Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Sitkin & Roth, 1993; Suchman, 1995). These responses have in common that they may constrain organizational agents from behavior that leads to similar failures in the future. Accordingly, we have labeled these measures prevention responses. For instance, when the US postal service was faced with a long series of workplace violence, the management introduced new employee selection procedures and started a leadership awareness program on workplace violence for managers and supervisors (Fearn-Banks, 2002).

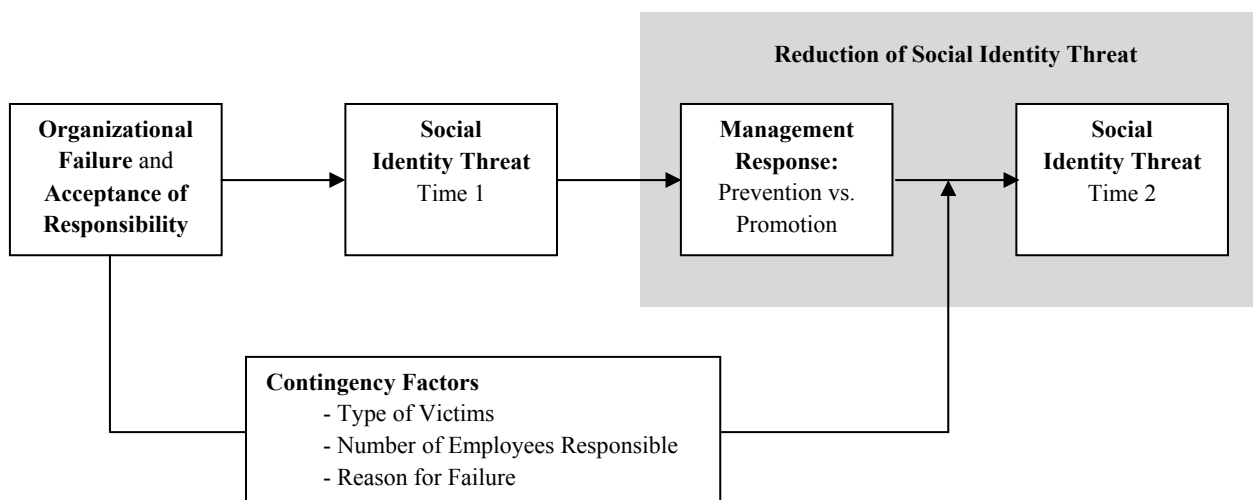
On the other hand, researchers have identified management responses that display beneficial conduct and desirable organizational action in areas not affected by the failure. For example, companies may engage in corporate social responsibility activities, inform organizational members about successful business operations, remember important events of organizational history, create and affirm value-driven visions and goals, or seek favorable external accreditations (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2007; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2008; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). These types of responses have in common that they do not focus on the prevention of negative organizational behaviors but promote positive organizational aspects. Correspondingly, we have labeled these responses promotion responses. Toyota, for instance, launched a campaign called "My Toyota is your Toyota" in the aftermath of the recent product safety scandal highlighting the passion and enthusiasm of its employees but avoiding any references to the safety of its cars (Brownsell, 2010).

Research indicates that prevention and promotion responses may both be able to reduce social identity threat as they may help to restore positive beliefs about an organization, its legitimacy, and status (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2007; Derks et al., 2009; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005). Nevertheless, prevention and promotion responses may reduce social identity threat differently. Prevention responses directly address the systemic causes of failure by neutralizing or removing negative organizational aspects. This may show organizational members that the organization does not accept malevolent behavior and wants to change (Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Sitkin & Roth, 1993). In contrast, promotion responses may signal that although failure has occurred positive group behaviors exist on which the organization should also be evaluated.

This may reduce social identity threat by shifting attention to dimensions in which the organizations compares favorably to other organizations (Ashforth et al., 2007; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996).

Against this background, it seems likely that prevention and promotion responses may not be equally effective for all types of failures. Specifically, organizational members may regard prevention or promotion responses as more or less appropriate in different situational contexts. Three contingency factors that may attenuate or mitigate the impact of prevention and promotion responses are (1) type of victims (internal versus external stakeholders), (2) number of employees responsible for the failure (small number versus great number), and (3) reason for failure (lack of ability versus lack of integrity). As we discuss in greater depth subsequently, prevention responses may reduce social identity threat more successfully when internal stakeholders are the main victims of failure, when a great number of employees are responsible for the incident of failure, and when failure is caused by a lack of integrity. In contrast, promotion responses may be better able to refute identity threat when external stakeholders are the main victims of failure, when a small number of employees are responsible, and when failure is caused by a lack of ability. Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual framework of our research.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



STUDY 1: THE MODERATING ROLE OF TYPE OF VICTIMS

Organizational failures can be distinguished by the people who are its immediate victims. For example, many organizational failures cause immediate harm to internal stakeholders. That is, organizational members become victims of the action or inaction of other organizational members. Recent examples include the exploitation and mistreatment of workers (e.g., Foxconn mistreating employees in its sweatshops), spying scandals (e.g., firms such as HP or Deutsche Telekom hiring private investigators to observe their employees), and catastrophic events caused by the carelessness of organizational actors (e.g., the Copiapó mining accident in the Chilean Atacama desert). However, other incidents of failure cause harm primarily to external stakeholders such as customers, business partners, shareholders, or the wider community. The BP oil spill in the gulf of Mexico, the food poisoning scandal at Jack-in-the-Box fast food restaurants in the 1990s, or Mattel's use of lead paint in the production process of its toys are prominent examples of corporate failures where external stakeholders were the main victims.

Research on social identity threat suggests that members of social groups experience different forms of threat depending on whether they perceive themselves as (potential) victims or whether they perceive other stakeholders to be the main victims (Breakwell, 1986; Ellemers et al., 2002). In the first case, organizational members may experience an individual-directed form of threat. Apart from the immediate bodily threat, becoming a victim of the action or inaction of fellow organizational members may represent a devaluation of the individual by the organization (Pearson & Clair, 1998). That is, it may signal a lack of acceptance and disrespect by the group and may ultimately challenge one's position within the group (Ellemers et al., 2002). In contrast, when organizational members perceive external stakeholders to be the main victims of organizational failure, threat is more group-directed. That is, threat does not arise from being directly attacked by fellow organizational members but from the general devaluation of a group's legitimacy, values, and status through the incident of failure (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Not surprisingly, group members

may develop feelings of shame and guilt by association (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998).

These findings may also be of relevance in the current context as prevention and promotion responses may not be able to address both forms of social identity threat to the same extent. For instance, a prevention response may be better able to refute identity threat resulting from the devaluation of an individual than identity threat resulting from the general devaluation of the organization. Specifically, prevention responses constrain an organization from similar failures in the future. This may not only limit the immediate risk and vulnerability of organizational members but may also signal that the organization is sympathetic and does not accept the behavior of those who are responsible for the act of failure (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Consequently, organizational members may be reaffirmed that they are still valued members of the organization. However, prevention responses may be less effective when organizational members perceive external stakeholders to be the main victims of failure. Prevention responses deal exclusively with the act of failure and may therefore not be able to relieve feelings of shame and guilt. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1a: A prevention response will reduce social identity threat to a greater extent when internal stakeholders are the immediate victims of organizational failure than when external stakeholders are the immediate victims of organizational failure.

In contrast, a promotion response may be more effective when organizational members perceive external stakeholders to be the immediate victims and threat is resulting from the general devaluation of the organization through the incident of failure. That is, promotion may help to re-build positive expectations about the organization and signal organizational members that although failure has occurred positive aspects exist on which the organization should also be evaluated. This may reduce feelings of shame and guilt by association and re-affirm an individual's social identity by reducing the relevance of failure and increasing the relevance of positive organizational action (Derks et al., 2009; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). However, promotion responses may be

less effective when individuals perceive internal stakeholders to be the main victims. Promotion responses do not show sympathy with victimized organizational members and may even be regarded as further devaluation of the victims. Thus,

Hypothesis 1b: A promotion response will reduce social identity threat to a greater extent when external stakeholders are the immediate victims of organizational failure than when internal stakeholders are the immediate victims of organizational failure.

Research context

All studies were conducted with different groups of employees from the Swiss division of an international manufacturer of domestic appliances. The company had an operating income from roughly US\$ 10.3bn in 2010 and more than 50,000 employees worldwide. Importantly, the company had not been involved in any incidents of failure in the past. Before conducting the studies, we interviewed several experienced managers of the company. On the basis of these interviews, we developed the scenarios. To enhance the generalizability of the results, all studies used different organizational failures and different prevention and promotion responses. Moreover, all materials were pre-tested with a small sample of employees. In sum, these procedures ensured that the materials were perceived as realistic.

Design and participants

In study 1, we wanted to test hypotheses 1a and 1b. The study used a 2 (type of victims: internal stakeholders, external stakeholders) x 2 (management response: prevention, promotion) between-subjects design. A total of 95 employees (36.6% female, 63.4% male, average age of 43.0 years, average tenure of 13.9 years) participated in the study. Participants were recruited via email and asked to visit a web site to take part in an online survey about media coverage on their company. Participation was voluntary.

Procedure and stimuli

Once participants had logged onto the web site, they were first asked to rate their identification with their company. Next, they were exposed to a fictitious newspaper article about an incident of organizational failure. The article informed them that the Swiss division of the company had illegally hired private detectors either to spy on its employees (i.e., internal stakeholders were the victims) or to spy on journalists reporting about the company (i.e., external stakeholder were the victims). The article mentioned that a great number of employees or journalists were affected and that public prosecution had started an investigation. It also cited the company's press officer taking responsibility for the scandal and apologizing. After reading the article, participants completed the dependent measures.

In the second part, participants were exposed to an internal memo addressed "to all employees" from the management. The memo was designed either as a prevention or as a promotion response. In the prevention condition, employees were told that the management had accepted full responsibility, stopped all illegal activities, and wanted to introduce several measures to prevent similar incidents in the future (e.g., hiring of a data protection commissioner, introduction of new guidelines). In the promotion condition, employees were told that the management had accepted full responsibility, stopped all illegal activities, and wanted to remind employees that the company displayed positive behavior in other domains (e.g., increasing revenues this year again, starting an environmental initiative). After participants had finished reading the internal memo, they completed the dependent variables again. Following this, they responded to the manipulation checks. Upon completion, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were told that all materials had been fictitious.

Measures

Reduction of social identity threat. To assess reduction of social identity threat, we used two different measures which had been previously used in similar contexts. First, we measured uncertainty with seven items that had been associated with threat and

cognitive inconsistency (Elliot & Devine, 1994; McGregor, Zanna, Holmes, & Spencer, 2001). A sample item was "I feel uneasy". Second, we adapted three items from organizational identification research (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) to measure identification ambivalence (e.g., "I feel conflicted about being part of this organization"). To examine whether social identity threat had been reduced, both dependent variables were measured before and after the management response (see, Wentzel, 2009, for a similar procedure). We averaged items for both scales and calculated difference scores (uncertainty: $\alpha_{\text{before}} = .95$, $\alpha_{\text{after}} = .94$, $\alpha_{\text{dif}} = .91$; identification ambivalence: $\alpha_{\text{before}} = .87$, $\alpha_{\text{after}} = .89$, $\alpha_{\text{dif}} = .73$). Note that all items in our studies were measured on seven-point scales with endpoints labeled "*strongly agree*" (7) and "*strongly disagree*" (1).

Manipulation checks. As a manipulation check, participants rated on one item the degree to which they perceived internal stakeholders to be the main victims of the incident of failure. They rated on another item the degree to which they believed that the measures presented in the memo could prevent future failures. Participants also rated one item whether their company had accepted responsibility for the failure.

Control variable. Although research suggests that identification is hardly able to buffer the negative effects of failure when failure extends a certain magnitude or when there is not much scope for questioning a perpetrator's responsibility (Doosje et al., 1998; Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson, & Kamins, 2006), we controlled for individual differences in organizational identification (scale from Mael & Ashforth, 1992, $\alpha = .86$). Importantly, participants indicated their level of organizational identification prior to the presentation of the stimulus materials.

Results

Manipulation checks. As expected, participants regarded internal stakeholders to a greater extent as victims when employees were the victims of failure than when journalists were the victims of failure ($M_{\text{employees}} = 6.20$, $M_{\text{journalists}} = 3.64$, $F(1, 93) = 58.40$, $p < .001$). Participants also believed that the measures described in the memo

were better able to prevent future failures when they received a prevention response than when they received a promotion response ($M_{\text{prevention}} = 5.45$, $M_{\text{promotion}} = 4.54$, $F(1, 92) = 7.11$, $p < .01$). Moreover, all participants believed that their company had accepted responsibility ($M = 5.78$, $t(94)_{\text{diff_from_4}} = 36.14$, $p < .001$). These judgments did not differ between the conditions and no other treatments effects were significant for all checks.

Control variable. A number of ANOVAs revealed that there were no differences across the conditions in terms of identification and that identification did not interact with any of the independent variables. However, identification emerged as a significant co-variate and was included in the main analyses.

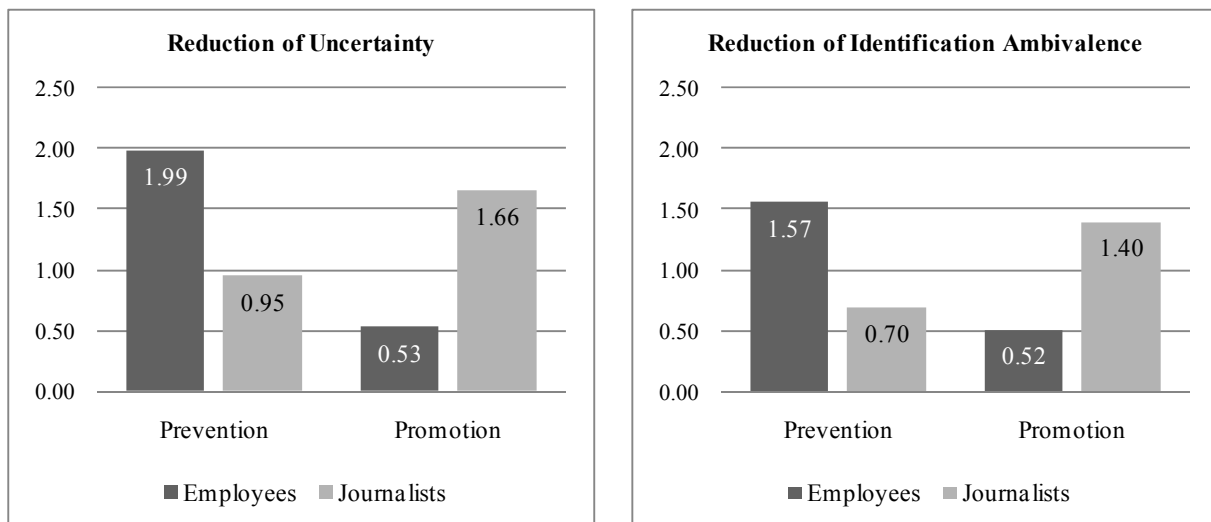
Hypotheses testing. To examine whether social identity threat had been reduced after the presentation of the internal memo, the mean values of the dependent values before the memo were compared to the mean values after the memo. These comparisons were achieved by calculating the differences between the measures before and after the presentation of the memo. Thus, higher values indicate a greater drop in uncertainty and identification ambivalence.

Two 2×2 ANCOVAs revealed no significant main effects for type of victims on reduction of uncertainty and reduction of identification ambivalence (reduction of uncertainty $F(1, 90) = 0.145$, $p > .70$, $\eta^2 = .00$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $F(1, 90) = 0.10$, $p > .74$, $\eta^2 = .00$) and no significant main effects for management response on reduction of uncertainty and identification ambivalence (reduction of uncertainty: $F(1, 90) = 1.06$, $p > .30$, $\eta^2 = .01$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $F(1, 90) = 0.28$, $p > .59$, $\eta^2 = .00$). More importantly, the ANCOVAs revealed a highly significant type of victim \times management response interaction effect on both difference scores (reduction of uncertainty: $F(1, 90) = 10.86$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $F(1, 90) = 10.12$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .10$).

To follow up on these effects, we conducted separate analyses for the prevention and the promotion response. As Figure 2 indicates, a prevention response reduced

uncertainty and identification ambivalence to a greater extent when employees (i.e., internal stakeholders) were the main victims than when journalists (i.e., external stakeholders) were the main victims (reduction of uncertainty: $M_{\text{employees}} = 1.99$, $M_{\text{journalists}} = 0.95$, $F(1, 41) = 5.33$, $p < .05$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $M_{\text{employees}} = 1.57$, $M_{\text{journalists}} = 0.70$, $F(1, 41) = 4.11$, $p < .05$). A reverse pattern was found when participants received a promotion message. In this case, uncertainty and identification ambivalence were reduced to a greater extent when journalists (i.e., external stakeholders) were the main victims than when employees (i.e., internal stakeholders) were the main victims (reduction of uncertainty: $M_{\text{employees}} = 0.53$, $M_{\text{journalists}} = 1.66$, $F(1, 47) = 4.90$, $p < .05$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $M_{\text{employees}} = 0.52$, $M_{\text{journalists}} = 1.40$, $F(1, 47) = 4.17$, $p < .05$). Thus, H1a and H1b were supported.

Figure 2
Interactions Between Management Response and Type of Victims



Discussion

The results of study 1 suggest that type of victim represents an important contingency factor that determines the impact of prevention and promotion responses. Specifically, a prevention response reduces social identity threat to a greater extent when organizational members perceive internal stakeholders to be the main victims of

failure than when they perceive external stakeholders to be the main victims. In contrast, a promotion response reduces social identity threat more strongly when external stakeholders are considered to be the main victims and not internal stakeholders.

STUDY 2: THE MODERATING ROLE OF NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBLE

The number of employees responsible is another contingency factor that can be used to assess an incident of failure. As such, research suggests that failure can be the result of the action or inaction of single employees ("bad apples") or of the collective action or inaction of a great number of employees or groups of employees (Ashforth, Gioia, Robinson, & Trevino, 2008a; Pinto, Leana, & Pil, 2008). For example, in 2008, the French trader Jérôme Kerviel almost caused the collapse of the investment bank Société Générale by placing unauthorized bets. Similarly, Texaco was accused of racism when a few managers referred to African Americans as "black jelly beans" (Brinson & Benoit, 1999). However, in many other cases, a great number of employees and divisions are responsible for failure. One of the most prominent examples is the failure of Arthur Andersen where hundreds of employees were involved into padding prices and other forms of cheating (Toffler, 2003).

Importantly, the number of employees responsible may strongly affect organizational members' responsibility attributions. According to attribution research, people have a general tendency to attribute negative events to individual dispositions (Nisbett, Legant, & Marecek, 1973; Ross, 1977). In fact, research has examined many types of individual dispositions that may lead to failure such as lack of integrity, lack of self-control, or insufficient knowledge (see, Ashforth & Anand, 2003, for a review). However, the more employees and divisions are involved, the more difficult it may become for organizational members to attribute failure only to individual dispositions. In particular, when failure represents a collective phenomenon with many actors involved, members may become more inclined to attribute responsibility to systemic

characteristics of the organization such as unrealistic goals, wrong incentive systems, permissive leadership, or peer pressure (Ashforth et al., 2008a; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009).

These arguments may have direct consequences for the effectiveness of prevention and promotion responses after organizational failures. First, a prevention response may be better able to reduce social identity threat when a great number of employees are responsible than when a small number of employees are responsible. A prevention response directly addresses the systemic causes of failure by implementing measures that avoid similar failures in the future. Hence, when a great number of employees are responsible and failure is likely to be attributed to systemic characteristics, a prevention response may be regarded as highly appropriate. However, when a small number of employees are involved and failure is likely to be attributed to individual dispositions, a prevention response may be perceived as less helpful because it only constrains individual behavior but does not change individual dispositions (Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009; Sitkin & Roth, 1993). This corresponds to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a: A prevention response will reduce social identity threat to a greater extent when a great number of employees are responsible for organizational failure than when a small number of employees are responsible for organizational failure.

Second, when a small number of employees are responsible, organizational members are likely to attribute responsibility to individual dispositions. In this case, a promotion response may fall on fertile ground because it signals that a few black sheep (Marques, Abrams, & Serodio, 2001) are not able to undermine an organization's central values and characteristics. Hence, there is a high fit between the perceived source of social identity threat and the selected response strategy. In contrast, when a great number of employees are responsible, a promotion response may be less helpful. In this case, it is likely that employees attribute failure to systemic reasons and not to individual dispositions. A promotion response does not acknowledge systemic reasons but rather

suggests that there is no need to change organizational practices. Consequently, social identity threat may not be reduced to the same extent. Thus,

Hypothesis 2b: A promotion response will reduce social identity threat to a greater extent when a small number of employees are responsible for organizational failure than when a great number of employees are responsible for organizational failure.

Design and participants

Study 2 was a paper-and-pencil study designed to test hypotheses 2a and 2b. The study used a 2 (employees responsible: small number, great number) x 2 (management response: prevention, promotion) between-subjects design. The sample consisted of different employees from the same Swiss company as in Study 1 (15.2% female, 84.8% male, average age of 40.3 years, average tenure of 12.3 years). A total of 106 employees voluntarily participated in the study during regular team meetings. Note that the sample did not include employees from the sales department.

Procedure and stimuli

Similar to study 1, participants were exposed to a fictitious newspaper article which informed them about an incident of organizational failure. This time organizational failure was operationalized as a corruption scandal. Half of the participants were informed that *two* sales force employees from *one* division had bribed the buying agents of retail partners with expensive gifts such as watches and travel vouchers over several years to increase sales. The other half of the participants were told that *many* sales forces employees from *many* divisions had bribed the buying agents over several years. Again, the article cited the company's press officer accepting responsibility and apologizing. After reading the article, participants completed the dependent measures for the first time.

Next, participants were exposed to an internal memo similar to the one used in study 1. In the prevention condition, employees were told that the management had accepted responsibility on behalf of all employees and had introduced several measures to constrain corrupt employees in the future (e.g., introduction of four-eye-principle in negotiations with retailers, imposition of sanctions for corrupt employees). In the promotion condition, employees were told that the management had accepted responsibility on behalf of all employees but wanted to emphasize that in many other areas employee behavior was exemplary (e.g., high reliability of employees, high friendliness of service employees). Participants then completed the dependent variables for a second time. Following this, they responded to the manipulation checks and were informed about the purpose of the study.

Measures

Reduction of social identity threat: Uncertainty and identification ambivalence were measured before and after the prevention or promotion response with the same items used in study 1. Again, difference scores were calculated. Scale reliability was satisfactory in all instances (uncertainty: $\alpha_{\text{before}} = .93$, $\alpha_{\text{after}} = .95$, $\alpha_{\text{dif}} = .88$; identification ambivalence: $\alpha_{\text{before}} = .87$, $\alpha_{\text{after}} = .92$, $\alpha_{\text{dif}} = .74$).

Manipulation checks. As a manipulation check, participants rated on one item the degree to which they perceived that collective action was responsible for the failure and on another item the degree to which they perceived that the failure had systemic causes such as unrealistic goals, wrong incentive systems, or permissive leadership. Similar to study 1, participants also rated the degree to which they believed that the measures presented in the memo could prevent similar failures in the future. Finally, participants rated on one item whether the company had accepted responsibility for the failure.

Control variable. We controlled for individual differences in organizational identification prior to the presentation of the stimulus materials using the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale ($\alpha = .81$).

Results

Manipulation checks. As expected, participants believed more strongly that failure was the result of collective action when a great number of employees were responsible than when a small number of employees were responsible ($M_{\text{great number of employees}} = 4.18$, $M_{\text{small number of employees}} = 2.56$, $F(1, 98) = 19.62$, $p < .001$). Participants also attributed failure more strongly to systemic causes when a great number of employees were responsible than when a small number of employees were responsible ($M_{\text{great number of employees}} = 4.59$, $M_{\text{small number of employees}} = 3.42$, $F(1, 101) = 12.39$, $p < .001$). Moreover, participants who received a prevention response believed more strongly that the measures described in the memo were able to prevent similar failures in the future than participants who received a promotion response ($M_{\text{prevention}} = 5.46$, $M_{\text{promotion}} = 4.53$, $F(1, 103) = 10.32$, $p < .01$). Again all participants believed that the company had accepted responsibility ($M = 4.95$, $t(99)_{\text{diff_from_4}} = 5.97$, $p < .001$). These judgments did not differ between conditions.

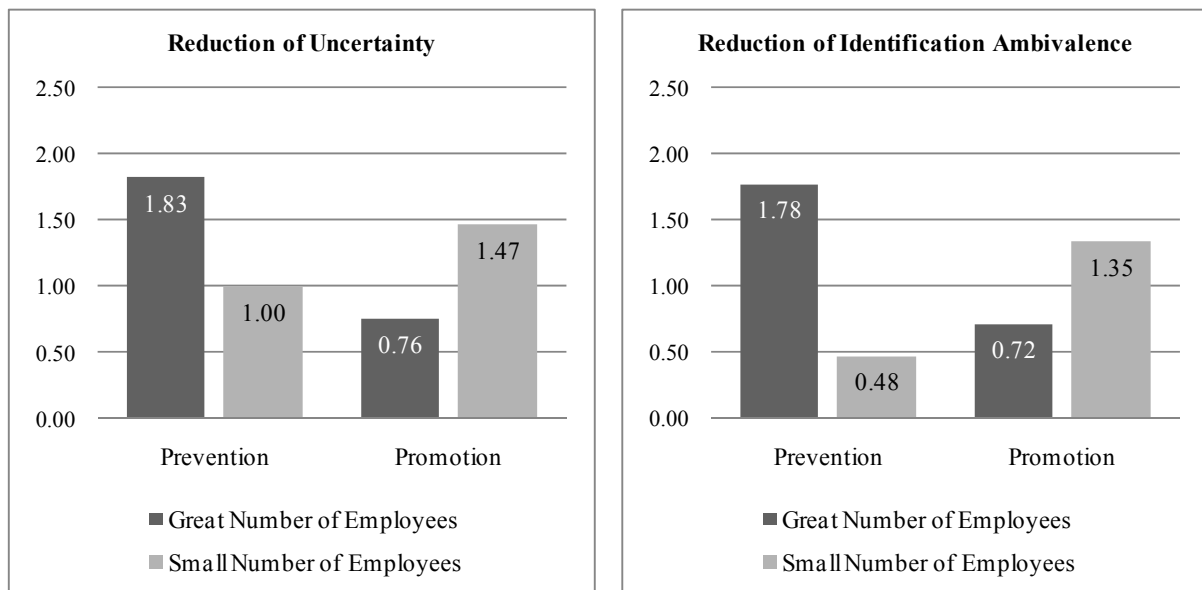
Control variable. A number of ANOVAs found that there were no significant differences across the conditions in terms of identification. Identification did not interact with the independent variables and did not emerge as a significant co-variate.

Hypotheses testing. Similar to the procedure in study 1, we calculated difference scores for both dependent variables by subtracting the mean values after the management response from the mean values before the management response.

We ran several 2×2 ANOVAs on the difference scores of uncertainty and identification ambivalence. Analyses revealed no significant main effects for number of employees responsible (reduction of uncertainty: $F(1, 102) = .04$, $p > .83$, $\eta^2 = .00$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $F(1, 102) = 1.99$, $p > .16$, $\eta^2 = .02$) and management response (reduction of uncertainty: $F(1, 102) = 1.18$, $p > .27$, $\eta^2 = .01$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $F(1, 102) = 0.15$, $p > .69$, $\eta^2 = .00$). However, there was a significant interaction effect on reduction of uncertainty ($F(1, 102) = 7.54$,

$p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$) and reduction of identification ambivalence ($F(1, 102) = 16.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$).

Figure 3
Interactions Between Management Response and Number of
Employees Responsible



To follow up on these effects, we performed planned contrasts within the prevention and the promotion condition. As Figure 3 shows, a prevention response reduced uncertainty ($M_{\text{great number of employees}} = 1.83$, $M_{\text{small number of employees}} = 1.00$, $F(1, 53) = 3.73$, $p < .06$) and identification ambivalence ($M_{\text{great number of employees}} = 1.78$, $M_{\text{small number of employees}} = 0.48$, $F(1, 53) = 14.41$, $p < .001$) to a greater extent when a great number of employees were responsible than when few employees were responsible. In contrast, a promotion response reduced uncertainty ($M_{\text{great number of employees}} = 0.76$, $M_{\text{small number of employees}} = 1.47$, $F(1, 49) = 4.10$, $p < .05$) and identification ambivalence ($M_{\text{great number of employees}} = 0.72$, $M_{\text{small number of employees}} = 1.35$, $F(1, 49) = 3.54$, $p = .06$) to a greater extent when few employees were responsible than when many employees were responsible. Thus, H2a and H2b were supported.

Discussion

Study 2 demonstrates that number of employees responsible is another important contingency factor which determines the impact of management responses after an incident of failure. Specifically, a prevention response reduces social identity threat more strongly when a great number of employees are responsible than when a small number of employees are responsible. In contrast, a promotion response is more effective when few employees are responsible than when many employees are responsible.

STUDY 3: THE MODERATING ROLE OF REASON FOR FAILURE

Research differentiates between ability failures and integrity failures (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Kim et al., 2004). That is, organizational failure can be the result of a lack of competence and skills or the result of a lack of integrity. Whereas ability failures are usually related to insufficient technical and interpersonal knowledge of organizational actors, integrity failures occur when organizational members act in ways which do not follow moral standards (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). The BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico or Toyota's recent product safety scandal are two prominent examples of ability failures. In contrast, Chiquita's alleged financing of a Columbian terrorist organization, Enron's accounting fraud, or the Siemens bribery scandal represent integrity failures.

Inferences about ability and integrity are central to the judgment of social groups (Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008). Importantly, such inferences may differ depending on whether individuals receive negative or positive information about a group's ability or integrity. Research suggests that individuals weigh negative information about integrity more strongly than negative information about ability, whereas they weigh positive information about ability more strongly than positive information about integrity (Snyder & Stukas, 1999). Research explains this effect with hierarchically restricted schemas of attribution (Reeder & Brewer, 1978). That is,

individuals intuitively attribute a single signal of immorality to enduring and general dispositions, whereas they do not necessarily attribute a single signal of incompetence to general inability. In contrast, a single signal of high ability is intuitively believed to be an indicator of high ability, whereas a single signal of high integrity is usually not attributed to a general disposition.

Such differences in the assessment of information on ability and integrity may also influence the extent to which social identity threat can be reduced through prevention and promotion responses after ability and integrity failures (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). In particular, research indicates that prevention responses are more effective after an integrity than after an ability failure. According to previous studies (Kim et al., 2004; Reeder & Brewer, 1978), single acts of immorality tend to be regarded as reliable signals of general immorality of the organization. Hence, integrity failures are likely to be perceived as systemic to the organization. Prevention responses may be viewed as an appropriate response because they try to generally constrain malevolent behavior. On the other hand, when failure is caused by a lack of ability, prevention responses may be perceived as less appropriate. Ability failures are likely to be discounted as single cases of incompetence which are not representative of the general ability of the organization. Consequently, a prevention response may be less likely to reduce social identity threat. Thus,

Hypothesis 3a: A prevention response will reduce social identity threat to a greater extent when reason for failure is a lack of integrity than when reason for failure is a lack of ability.

On the other hand, a promotion response may be very effective after ability failures because it resonates with an individual's tendency to discount ability related acts of failure as single incidents. In fact, a promotion response may emphasize the intuitive belief that the organization is competent regardless of the act of failure by providing supporting examples. However, when failure is the result of a lack of integrity, the opposite may happen. Employees may perceive a promotion response as inappropriate because promotion is not able to address the general and enduring nature of

attributions of immorality. Consequently, a promotion response may not help to remedy social-identity threat. Thus,

Hypothesis 3b: A promotion response will reduce social identity threat to a greater extent when reason for failure is a lack of ability than when reason for failure is a lack of integrity.

Although the predictions derived from research in the field of schematic attribution are relatively clear, it is important to understand the process through which prevention and promotion responses reduce social identity threat after ability and integrity failures. Recent organization and marketing research (e.g., Simons, 2002; Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009) indicates that perceptions of hypocrisy may explain the effectiveness of different management responses when failure is attributed to a lack of ability or a lack of integrity.

Hypocrisy can be defined as a perceived lack of alignment between an organization's actual deeds and previous beliefs about an organization (Simons, 2002; Spiegel, 1999). After an incident of failure organizational members can be expected to perceive high levels of hypocrisy as failures challenge previous beliefs about an organization's integrity or ability (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Harrison et al., 2009). Consequently, management responses may reduce social identity threat when they are able to reduce organizational members' hypocrisy perceptions (Wagner et al., 2009). This is most likely the case when there is a high congruence between the selected management response and the schematic attributions induced by reason for failure. For example, when organizational members attribute failure to general organizational immorality, they may perceive a response that promotes positive ethical behavior or successful business operations as hypocritical. In contrast, when organizational members attribute failure to a single act of inability, they may perceive a prevention response that changes organizational structures and processes as hypocritical.

Against this background, it seems likely that prevention and promotion responses induce different levels of hypocrisy after ability and integrity failures and that

hypocrisy, in turn, determines the effectiveness of prevention and promotion responses in reducing social identity threat. Specifically, hypocrisy may be reduced strongly when a prevention response follows an integrity failure or when a promotion response follows an ability failure. Consequently, social identity threat may also be reduced effectively. In contrast, hypocrisy may be reduced less strongly when a prevention response follows an ability failure or when a promotion follows an integrity failure. In these cases social identity threat may not be reduced effectively. Hence, an overriding mediation effect is predicted:

Hypothesis 4: The interactive effect of management response and reason for failure on reduction of social identity threat will be mediated by perceived hypocrisy.

Design and participants

The aim of study 3 was to test hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 4. The study used a 2 (reason for failure: lack of ability, lack of integrity) x 2 (management response: prevention, promotion) between-subjects design. The sample consisted of 104 employees recruited from the same Swiss company for household appliances as in Study 1 and 2 (41.7% female, 58.3% male, average age of 44.1 years, average tenure of 11.5 years). This time employees were recruited via email and took part in an online survey. Participants were different from the employees in study 1 and 2. Participation was voluntary.

Procedure and stimuli

A fictitious newspaper article about a product safety scandal was used to operationalize organizational failure. The article stated that the company had recalled one series of its vacuum cleaners after several customers had suffered severe electric shocks. To manipulate reason for failure, we adapted operationalizations from previous research (Kim et al., 2004). In the lack of ability-condition, the article reported that a previously unknown technical problem with the electrical wiring had caused the accidents, whereas in the lack of integrity-condition, the article stated that

the technical problem was previously known but had been intentionally ignored to avoid additional costs. Similar to study 1 and 2, the article cited the company's press officer accepting responsibility and apologizing. After participants had read the article, participants completed the social identity threat scales for the first time.

Next, participants were exposed to an internal memo from the management which was designed either as a prevention or as a promotion response. In the prevention condition, participants were informed that the company had recalled all vacuum cleaners of the series, had accepted responsibility for the failure, and had introduced a new training program on product safety to prevent similar failures in the future. In the promotion condition, participants were told that the company had recalled all vacuum cleaners of the series, had accepted responsibility for the failure, and had introduced a new environmental initiative for sustainable production. Following the internal memo, participants completed the dependent measures a second time and also completed a measure of perceived hypocrisy. After this they responded to the manipulation checks and were finally informed about the purpose of the study.

Measures

Dependent variables: Uncertainty and identification ambivalence were measured before and after the prevention or promotion response with the same items used in study 1 and 2 and difference scores were calculated (uncertainty: $\alpha_{\text{before}} = .91$, $\alpha_{\text{after}} = .97$, $\alpha_{\text{dif}} = .93$; identification ambivalence: $\alpha_{\text{before}} = .89$, $\alpha_{\text{after}} = .96$; $\alpha_{\text{dif}} = .86$). To measure hypocrisy perceptions, we used three items from Wagner et al.'s (2009) corporate hypocrisy scale ($\alpha = .91$). A sample item was "The organization I work for pretends to be something it is not".

Manipulation checks. Participants rated on one item the degree to which they believed a lack of integrity was responsible for the failure and on another item the degree to which they believed that the measures described in the memo could prevent similar failures. In addition, they rated on one item whether the company had accepted responsibility for the failure.

Control variable. Using the same items as in study 1 and study 2, we controlled for individual differences in organizational identification prior to the presentation of the stimulus materials ($\alpha = .79$).

Results

Manipulation checks. A significant main effect indicated that failure was believed to be the result of a lack of integrity in the integrity failure condition but not in the ability failure condition ($M_{\text{lack of integrity}} = 6.27$, $M_{\text{lack of ability}} = 4.04$, $F(1, 102) = 44.91$, $p < .001$). Moreover, participants believed more strongly that the measures described in the memo could prevent future failures when they received a prevention response compared to when they received a promotion response ($M_{\text{prevention}} = 4.94$, $M_{\text{promotion}} = 3.82$, $F(1, 101) = 7.33$, $p < .01$). Again all participants believed that the company had accepted responsibility ($M = 5.46$, $t(103)_{\text{diff_from_4}} = 8.33$, $p < .001$). These judgments did not differ between conditions.

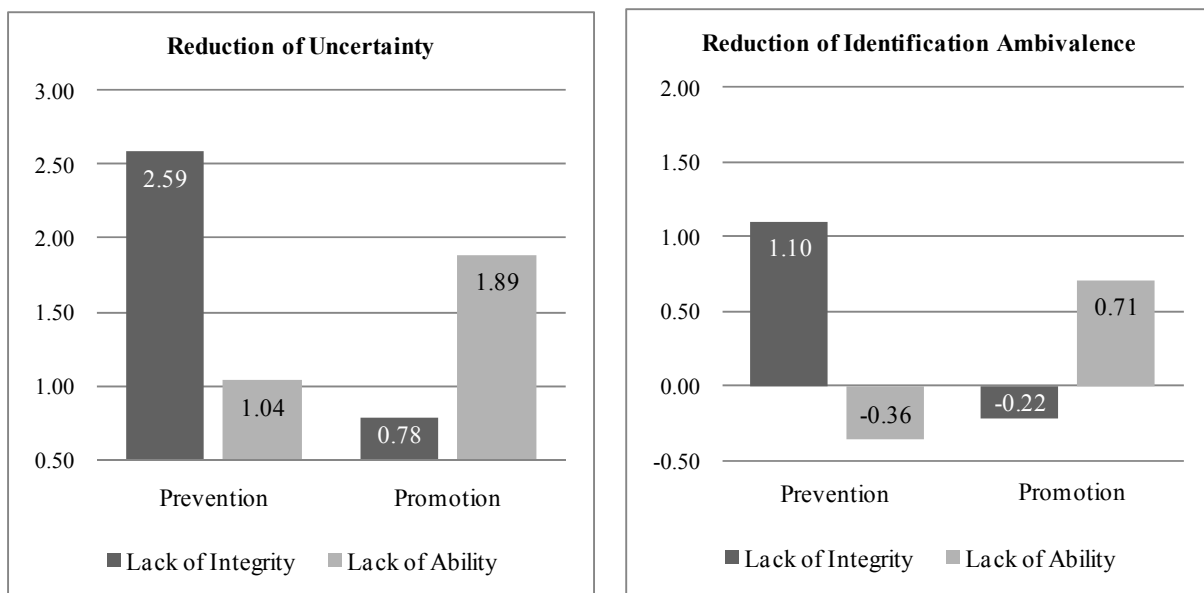
Control variable. A number of ANOVAs found that there were no significant differences across the conditions in terms of identification. Moreover, identification did not interact with any of the independent variables. However, identification emerged as a marginally significant co-variate and was therefore included in the main analyses.

Hypotheses testing. To examine whether social identity threat had been reduced, we compared the scores of uncertainty and identification ambivalence prior to the management response to the scores after the management response by calculating difference scores.

Several 2×2 ANCOVAs on the difference scores revealed no significant main effects for reason for failure (reduction of uncertainty: $F(1, 99) = 0.70$, $p > .40$, $\eta^2 = .01$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $F(1, 99) = 0.90$, $p > .34$, $\eta^2 = .01$) and management response (reduction of uncertainty: $F(1, 99) = 2.34$, $p > .13$, $\eta^2 = .02$;

reduction of identification ambivalence: $F(1, 99) = 0.37, p > .54, \eta^2 = .00$). More importantly, there was a significant interaction effect on reduction of uncertainty ($F(1, 99) = 10.59, p < .01, \eta^2 = .10$) and reduction of identification ambivalence ($F(1, 99) = 10.84, p < .01, \eta^2 = .10$).

Figure 4
Interactions Between Management Response and Reason for Failure



Similar to study 1 and study 2, we performed planned contrasts to follow up on these effects. As Figure 4 shows, the prevention response reduced uncertainty and identification ambivalence strongly when reason for failure was a lack of integrity. However, the prevention response did not reduce uncertainty to the same extent ($M_{\text{lack of integrity}} = 2.59, M_{\text{lack of ability}} = 1.04, F(1, 49) = 8.43, p < .01$) and even increased identification ambivalence ($M_{\text{lack of integrity}} = 1.10, M_{\text{lack of ability}} = -0.36, F(1, 49) = 8.84, p < .01$) when reason for failure was a lack of ability. The reverse pattern was found for the promotion response. That is, the promotion response reduced uncertainty and identification ambivalence strongly when failure was caused by a lack of ability, but reduced uncertainty only weakly ($M_{\text{lack of integrity}} = 0.78, M_{\text{lack of ability}} = 1.89, F(1, 46) = 4.19, p < .05$) and even increased identification ambivalence ($M_{\text{lack of integrity}} = -0.22,$

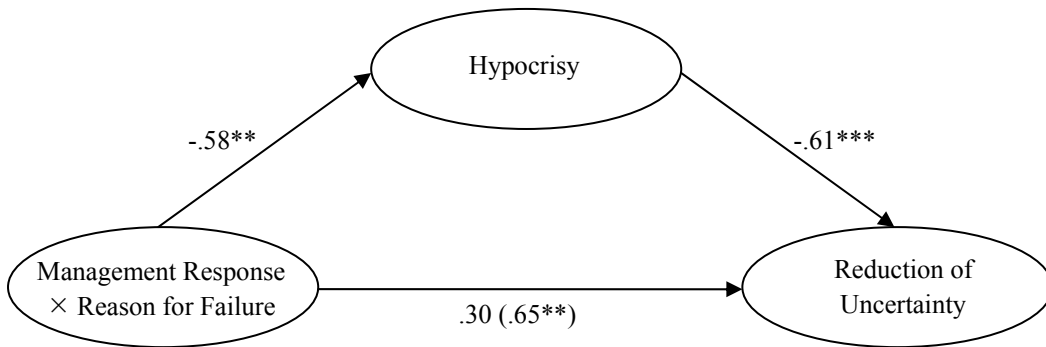
$M_{\text{lack of ability}} = 0.71$, $F(1, 46) = 3.77$, $p < .06$) when failure was caused by a lack of integrity. These findings provide support for H3a and H3b.

Finally, we examined whether the effect of the interaction between management response and reason for failure on reduction of uncertainty and identification ambivalence was mediated by perceptions of hypocrisy. An ANOVA conducted on hypocrisy revealed that the main effects of management response ($F(1, 99) = 2.63$, $p > .11$, $\eta^2 = .03$) and reason for failure ($F(1, 99) = 1.23$, $p > .27$, $\eta^2 = .01$) were not significant. Again, there was a significant management response \times reason for failure interaction ($F(1, 99) = 10.35$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .10$). Contrasts showed that in the prevention response condition the mean values for hypocrisy were lower when failure was caused by lack of integrity than by a lack of ability ($M_{\text{lack of integrity}} = 2.63$, $M_{\text{lack of ability}} = 3.38$, $F(1, 49) = 2.24$, $p = .14$), whereas in the promotion response condition the mean values for hypocrisy were lower when failure was caused by lack of ability than by a lack of integrity ($M_{\text{lack of integrity}} = 4.36$, $M_{\text{lack of ability}} = 2.79$, $F(1, 49) = 8.66$, $p < .01$).

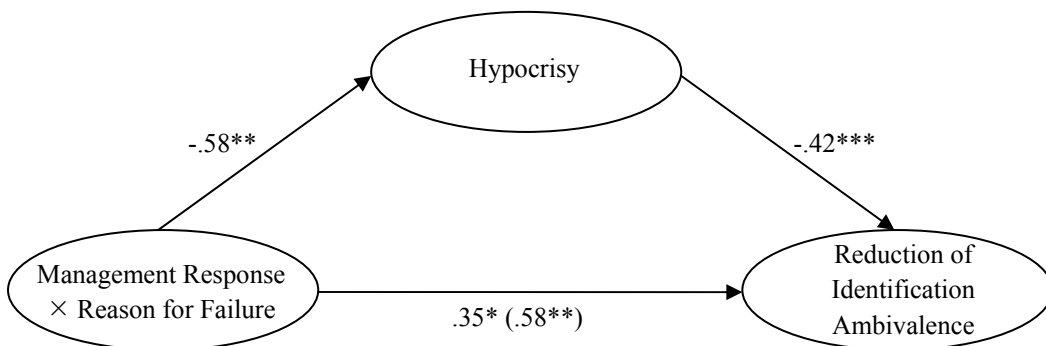
Next, we followed the procedures by Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt (2005) to test for mediated moderation (see Figure 5). We first regressed management response (-1 = prevention response, 1 = promotion response), reason for failure (-1 = lack of integrity, 1 = lack of ability), identification, and the management response \times reason for failure interaction term on reduction of uncertainty and reduction of identification ambivalence. Next, we regressed the same predictors on hypocrisy perceptions. Finally, we regressed management response, reason for failure, identification, the management response \times reason for failure interaction, and hypocrisy on both difference scores.

Figure 5
Mediation of the Interaction Effect Between Management Response and Reason for Failure by Hypocrisy

(5a) Reduction of Uncertainty



(5b) Reduction of Identification Ambivalence



Note: Number on paths are beta-values. The total effect before controlling for the mediator is given in parentheses.

The effect after controlling for the mediator is given outside the parentheses. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The results met the criteria used to establish mediated moderation. That is, the first regression model showed a significant effect of the management response \times reason for failure interaction on reduction of uncertainty and reduction of identification ambivalence (reduction of uncertainty: $B = .65$, $t(99) = 3.25$, $p < .01$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $B = .58$, $t(99) = 3.29$, $p < .01$). All other predictors did not reach significance. The second regression model showed a significant effect of the

management response \times reason for failure interaction on hypocrisy ($B = -.58, t(99) = -3.22, p < .01$). Most importantly, when we added the regression effect for hypocrisy, the third model showed a significant effect for hypocrisy on both difference scores (reduction of uncertainty: $B = -.61, t(98) = -6.51, p < .001$; reduction of identification ambivalence: $B = -.42, t(98) = -4.61, p < .001$), while the management response \times reason for failure interaction effect became nonsignificant (reduction of uncertainty: $B = .30, t(98) = 1.69, p = .10$; Sobel test = 2.89, $p < .01$) or was greatly reduced (reduction of identification ambivalence: $B = 0.35, t(98) = 2.02, p = .01$; Sobel test = 2.64, $p < .01$). Thus, as hypothesized, hypocrisy perceptions mediated the interactive effect between management response and reason for failure on reduction of uncertainty and reduction of identification ambivalence.

Discussion

Study 3 shows that reason for failure moderates the impact of management responses after organizational failure. That is, a prevention response reduces social identity threat more strongly when reason for failure is a lack of integrity than a lack of ability, whereas a promotion response reduces social identity threat more strongly when reason for failure is a lack of ability than a lack of integrity. Importantly, this effect can be explained by perceptions of hypocrisy. That is, when a prevention response follows an integrity failure or when a promotion response follows an ability failure, there is strong reduction of perceived hypocrisy, which in turn reduces social identity threat. In contrast, when a promotion response follows an integrity failure or when a prevention response follows an ability failure, the reduction of perceived hypocrisy is much weaker. Consequently, there is a weaker effect on social identity threat.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The objective of this research was to examine when prevention and promotion responses are effective in reducing social identity threat after organizational failures. Our studies identified three contingency factors which determine the effectiveness of

prevention and promotion responses: type of victims, number of employees responsible, and reason for failure. First, study 1 shows that a prevention response reduces social identity threat to a greater extent when internal stakeholders are the victims of organizational failure than when external stakeholders are the victims of failure. On the other hand, a promotion response reduces social identity threat more effectively when external stakeholders are the main victims of organizational failure and not internal stakeholders. Study 2 extends these findings by showing that a prevention response reduces social identity threat more strongly when a great number of employees are responsible for failure than when a small number of employees are responsible for failure. In contrast, a promotion response reduces social identity threat more strongly when a small number of employees are responsible than when a great number of employees are responsible. Finally, study 3 demonstrates that a prevention response reduces social identity threat more effectively when reason for failure is a lack of integrity than when reason for failure is a lack of ability, whereas a promotion response reduces social identity threat more strongly when reason for failure is a lack of ability than when reason for failure is a lack of integrity. Study 3 also shows that the interactive effect between management response and reason for failure on reduction of uncertainty and identification ambivalence is mediated by perceptions of hypocrisy. That is, social identity threat is reduced effectively when a prevention response follows an integrity failure or when a promotion response follows an ability failure because in these cases perceived hypocrisy is low. In contrast, social identity threat is not reduced effectively when a prevention response follows an ability failure or when a promotion response follows an integrity failure because in these cases perceived hypocrisy is still high.

Theoretical and practical implications

This research makes several contributions to the literature. Firstly, our studies respond to the call for more research on substantial management responses after organizational failure (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2008). Previous research has mainly investigated short-term responses such as apology and denial (e.g., Elsbach, 1994; Kim et al., 2004). However, the question of what an organization should do beyond

apologizing when it is responsible for failure has hardly been addressed so far. In this respect, finding ways to help organizational members to cope with failure seems very important. As such, previous research indicates that prevention and promotion responses may both be effective in reducing social identity threat (e.g., Derks et al., 2009; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005). Our findings demonstrate that these effects are contingent on factors such as type of victims, number of employees responsible, and reason for failure. Hence, our studies extend the literature by specifying under which conditions prevention and promotion responses are most effective.

Secondly, our studies also add to the general literature on social identity threat. Earlier studies have investigated social identity threat that arises from the devaluation of a group by the broader social environment, for example through stereotyping (see, Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002, for a review). Our studies extend these findings by examining social identity threat that arises from the failure of the in-group. In particular, previous research has argued that promoting positive group aspects can re-affirm a threatened social identity (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2007; Derks et al., 2009). Our research shows that such a response may not always be effective when the group itself is the source of threat. For instance, when threat arises from the devaluation of an individual by fellow in-group members (i.e., when internal stakeholders are the victims of organizational failure), from the failure of many group members (i.e., when a great number of group members are responsible for the failure), or from the immoral behavior of other in-group members (i.e., when failure is caused by a lack of integrity), promotion may not be able to reduce social identity threat. In these cases a prevention response may be more effective because it signals that the group does not accept malevolent behavior and wants to change.

Thirdly, our research extends previous work on causal attributions (see, Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009, for a review). Scholars have argued that it is important to investigate responsibility attributions more closely when an organization is responsible for a negative event, that is, when there is not much scope for attributing blame to external influences (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Kim et al., 2004). Addressing this issue, our research suggests that organizational members react differently to management

responses depending on whether they attribute failure to a small number or a great number of employees and depending on whether they attribute failure to a lack of integrity or a lack of ability. Study 3 explains this effect with different levels of perceived hypocrisy. That is, a management response which does not resonate with causal attributions after failure may not effectively reduce hypocrisy perceptions, which restricts the effectiveness of the management response. In sum, these findings extend the literature by showing that the effects of causal attributions are more complex than previously envisioned.

The issues addressed in this research also have several practical implications. In general, managers should be interested in strongly identified organizational members as identification increases the psychological well-being of individual members and is related to numerous organizational citizenship behaviors (see, Riketta, 2005, for a meta-analysis). Management action is one of the most important sources of organizational identification (e.g., Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008b; Pratt, 2000) and is particularly important when social identity is threatened by failure (Gutierrez et al., 2010). The differentiation between prevention and promotion responses in this research provides managers and leaders with a framework that can be used to categorize various actual and symbolic management responses after organizational failure. However, managers should be aware that prevention and promotion responses have different effects depending on the characteristics of the incident of failure.

Specifically, our studies indicate that managers need to closely analyze an incident of failure and then select a congruent management response. When internal stakeholders are the victims of failure, many organizational agents are responsible for failure, and/or failure is the result of lack of integrity, a prevention response may be most effective in reducing social identity threat. For example, leaders may introduce new guidelines, rules, and sanctions or introduce training sessions for employees to constrain negative behavior in the future. When external stakeholders are the victims of failure, a small number of organizational agents are responsible for failure, and/or failure is the result of a lack of ability, a prevention response may prove less successful. Instead, managers may be well-advised to promote positive organizational

characteristics and behaviors which are not affected by the scandal (e.g., corporate social responsibility activities, successful business operations, value-driven visions and goals). Hence, different contingency factors may be used as selection criteria for prevention and promotion responses.

Limitations and future research

While this research presents a set of findings that contribute to the literature on organizational failures, it also has some limitations. For instance, scholars have described management reactions to failures and transgressions as multi-stage processes (e.g., Harrison et al., 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2008). Although we created experimental settings that closely resembled real-life organizational failures and management responses, our design did not allow us to capture the length of such processes. This may have restricted the external validity of our findings. Moreover, some participants may have found the stimulus material used in the studies somewhat artificial. For example, although we adapted the style and format of newspaper articles to operationalize organizational failures, some participants may have wondered why they hadn't heard about the failure before. Hence, research that investigates real cases of organizational decision-making after failure may be a valuable extension of our studies.

In a similar vein, the fact that all studies used employee samples from one company may have restricted the external validity of our findings. For instance, one may argue that using employee samples from different companies and industries would help to better control for company- and industry-specific factors such as different cultures or previous incidents of failure. Note, however, that it is very difficult to gain permission to collect data on sensitive matters such as organizational failures within organizations (Trevino, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Nevertheless, future research should investigate whether our findings apply to different organizations and industries.

Moreover, the issue of hypocrisy perceptions may be an interesting topic for future research. Study 3 shows that hypocrisy perceptions can restrict the effectiveness of

prevention and promotion responses. This raises the question if there are conditions which may additionally increase hypocrisy perceptions. For example, organizational members who believe that their organization has introduced prevention or promotion responses only to influence the opinion of employees and other stakeholders may also perceive high levels of hypocrisy. In a similar vein, organizational members may perceive high hypocrisy when failure has not occurred for the first time and the organization has a history of failure. Hence, hypocrisy may constitute a general boundary condition for the effectiveness of management responses after organizational failure.

Finally, management responses to restore an organization's relationship with its members may not necessarily restore the relationship with other groups of stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, or local communities. Other stakeholders have different needs and expectations and management may have to find different responses for different groups of stakeholders. Future studies may want to investigate the effect of prevention and promotion responses on other stakeholder groups and may examine how responses directed towards one group of stakeholders affect responses towards other groups of stakeholders. For example, how do internal stakeholders react to a promotion response that emphasizes positive organizational aspects, when at the same the organization communicates to external stakeholders what it has done to prevent future failures? As these arguments demonstrate, further research is needed to fully understand the impact of management responses after organizational failure.

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Beitrag II

von Walter, B., Wentzel, D., Tomczak, T.: The effect of applicant–employee fit and temporal construal on employer attraction and pursuit intentions. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, accepted for publication.

The effect of applicant-employee fit and temporal construal on employer attraction and pursuit intentions

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Although applicant-employee fit has emerged as an important topic in recruitment research, little is known about how job seekers' perceived similarity with the employees working for an organization affects employer attraction. In this research, we introduce temporal construal as a crucial moderating variable and study how the temporal decision context affects the weighting of applicant-employee fit. In particular, we argue that applicant-employee fit is construed in abstract, high-level terms and exerts a stronger influence when prospective applicants hold a distant time perspective. In contrast, instrumental attributes such as pay level represent low-level construals and gain greater relevance when prospective applicants hold a near time perspective. Two experiments involving a student sample and a sample of unemployed job seekers supported these predictions.

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In recent years, scholars have emphasized that a job seeker's perception of the people working for a particular employer may affect the success of an organization's recruitment efforts (e.g., Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Specifically, Cable and Turban (2001) argue that beliefs about potential co-workers represent a central dimension of employer knowledge and that job seekers may use this knowledge to assess how similar they are to an organization's employees (hereafter referred to as "applicant-employee fit"). However, research on applicant-employee fit is relatively scarce as most studies have investigated fit at the applicant-job or applicant-organization level (Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005).

This paucity of research is surprising as individuals may often form beliefs about applicant-employee fit before applying for a job. As such, a recent study by Devendorf and Highhouse (2008) found that the extent to which college students thought they fitted with the employees of several clothing stores was a strong predictor of employer attraction. For instance, a person who considers herself sophisticated may feel more attracted to an organization when the organization's employees are also perceived as sophisticated.

One limitation of the current literature is that it has not considered different time perspectives when examining the relationship between applicant-employee fit and attraction. However, job search processes are usually longitudinal in nature (Barber, 1998), such that individuals may hold different temporal perspectives depending on the specific stage of their search process. For example, a student who is thinking about an employer to work for after finishing his/her studies in a few years will hold a more distant time perspective than a recent graduate who is looking for an employer to work for immediately.

Against this background, scholars have suggested that the importance assigned to different employer attributes and fit may change over time (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Lievens, 2007; Rynes, 1991). Specifically, Harold and Ployhart (2008) argued that such changes may be observed because individuals acquire additional information throughout the job search process. While this reasoning is plausible, one may also argue that different time perspectives cause individuals to evaluate the same pieces of information in a different manner (Lievens, 2007; Osborn,

1990). This argument parallels a stream of research on temporal construal that suggests that differences in temporal perspective affect the way future events are mentally construed (Trope & Liberman, 2003).

In this research, we address this issue by examining how different time perspectives affect the relationship between applicant-employee fit and employer attraction. Drawing on construal level theory, we propose that applicant-employee fit is an abstract principle that is most likely to guide attraction and pursuit intentions when individuals make decisions for their distant future. In contrast, when individuals make decisions for their near future, they should pay less attention to applicant-employee fit and should base their evaluations more strongly on concrete, instrumental benefits offered by an employer.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The impact of applicant-employee fit on employer attraction

According to Cable and Turban (2001), beliefs about employees represent a central dimension of employer knowledge. Such beliefs may be derived when, for example, individuals interact with an organization's employees during service encounters (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; Wentzel, 2009) or when employee testimonials are depicted in corporate and employment advertising (Gilly & Wolfenbarger, 1998; Wentzel, Henkel, & Tomczak, 2010). More importantly, individuals may use these beliefs to assess whether there is a fit between themselves and an organization's employees (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; van Hove & Lievens, 2007).

Applicant-employee fit may be considered as a specific form of person-environment fit. Specifically, person-environment fit is a multidimensional concept consisting of different types of fit such as person-job, person-organization, and person-to-person fit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Whereas person-job and person-organization fit refer to broad, overall characteristics of a job or organization, person-to-person fit (sometimes also described as person-group fit) refers to a fit with (other) employees (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; van Vianen, 2005). In a recruitment context,

Devendorf and Highhouse (2008) suggested that person-to-person fit may be defined as a fit in values, personality features, and attitudes (e.g., conservative, unconventional, alternative) between a potential applicant and the employees working for an organization. In a similar vein, research in non-recruitment contexts has conceptualized person-to-person fit in terms of value similarity (Adkins, Ravlin, & Meglino, 1996; van Vianen, 2000), personality similarity (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002), or attitude similarity (Tan & Singh, 1995).

Importantly, applicant-employee fit can be an antecedent of employer attraction; that is, job seekers are likely to evaluate an employer more favorably when they perceive a high degree of fit (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008). Although several explanations may account for this relationship, one of the most straightforward ones is that individuals want to be liked and expect that similar others will like them more than dissimilar others (Byrne, 1971; Condon & Crano, 1988). According to Berscheid and Reis (1998), interpersonal similarity may facilitate social interaction and may reduce disagreement and conflict. Hence, individuals should feel more comfortable when potential co-workers are perceived as similar (Cable & Turban, 2001). Another explanation is based on signaling theory, arguing that employees can act as signals for unknown organizational characteristics (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). That is, when job seekers perceive that an organization employs people who are similar to them, they would infer that the organization values their attributes. This, in turn, may increase their beliefs that they may receive a job offer and may increase the attractiveness of the employer.

The moderating role of temporal construal

Although applicant-employee fit may be strongly related to employer attraction, the current literature has not addressed how individuals may evaluate fit when they hold different time perspectives. As the following sections will outline, however, time may change the role of applicant-employee fit in the formation of employer attraction.

Scholars have frequently emphasized that job search should be conceptualized as a longitudinal process that consists of several consecutive stages (Barber, 1998). Considering the longitudinal nature of job search processes is important since job

seekers' evaluations of employer attributes may change over time. More specifically, job seekers may modify their evaluations because they are likely to gain additional, job-relevant information as they move through the recruitment process (Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Rynes, 1991; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009). For instance, Harold and Ployhart (2008) suggested that applicants may receive additional cues on their own marketability, which, in turn, affects how much weight they assign to different employer attributes. Strictly speaking, this argument would imply that employer attraction would remain constant over time if that individual had the same information throughout the entire process. However, one may also argue that prospective applicants adjust their judgments because they evaluate the same pieces of information differently at different points in time (Lievens, 2007; Osborn, 1990).

To understand how different temporal perspectives may affect the weighting of applicant-employee fit, it is useful to draw on construal level theory (CLT). According to CLT, temporal distance changes responses to future events by changing the way people mentally construe those events (Trope & Liberman, 2003). On the one hand, individuals construe temporally near events in terms of low-level and concrete features. Consequently, the evaluation of those events is likely to be based on low-level, contextual aspects. On the other hand, individuals construe temporally distant situations in terms of high-level and abstract features. Correspondingly, the evaluation of temporally distant situations is likely to be based on high-level aspects. For example, Kivetz and Tyler (2007) asked students to rank the attributes of an academic course according to their importance and also manipulated the temporal frame. Students who were told that the course would start in the distant future (i.e., in the next academic year) assigned greater weight to abstract, high-level benefits (e.g., respectful treatment of participants), whereas students who were told that the course would start in the near future (i.e., in a few days) focused on concrete, low-level benefits (e.g., good grades).

These findings may also be of relevance in the current context. Individuals that consider working for an employer think of a future situation that cannot be experienced directly until they join the organization. Put differently, they need to mentally construe that event. From this perspective, an applicant's temporal distance

(i.e., the length of time until joining an organization) may determine how that event is mentally construed.

Importantly, applicant-employee fit can be regarded as an abstract, high-level feature. First, applicant-employee fit refers to the normative idea that people want to join (avoid) social groups because they do (do not) experience a sense of fit. As outlined above, this idea may be associated with idealistic concepts such as interpersonal liking and appreciation. Second, applicant-employee fit has been typically defined as a fit in values, personality, or attitudes, that is, in terms of highly intangible, symbolic characteristics (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; van Vianen, 2000). According to construal level research, idealistic and normative ideas as well as intangible and symbolic personal characteristics such as traits, attitudes, and values are more likely to be construed in high-level terms because of their abstract and decontextualized nature (Eyal, Sagristano, Trope, Liberman, & Chaiken, 2009; Kivetz & Tyler, 2007). Consistent with this reasoning, Lievens (2007) argued that abstract and symbolic attributes exert a stronger influence during the recruitment process when job seekers perceive higher levels of temporal distance (i.e., when job seekers are in an early stage of their job search process).

In sum, these findings indicate that temporal construal may change the role of applicant-employee fit. For instance, imagine a student who is thinking about where to apply when he/she finishes his/her degree in three years' time (a distant time perspective). In that case, it seems likely that he/she would construe joining an organization in terms of high-level, abstract features and would assign great weight to a fit with the organization's employees (Eyal et al., 2009; Kivetz & Tyler, 2007). On the other hand, fit may play a less prominent role when he/she has already finished his/her degree and is looking for an employer immediately (a near time perspective). In that case, evaluations should be less strongly affected by high-level features such as applicant-employee fit (Trope & Liberman, 2000). Put differently, applicant-employee fit should exert a stronger impact on employer attraction and pursuit intentions for distant future decisions relative to near future decisions. Thus,

Hypothesis 1: A fit between a prospective applicant and an organization's employees will have a stronger impact on employer attraction and intentions to pursue employment in a distant time condition than in a near time condition.

STUDY 1

Research design, participants, and procedure

In study 1, we examined how temporal distance affects the weight assigned to a fit between the values held by a potential applicant and those held by an organization's employees. For the purpose of study 1, we focused on the value "stimulation" (i.e., seeking variety and stimulation in one's life) from Schwartz's (1992) value theory. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two temporal distance conditions (near future, distant future).

A total of 97 marketing students (52% female, 48% male, average age of 26.2 years) at a Swiss university participated in the study. As past research indicates, university students are an important target group of recruitment practices (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Participants were recruited during a mandatory lecture, and participation in the study was voluntary.

In the first part of the study, participants completed an ostensibly unrelated set of personality measures administered by a different experimenter. Buried in this survey were three items that asked participants to rate how important the value stimulation was to them (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). In the second part of the study, participants were exposed to two employee testimonials of a fictitious employer. After reading through these testimonials, participants were exposed to the temporal distance manipulation and responded to the dependent variables. Upon completion, participants were informed about the purpose of the study.

Operationalization of independent variables

Assessment of applicant-employee fit. Firstly, participants rated the extent to which stimulation was a guiding principle in their life on three items (e.g., "an exciting life (stimulating experiences)", $\alpha = .71$) adapted from Schwartz (1992). In line with previous research (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003), these items used a 9-point scale from -1 (*opposed to my principles*) to 0 (*not important*) to 7 (*of supreme importance*).

Secondly, to evoke employee beliefs, participants were presented with two testimonials from employees of a fictitious media company called "Ronnier". As Walker et al. (2009) note, employee testimonials are frequently featured on recruitment web sites to provide applicants with firsthand, credible information from potential co-workers. Thus, we considered testimonials as a realistic and effective way of generating employee beliefs.

In the testimonials, two employees (one male, one female) issued statements about themselves and their jobs at Ronnier. Specifically, both employees described themselves as individuals intent on reaching high levels of stimulation within and outside of their work (e.g., "I enjoy working at the business development department because I like new challenges and variety", see Appendix A). The behaviors featured in the testimonials were behaviors that were expressive of the value stimulation (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). The testimonials did not include any further information about the organization or the jobs that may be available. Both testimonials were accompanied by a picture of the employee pre-tested to represent stimulation values. Sixteen students evaluated the pictures and found the people depicted to be high in stimulation (male picture: $M = 5.38$, $t(15)_{\text{diff_from_4}} = 5.70$, $p < .001$; female picture: $M = 6.19$, $t(15)_{\text{diff_from_4}} = 14.39$, $p < .001$; both ratings on a 7-point scale (1 = *agree not all*, 7 = *agree very much*)). On the basis of these testimonials, participants were able to assess the extent to which they fitted with the employees of Ronnier. That is, participants with a strong (weak) inclination towards stimulation should have experienced a greater (lower) degree of fit.

Manipulation of temporal distance. Consistent with previous research (Trope & Liberman, 2000), participants in the near future conditions were asked to imagine that

they were looking for a job immediately, whereas participants in the distant future conditions were asked to imagine that they were looking for a job in 1-2 years.

Measures

Dependent variables. Employer attraction was measured with three items (e.g., "For me this company would be a great place to work", $\alpha = .92$) and intentions to pursue employment were assessed with three items (e.g., "I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer", $\alpha = .78$). These items were adapted from the multidimensional organizational attractiveness scale developed by Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003). All dependent variables in the study used 7-point scales from 1 (*agree not all*) to 7 (*agree very much*).

Assessment of applicant-employee fit. To ascertain that our operationalization of applicant-employee fit was effective, participants rated on four items to what extent they thought the employees of Ronnier seek stimulation (e.g., "The employees at Ronnier are looking for an exciting life and stimulating experiences", $\alpha = .93$). Furthermore, participants also rated their fit with the employees of Ronnier on three items (e.g., "I fit well with the employees of Ronnier", $\alpha = .89$). These items were adapted from previous research on person-to-person fit (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Again, all measures used 7-point scales from 1 (*agree not all*) to 7 (*agree very much*).

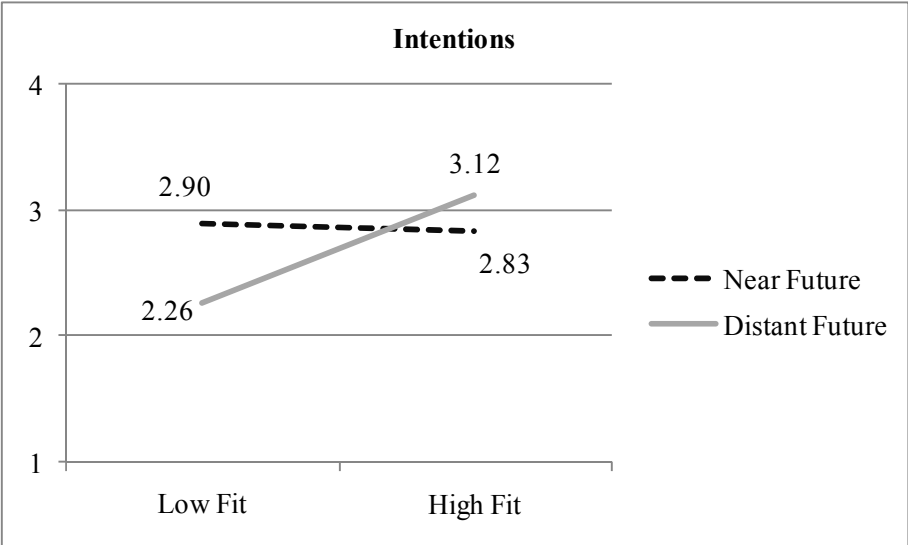
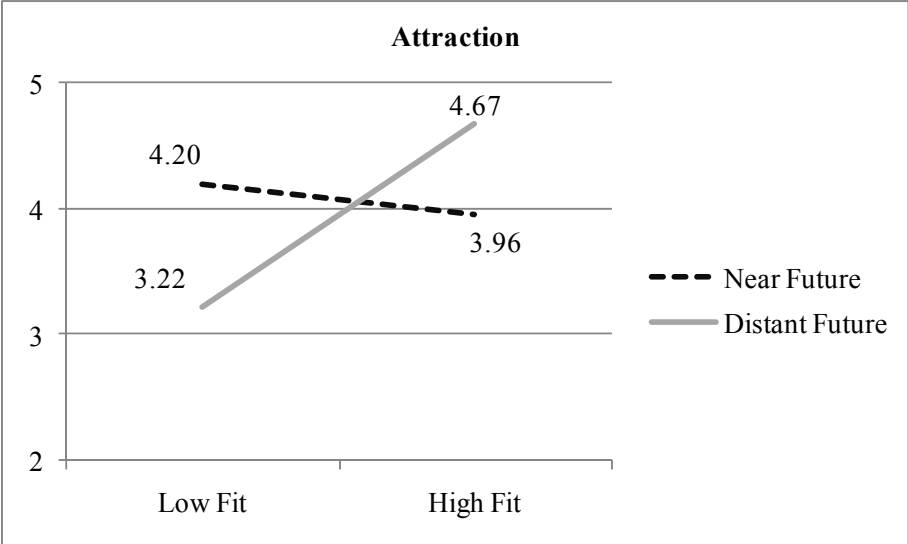
Results

Assessment of applicant-employee fit. As expected, all participants considered the employees of Ronnier to be high in stimulation ($M = 5.60$ on a 7-point scale (1 = *agree not all*, 7 = *agree very much*), $t(96)_{\text{diff_from_4}} = 14.73, p < .001$). Importantly, this judgment did not differ between the two temporal distance conditions ($F(1, 95) < 1$). Furthermore, there was a positive relationship between participants' self-rated stimulation orientation and their perceptions of fit ($\beta = .27, p = .01$). The temporal distance manipulation did not exert a significant effect on the fit measure ($F(1, 95) < 1$). As such, these results indicate that our operationalization of applicant-employee fit was effective.

Hypothesis testing. To examine hypotheses 1, we conducted two OLS-regression analyses, one for employer attraction and one for intentions to pursue employment. In these regressions, we mean-centered the stimulation scores and included them as a continuous predictor variable in the model. Moreover, we specified a dummy variable for temporal distance, and a term for the interaction between stimulation and the dummy variable. Regressing attraction and intentions on these variables yielded results that were consistent with H1. That is, the analyses revealed an insignificant main effect for stimulation (attraction: $\beta = -.10$, $p = .46$; intentions: $\beta = -.03$, $p = .81$), an insignificant main effect for temporal distance ($\beta = -.05$, $p = .57$; intentions: $\beta = -.07$, $p = .42$) as well as a significant interaction effect between these variables ($\beta = .47$, $p < .001$; intentions: $\beta = .28$, $p = .03$).

To follow up on this effect, we conducted simple slope analyses. Following the procedure outlined by Aiken and West (1991), we plotted the regression lines at lower (i.e., $-1 SD$) and higher levels (i.e., $+1 SD$) of stimulation for low and high levels of temporal distance. Figure 1 shows how applicant-employee fit and temporal distance interact to affect employer attraction and intentions. More specifically, the slope of fit was not significant when temporal distance was low (Attraction: $\beta = -.10$, $p = .46$; intentions: $\beta = -.03$, $p = .81$); that is, participants with high and low levels of stimulation found the employer equally attractive ($M_{\text{high}} = 3.96$, $M_{\text{low}} = 4.20$) and reported similar intentions ($M_{\text{high}} = 2.83$, $M_{\text{low}} = 2.90$). In contrast, the slope of fit was significant and positive when temporal distance was high (Attraction: $\beta = .58$, $p < .001$; intentions: $\beta = .38$, $p = .01$); that is, high-stimulation participants considered the employer more attractive ($M_{\text{high}} = 4.67$, $M_{\text{low}} = 3.22$) and exhibited greater intentions ($M_{\text{high}} = 3.12$, $M_{\text{low}} = 2.26$) than low-stimulation participants. These results suggest that applicant-employee fit is more influential when temporal distance is high rather than low. Hence, H1 is supported.

Figure 1
Interaction effects in study 1



Discussion

Study 1 provides support for the notion that temporal construal affects how much weight potential applicants assign to a fit with the organization's employees. That is, the results suggest that applicant-employee fit is an abstract, high-level attribute that exerts a greater influence on an individual's employer attraction and intentions when that individual holds a distant time perspective relative to a near time perspective.

Nevertheless, one limitation of study 1 is that participants were only given information about the organization's employees. In real life, however, individuals may not only base their application decisions on abstract principles (e.g., fit), but also on pragmatic and instrumental attributes such as pay level and advancement opportunities (Cable & Turban, 2001; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). From this perspective, it would be interesting to examine how temporal distance affects individuals' evaluations when abstract *and* concrete job attributes are presented simultaneously. As pay is regarded as one of the most important instrumental benefits (Highhouse, Brooks-Laber, Lin, & Spitzmueller, 2003; Rynes & Barber, 1990), we focused on pay in our analysis. According to CLT, instrumental attributes such as pay represent low-level construals that are most likely to gain relevance in temporally near situations (Eyal et al., 2009; Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007). Thus, beliefs about instrumental job attributes should be more relevant when potential applicants hold a near time perspective relative to a distant time perspective. As such, the importance assigned to both fit and pay may depend on an individual's temporal perspective.

For instance, imagine an employer that is characterized by a high applicant-employee fit *but* relatively poor pay. Since the employer features a favorable abstract attribute (i.e., fit) and an unfavorable concrete attribute (i.e., pay), individuals should show more positive evaluations at high relative to low levels of temporal distance. However, temporal distance should not affect employer attraction and intentions when the employer exhibits a high fit *and* a good pay. In this case, the employer should be evaluated equally favorably for near-future decisions (i.e., because it features a favorable concrete attribute) as well as for distant-future decisions (i.e., because it features a favorable abstract attribute). Thus,

Hypothesis 2: At high levels of applicant-employee fit, an employer offering an average pay level will be considered more attractive at high relative to low levels of temporal distance, whereas an employer offering an above-average pay level will not be considered more attractive at high relative to low levels of temporal distance.

Similar but directionally different effects may be observed for employers characterized by a low applicant-employee fit. As such, an employer offering a low fit *but* a high pay should be evaluated more favorably for near-future rather than distant-future decisions. Conversely, an employer exhibiting a low fit *and* a relatively poor pay should be considered equally unfavorably at different levels of temporal distance. Hence,

Hypothesis 3: At low levels of applicant-employee fit, an employer offering an above-average pay level will be considered more attractive at low relative to high levels of temporal distance, whereas an employer offering an average pay level will not be considered more attractive at low relative to high levels of temporal distance.

STUDY 2

The purpose of study 2 was to test hypotheses 2 and 3. To increase the generalizability of the results, study 2 incorporated two important changes. Firstly, whereas study 1 relied on a student sample, study 2 used a sample of unemployed job seekers. A sample of this kind constitutes a significant extension on previous research that has relied on university students (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004), high school students (Lievens, van Hove, & Schreurs, 2005), or currently employed individuals (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Specifically, unemployed individuals are actual (not potential) job seekers, making them a particularly interesting group to study. Secondly, whereas fit was assessed in study 1 based on participants' self-reported values, fit was operationalized in study 2 based on participants' gender.

Research design, participants, and procedure

The study used a 2 (applicant-employee fit: low, high) \times 2 (pay level: average, above-average) \times 2 (temporal distance: distant future, near future) between-subjects design. A total of 226 unemployed job seekers participated in the study as part of a paper-and-pencil survey (50.4% female, 49.6% male, average age of 31.8 years, average work experience of 12.5 years, average time of unemployment of 5.1 months). Participants were recruited at an employment center in Southern Germany and were approached while waiting for their appointment with a career counselor. All participants were asked to evaluate an employer described in a hypothetical employment ad. Once participants had completed all the materials, they were informed about the purpose of the study.

Operationalization of independent variables

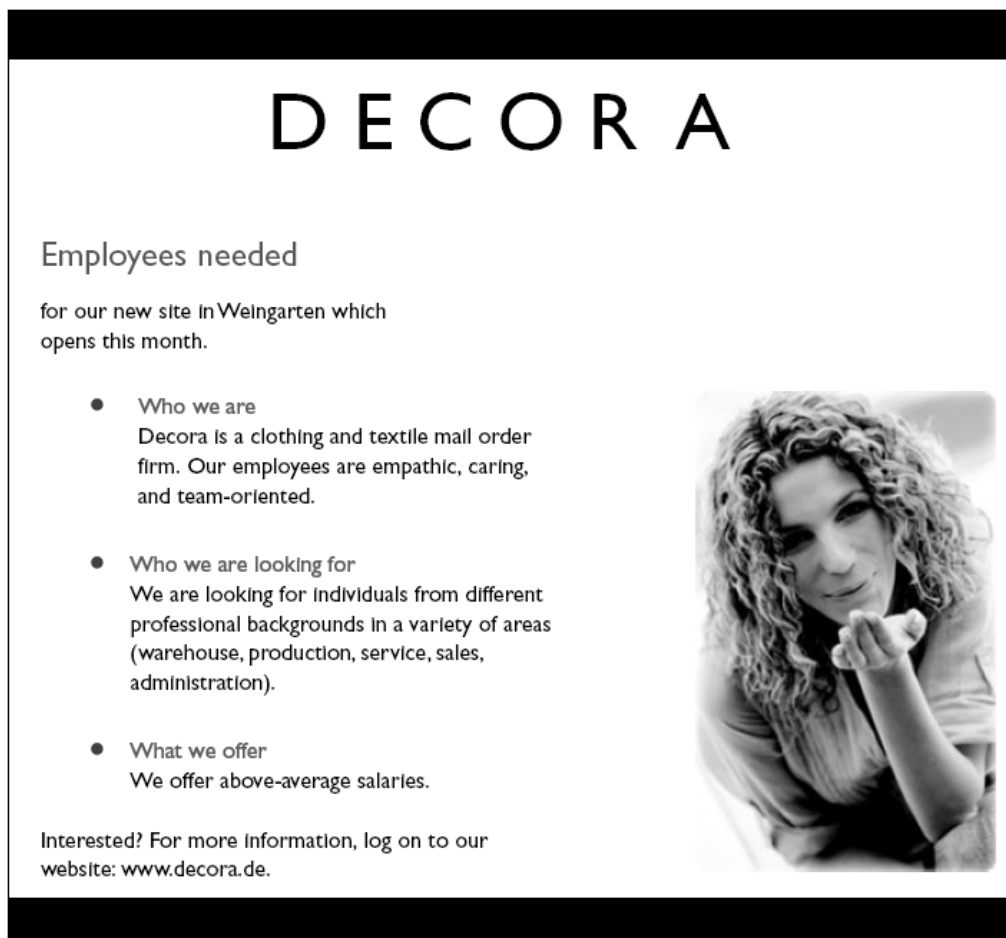
Assessment of applicant-employee fit. While study 1 relied on testimonials to evoke perceptions of applicant-employee fit, study 2 used an employment ad describing a fictitious employer (see figure 2). As Rafaeli and Oliver (1998) note, such ads often depict an organization's employees by referring to shared values or by featuring pictures of typical employees. Hence, we considered this to be a realistic and effective way of generating employee beliefs and subsequent perceptions of fit. The ad described a mail order firm called "Decora" whose employees were characterized by feminine values (e.g., caring, empathic). These values were derived from Bem's gender inventory (Bem, 1974). The ad also included a picture of a female employee pre-tested to represent feminine values.

Given that the employees represented feminine values, female participants should have experienced a greater degree of fit with the organization's employees than male participants. As such, research from occupational as well as non-occupational contexts suggests that differences in masculine and feminine values are highly correlated with demographic sex differences (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000; Stern, 1988). Furthermore, while individuals within each gender group may differ in terms of masculinity and femininity, such differences are typically observed when individuals think of their private self and not when they think of themselves as members of social

groups as is the case during job search (Martin & Gnoth, 2009). Therefore, we believed that gender may be used as an effective proxy for assessing applicant-employee fit. Moreover, this procedure may be effective due to the nature of our sample. That is, only 12% of our sample had a school degree that qualified them to study at university. As Best and Williams (1997) suggest, individuals with relatively low levels of education usually adhere more strongly to femininity and masculinity values regarded as typical for their gender.

Manipulation of pay level. To manipulate pay level, the ads either stated that applicants at Decora would receive an average salary or an above-average salary.

Figure 2
Stimulus used in study 2




The image shows a job advertisement for DECORA. The title 'DECORA' is at the top in large, spaced-out letters. Below it, the text reads 'Employees needed for our new site in Weingarten which opens this month.' There are three bullet points: 'Who we are' (Decora is a clothing and textile mail order firm...), 'Who we are looking for' (We are looking for individuals from different professional backgrounds...), and 'What we offer' (We offer above-average salaries.). At the bottom, it says 'Interested? For more information, log on to our website: www.decora.de.' On the right side, there is a black and white photograph of a woman with curly hair, looking thoughtful with her hand near her chin.

DECORA

Employees needed
for our new site in Weingarten which
opens this month.

- **Who we are**
Decora is a clothing and textile mail order firm. Our employees are empathic, caring, and team-oriented.
- **Who we are looking for**
We are looking for individuals from different professional backgrounds in a variety of areas (warehouse, production, service, sales, administration).
- **What we offer**
We offer above-average salaries.

Interested? For more information, log on to our
website: www.decora.de.



Manipulation of temporal distance. Temporal distance was manipulated in a similar vein as in study 1. The near future ad stated that Decora was looking for applicants because a new site was opening near the employment center's location "this month", whereas the distant future ad stated that Decora was looking for applicants because a new site would open "next year".

Measures

Dependent variables. Employer attraction ($\alpha = .93$) and intentions to pursue employment ($\alpha = .88$) were measured with the same 7-point items (1 = *agree not all*, 7 = *agree very much*) as in study 1.

Assessment of applicant-employee fit. To ascertain that our operationalization of applicant-employee fit was effective, we included two different checks. Firstly, participants indicated how well they fitted with the employees of Decora on the same 7-point items as in study 1 (1 = *agree not all*, 7 = *agree very much*; $\alpha = .86$). Secondly, we also assessed participant's gender identity before they were exposed to the ads. Specifically, participants rated themselves on the same four 7-point items (1 = *agree not all*, 7 = *agree very much*) that were used to describe the employees in the ad (i.e., feminine, empathic, caring, and team-oriented). These items were adapted from Bem's (1974) gender identity scale.

Control variables. To ensure that our results would not be affected by the individual characteristics of the job seekers in our sample, we included a number of control variables. In particular, researchers have suggested that unemployment duration, financial hardship, job search intensity, and perceptions of employability may affect application decisions (Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Rynes, 1991). Arguably, these variables may also affect how individuals respond to job offers differing in terms of fit and pay level. For instance, individuals that have been unemployed for a considerable time, have low employability perceptions, or are experiencing financial hardship may be more likely to accept a job that offers a low fit and/or a low pay - regardless of their current temporal perspective. Duration of unemployment was measured by asking respondents how long they were unemployed. Job search intensity was measured with two items ($\alpha = .60$) and financial hardship was assessed with one item, both from

Wanberg, Hough, and Song (2002). Finally, employability was measured with two items ($\alpha = .70$) adapted from de Witte (2000). All items used 7-point scales from 1 (*agree not all*) to 7 (*agree very much*).

Results

Assessment of applicant-employee fit. As expected, female participants experienced a greater degree of fit with the firm's employees than male participants ($M_{\text{female}} = 4.43$, $M_{\text{male}} = 3.10$, $F(1, 211) = 55.32$, $p < .001$). In addition, female participants described themselves as more feminine ($M_{\text{female}} = 5.13$, $M_{\text{male}} = 2.38$, $F(1, 220) = 218.64$, $p < .001$), empathic ($M_{\text{female}} = 5.66$, $M_{\text{male}} = 3.87$, $F(1, 223) = 91.57$, $p < .001$), caring ($M_{\text{female}} = 5.77$, $M_{\text{male}} = 4.78$, $F(1, 222) = 29.23$, $p < .001$), and team-oriented ($M_{\text{female}} = 5.76$, $M_{\text{male}} = 4.86$, $F(1, 223) = 21.23$, $p < .001$) than male participants. Moreover, the temporal distance manipulation, the pay level manipulation, and all of the possible interactions between the independent variables did not exert a significant impact on these measures (all p 's $> .13$). Hence, these results suggest that operationalizing applicant-employee fit based on participant's gender was effective.

Control variables. A number of univariate ANOVAs revealed that there were no differences across the conditions in terms of duration of unemployment ($p > .10$), financial hardship ($p > .29$), employability ($p > .37$), and job search intensity ($p > .30$). Furthermore, none of these variables emerged as a significant covariate in the main analyses.

Hypothesis testing. A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ MANOVA revealed significant main effects for applicant-employee fit (Wilk's $\lambda = .82$, $p < .001$; attraction: $F(1, 218) = 48.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$; intentions: $F(1, 218) = 36.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$) and pay level (Wilk's $\lambda = .96$, $p = .01$; attraction: $F(1, 218) = 4.12$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .02$; intentions: $F(1, 218) = 8.73$, $p = .00$, $\eta^2 = .04$). Moreover, these effects were qualified by a fit \times temporal distance interaction (Wilk's $\lambda = .97$, $p = .06$; attraction: $F(1, 218) = 5.19$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$; intentions: $F(1, 218) = 5.42$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$) as well as by a pay level \times temporal distance interaction (Wilk's $\lambda = .97$, $p = .03$; attraction: $F(1, 218) = 7.11$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$; intentions: $F(1, 218) = 5.29$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$). The three-way interaction between the independent variables was not significant (Wilk's $\lambda = .99$, $p = .34$;

attraction: $F(1, 218) = 0.01, p = .92, \eta^2 = .00$; intentions: $F(1, 218) = 0.61, p = .44, \eta^2 = .00$). To follow up on these effects, we conducted separate analyses for the high and low fit conditions. Means for the dependent variables appear in table 1.

Table 1
Mean values and standard deviations for the dependent variables in study 2

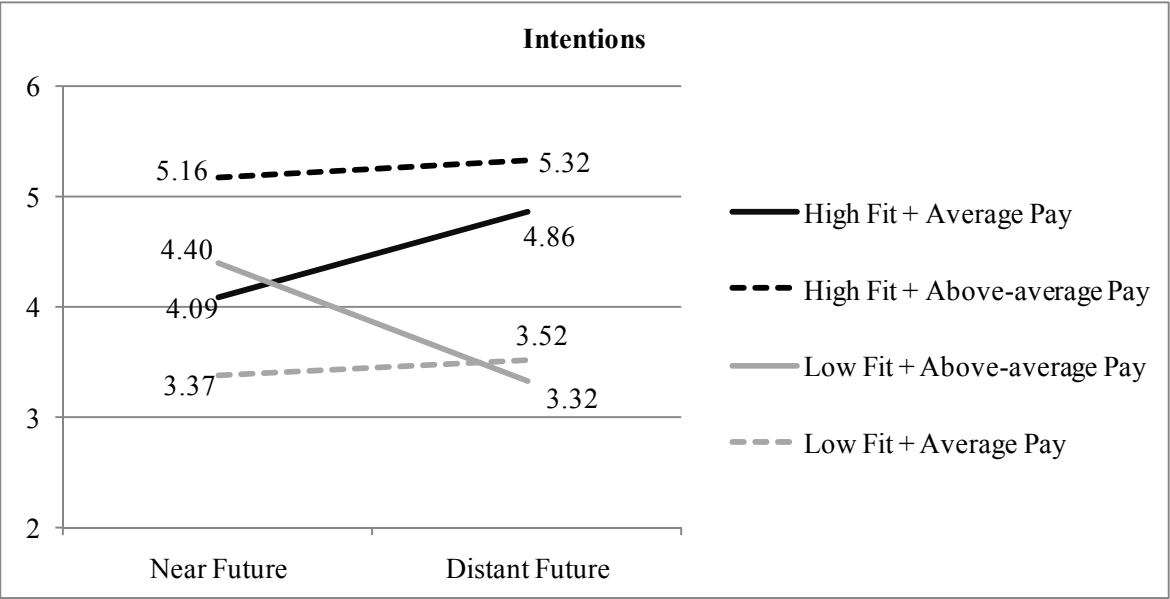
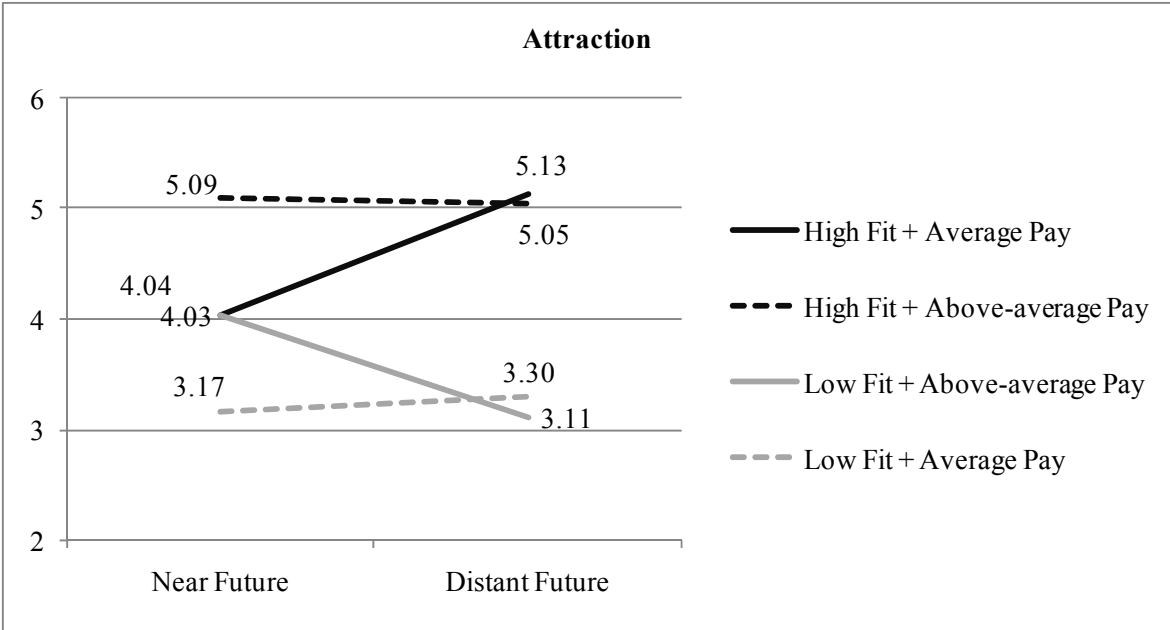
	Attraction*				Intentions*			
	Near		Distant		Near		Distant	
	Future	Future	Future	Future	Future	Future	Future	Future
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
High Fit + Average Pay	4.03 ^a	1.65	5.13 ^b	1.31	4.09 ^a	1.56	4.86 ^b	1.33
High Fit + Above-average Pay	5.09 ^a	1.50	5.05 ^a	1.37	5.16 ^a	1.45	5.32 ^a	1.30
Low Fit + Above-average Pay	4.04 ^a	1.53	3.11 ^b	1.57	4.40 ^a	1.39	3.32 ^b	1.51
Low Fit + Average Pay	3.17 ^a	1.49	3.30 ^a	1.76	3.37 ^a	1.63	3.52 ^a	1.78

$N = 226$

Note: Mean values across the rows with different superscripts a and b are significantly different at $p < .05$. Mean values with the same letters are not significantly different at $p < .05$.

*All dependent measures are on seven-point scales such that higher numbers represent higher mean ratings.

Figure 3
Interaction effects in study 2



As figure 3 indicates, female participants (i.e., high fit) considered an employer offering an average salary to be more attractive and showed greater intentions to pursue employment at high relative to low levels of temporal distance. In contrast, temporal distance did not affect attraction or intentions when the employer offered an above-average salary. Hence, these results support H2. Similar, but directionally different results were revealed for male participants (i.e., low fit). That is, male participants found an employer offering an above-average pay level more attractive and exhibited greater intentions to pursue employment when temporal distance was low compared to when it was high. Conversely, attraction and intentions did not differ as a function of temporal distance when the employer offered an average salary. As such, these results provide support for H3.

Discussion

The results of study 2 extend the findings of study 1 by showing that temporal distance does not only affect how much weight job seekers assign to applicant-employee fit, but also how they process attributes such as pay level. As such, applicant-employee fit is likely to be construed at a relatively high level (i.e., a schematic and decontextualized representation), whereas pay level is likely to be construed at a relatively low level (i.e., a more concrete and contextualized representation). In line with this prediction, study 2 showed that a high fit/average pay employer was evaluated more favorably at high levels of temporal distance, whereas a high fit/above-average employer was evaluated equally favorably across different levels of temporal distance. In contrast, a low fit/above-average pay employer elicited more favorable reactions at low levels of temporal distance, while a low fit/average pay employer was considered equally unfavorably across different levels of temporal distance.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The objective of this research was to examine how much weight potential applicants assign to a fit between themselves and an organization's employees when deciding whether they want to work for that organization. Lending support to our basic premise that applicant-employee fit is an abstract, normative principle, study 1 showed that fit

exerted a stronger impact on attraction and intentions when participants were asked to consider where they would like to work in their distant relative to their near future. Study 2 extended these findings by incorporating an additional attribute that was more concrete in nature (i.e., pay level). As expected, both applicant-employee fit and pay level interacted with temporal distance, such that fit was more influential for distant-future decisions, while pay was more relevant for near-future decisions.

Theoretical and practical implications

This research makes several contributions to the literature. Firstly, the studies contribute to research on fit effects during job search. Using an experimental paradigm and diverse samples, our studies demonstrate that applicant-employee fit can play a crucial role in forming employer attraction and intentions. More importantly, our results also show that the impact of applicant-employee fit is contingent on the temporal perspective of the job seeker. In this respect, scholars have frequently noted that timing may affect an individual's employer attraction (Rynes, 1991; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009), but have usually failed to specify how an individual's cognitions may change throughout time. Addressing this issue, our studies demonstrate that different time perspectives affect how much weight job seekers assign to abstract, high-level features (e.g., applicant-employee fit) and to concrete, low-level features (e.g., pay level) when evaluating a potential employer. In sum, our studies extend the literature by showing that the relationship between applicant-employee fit and employer attraction may be more complex than previously envisioned.

Secondly, our studies may also add to the literature on more general fit effects. That is, researchers have found that fit is typically able to predict attraction and application intentions but not actual job choices (Carless, 2005; Chapman et al., 2005; Judge & Cable, 1997). Our results may help to account for this puzzling finding. As such, one may argue that application choices represent distant future decisions, whereas job choices represent near future decisions. Consistent with this reasoning, our results not only show that fit effects are most likely to be observed for distant future decisions, but also suggest that these effects may be superseded by more instrumental concerns (e.g., pay level) when applicants have to make a decision for their immediate future.

Thirdly, our studies may also contribute to research on the intertemporal importance of different job attributes, suggesting that the relative importance of abstract (e.g., fit) and concrete (e.g., pay) attributes may change throughout the recruitment process. At first sight, these findings seem to contradict the findings of Harold and Ployhart (2008). These authors found that applicants assigned a greater weight to both fit and pay as they came closer to organizational entry. However, there is an important difference between the two studies. In Harold and Ployhart's study, applicants received additional pieces of information (e.g., GPA scores, number of offers) as they proceeded through the recruitment process. In our study, we held the amount of information constant and examined how applicants evaluate fit information at different levels of temporal distance. Hence, it seems possible that participants in Harold and Ployhart's study may have assigned a considerable weight to fit information in the beginning of the recruitment process had the amount of information been constant throughout the entire process. Moreover, it is important to note that Harold and Ployhart (2008) focused on job seekers who held a rather near temporal perspective (i.e., the first data collection took place after job seekers had already submitted an application). In contrast, our studies focused on job seekers that were in a pre-application status and may have thus held a more distant temporal perspective.

The issues addressed in this research also have several practical implications. As such, this research may help practitioners in deciding when applicant-employee fit should be promoted to enhance attractiveness as an employer. When targeting prospective applicants who normally hold a distant time perspective (e.g., freshman students, professionals with a long period of notice), an identity-based recruitment strategy that focuses on establishing applicant-employee fit should be most effective. When targeting individuals who normally hold a near time perspective (e.g., recent graduates), such messages may prove less successful. Instead, managers may be well-advised to focus on concrete, instrumental benefits such as pay level. Hence, temporal distance may be used as a criterion to segment different types of prospective applicants and to tailor recruitment messages to their specific needs.

Another important implication of this research is that employers may systematically prime a near or distant future perspective in their recruitment messages. In study 2, we told participants that the jobs depicted in the ads were either available immediately or

next year. This procedure induced different levels of temporal construal, which, in turn led to different weightings of fit and pay. As such, companies need to ensure that their recruitment appeals are congruent with the temporal distance that is primed by the message. For example, an image campaign may focus on enhancing perceptions of fit (e.g., "Become a member of a team of dynamic and innovative professionals") and should therefore use distant future cues to increase the impact of the campaign (e.g., "Think about your future life. Who do you want to be in ten years?").

Limitations and future research

Although this research presents a set of findings that contribute to the literature on applicant-employee fit, it also has some limitations. For instance, in the interest of internal validity, we relied on fictitious employers in both studies. If we had used real employers, participants' evaluations may have been affected by their prior knowledge, making it more difficult to isolate the effects of temporal construal. Although recruitment researchers have frequently relied on fictitious employers (e.g., Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, & Slaughter, 1999; Walker et al., 2009; Williamson, Lepak, & King, 2003), this may constitute a limitation of our findings as participants may have found this task somewhat artificial. Moreover, we used a rather general employment ad in study 2 that promotes several job vacancies. Although such ads exist in practice, job seekers may have been more familiar with a job ad that features only one position and contains more specific information.

In a similar vein, the fact that temporal distance was explicitly manipulated may have restricted the external validity of our findings. Although study 2 used an unobtrusive manipulation of temporal distance (i.e., by stating at which point in the future the jobs would become available), relying on more natural manipulations may capture the process of employer attraction more accurately. For instance, one may argue that individuals at different stages of the recruitment process may naturally hold a near or distant time perspective. Note, however, that if we had used participants at different stages of the recruitment process it would have been difficult to distinguish between the effects of temporal construal and the effects of other factors such as additional information received throughout the recruitment process. Thus, future research may

want to employ settings that resemble real-life experiences more closely, while also controlling for the influence of extraneous factors.

In addition, although the two studies relied on different populations (i.e., university students and unemployed job seekers), our experimental design did not allow us to compare the effects of temporal distance manipulations *across* different applicant types. Such an analysis, however, may be of great theoretical interest. As Liberman et al. (2007) note, temporal distance is a form of psychological distance and may be affected by the decision context. More specifically, temporal distance may not only be determined by an event's objective distance but also by an event's emotional intensity. That is, people perceive an event as less distant when they feel more rather than less intense emotions about the event (van Boven, Kane, Peter, & Dale, 2010). Building on these findings, one may argue that a certain time frame (e.g., one year) may be construed differently by different applicant types.

For instance, imagine that an unemployed individual receives an offer for a job that starts in a year's time. Assuming that the individual's emotional attention is focused on immediate work-related concerns (e.g., looking for earlier job opportunities, claiming unemployment benefits), he may feel less intense emotions about the job offer. That is, although the individual may find the job opportunity interesting, he may feel that a job starting in a year's time is psychologically distant (van Boven et al., 2010). On the other hand, an individual that is currently employed may have less pressing, immediate concerns regarding her work-related future on her mind. In this case, that same job opportunity may elicit more intense emotions, even when it is still a year away. As a result, the job may feel psychologically closer. Hence, investigating how the decision contexts experienced by different applicant types affect the construal of different temporal frames would constitute an interesting possibility for future research.

Furthermore, while the current research has focused on temporal distance, future research may also examine if other forms of psychological distance exert a similar effect on the construal of applicant-employee fit. For instance, research has shown that events taking place in remote locations are construed at a higher level of abstraction than events taking place in near locations (Henderson, Fujita, Trope, & Liberman, 2006). These findings may imply the intriguing possibility that individuals would

assign a much greater weight to applicant-employee fit when a job opportunity is spatially distant (e.g., a job in another country) than when it is spatially near (e.g., a job in one's home town).

Finally, future research may examine if the effects found in this research are contingent on the source through which fit information is provided. In our studies, fit information was transmitted through company-dependent sources, namely web-based testimonials and recruitment advertising. As van Hoye and Lievens (2007) point out, however, company-independent sources, such as word-of-mouth, might "be perceived as providing more credible information because they do not have the explicit purpose to promote the organization" (p. 373). These findings may also be relevant in the current context. That is, when individuals need to make decisions about their distant future, they may discount fit information if they are not entirely sure of the source's credibility. Instead, they may focus more strongly on concrete, tangible attributes that can be verified more easily, thereby exhibiting decision patterns that are more characteristic of near-future decisions. As these arguments demonstrate, further research is needed to fully understand the role of applicant-employee fit in the formation of employer attraction.

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Appendix A

Stimulus material from study 1

Fictitious self-descriptions of employees

Marcel Niedermann, 31 years. I have been working for the Ronnier Media Group as a licensing manager for a few years now. I am responsible for collaborations with other media firms and the purchase of movie licenses. Working at Ronnier gives me the opportunity to turn my passion for movies into a career. I am constantly looking for new and exciting movies. My personal favorites are thrillers. I also enjoy meeting interesting and extraordinary people such as authors and movie makers. There are some quite crazy guys among them. At the weekend, you can meet me at parties or in a club. I also do Kendo, which is a Japanese martial art. It is important for me that there is always something going on and that I am not getting bored. I like changes and challenges.

Martina Bieger, 27 years. I have been working as a project manager in the business development department of the Ronnier Media Group for a year. I am in charge of different projects which can change quite often. At the moment I am doing a project that deals with mobile advertising. I enjoy working at the business development department because I like new challenges and variety. There is nothing more boring than always working on the same things. Personally, I really like travelling, going to parties, and listening to electronic music. I spent my last summer holidays backpacking through Tasmania, where I also started free climbing. Free climbing is now one of my many hobbies. What I don't like? Boring people, who are afraid of taking a risk once in a while.

Beitrag III

von Walter, B.: Employer Branding zwischen Erfolg und Verantwortung. *Unveröffentlichtes Arbeitspapier.*

Employer Branding zwischen Erfolg und Verantwortung*

Benjamin von Walter

Im vorliegenden Beitrag wird die Frage erörtert, wie Employer Branding sowohl aus Sicht des Personalmarketings effektiv als auch aus Sicht von Jobsuchern sozial verantwortlich gestaltet werden kann. Basierend auf der Rekrutierungs- und Corporate Social Responsibility-Literatur werden Kriterien zur Bewertung von Employer Branding aus beiden Perspektiven dargestellt. Darauf aufbauend werden drei konkrete Ansätze ("Realistic Job Preview", persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation, Partizipation auf Zeit) diskutiert, die Managern helfen können, ihr Employer Branding an den genannten Kriterien auszurichten. Kernthese ist, dass vor allem unter Einnahme einer langfristigen Perspektive, die stark an der Bindung neuer Mitarbeiter orientiert ist, ein ökonomisch effektives und gleichzeitig verantwortungsbewusstes Employer Branding möglich ist.

*Das Arbeitspapier stellt eine Vorläufer-Version dar und wurde in abgewandelter Form in folgenden Sammelbänden unter der Mitarbeit von Torsten Tomczak und Daniel Wentzel wie folgt veröffentlicht:

von Walter, B., Tomczak, T., & Wentzel, D. (2011): Wege zu einem effektiven und verantwortungsvollen Employer Branding. In Raupp, J., Jarolimek, S., & Schultz, F. (Hrsg.), *Handbuch CSR - Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Grundlagen, disziplinäre Zugänge und methodische Herausforderung* (S. 327-343). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Tomczak, T., & von Walter, B. (2010): Kampf um die besten Köpfe: Employer Branding zwischen Erfolg und Verantwortung. In: Leibfried, P., & Schäfer, D. (Hrsg.): *25 Jahre Unternehmertum - Festschrift für Giorgio Behr* (S. 135-150). Zürich: Versus.

Die Anwerbung und Bindung geeigneter Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter stellt eine zentrale Aufgabe unternehmerischer Tätigkeit dar, deren Bewältigung vielen Unternehmen zunehmend schwer fällt. Umfragen zufolge haben aktuell mehr als 40 Prozent der deutschen und Schweizer Unternehmen Schwierigkeiten bei der Besetzung offener Stellen (vgl. Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag 2010: 2; Manpower AG 2011: 2). Zukünftig dürften den Firmen aufgrund der demographischen Entwicklung noch tiefergehende Probleme ins Haus stehen. Die Zahl von Erwerbspersonen und damit das Arbeitskräftepotenzial soll in der Schweiz wie auch in Deutschland innerhalb der nächsten zwanzig Jahre stark sinken (vgl. Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2011: 7; Bundesamt für Statistik BFS 2006: 6).

Vor diesem Hintergrund ist es wenig verwunderlich, dass immer mehr Unternehmen sich als Arbeitgeber gezielt vermarkten und Employer Branding betreiben. Hierunter wird der Versuch verstanden, eine attraktive Arbeitgebermarke aufzubauen (vgl. Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). In der Praxis richtet sich Employer Branding in erster Linie an junge Jobsucher (Auszubildende, Studenten und Absolventen, Young Professionals), die als potenzielle Mitarbeiter in Frage kommen. So buhlt z.B. der Industriekonzern ABB mit dem Slogan "Eine bessere Welt beginnt mit Ihnen" um junge Talente. Die Unternehmensberatung Deloitte veranstaltet unter dem Motto "Ab in den Süden" Recruitingevents auf Mallorca und der Arbeitgeber IKEA verspricht in seinen Flyern, dass mit einem Job bei IKEA "aus einem Arbeitsplatz ein Erlebnispark" und "aus einer Aufgabe eine Chance" werden kann. Die Beispiele zeigen, dass Arbeitgeber zunehmend wie Produkte vermarktet werden, indem durch Kommunikation Marken aufgebaut werden, die nicht nur Karrierechancen, Gehalt oder Work-Life-Balance versprechen, sondern auch Sinnstiftung, Dynamik und Erlebnis.

Nur wenig reflektiert wird hingegen die soziale Verantwortung, die Arbeitgebern beim Employer Branding zukommt. Diese Verantwortung resultiert nach Meinung des Autors aus der Tatsache, dass Arbeitgebermarken letztlich Bündel von Erwartungen darstellen (vgl. Cable & Turban 2001: 147), die angesichts der individuellen Tragweite der Entscheidung zugunsten eines bestimmten Arbeitgebers nicht leichtfertig geschürt werden dürfen. Dies erscheint insofern wichtig, als junge Jobsucher wie Auszubildende und Absolventen, die derzeit die Hauptzielgruppe des Employer

Branding darstellen, erst ins Berufsleben starten und über nur wenig Erfahrungswissen verfügen (vgl. Collins & Stevens, 2002: 1122). Der Arbeitgeber verfügt über einen Informationsvorsprung, den er aus normativ-ethischer Sicht nicht einseitig zu seinem Vorteil ausnutzen darf, indem er Vorstellungen befördert, die aus Sicht der Zielgruppe zwar attraktiv sind, mit dem realen Arbeitsalltag aber wenig zu tun haben. Im vorliegenden Beitrag soll daher die Frage erörtert werden, wie das Employer Branding sowohl aus Personalmarketing-Sicht effektiv als auch ethisch verantwortlich gestaltet werden kann.

Employer Branding zwischen Personalmarketing und Corporate Social Responsibility

Anforderungen aus Sicht des Personalmarketings

Die Hauptfunktionen des Personalmarketings sind es, neue Mitarbeiter zu rekrutieren und bestehende Mitarbeiter zu binden (vgl. Bröckermann & Pepels 2002). Überträgt man diese Funktionen auf das Employer Branding, kann zwischen kurzfristigen Rekrutierungs- und langfristigen Bindungsanforderungen unterschieden werden.

Die unmittelbare Anforderung an das Employer Branding ist die *Rekrutierung neuer Mitarbeiter*. Der Rekrutierungserfolg bemisst sich daran, ob es gelingt eine ausreichend große Zahl geeigneter Personen zu finden, die sich bewerben, während des Selektionsprozesses ihre Bewerbung nicht zurückziehen und letztlich ein Jobangebot annehmen (vgl. Breaugh 1992: 4; Saks 2005: 51). Diese Zielsetzungen sind kurzfristig orientiert, da sie spätestens dann als erreicht angesehen werden können, wenn neu angeworbene Personen als Mitarbeiter in die Organisation eintreten. Als zentrale Stellschraube für den Rekrutierungserfolg gilt neben der Bekanntheit eines Arbeitgebers die subjektiv empfundene Arbeitgeberattraktivität von Personen der anvisierten Zielgruppe (vgl. Barber 1998: 11; Cable & Turban 2001: 146). Arbeitgeberattraktivität basiert vor allem auf dem Arbeitgeberimage, d.h. den inhaltlichen Vorstellungen eines Individuums von einem bestimmten Arbeitgeber (vgl. z.B. Lievens & Highhouse 2003; Slaughter et al. 2004). Anforderung an das Employer Branding ist es, durch Kommunikation ein vorteilhaftes, d.h. positives und vom

Wettbewerb differenzierendes, Arbeitgeberimage in den Köpfen der Zielgruppe zu verankern (vgl. Backhaus & Tikoo 2004: 501; Collins & Stevens 2002). Ewing et al. (2002: 12) formulieren diesen Anspruch wie folgt: "Employment branding is ... concerned with building an image in the minds of the potential labour market that the company, above all others, is a 'great place to work'." Eine hohe Arbeitgeberattraktivität und damit einen großen Rekrutierungserfolg erreicht ein Unternehmen dann, wenn durch Employer Branding Vorstellungen vermittelt werden, die von der Zielgruppe besonders erwünscht sind und entsprechend positiv aufgenommen werden. Für Employer Brand Manager besteht daher ein großer Anreiz, in der Rekrutierungskommunikation (Anzeigen, Internetauftritt, Events, persönliche Kommunikation etc.) vorteilhafte Eigenschaften wie z.B. Innovativität und Dynamik besonders zu betonen und unvorteilhafte Eigenschaften wie z.B. lange Arbeitszeiten zu verschweigen.

Ein ganzheitliches Employer Branding muss aber über den Rekrutierungserfolg hinaus auch an der langfristigen *Bindung der neu angeworbenen Mitarbeiter* interessiert sein (vgl. Förster et al. 2009: 284). Für den amerikanischen Arbeitsmarkt ermittelten O'Connell und Kung (2007: 14) Durchschnittskosten von 13.996 US-Dollar pro Mitarbeiter, der sein Unternehmen verlässt, um zu einem anderen Arbeitgeber zu wechseln. Als objektive Größe zur Messung des Bindungserfolgs gilt die Fluktuationsrate einer Organisation. Diese wird wiederum von verhaltenswissenschaftlichen Indikatoren beeinflusst. Da sich die Rekrutierungsforschung und die Erforschung der Mitarbeiterbindung parallel entwickelt haben, wird in Bezug auf bestehende Mitarbeiter in der Regel nicht die Arbeitgeberattraktivität als Indikator herangezogen, sondern die Zufriedenheit der Mitarbeiter oder das Commitment der Mitarbeiter für das eigene Unternehmen. Einschlägige Metaanalysen belegen einen hochsignifikanten Zusammenhang zwischen diesen Indikatoren und der Fluktuation (bzw. der individuellen Absicht, das Unternehmen zu verlassen) und zeigen außerdem, dass diese Größen untereinander recht stark korreliert sind (vgl. Mathieu & Zajac 1990; Meyer et al. 2002). Zufriedenheit und Commitment lassen sich wie Arbeitgeberattraktivität auch auf die Wahrnehmung von Organisationsmerkmalen zurückführen (vgl. Meyer et al. 2002). Im Gegensatz zum Arbeitgeberimage eines Jobsuchers basiert diese Wahrnehmung allerdings weniger auf durch Marketingkommunikation vermittelten Vorstellungen,

sondern vielmehr auf eigenen Erfahrungen mit dem Arbeitgeber, insbesondere mit der durch Kollegen und Führung vermittelten Unternehmenskultur (vgl. Backhaus & Tikoo 2004: 509; O'Reilly 1989). Für das Employer Branding ergibt sich die Herausforderung, beim Aufbau und bei der Pflege von Arbeitgebermarken darauf zu achten, dass die Wahrnehmung von Organisationsmerkmalen nach Eintritt in die Organisation mit den im Employer Branding vermittelten Vorstellungen vor Eintritt in die Organisation übereinstimmt. Cable und Turban (2001: 147) weisen zurecht darauf hin, dass Arbeitgeberimages letztlich die Erwartungen eines neu in die Organisation eintretenden Mitarbeiters repräsentieren, die nicht enttäuscht werden dürfen, weil sonst die Wahrscheinlichkeit steigt, dass der neu eingestellte Mitarbeiter Unzufriedenheit empfindet und das Unternehmen bald wieder verlässt (vgl. z.B. Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler 2000; Robinson et al. 1995). Hieraus lässt sich für das Employer Branding der Anspruch ableiten, bei Aufbau und Pflege von Arbeitgebermarken darauf zu achten, dass die kommunizierten Markeninhalte authentisch und einlösbar sind (vgl. Backhaus & Tikoo 2004: 507; Cable & Turban 2001: 147).

Letztlich bleibt festzuhalten, dass sich der Employer Brand Manager in einem Spannungsfeld zwischen kurzfristigen Rekrutierungszielen und langfristigen Bindungszielen bewegt. Er muss bei Aufbau und Pflege der Arbeitgebermarke darauf achten, dass das Arbeitgeberimage aus Zielgruppensicht attraktiv und differenzierend ist, und gleichzeitig sicherstellen, dass die vermittelten Vorstellungen authentisch sind und nach Eintritt in die Organisation real erfahren werden können.

Anforderungen aus Sicht des Corporate Social Responsibility-Ansatzes

In der betriebswirtschaftlichen Forschung und Praxis hat sich in den letzten Jahren der sogenannte Corporate Social Responsibility-Ansatz fest etabliert. Dieser propagiert, dass Unternehmen über rein wirtschaftliches Handeln hinaus Verantwortung für einzelne Anspruchsgruppen oder die Gesellschaft als ganze übernehmen sollen (vgl. z.B. Carroll 1999; Hansen & Schrader 2005; Sen et al. 2006). Aus normativ-ethischer Sicht muss sich ein verantwortlich handelndes Unternehmen fragen, welche moralischen Rechte eine Stakeholder-Gruppe hat und inwiefern diese Rechte durch wirtschaftliches Handeln verletzt werden (vgl. Donaldson & Preston 1995: 67; Ulrich 2001: 488). Was aus normativ-ethischer Sicht verantwortlich oder unverantwortlich

ist, steht nicht generell fest, sondern ist vielmehr das Ergebnis gesellschaftlicher Diskussionsprozesse (vgl. Maignan & Ferrell 2004: 6 f.). So besteht z.B. ein breiter Konsens, dass Marketingkommunikation dann als unverantwortlich anzusehen ist, wenn sie das Vertrauen von Stakeholdern missbraucht, indem sie mangelndes Wissen oder Erfahrung ausnutzt. Diese Vorstellung basiert auf dem Argument, dass eine besondere Schutzwürdigkeit der moralischen Rechte einer Anspruchsgruppe besteht, wenn ein Unternehmen über große Handlungsspielräume gegenüber dieser Anspruchsgruppe verfügt (vgl. z.B. Hansen 1988: 712; Shaw & Barry 1998: 197).

Die Literatur zum Thema Rekrutierung indiziert, dass solche Handlungsspielräume auch bei der Beeinflussung von Jobsuchern durch Employer Branding vorhanden sind, da eine - im Einzelfall unterschiedlich stark ausgeprägte - Informationsasymmetrie zwischen potenziellen Mitarbeitern und tatsächlichen Mitarbeitern besteht (vgl. z.B. Buckley et al. 1997: 470 f.; Cable & Turban 2001: 147; Rousseau 2001: 519; Wanous 1992: 22 f.). Nur wenige Eigenschaften wie die Höhe des Gehalts oder die Anzahl der Urlaubstage lassen sich vor Eintritt in die Organisation objektiv in Erfahrung bringen. Ob die Unternehmenskultur wirklich teamorientiert und dynamisch ist, inwiefern Eigeninitiative gefordert wird und die ausgeübten Tätigkeiten interessant und verantwortungsvoll sind, kann der Jobsucher erst wirklich beurteilen, wenn er einige Zeit im Unternehmen verbracht hat. Gerade die durch Employer Branding besonders umworbenen jungen Zielgruppen (Schüler, Studenten, Young Professionals) starten erst ins Berufsleben und verfügen daher über besonders wenig Erfahrungswissen. Hieraus resultiert die Forderung, die Rekrutierungskommunikation an den Bedürfnissen von Jobsuchern auszurichten und eine möglichst umfassende Information sicherzustellen (vgl. Buckley et al. 1997: 479 f.; Shaw & Barry 1998: 267). Für das Employer Branding ergibt sich der Anspruch, Jobsuchern dabei zu helfen, ausgewogene Entscheidungen zu treffen. Bei Aufbau und Pflege von Arbeitgebermarken durch Kommunikation ist insbesondere an drei Grundsätze zu denken, die in der normativ orientierten CSR-Literatur immer wieder diskutiert werden: Authentizität, Transparenz und Dialogbereitschaft. Im Folgenden präzisieren wir diese Prinzipien in Hinblick auf ihre Bedeutung für das Employer Branding.

Authentizität: Wie an anderer Stelle ausgeführt, ist es unter Personalmarketing-Gesichtspunkten zumindest kurzfristig zielführend, ein möglichst vorteilhaftes Image

von sich als Arbeitgeber in den Köpfen potenzieller Mitarbeiter zu verankern, um so die Arbeitgeberattraktivität zu steigern. Aus CSR-Sicht darf dies aber nicht dazu führen, dass falsche Erwartungen geweckt werden. Employer Branding sollte vielmehr ein authentisches Bild von einem Arbeitgeber vermitteln. Zunächst gilt, dass die durch Markenkommunikation vermittelten Inhalte ehrlich und wahr sein müssen (vgl. z.B. Borrie 2005: 64; Polonsky & Hyman 2007: 6). Fragwürdig ist beispielsweise die Rekrutierungskommunikation eines bekannten Modehändlers, der die eigene Ausbildung zum Handelsassistenten in der Filiale als "Alternative zum Studium" anpreist, obwohl es sich keinesfalls um ein studienähnliches Angebot handelt. Auch zu starke Übertreibungen gefährden die Authentizität als Arbeitgeber. Als problematisch angesehen wird in der Literatur die übertriebene Lockwerbung des Logistikunternehmens UPS in den USA: "Package handler today... CEO tomorrow" (vgl. Buckley et al 2002: 264).

Transparenz: Ein verantwortliches Employer Branding unterstützt den Jobsucher darin, sich soweit möglich selbst ein Bild von einem Arbeitgeber zu machen. Hierzu bedarf es Transparenz, d.h. ein Unternehmen muss Jobsuchern proaktiv alle für eine Entscheidung relevanten Informationen zur Verfügung stellen (vgl. Buckley et al. 1997: 479 f.). Ein Unternehmen, das Jobsuchern eine große Karriere verspricht, sollte beispielsweise transparent offenlegen, welche Personalentwicklungsprogramme angeboten werden. Berechtigt ist freilich der Einwand, dass Employer Branding häufig vor allem symbolische Eigenschaften eines Arbeitgebers in den Vordergrund stellt, die naturgemäß subjektiv sehr unterschiedlich bewertet werden und die daher nicht generell als irreführend kritisiert werden können, weil sie nicht direkt belegt werden können (vgl. Bishop 2000). Transparenz kann in solchen Fällen vor allem durch Dialogbereitschaft hergestellt werden.

Dialogbereitschaft: Aus der Employer Branding-Forschung ist bekannt, dass gerade symbolische Eigenschaften eine starke Wirkung am Arbeitsmarkt entfalten, weil sie einen Arbeitgeber differenzierbar machen, während funktionale Attribute innerhalb einer Branche sich meist ähneln (vgl. Lievens & Highhouse 2003). Symbolische Eigenschaften sind letztlich nichts anderes als von einem Unternehmen getroffene Aussagen über die Persönlichkeit und Kultur des Unternehmens, d.h. Aussagen über zentrale Wertorientierungen der Mitglieder einer Organisation. In der Stakeholder- und

CSR-Literatur wird betont, dass grundlegende Wertorientierungen im Dialog mit Stakeholdern argumentativ begründet und diskutiert werden sollten (vgl. z.B. Bentele et al. 1996; O'Riordan & Fairbrass 2008). Dies erscheint in Hinblick auf Jobsucher besonders wichtig, denn wer Teil einer bestimmten Organisationskultur werden will, sollte sich bereits im Vorfeld vor dem Hintergrund eigener Bedürfnisse und Wünsche mit dieser Kultur auseinandersetzen können. Hierzu bedarf es der Offenheit seitens des Unternehmens, in einen solchen Dialog ernsthaft einzutreten. Negativ fiel in dieser Hinsicht beispielsweise die Drogeriekette Schlecker auf, die auf ihrer Karriere-Homepage als zentrale Werte "Eigeninitiative" und "selbständiges Denken" auslobte, aber keinerlei Möglichkeit bot, das Unternehmen vor einer Bewerbung eigeninitiativ zu kontaktieren und Rückfragen zu stellen.

Abschließend bleibt festzuhalten, dass die Forderung nach einem verantwortungsvollen Employer Branding, das durch Authentizität, Transparenz und Dialogbereitschaft gekennzeichnet ist, sich aus theoretischer Sicht gut mit einer langfristigen Personalmarketing-Perspektive verträgt, deren Ziel es ist, Enttäuschungen von Neueinsteigern zu vermeiden. Zu betonen ist allerdings die unterschiedliche Begründung der Anforderungen. Während das Personalmarketing letztlich eine rein ökonomische Zielsetzung verfolgt, ist die CSR-Sicht normativ-ethisch motiviert.

Die folgende Darstellung gibt einen kompakten Überblick über die bisherigen Ausführungen:

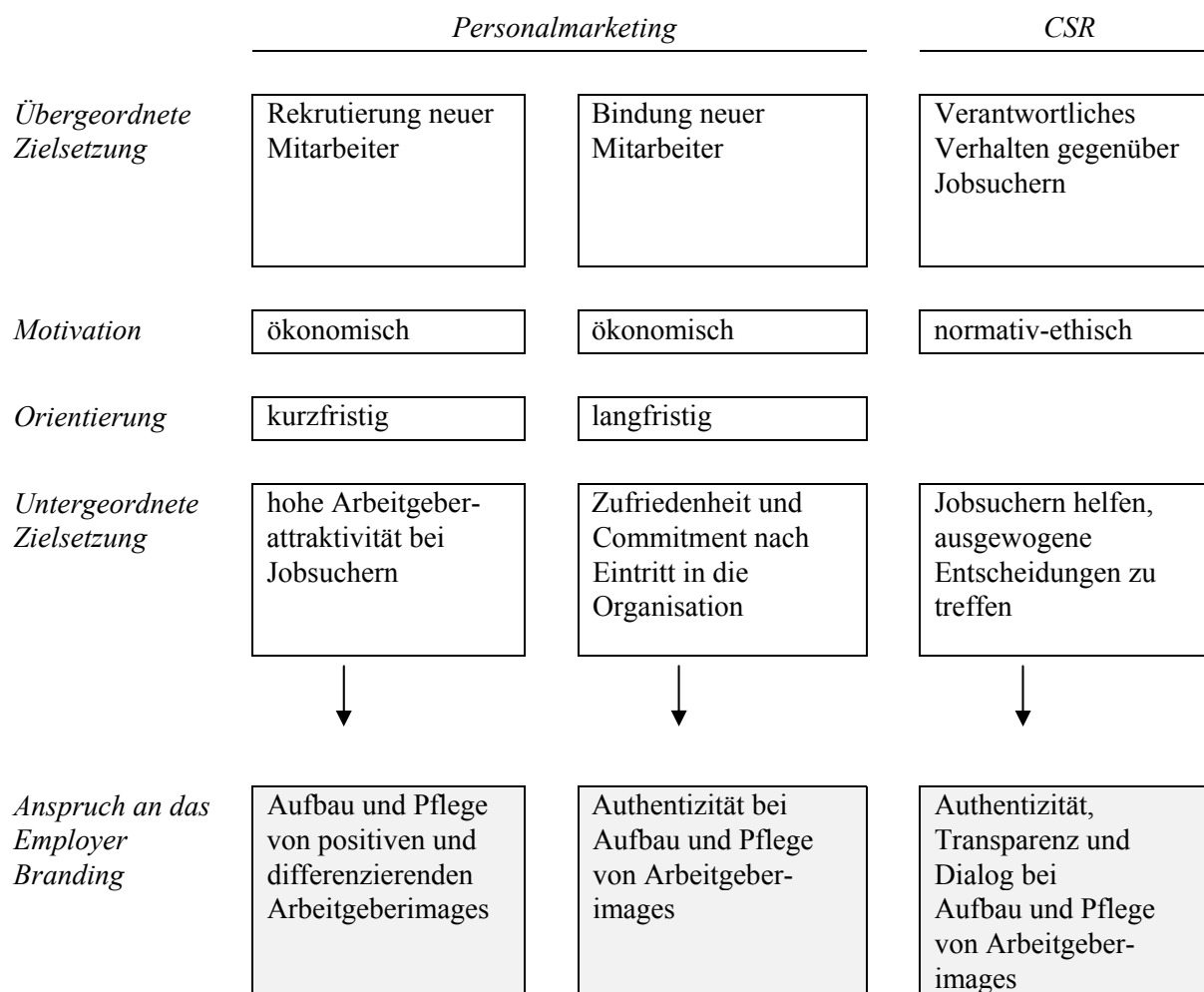


Abb. 1. Anforderungen an das Employer Branding

Ansätze für ein verantwortungsvolles und effektives Employer Branding

Im Folgenden sollen drei konkrete Ansätze aus Forschung und Praxis diskutiert werden, die Marketing- und HR-Managern helfen können, ihr Employer Branding verantwortlich und effektiv zu gestalten. Alle drei Ansätze setzen bei der Organisation an. Sie betreffen sowohl die Inhalte des Employer Brandings ("Realistic Job Preview") als auch die im Employer Branding eingesetzten Kommunikationsmittler bzw. Informationsquellen (persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation, Partizipation auf Zeit).

"Realistic Job Preview"

Der sogenannte "Realistic Job Preview" gehört zu den am besten erforschten Themen im Personalmarketing. "Realistic Job Preview" bedeutet, dass ein Unternehmen nicht nur positive Eigenschaften eines Jobs oder Arbeitgebers kommuniziert, sondern den Jobsucher bewusst auch über negative Aspekte informiert (vgl. z.B. Saks 2005: 52; Wanous 1992: 63 f.). Diese Vorgehensweise widerspricht der gängigen Marketing-Regel, nur positive Botschaften zu kommunizieren, und ist daher umstritten. Ein Beispiel für den "Realistic Job Preview" stellt das Employer Branding der Deutschen Lufthansa dar, das in der jüngsten Anzeigen-Kampagne erstmals konkrete Situationen aus dem Arbeitsalltag von Bord- und Bodenpersonal beschreibt, aus denen klar hervorgeht, welche Anstrengungen und Anforderungen mit einem Job bei Lufthansa verbunden sind (vgl. Krüger 2009: 333 f.).

In der Praxis zögern viele Unternehmen, in ihre Rekrutierungskommunikation auch negative Aspekte zu integrieren. So ergab eine unlängst durchgeführte inhaltsanalytische Auswertung der Karriere-Webseiten der Fortune 500-Unternehmen, dass die grosse Mehrheit der Unternehmen keinen "Realistic Job Preview" bietet (vgl. Young & Foot 2006). Hintergrund der Zurückhaltung dürfte vor allem die Befürchtung sein, dass negative Informationen die Arbeitgeberattraktivität schädigen und die Rekrutierungsfunktion damit nur unzureichend erfüllt werden kann. Die Rekrutierungsforschung ist sich bislang nicht einig, ob diese Befürchtung berechtigt ist. Während z.B. Bretz und Judge (1998) eine negative Beziehung zwischen dem "Realistic Job Preview" und der wahrgenommenen Arbeitgeberattraktivität nachweisen konnten, belegen Thorsteinson et al. (2004) in ihrer Studie einen Anstieg der Arbeitgeberattraktivität und begründen dies mit der erhöhten Glaubwürdigkeit, die durch den "Realistic Job Preview" vermittelt wird. Wesentlich eindeutiger sind die Ergebnisse, was das langfristige Personalmarketing-Ziel angeht, Jobsucher nicht nur zu gewinnen, sondern auch längere Zeit an einen Arbeitgeber zu binden. So belegen drei bislang erschienene Metaanalysen, dass Jobsucher, die auf Basis realistischer (positiver wie negativer) Informationen rekrutiert worden sind, eine geringere Fluktuationswahrscheinlichkeit aufweisen (vgl. Meglino et al. 2000; Phillips 1998; Premack und Wanous 1985). Dies wird in der Literatur u.a. auf eine höhere Bindung aufgrund besser angepasster Erwartungen und weniger Unzufriedenheit nach Beginn

des Arbeitsverhältnisses zurückgeführt (vgl. Philipps 1998; Meglino et al. 2000: 408 f.). Es lässt sich somit sagen, dass vor allem in Hinblick auf langfristige Bindungsziele eine Orientierung am "Realistic Job Preview" empfehlenswert ist, um Fluktuation zu reduzieren.

Die Orientierung an einem "Realistic Job Preview" stellt aus Organisationssicht eine bewusste Selbstbeschränkung dar, die dazu beitragen kann, den Handlungsspielraum von Jobsuchern zu erweitern und ist somit Ausdruck von verantwortlichem Handeln gegenüber Jobsuchern ist (vgl. Buckley et al. 1997). Wanous (1992: 48 ff.) betont, dass der "Realistic Job Preview" Individuen in die Lage versetzt, besser ausgewogene Entscheidungen zu treffen, da Jobsucher, die auch negative Informationen erhalten, besser einschätzen können, was sie erwartet und inwiefern sie zu einem Arbeitgeber passen. Der "Realistic Job Preview" geht über die Forderung nach Authentizität der im Employer Branding vermittelten Kommunikationsinhalte hinaus, da diese Anforderung nicht zwangsläufig die Kommunikation negativer Informationen beinhaltet. Er trägt vor allem zur Transparenz des Employer Brandings bei, weil proaktiv auch negative Aspekte offengelegt werden, die für die Entscheidungsfindung potenzieller Mitarbeiter relevant sind.

Persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation

Wurden früher vor allem unpersönliche Medien wie Anzeigen und Broschüren genutzt, haben Jobsucher heute bei vielen Unternehmen die Gelegenheit, sich bereits vor der Bewerbung mit Recruitern und potenziellen Kollegen auszutauschen (vgl. Collins & Han 2004: 691; Poe 2000). Persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation kann im Rahmen von speziellen Recruiting-Events, auf Jobmessen, bei Hochschul-Veranstaltungen als auch bei Unternehmensbesichtigungen stattfinden. Die Wirtschaftsprüfung KPMG veröffentlicht beispielsweise auf ihrer Website einen Event-Kalender, aus dem genau hervorgeht, an welchen Fachhochschulen und Universitäten interessierte Studenten KPMG-Mitarbeiter persönlich kennenlernen können.

Aus Personalmarketing-Sicht ist die Frage von besonderem Interesse, wie sich der verstärkte Einsatz persönlicher Kommunikation auf das Erreichen von Rekrutierungs-

und Bindungszielen auswirkt. Grundsätzlich wird persönliche Kommunikation von der Forschung als reichhaltiger als unpersönliche Kommunikation erachtet, da in stärkerem Maße individualisierte, soziale und non-verbale Informationen transportiert werden können als dies bei unpersönlichen Kommunikationsformen wie Stellen- und Imageanzeigen der Fall ist (vgl. Allen et al. 2004: 147 f.). Dies kann, muss sich aber nicht zwangsläufig positiv auf kurzfristige Rekrutierungsziele auswirken. So wird beispielsweise angenommen, dass Jobsucher vom Auftreten und Verhalten eines Mitarbeiters auf die Organisation als solche schließen, was sich je nach gezeigtem Verhalten positiv oder negativ auf Zielgrößen wie Arbeitgeberattraktivität oder Bewerbungsabsicht auswirken kann (vgl. z.B. Goltz & Giannantonio 1995; Rynes et al. 1991; Schreurs et al. 2005). Exemplarisch sei auf die Studie von Goltz und Giannantonio (1995) verwiesen, die belegt, dass die wahrgenommene Freundlichkeit eines Recruiters sich auf verschiedene Imagedimensionen (z.B. mitarbeiterorientiert, fair, sicher) sowie auf die Arbeitgeberattraktivität auswirkt. Ähnlich wie der "Realistic Job Preview" dürfte persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation vor allem langfristigen Bindungszielen zuträglich sein, da persönliche Kommunikation in der Lage ist, ein wesentlich differenziertes und realistisches Bild von einer Organisation zu vermitteln (vgl. z.B. Saks 1994; Weller et al. 2009). Die vielschichtigen Informationen, die Jobsucher durch persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation erhalten, dürften tendenziell dazu führen, dass es bereits vor Eintritt in die Organisation zu verstärkter Selbstselektion kommt, weil Jobsucher besser bewerten können, ob sie zu einem Arbeitgeber und dessen Mitarbeitern passen (vgl. von Walter et al. 2009).

Aus einer normativen CSR-Sicht sollte ein Arbeitgeber in einen Dialog mit den vom Employer Branding betroffenen Personen treten (vgl. O'Riordan & Fairbrass 2008). Die Förderung persönlicher Kommunikation zwischen Jobsuchern und gegenwärtigen Mitarbeitern im Rahmen verschiedener Events trägt dem Rechnung, weil Dialogprozesse institutionalisiert werden und so einen festen Platz im Rekrutierungsgeschehen bekommen. Persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation hilft Jobsuchern, die Wertorientierungen von Unternehmen und Mitarbeitern besser zu verstehen, umgekehrt lernen Unternehmen die Besorgnisse von Jobsuchern kennen. Außerdem trägt persönliche Kommunikation dazu bei, dem Jobsucher ein authentischeres Bild von einem Arbeitgeber zu vermitteln. Im persönlichen Gespräch können in der Regel Fragen gestellt und beantwortet werden, auf die die formale

Kommunikation nicht eingehen kann. Insofern erhöht sich aus Sicht des Jobsuchers die Transparenz. Organisationspsychologische Studien indizieren, dass Neueinsteiger, die vor Eintritt in die Organisation im Austausch mit Mitarbeitern stehen, über mehr Wissen über die Organisation verfügen und daher besser informierte Entscheidungen treffen können (vgl. z.B. Moser 1995; Saks 1994).

Partizipation auf Zeit

Unter Partizipation auf Zeit können alle Arten von Maßnahmen verstanden werden, die es Jobsuchern ermöglichen, während eines abgegrenzten Zeitraums an den Arbeitsprozessen einer Organisation teilzunehmen. Am weitesteten verbreitet sind Praktika und Werkstudententätigkeiten (vgl. Herrmann & Hayit 2006: 10). In der Schweiz sind zudem einwöchige Schnupperlehren üblich, die Ausbildungsinteressierten die Möglichkeit geben, einen bestimmten Arbeitgeber und Beruf besser kennen zu lernen. Häufig anzutreffen sind auch ein- oder mehrtägige Workshops, die Arbeitsprozesse im Unternehmen simulieren, indem z.B. reale Fälle bearbeitet werden.

Jobsucher, die an Partizipationsprogrammen teilgenommen haben, dürften sich von anderen Jobsuchern dahingehend unterscheiden, dass sie über mehr Wissen über den Arbeitgeber verfügen (vgl. Cable & Turban 2001: 152). Dies spricht für einen ähnlichen Einfluss auf Personalmarketingziele, wie sie in den Abschnitten zum "Realistic Job Preview" und zur persönlichen Rekrutierungskommunikation beschrieben worden sind. Personen, die sich bewerben, dürften realistischere Erwartungen haben und daher weniger leicht enttäuscht werden, wodurch die Fluktuationsgefahr sinkt. Tatsächlich belegt eine unlängst erschienene Studie (vgl. Höft & Hell 2007), dass Unternehmenspraktika eine starke Wirkung entfalten können. Dabei ist die Integration des Praktikanten (gute Betreuung, Einbeziehung und Information) von entscheidender Bedeutung, da sich diese positiv auf das Commitment und die Zufriedenheit während des Praktikums auswirkt, was wiederum Voraussetzung für den Wunsch ist, später bei dem Arbeitgeber fest zu arbeiten. Bislang gibt es aber noch zu wenige Studien, um verlässliche Aussagen über die Wirkung auf Rekrutierungs- und Bindungsziele zu treffen. Es zeichnet sich jedoch ab,

dass an der beruflichen Orientierung und Entwicklung von Jobsuchern ausgerichtete Partizipationsprogramme nicht nur aus CSR-Sicht wünschenswert sind.

Aus Sicht von CSR stellen Partizipationsmöglichkeiten auf Zeit eine gute Möglichkeit dar, die Authentizität und Transparenz des Employer Brandings zu erhöhen, weil sie bei entsprechender Ausgestaltung wichtige berufliche Informationen vermitteln können (vgl. Brooks et al. 1995). Gerade die symbolischen Eigenschaften eines Arbeitgebers, auf die das Employer Branding häufig Bezug nimmt, werden subjektiv unterschiedlich wahrgenommen und bewertet (vgl. Bishop 2000). Ob eine Unternehmenskultur wirklich traditionell, glamourös oder kundenorientiert ist, lässt sich aus Perspektive des Jobsuchers am besten bewerten, wenn er die Chance bekommt, am Arbeitsleben einer Organisation teilzunehmen und so die Unternehmenskultur direkt kennen zu lernen. Partizipationsmöglichkeiten bieten außerdem die Chance, in einen tiefgehenden Dialog mit Jobsuchern einzutreten, der sich evtl. auch nach dem Ende der Partizipation fortsetzt, wenn Unternehmen und Jobsucher in Kontakt bleiben.

Fazit

Auf Basis der bisherigen Ausführungen kann abschließend das Fazit gezogen werden, dass ein ökonomisch effektives und gleichzeitig verantwortungsvolles Employer Branding vor allem unter Einnahme einer langfristigen Perspektive möglich ist. Abb. 2 stellt eine Konzeptualisierung der unterschiedlichen Ansprüche an das Employer Branding dar und verdeutlicht die Beziehungen zwischen ihnen.

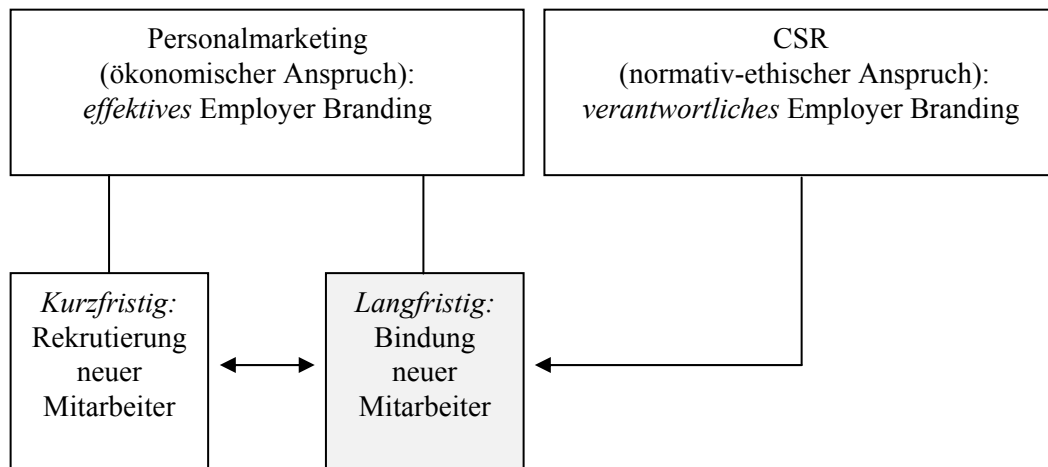


Abb. 2. Beziehungen zwischen den unterschiedlichen Anforderungen

Grundlegendes Ziel jedes Unternehmens sollte es sein, bei seiner wirtschaftlichen Tätigkeit auch normativ-ethisch begründete Ansprüche von Stakeholdern zu berücksichtigen (vgl. z.B. Carroll 1991; Ulrich 2001: 488). Wird Employer Branding auf die Personalmarketing-Funktion "Rekrutierung neuer Mitarbeiter" verengt, deren Erfüllung an Größen wie der Zahl der eingegangenen Bewerbungen gemessen wird, kann es leicht in Konflikt mit solchen Ansprüchen geraten. Grund hierfür ist, dass durch eine zu einseitige Fokussierung auf das Rekrutierungsziel ein starker Anreiz entsteht, die tatsächliche Identität eines Arbeitgebers zu verklären, indem positive Eigenschaften überbetont und negative Eigenschaften verschwiegen werden (vgl. Cable & Turban 2001: 126). In solchen Fällen wird eine attraktive und begehrte Markenvision kommuniziert, die nur wenig mit dem realen Arbeitsalltag im Unternehmen zu tun hat, was den Anspruch von Jobsuchern auf authentische Information verletzt. Aus Sicht des CSR-Ansatzes sollte ein Unternehmen Jobsucher vielmehr darin unterstützen, ausgewogene Entscheidungen auf Grundlage angemessener Informationen zu treffen. Hierzu tragen neben Authentizität auch Transparenz und Dialogbereitschaft bei.

Wird Employer Branding ganzheitlich verstanden, d.h. geht es nicht nur um das Ziel der Anwerbung neuer Mitarbeiter, sondern auch darum, neue Mitarbeiter an das Unternehmen zu binden, ergeben sich keine Widersprüche zum CSR-Ansatz. Ein

solches Employer Branding ist langfristig orientiert und berücksichtigt von Anfang an, dass Jobsucher durch Eintritt in die Organisation von Outsidern zu Insidern werden, die das Unternehmen durch Fluktuation schädigen können. Um persönliche Enttäuschungen zu vermeiden, stellt ein an der Bindung neuer Mitarbeiter interessiertes Unternehmen im Vorfeld sicher, dass die im Employer Branding gemachten Aussagen authentisch sind und nach Eintritt in die Organisation nicht zurückgenommen werden müssen. Ein solches Employer Branding versucht ebenfalls, durch Kommunikation ein attraktives und differenzierendes Image zu vermitteln, aber nur wenn die vermittelten Vorstellungen authentisch sind und nach Eintritt in die Organisation real erfahren werden können.

Dass ein ökonomisch effektives und gleichzeitig verantwortungsvolles Employer Branding vor allem unter Einnahme einer langfristigen Perspektive möglich ist, verdeutlichen auch die im Beitrag analysierten Studien zu drei konkreten Ansätzen aus Forschung und Praxis. Durch die Orientierung an einem "Realistic Job Preview", persönliche Rekrutierungskommunikation und die Förderung von Partizipation auf Zeit (z.B. Praktika oder Schnuppertage) kann das Wissen von Jobsuchern durch ein Mehr an Authentizität, Transparenz und Dialog erhöht werden. Auch wenn z.T. noch Forschungsdefizite vorliegen, indizieren die bisherigen Erkenntnisse doch recht einheitlich, dass Jobsucher im Ergebnis besser einschätzen können, ob sie zu einem Arbeitgeber passen und für diesen arbeiten möchten, was zu einer erhöhten Selbstselektion führen dürfte. Arbeitgeber profitieren von dieser Selbstselektion vor allem langfristig in Form einer stärkeren Bindung und geringeren Fluktuation.

Um ein effektives und gleichzeitig verantwortliches Employer Branding zu erreichen, müssen also unter Umständen auch Entscheidungen getroffen werden, die sich kurzfristig ökonomisch nachteilig auswirken, z.B. weil auf eine aus Zielgruppensicht wünschenswerte, aber im Unternehmen nicht gelebte Positionierungsdimension bewusst verzichtet wird oder weil ein negativer Aspekt offen angesprochen wird. Langfristig sollte sich ein verantwortliches Employer Branding jedoch auch in Hinblick auf ökonomische Ziele als förderlich erweisen, da der Arbeitgeber durch eine erhöhte Mitarbeiterbindung belohnt wird, was letztlich auch die Voraussetzung dafür ist, dass Mitarbeiter zu begeisterten Botschaftern ihres Unternehmens und ihrer Marke werden (vgl. Tomczak et al. 2009). Ein langfristig ökonomisch erfolgreiches Employer

Branding ist vor allem deshalb erfolgreich, weil es seiner Verantwortung gegenüber (potenziellen) Mitarbeitern gerecht wird.

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