Realise Your Full Potential

A Case Study of External Employer Branding at Microsoft

By

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Summary

Based on today’s knowledge economy and the subsequent war for talent, this thesis revolves around employer branding and the attraction of potential employees. Every year, organisations compete to win various “Employer of Choice” and workplace awards as these help create a compelling employer brand.

In 2009, Microsoft was awarded several of these prices and nominated number 1 within workplace relations by The Reputation Institute (Reputation Institute, 2009). Anchored in this, the underlying hypothesis for this thesis was that Microsoft would provide a good example of effective employer branding communication. Therefore, the purpose of the thesis has been to examine how Microsoft uses communication to brand them self as an employer of choice and how this communication relates to the theoretical perspective of employer branding. The purpose is rooted in identifying some essential aspects of employer branding communication for the future benefits of other companies.

Through a hermeneutic approach, the thesis sought to understand the intentions of Microsoft’s communicative strategies of their external employer brand.

To specify the field of study and set a theoretical frame for the further analysis, employer branding and general branding theory were discussed. Drawing mainly upon the work of Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), Barrow & Mosley (2008), and Gaddam (2008), the concept of employer branding, its relevance, and advantages for companies were introduced. The founding principles of employer branding were described to develop a deeper understanding of which factors should be considered in connection to external employer branding communication. Following, branding theory and theory of organisational behaviour were included as they are pivotal in examining and identifying factors of employee attraction. Subsequently, a theoretical framework for employer branding communication was developed in form of a model containing the key values and messages to be communicated through the textual and visual means of an employer brand.

To examine how Microsoft uses communication to brand them self as an employer of choice, a discourse analysis was conducted. The empirical data being analysed was content from the Microsoft careers website, U.K. division. Based on theory proposed by Vijay K. Bhatia and John M. Swales in Kasch (2005), the communicative purpose and move structure were
identified to understand what Microsoft set out to achieve in the empirical material. The communicative purpose was to create an attractive employer brand, which was realised through four moves; arousing interest, creating desire, inducing action, and displaying accuracy. Through a discourse analysis anchored in Halliday’s register analysis (Stillar, 1998) and the visual framework provided by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), the textual and visual structures in the empirical material were examined. The findings proved that Microsoft uses textual and visual communication to create an attractive employer brand. Further, they proved the messages and values communicated strongly related to the theoretical perspective of employer branding.

Lastly, to emphasise and evaluate how Microsoft’s employer brand communication strategy related to the theoretical perspective, and thereby answer the last part of the problem statement posed, the thesis applied the developed framework onto the empirical material. Here it was identified that the Microsoft employer brand identity consists of a symbolic and emotional value package, organisational values, and accuracy. Based on these findings, the thesis concludes that Microsoft employs communicative strategies from the field of employer branding and, thus, displays a good example of employer branding communication.
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1 Introduction

Having entered the era of knowledge-based economy, talented people have become among the greatest resources in a company and thus a natural force in creating a competitive edge. Therefore, companies fight to attract the brightest minds and gain a much needed competitive advantage in today’s market (Gaddam, 2008). In this war for talent, potential employees can be regarded as consumers, whose behaviours are equally receptive to advertising and branding methods (Barrow & Mosley, 2008).

Originating from Simon Barrow in the 1990s, the concept of employer branding has become a vital tool in this war (Barrow & Mosley, 2008). The importance of employer branding in a knowledge economy has been emphasised by Ewing et al. (2002), who argue that traditional strategies of recruitment are no longer sufficient to attract potential employees. This emphasis on emerging employer branding activities in the market has lead to different workplace nominations such as “Employer of Choice”.

In 2009, Microsoft was awarded several of these prices and was nominated number 1 within workplace relations by The Reputation Institute (Reputation Institute, 2009). Based on this, the underlying hypothesis for this thesis is that Microsoft will provide a good example of effective employer branding communication. Therefore, the thesis will set out to examine the following question:

*How does Microsoft use communication to brand themselves as employers of choice and how does this relate to the theoretical perspective on effective employer branding communication?*

More specifically, the aim of this thesis is to examine how Microsoft uses communication and employer branding in the war for talent. The purpose of this examination is rooted in identifying some essentials of effective employer branding communication for future benefits of other companies. Thus, if the analysis shows that Microsoft’s communication activities relate to the theoretical platform of employer branding communication, other companies can benefit from employing these theories.
1.1 Methodology
Methodologically, this project will seek to answer the question stated above by drawing upon the tradition of methodological hermeneutics. Introduced by Schleiermacher, this scientific tradition aims to understand the true meaning of a text considering the author’s intentions (Sherrat, 2005). By employing the interpretive framework of discourse analysis this project will study the intentions of Microsoft and how these are communicated via textual and visual means.

To examine Microsoft’s communication activities and how these relate to employer branding communication, it is necessary to define the field of employer branding. Thus, a theoretical framework for this thesis will be introduced by discussing and drawing upon theories of employer branding and general branding.

Anchored in methodological hermeneutics, the thesis will examine what communicative strategies Microsoft employs through a discourse analysis. More specifically, content from the Microsoft career website U.K. (appendix 2) will be examined. The United Kingdom division have been chosen to employ an international perspective. Through this analysis the communicative strategies Microsoft uses in the war for talent will be identified. Further, these key findings will be evaluated in relation to the theoretical framework on effective employer branding communication.

By applying this method, the thesis will be able to develop a deeper understanding of employer branding to draw upon in the development of an employer branding communicative framework. Further, the discursive analysis will enable an understanding of Microsoft’s communication strategy, which is important in a comparison to the employer branding communication framework.

1.2 Theoretical Framework
To answer the problem statement, this thesis will draw upon employer branding- and discourse analysis theory. The following sections will introduce these theories to develop an understanding of the theoretical framework applied.
1.2.1 Employer Branding Scholars

Employer branding will function as a theoretical platform for this thesis, and will be discussed separately in section 2. The thesis employs theory from several scholars within the field, however, the work of Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), Barrow & Mosley (2008), and Gaddam (2008) sets the main frame. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) deal with researching and conceptualising employer branding as a theoretical discipline. They scrutinise the concept and its underlying founding principles to present a framework for scholarly study of employer branding. Similarly, Gaddam (2008) focuses on the theory of employer branding and adds a communicative aspect. Gaddam (2008) includes the values an organisation should incorporate in developing an attractive employer brand. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Gaddam (2008) both have a theoretical approach to employer branding, whereas Barrow & Mosley (2008) have practical approach to the concept. The work of Barrow & Mosley (2008) serves as a guideline for organisation to understand employer branding and how to develop an employer brand. Common for these scholars is the focus on both internal and external employer branding, however, this thesis will only employ the sections of external employer brand communication.

Employer branding theory directs the field of study in this thesis. However, when examining Microsoft’s employer branding communication, I will apply theory from the field of discourse analysis. Two different sets of theories will form the Microsoft analysis, namely, theory of communicative purpose and move structure as provided by Kasch (2005) and textual and visual discourse analysis.

1.2.2 Discourse Analysis Theory

The theory of communicative purpose and move structure originates from Vijay K. Bhatia and John M. Swales. Accordingly, all texts possess a communicative purpose, which is reached through a series of move. Typically, for sales letter and other marketing communication efforts the move structure concern (Kasch, 2005):

1. Arousing interest
2. Create desire
3. Carry conviction
4. Induce action
Subsequently, the empirical material also possesses a communicative purpose and a move structure, which will guide the further discourse analysis. The communicative purpose is an essential tool for understanding the intentions behind the sender’s communication efforts, and therefore pivotal to include in this thesis.

The communicative purpose and its respective moves are realised through the choice of textual and visual resources in the text.

The textual resources in the empirical material will be analysed according to M. A. K. Halliday’s register analysis as employed by Glenn F. Stillar (1998). According to Stillar (1998), Halliday’s register analysis is a useful framework for analysing the linguistic meanings and choices of a given text. This and the level of detail provided by the textual analysis, is the reason the register analysis have been chosen to compliment the visual analysis. The register analysis posits that texts consist of three linguistic functions, the ideational-, the interpersonal-, and the textual function. The ideational function concerns what topics are represented in the text and what is claimed about them. More specifically, this function examines the process types (the verbs) and its related participants (related subject) as well as the circumstance and time frame in which these exist. The interpersonal function illustrates the relationship between the sender and receiver, and assigns roles / authority through speech functions, modality, attitudinal lexis, and sentence adjuncts. The textual function considers the structure, thematic progression and cohesion in a given text. The three linguistic functions are strongly interconnected and all help reach the communicative purpose of a text (Stillar, 1998).

The visual analysis will be based on the theoretical framework provided by Guther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in Reading Images – The Grammar of Visual Design (2006). Their theory is closely related to Halliday’s textual register analysis and focus on the same type of resources; the ideational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction, and the textual metafunction. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), the ideational metafunction concerns the structures of an image and can either be narrative or conceptual. The narrative structures function to embed action in an image, whereas the conceptual structures are typical for static images and function to symbolise a concept. Vector lines and participants in the image determine whether an image contains narrative or conceptual structures. Further, the relationship between the represented participants and the viewer is established through the interpersonal metafunction. Here, tools such as social distance, attitude, and modality marker depict how the viewer is supposed to read and relate to the image. Combining the textual and visual resources into an
integrated object for analysis, the textual metafunction examines the composition of the image. The information value\textsuperscript{1}, salience, and framing of an image determine the relation between text and image as well as add to the symbolism of the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The visual resources are interconnected and, along with the textual resources, help realise the communicative purpose if a text or advertisement.

1.3 Thesis Structure
To obtain the best possible coherence in the thesis it is structured into five parts. The first part is introductory and sets forth the frame and field of study for the thesis.

Following, to specify the theoretical frame in which the thesis operates, the second part consists of a theoretical discussion on employer branding. Here, the concept and founding principles of employer branding will be introduced. Further, as employer branding emanates from branding theory, this will be introduced. Drawing mainly upon David A. Aaker’s (1996) concept and theories on branding, basic branding theory will be included in the discussion to reach a suitable framework for employer branding communication. In addition, organisational behaviour theory of employee motivation and satisfaction will be included as it holds significant importance for the employer branding communication. Lastly, to create a more holistic framework for effective employer branding communication, contemporary theories of employer branding will also be introduced and discussed.

With a theoretical background founded, the third part of the thesis concentrates on analysis of Microsoft’s webpage content. Through discursive tools, the aim of this analysis is to gain knowledge on the communicative means Microsoft utilises to attract potential employees. This will add to the understanding of Microsoft’s communication activities and thus also answering the first part of the problem statement.

An evaluation of the key findings in the analysis and how these relate to the theoretical framework will form the fourth part of the thesis. Through this evaluation, the thesis will seek to answer the problem statement fully by examining the analytical findings and including them in the theoretical framework of effective employer branding communication. Thus, this part of the

\textsuperscript{1} The placement of textual and visual objects in the image
thesis will seek to answer the second part of the problem statement as well as try to determine the future benefits in effective employer branding communication theory for other organisations.

Lastly, a conclusion will form the fifth part of the thesis, tying it together to evaluate whether the relevant concepts and theories were provided to answer the problem statement. Further, it will evaluate the value of the knowledge created and how this can contribute to future research within the field of study.

1.4 Delimitations

Naturally, the chosen field of study as well as the problem statement set forth a range of limitations for the thesis, which I will consider in the following.

Employer branding as a study field encompasses both internal and external activities. However, the focus of this thesis is on the attraction of potential employees and thus the external branding activities Microsoft employs. Therefore, the results of this analysis will be narrowly aimed at verifying and improving theory of external employer branding communication for future use.

Due to the extent of the project, only one example from the Microsoft Career website will be analysed. Potential employees will have access to the entire Microsoft website as well as other material created to attract employees, and thus more factors will affect the choice of applying for a job at Microsoft. Therefore, it is important to note that this analysis stands as an example of how Microsoft communicates to potential employees.

Methodologically, the project employs a hermeneutic research approach; however, it is restricted to examining the grammatical dimensions of the Microsoft text, and will not focus on the psychological dimensions of hermeneutic circle. A more thorough examination of Microsoft and their background in communication will therefore not be applied; the thesis will examine current communication material solely.
2 Effective Employer Branding Communication

To specify the field of study and set a theoretical frame for the further analysis, this chapter will deal with employer branding theory and general branding theory. First, the concept of employer branding will be introduced and its theoretical background will be examined. Following, branding theory and theory of organisational behaviour will be included as they are pivotal in examining and identifying employee attraction. This theoretical foundation accompanied by theory of employer branding communication will form a discussion and provide a framework for effective employer branding communication.

2.1 The Relevance of Employer Branding

This section will seek to justify the relevance of employer branding for companies, and thereby also why it is relevant to deal with effective employer branding communication.

Basically, as employer branding concerns internal and external branding efforts, it holds different potential benefits for companies. Similar to product branding, external employer branding is used externally to distinguish a company from its competitors. This differentiation has proved necessary in order to attract talents and gain a competitive advantage (Gaddam, 2008). According to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), external branding activity will position a company as a potential employer and thereby help attract talented employees. In today’s knowledge economy, companies are highly dependent on having skilled employees in their workforce, as it generates a competitive edge and consequently profit (Ewing et al., 2002).

Additionally, employer branding can function internally to unify the organisation and create a strong bond between employees and the organisation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). A strong employer brand based on organisational mission, vision, and values will ensure commitment, loyalty, advocacy, and satisfaction from employees (Gaddam, 2008). Further, Gaddam (2008) argues that employer branding is indirectly affecting organisational profitability through employee retention.

Thus, as employer branding indirectly impacts an organisation’s profit opportunities, it is highly relevant to understand how to improve employer brand communication.
2.2 Theoretical Background of Employer Branding

Employer branding dates back to the 1990s and was developed by Simon Barrow as he identified strategic advantages for companies, both internally and externally, to create an “employer brand” (Barrow & Mosley, 2008). These advantages are manifested in unifying the company and optimising performance internally as well as retaining employees. Further, creating an employer brand, and thereby distinguish a company from its competitors, will attract potential employees. Thus, employer branding is a mixture of human resources and marketing efforts with a focus on current and potential employees. More specifically, Barrow & Mosley (2008) offer a definition of employer branding, which, in this thesis, will be considered the foundation and point of departure: We define the Employer Brand as the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company. The main role of the employer brand is to provide a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity and improve recruitment, retention and commitment. (Barrow & Mosley, 2008, p. Xvi).

In addition, according to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004, p. 501), John Sullivan defines employer branding as a long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm. Providing a more strategic focus, the aspects of this definition will be included in the development of the theoretical framework.

Other definitions focus more on employer branding as a differentiation tool (Gaddam, 2008; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), however this thesis seeks to develop a framework anchored in the origins of employer branding.

As mentioned, employer branding is a holistic concept encompassing both internal and external branding activities, however this thesis is solely concerned with external communication efforts. Therefore, this thesis defines employer branding as a long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perception of potential employees for the purpose of employee attraction. Supplementary, the actual employer brand is defined as the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company and communicated for the purpose of attracting highly talented employees (Barrow & Mosley, 2008; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Author’s own production). These definitions are essentially the exact same as the ones provided by Barrow & Mosley (2008) and by John Sullivan in Backhaus.
& Tikoo (2004), however a focus on employee attraction is added due to the external perspective the thesis is based upon.

2.2.1 The Foundation of Employer Branding

The underlying theoretical foundation of employer branding sets forth certain implications for developing a framework of effective employer branding communication. Therefore, based on the work of Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), this section will look at these founding principles and identify their impact on employer branding communication.

The basic foundation of employer branding is embedded in the notion of employees creating value in a company. By attracting and retaining highly skilled employees a company is able to improve overall performance and gain profit (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) as well as a competitive edge (Ewing et al., 2002). Further, Barrow & Mosley (2008) add that today’s employees are career planning from an early stage and thus know what type of skills they need to reach their goals. Therefore, through an employer brand a company is able to communicate possible skills attained by the job as well as career development opportunities. Conclusively, this foundation posits that the employer branding effort should reflect that employees are recognised and highly valued by the respective organisation.

The second founding principle is embedded within theory of the psychological contract, its impact on the employee organisational relationship, and basic organisational behaviour theory on job motivation and satisfaction (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In addition, employer branding can impact the psychological motives of employees by using motivational factors to attract potential employees (Gaddam, 2008). Anchored in the theory of organisational behaviour these motivators entail functional and emotional benefits, however a more explicit description of these will be provided in section 2.3. Therefore, strongly related to the definition of employer branding, this foundation encompass that the employer brand should express motivating factors in order to attract potential employees.

As implied in the name “employer branding” the concept necessitates a focus on branding theory, which forms the last founding principle in understanding employer branding. More specifically, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) assess that brand equity is important to consider in developing an attractive employer brand. Similarly, Barrow & Mosley (2008) argue that in the
field of employer branding, the employee should be regarded as a consumer and the product/service offered is a job. Thus, the theoretical framework of branding and building brand equity is highly applicable in employer branding. Supporting, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) state that the desired outcome of successful employer branding is employer brand equity as this encourages potential employees to apply. The employer brand should, therefore, also focus on creating employer brand equity through its communication efforts.

The foundations identified above are necessary to consider to fully understand the building blocks of employer branding. Therefore, to develop a deeper understanding of what motivates employees as well as how branding theory and brand equity relates to effective employer branding communication; the following sections will concentrate on examining the field of branding theory and organisational theory.

2.3 Branding Theory
Employer branding operates within the field of both human resources and marketing, and is deeply rooted within branding theory. Originally, the term branding had a product oriented view as it was associated with consumer goods and services. However, today it is used in broader terms describing virtually anything carrying a distinct identity, and the reputation, good or bad, associated with that identity (Barrow & Mosley, 2008). Branding efforts are, therefore, not only directed at consumers, but all stakeholders. This section will examine the basics of branding theory and how it is related to employer branding.

2.3.1 What is a Brand?
Traditionally, branding traces back to the branding of cattle and was used to identify a supplier of a certain product or service (Roper & Parker, 2006). Since, the discipline of branding has continued to grow and many scholars have provided definitions on the subject. Most commonly, however, many of these build upon or are closely related to the one provided by Aaker in 1991: A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or pack design) intended to identify the goods and services of either one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors (Pickton & Broderick, 2005).

The creation of a brand is, therefore, embedded in identification of the product or service provided, as well as a differentiation strategy to stand out among immediate competitors. Supporting this view, Roper & Parker (2006) state that the very concept of branding is anchored in identification, ensuring that consumers can recognise a specific product. Pickton & Broderick
(2005) adds, however, that branding is not just about this being able to distinguish competitors from each other but about standing out as a better choice than the competitors. As competitors within the same industry often offer the same product functions, a strong brand needs to offer more than just the functional benefits. To attract consumers a brand holds a specific brand identity based on a value proposition of functional, emotional or symbolic benefits (Aaker, 1996).

In summation, a brand is created as an identification marker to differentiate a company from competitors and attract consumers.

### 2.3.2 Brand Equity and The Value Proposition

As stated above, employer brand equity is the desired outcome of employer branding communication, as it will encourage potential employees to apply (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Therefore, to be able to develop an employer branding framework, it is necessary to examine the foundation of brand equity and how this generates value to a brand.

According to Aaker (1996, pp. 7-8), **brand equity is a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or the firm's customer.** Brand equity can be regarded as a way to determine a brand’s value either good or bad. Brand equity is created through four categories: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. The concept of brand awareness is based on consumer’s knowledge of the brand’s existence and the consumer being able to recognise or recall the brand when necessary. Brand associations are anchored in a brand’s identity and the associations a consumer has of the brand. Brand loyalty is important in generating brand equity as a strong brand relies on a loyal consumer group. The concept refers to consumer’s continuous usage of the brand’s product or service (Aaker, 1996). To build employer brand equity, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) argue that especially the brand associations and brand loyalty are key factors. However, this thesis includes brand awareness as it is essential to build brand associations and brand loyalty. A potential employee cannot possess any associations if they are not familiar with the employer brand. Further, as the focus of this thesis is on external employer branding the concept of brand loyalty will not be dealt with, as it relates to internal employer branding. (For further clarification on the relation between employer branding and employee attraction as proposed by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), see appendix 1).
Positive brand equity is the desired aim of employer branding communication efforts, to reach this goal a brand identity needs to offer an attractive value proposition. Aaker (1996, p.95) defines a value proposition as a statement of the functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer. The value proposition expresses a brand's identity through the proposed benefits. According to Aaker (1996) the value proposition is tripartite; a brand can rely on one or any combination of the three in creating an attractive brand identity. The functional benefits of a brand are the functional utility of the product or service. Functional benefits are often limiting as immediate competitors often produce a similar product. Therefore, unless a company operates in a niche market, other value benefits need to be added to create differentiation. The emotional benefit is anchored in creating positive feelings when purchasing or using a brand and is considered to add a level of experience or richness to a brand. Self-expressive benefits of a brand provide an opportunity for the consumer to communicate a self-image or self-concept for both the consumer and the outside world (Aaker, 1996). Specifically what these benefits entail for employer branding will be discussed in section 2.5.

The value proposition is one of the key factors in building a strong brand and therefore it is also considered essential in building an attractive employer brand. Similarly, to customer brands, the employer brand should provide an effective value proposition, which attracts and propels potential employee to apply. Section 2.5 will include a discussion of what an attractive employer brand value proposition should embrace.

2.4 The Psychological Contract and Employee Motivation

As mentioned, it is essential for the employer brand to express potential benefits an employee will gain by attaining a job. These benefits are anchored in job motivators and the psychological contract. Therefore, this section will briefly outline what motivates employees, how it relates to the psychological contracts and affects the employer brand communication.

The psychological contract is defined as a joint agreement between an employee and employer including an understanding about the level of commitment expected of employees and of support offered by the employer (Brooks, 2009 pp. 98-99). Thus, the psychological contract is basically the expectation an employee and employer have towards future collaboration. Mosley (2007) argues that the employer brand needs to clarify expectations of both employee and employer. In addition, Rousseau (2001) states that the formation of the psychological contract is
activated through pre-employment experiences, such as employer branding activities. It is therefore important that the employer brand mirrors an accurate and realistic picture of a potential employment. Accuracy in the employer brand will be touched upon further in section 2.5 discussing effective employer branding communication.

As mentioned in section 2.2.1 expressing motivational factors in the employer brand will improve brand equity and drive potential employees to apply. This is expressed through the package of functional, economical, and emotional benefits of the employer brand. According to motivational theorists such as Maslow and Herzberg, employee’s motivation is driven by different subjective needs of job security, salary, growth, achievement, autonomy, and self actualisation (Brooks, 2009). More specifically, Gaddam (2008) lists some motivational factors which attracts potential employees, these include: financial compensation, working environment, work-life balance, professional development, flexibility, emotional attachment, and social and mental satisfaction. Employee motivation and satisfaction is closely linked to an attractive employer brand, as it encompass the value proposition offered and thus provides a reason to apply.

2.5 Effective Employer Branding Communication Framework

Previously, this chapter identified the concept and founding principles of employer branding. Subsequently, to develop a deeper understanding of what impact motivational factors and branding theory have on employer branding content, these were examined. This section will develop a theoretical framework for effective employer branding communication. The developed framework should be seen as a guideline to which values and messages should be communicated through textual and visual means in an employer brand. The framework is developed on the basis of David A. Aaker’s models of brand equity and brand identity planning mode and inspired by contemporary scholars within employer branding theory.
The framework is structured in three levels considered important to develop an attractive employer brand. The first level represents the desired goal of building employer brand equity. Based on the theory of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) the desired outcome of employer branding efforts is employer brand equity as this attracts and propels potential employees to apply.

This is realised through the employer brand associations and employer brand awareness, which help form perceptions of an employer brand in the minds of potential employees. The employer brand identity constitutes the third level and represents the communication of values and messages, which functions to build positive associations. According to Aaker (1996) brand associations are driven by brand identity. Therefore, it is important to create a strong and attractive brand identity to reach employer brand equity. Further, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) argue that brand associations build a brand image, which in turn affects the attraction of potential employees. The employer brand identity consists of three components, the value proposition, the organisation, and accuracy. The following section will elaborate upon the different components in the brand identity level, to deepen the understanding of effective employer branding communication.
2.5.1 Brand Identity: The Value Package

The value proposition is, in consistency with Barrow & Mosley’s (2008) package of benefits, the benefits a potential employee can obtain by employment in a company.

The functional benefits of an employer brand are basic values such as salary, flexible hours, work-life balance, benefits, leave allowance, safe working environment etc. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barrow & Mosley, 2008; Gaddam, 2008). Further, Berthon et al. (2005) identified that functional benefits are also manifested in what they refer to as “development value” and “application value”. Functional benefits only offer a company modest chances for differentiation, as these are easy to copy by competitors (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Thus, according to Lievens & Highhouse (2003) a company should also focus on symbolic benefits, as these have incremental value over functional benefits. However, to express the valuing of human capital and reach employees basic needs, functional benefits are excellent to incorporate into the employer brand.

The emotional benefits of a brand were anchored in creating positive feeling when a customer purchased or used a brand (Aaker, 1996). Similarly, employer brands aim at creating emotional engagement through psychological benefits (Barrow & Mosley, 2008). A potential employee will be attracted to the employer brand because working at that company will be personal fulfilling for the employee. The emotional benefits are driven by what motivate employees, such as feeling valued by colleagues, satisfaction with the work they perform, challenging work etc. Barrow & Mosley (2008, p. 59) state that people’s emotional attachment to the employer tends to be derived from the total work experience. The emotional benefits of an employer brand should, therefore, express a positive atmosphere of good collegial relations, and a fun and challenging working environment (Berthon et al., 2005).

The symbolic benefits of an employer brand functions similarly to Aaker’s self-expressive benefits. It is the overall idea or associations a brand tries to convey and is often of a more intangible nature such as: innovativeness, creativeness, professionalism etc. This benefit can create an atmosphere of status or prestige around the company and can thereby attract potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

2 Development value is the extent to which an employee is attracted to an employer that provides career-enhancing experiences and a springboard to future development (Berthon et al., 2005 p. 162).

3 Application value is the extent to which an employee is attracted to an employer providing the opportunity for the employee to apply theory they have learned as well as to teach others what they have learned (Berthon et al., 2005 p. 162).
The employer brand can convey either three parts of the value proposition in combination or alone, the importance is that it expresses a beneficial value to attract potential employees and that it is embedded within the organisational values.

2.5.2 Brand Identity: Organisation

In addition to the value package, the organisation and its values, mission, and vision are an important component in building brand identity. The brand identity and to the value proposition should be anchored in the foundation of the organisation.

According to König (2008/2009) an effective employer brand should consists of an individual aspect (employee benefits) and a corporate aspects. Further, Gaddam (2008) argues that the organisational culture, as expressed through values, vision, and mission, plays a vital role in creating a strong employer brand. Thus, the value package is not sufficient to attract potential employees; the organisation itself needs to be expressed through the employer brand. Barrow & Mosley (2008 p. 117) state that the first reference point for an employer brand proposition should be the corporate vision and mission. This is intended to create consistency in the employer brand as well as function as the basis upon which the value proposition is build (Barrow & Mosley, 2008). Similarly to the value proposition, the organisational features (values, mission, and vision) can be expressed through textual and visual means and functions to support the symbolic benefits (“the big idea”) as well.

2.5.3 Brand Identity: Accuracy

Lastly, the employer brand identity is surrounded by “accuracy”, which signifies the need to develop an honest employer brand. According to Moroko & Uncles (2008), a successful employer brand should be portrayed accurately to ensure positive brand associations. As mentioned earlier, Rousseau (2001) argued that the employer brand messages activate the formation of a psychological contract. By providing accuracy, the employer brand helps inform the terms of mutual obligations and expectations, which helps ensure a fulfilment of the psychological contract (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Further, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) add that honest messages and realistic job previews help build an accurate picture of the organisation, which will create positive associations. Besides delivering an honest employer brand promise, accuracy in the employer brand can be enforced through testimonies given by current employees (Gaddam, 2008). Therefore, to build positive employer brand associations, accuracy is important to consider.
2.6 Part Conclusion
To identify how Microsoft uses communication to brand themselves as an employer of choice, it was necessary to examine the field of employer branding before conducting an analysis. This chapter has identified the concept of employer branding, its relevance and advantages for companies as well as defined how this thesis will deal with external employer branding. The foundations of employer branding were described to develop a deeper understanding of which factors should be considered in connection to external employer branding communication. Subsequently, a theoretical framework for employer branding communication was developed in form of a model containing the pivotal values and messages to be communicated through the textual and visual means of an employer brand.

3 Microsoft Analysis

The purpose of the founded framework was to determine what components and values should be communicated via the external employer brand to attract potential employees. As mentioned in the introduction, the underlying assumption of this thesis is anchored in Microsoft being nominated as an “employer of choice 2009”, which leads to the assumption that Microsoft will provide a good example of effective employer branding communication. In the following section, an example of Microsoft’s employer branding material is analysed through discursive and rhetorical resources to identify how Microsoft uses communication to brand themselves as an employer of choice. The analysis is based on discursive ad rhetorical tools provided by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006), Stiller (1998), and Daniel Kies (Kasch, 2005).

3.1 The Microsoft Values
It was established in the employer branding communicative framework that an organisation’s values as expressed through corporate mission, vision, and values, were essential in forming the employer brand. Therefore, to analyse and understand how the Microsoft employer brand is communicated, the Microsoft mission and values are included.
The Microsoft mission:

At Microsoft, our mission and values are to help people and business throughout the world realize their full potential. (About Microsoft, 2010)

3.2 Microsoft Careers Analysis

The following analysis will examine how Microsoft through textual and visual means communicate their employer brand on the Microsoft careers website. The empirical material being analysed is enclosed in appendix 2. The communicative purpose and its move structure will be identified to understand the intentions of Microsoft. In addition, the communicative purpose and related move structure will form the further analysis. To examine how and by what means the communicative purpose is realised, a textual and visual discursive analysis is employed.

3.2.1 Communicative Purpose and Move Structure

As mentioned previously, Frandsen et al. (1997) argue that all texts have an overall communicative purpose, which is realised through a series of moves in a move structure (Kasch, 2005). The communicative purpose for the empirical material is to attract potential employees and thus create an attractive employer brand. This purpose is realised through a move structure of four moves, all with different means to reaching the communicative purpose. As indicated in appendix 2, the four moves are naturally divided in sections on the career website.

The first move, consisting of two lines of text placed on a picture of a woman, functions to arouse interest about Microsoft as an employer and thereby make the reader study the rest of the career website. In continuity, the next move functions to create desire about Microsoft as a potential workplace by describing what characteristics Microsoft value in a potential employee as well as describing some of the benefits a Microsoft employee can obtain and enjoy. Based on this, the third move encourages the reader to explore job openings and apply. Thus, the goal of this third move is to induce action. Lastly, the fourth move in building an attractive employer brand consists of the pictorial presence of employer -and workplace awards and testimonies from current employees. This functions to carry conviction and display accuracy of the
employer brand. Together these four moves help create an attractive employer brand, and thus reach the communicative purpose.

3.2.2 Discourse Analysis
The communicative purpose and its moves are realised through the textual and visual resources in the empirical material. The following section will analyse these resources in detail to develop a deeper understanding of how Microsoft uses communication to build an attractive employer brand. The textual analysis, based on Halliday’s register analysis, scrutinises the grammatical choices of the empirical material, and is very detailed in describing both single words as well as sentence constructions. Therefore, to create an accessible textual analysis, the discourse analysis is structured around the move structure described above.

Arousing Interest
As mentioned above, the first move mainly functions to arouse interest and introduce the reader to the Microsoft employer brand (Image 1.).

Textually, the move consists of two imperative sentences: *Come as you are. Do what you love.* The ideational resources are action processes (Come, Do), indicating a desire for the reader to actively engage in the employer brand and the Microsoft organisation. Adding to the active atmosphere, the grammatical time and perspective is presence, signifying that a potential employment could become a reality right now. Further, a relational and mental processes (you are, you love) are used to describe the potential employee, and indicate that Microsoft values
employee’s individuality and that Microsoft is a workplace where professional and personal passion can be combined. The individuality is emphasised further by the circumstantial as, which creates the role or personality Microsoft looks for in a potential employee, namely as you are. This leads to the interpersonal textual resources in the text concerning the construction of relations between sender and receiver. The imperative sentence structure assigns authority to Microsoft. The authoritative mood creates an active atmosphere as well as empowers the potential employees with uniqueness by directly addressing them (you). It is a strong rhetorical tool to set an authoritative tone in the introduction to the employer brand as it empowers Microsoft with credibility. This credibility is important to for the further employer brand communication as it helps ensure that potential employees trust the organisation.

Visually, the move consists of a pictorial frame surrounding and connecting an image of a woman sitting laid-back, smiling at the viewer with the text *Come as you are. Do what you love.* The ideational structure in this image is a conceptual process, where the woman represents a Microsoft employee. Analytically, she is the representative and her smile is as an attribute symbolising happiness and, through this, that Microsoft employees are happy employees. The interpersonal resources of the visual image establish the relation between the depicted participant (woman) and the viewer (potential employee). The participant’s direct gaze at the viewer construct a demand for attention and realises a visual “you”. This symbolises that the represented Microsoft employee could be the viewer and that by joining Microsoft the potential employee can become as happy and satisfied as the depicted participant. This is emphasised through the close social distance of the image, which creates an intimate atmosphere between the participant and the viewer and thereby realises the visual “you” once again. Further, the picture angle provides the viewer with power symbolising that the viewer has the power to become a happy Microsoft employee.

The composition of the image, combining textual and visual resources, adds to arousing interest through salience and framing. The most salient part of the image is the text *do what you love,* and through this strong emotional appeal it functions as the main process in arousing interest. Further, the framing of the image and the text overlapping the participant create a strong connectivity in the image, symbolising that “to do what you love” is connected with being a Microsoft employee. Thus, the visual resources in the first move possess strong emotional appeals and function to arouse interest about working at Microsoft.
In this first move, Microsoft uses textual and visual communication strategies to express important employer branding values and messages for the purpose of arousing interest about Microsoft as an employer. Both the textual and visual messages are anchored in Microsoft’s mission and values (section 3.1). The textual resources surround creating an encouraging atmosphere in terms of both the authoritative tone and by empowering employees with uniqueness. In addition, this is emphasised through the visual resources creating a strong emotional appeal.

Creating Desire
The next move in realising an attractive employer brand consists of an explanatory text with the heading *Imagine* (Image 2.)

**Imagine**

You have unique experiences, skills and passions—and we believe you can bring them all to Microsoft for a rich, rewarding career and lifestyle that will surprise you with its breadth and potential. Just imagine the excitement and satisfaction of what you can do, where you can go, and the difference you can make with the resources of Microsoft behind you.

Here at Microsoft U.K., we help change the way the world lives, works and plays. Explore our job opportunities and, if you like what you see, consider joining us—our people are some of the most extraordinary people you’ll ever meet.


The textual resources create desire about Microsoft as a potential workplace and the proposed benefits obtained by employment. The ideational resources are guided by the grammatical processes of verb choice, agent type, and time perspective. The heading (*Imagine*) is a mental verb in an imperative form and sets the scene for the explanatory text. It invites or politely commands the reader to consider the future and *imagine* how it could be to be an employee at Microsoft. Therefore, the explanatory text is surrounded by a dreamy atmosphere, functioning to create desire as mentioned above.

The text consists of both mental and relational process verbs and thus it is interesting to examine the context in which they are represented. The relational processes (have, can) are used to describe the potential employee and his’ skills and abilities. By presuming that the potential employee actually does *have unique experiences, skills and passions*, the reader is empowered,
as in the section above. This empowerment adds to creating desire, and functions as a rhetorical emotional appeal. Further, it describes what talents Microsoft values in a potential employee. This is emphasised by the fact that the agent for the relational processes (you) is the potential employee. The thematically progression in the text surrounds the unmarked theme you and therefore emphasises creating desire is all about “you” (the reader).

The mental processes (imagine) is, as mentioned above, creating the dreamy atmosphere. The second mental process (believe) adds to empowering the potential employee, indicate the possibility of an employment at Microsoft, and encourage the employee to apply.

The use of two imperative sentence structures creates the relation between Microsoft and the reader. Besides functioning to uphold the dreamy atmosphere, they assign authority to Microsoft who assumes the role of guiding the reader through his possible future at Microsoft. This is emphasised by the heavy use of modality (can, will) indicating possibility. The present and ongoing perspective of the verb processes emphasise the aspect of possibility by indicating this future is a reality. These ideational and interpersonal resources connotes that joining Microsoft; the future you dream of can become a reality, and therefore functions as a strong rhetorical emotional appeal. Furthermore, this relates strongly to the Microsoft mission and values of creating an atmosphere for helping people realize their true potential (About Microsoft, 2010).

Attitudinal lexis (unique, rewarding, rich) further realises the purpose of creating desire about Microsoft as a potential workplace. By using the determiner unique to describe the skills and passions of the potential employee, Microsoft assigns uniqueness to the potential employee, which adds to empowerment of the reader as mentioned above. Further, it indicates that Microsoft recognise that their employees are unique and thereby express they value their employees. The qualitative determiners rewarding and rich are used to emphasise the value and quality of the benefits in working at Microsoft. These determiners form a strong function in attracting potential employees as they are used to describe both functional and emotional benefits obtained by a Microsoft employment. The connotation of rewarding and rich encompass that a career will hold economic and developmental prospects as well as personal satisfaction.

In this section, Microsoft uses textual communication to create a dreamy atmosphere and empower the potential employee to imagine future career with the organisation. Thus, the
textual resources in this section form an important tool in creating desire about the Microsoft workplace and developing an attractive employer brand.

**Induce Action**

The goal of the third move is to induce action, which is vividly expressed through the textual resources (Image 3)

![Image 3. Third move: induce action. Excerpted from appendix 2.](image)

The ideational processes in this section consist of all three verb categories action (lives, works, plays), mental (help, explore, like, consider), and relational (are). The action-based atmosphere is supported by the action verbs (lives, works, plays) describing the outcomes a potential employee can help create by working at Microsoft. Further, these connote that that a job at Microsoft entails a combination of living, working and, playing with what you love to do, as well as help change the world. Thus, Microsoft is portrayed as an innovative and creative organisation constantly trying to improve the world of technology. Therefore, these three verbs function as a rhetorical appeal to attract potential employees by expressing emotional and symbolic benefits. The mental verbs *explore* and *consider* are used in an imperative form, which adds to the guideline function described above. Furthermore, the imperative form assigns authority to Microsoft giving a command (explore, consider) and therefore these verb processes adds to the action-based atmosphere.

The relational verb process (are) appearing in the end of the last sentence holds a different function from the other ideational resources. The first part of the section focuses on inducing action, trying to get the potential employee join the Microsoft organisation. This very last part of the section, however, does not include any action processes or imperative form, and therefore does not function to induce action. Instead, through the relational process, attitudinal lexis and modality, its purpose is to recreate desire and attract the potential employee. The relational verb (are) is used to describe the Microsoft employees and expresses that the organisation appreciates and values its human capital. This is strongly emphasised by categorisation of the verbs agent (our people). Instead of referring to their employee as co-worker, employees or subordinates,
Microsoft refers to them as people, connoting that they recognise and value their employees. Furthermore, by the circumstantial *our* (people), Microsoft indicates that the organisation has a strong and unified culture. The use of a qualitative determiner (the most extraordinary) emphasise that Microsoft values their employees and further indicates that, if joining the organisation, the potential employee can become extraordinary. Moreover, the modal verb (you’ll), once again, indicates possibility and future prospects for the potential employee by joining the organisation.

This section clearly functions to induce action and attract potential employees to reach the communicative purpose. The section realises this by creating a brand identity based on the organisation’s culture, valuing human capital, and using emotional and symbolic benefits as an appeal to attract potential employees.

**Accuracy**

The section accuracy is the fourth move in realising the communicative purpose (Image 4).

This section is isolated from the rest of the employer brand (move 1-3); however it forms an important function in creating an effective employer brand. Through the visual images of employer awards, surveys, and workplace achievements Microsoft enhances both accuracy and an emotional beneficial appeal by expressing positive working environment. Further, by providing the potential employee with the possibility to explore the organisation from another perspective placed next to the awards employee blogs function as testimonies to verify that what Microsoft has claimed about the organisation and the working environment is in fact true. The awards and employee testimonies function rhetorically to provide Microsoft with credibility and
trustworthiness, which is important to display accuracy and through that an attractive employer brand.

### 3.3 Part conclusion

This chapter set out to analyse the empirical material in terms of its communicative strategies and how Microsoft brands them self as an employer of choice. The communicative purpose and move structure was identified to understand what Microsoft set out to achieve with the content on the career website. The communicative purpose was to create an attractive employer brand, which was realised through four moves; arousing interest, creating desire, inducing action, and displaying accuracy. Through a textual and visual analysis, it was examined how Microsoft communicated the important values and messages of effective employer branding as identified in section 2. It is therefore concluded that, to create an attractive employer brand, Microsoft employs communicative strategies strongly relating to the employer branding framework developed earlier.

### 4 Microsoft and Effective Employer Branding Communication

To understand and examine how Microsoft brands them self as an employer of choice, a theoretical framework for employer branding communication was developed and a textual and visual analysis of the Microsoft career website was employed. Through this, it was concluded that Microsoft uses communication strategies related to employer branding communication. This chapter seeks to emphasise how Microsoft’s communication efforts relate to employer branding theory and thereby answer the last part of the problem statement.

The developed framework was manifested in a model containing essential values and message for communicating an attractive employer brand (figure 1). To understand how Microsoft’s textual and visual communication efforts relate to employer branding theory, the developed model will be applied to the empirical Microsoft material. Figure 2 illustrates the Microsoft employer brand and components used to attract potential employees.
As depicted in figure 2, the Microsoft employer brand identity consists of an emotional and symbolic value proposition, organisational values, and displays accuracy.

The organisation and its values (section 3.1) are strongly represented throughout the empirical material and functions as a reference point for the entire employer brand. The concept of *realising your full potential* is present as an underlying foundation throughout the first move, however in the second (*Just imagine (...)*) and third move (*we help change (...)*) it is explicitly expressed. Thus, Microsoft’s organisational values function as a founding outset for the value proposition and thereby creates coherent employer brand.

As mentioned in section 2.5.1 the emotional benefits in an attractive employer brand should express personal fulfilment, fun and challenging work environment, positive atmosphere, and good collegial relations (Berthon *et al.*, 2005). The emotional benefits provided by Microsoft were manifested throughout the first three moves in the move structure and encompass all the values in an attractive employer brand. Personal fulfilment is reached by Microsoft expressing that its job combine work and passion (*do what you love*), and by promising a *rewarding career and lifestyle* and a job with *breadth and potential* (appendix 2). These abstracts along with *changing the way the world lives* (...) also connote a fun and challenging work environment. Further, by describing employees as *our people* and *extraordinary*, Microsoft creates a positive atmosphere of good collegial relations and express that they value employees. Thus, the
emotional benefits functions to attract potential employees by encompassing both professional and personal aspects.

Throughout the empirical material Microsoft expresses symbolic employee benefits surrounding the concepts creativeness and innovativeness. Strongly related to the organisational values, these are explicitly present in the second move (Just imagine (...)) and third move (we help change (...)). Therefore, the organisational values support the symbolic benefits throughout the Microsoft employer brand. The symbolic benefits function to create an atmosphere of status and prestige around Microsoft as a potential workplace and thereby try to attract potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

As discussed in chapter 2, it is important to communicate accuracy or create a picture of honesty in the employer brand. The discourse analysis identified that the fourth move in creating an attractive employer brand concerned this accuracy. This accuracy was manifested through employer awards and employee testimonies, and functions to provide Microsoft credibility to Microsoft as an employer. Further, this functions to ensure positive brand associations and avoid a breach of the psychological contract (section 2.5.3).

Microsoft has created an attractive employer brand, which is based on employer branding theory as discussed in chapter 2. The value proposition is a mix of emotional and symbolic benefits, and based on the organisational values, which creates a coherent employer brand. It is important to notice the almost total absence of functional benefits in the employer brand. In the second move, the determiners rewarding and rich could connote that a job at Microsoft encompass economic benefits, however this is not expressed explicitly. According to Lievens & Highhouse (2003) symbolic benefits have incremental value over functional benefits, especially in a generic industry. Microsoft operates within the technology industry, which encompass many large competitive organisations able to offer the same functional benefits as Microsoft. Therefore, by focusing on emotional and symbolic benefits, Microsoft indicates that emotional and personal values are important, and thereby help the organisation distinguish itself from immediate competitors.

Thus, as Microsoft’s employer brand relates strongly to the theoretical aspects, it has proven a good example of effective employer branding communication. The hypothesis set forth in the introduction chapter can therefore be verified. This provides other companies the opportunity to create or improve their external employer brand based on the component argued for in the framework for effective employer branding communication.
5 Conclusion

Today’s knowledge-based economy entails that talented people are among the most important resources in a company and thus a natural force in creating a competitive edge. This war for talent has led to the development of employer branding, functioning to attract and retain talented employees. Every year, organisations compete to win various “employer of choice” and workplace awards as these help create a compelling employer brand. In 2009, Microsoft was awarded several of these prices and nominated as number 1 in workplace relations by The Reputation Institute.

Based on this, the underlying hypothesis was that Microsoft would provide a good example of effective employer branding communication. Therefore, the purpose of the thesis has been to examine how Microsoft uses communication to brand themselves as an employer of choice and how this communication effort relates to the theoretical perspective of employer branding. Through a theoretical discussion of employer branding and a textual and visual discourse analysis, Microsoft’s communication strategy was identified. The findings proved that Microsoft uses textual and visual communication to create an attractive employer brand. This is realised through a move structure of four moves: arouse interest, create desire, induce action, and displaying accuracy. Further, the findings proved the values and messages communicated via this move structure strongly related to the theoretical perspective of employer branding communication. Based on these findings the thesis concludes that Microsoft employs communicative strategies from employer branding and that their career website, therefore, displays a good example of employer branding communication.

The developed framework and results of this thesis add to the understanding of attractive employer brands. This holds potential benefits for organisations wishing to create or improve their employer brand, as well as for the theoretical field of employer branding.

Based on the research question the intention of this thesis was to examine Microsoft’s external employer brand. Therefore, methodological hermeneutics was applied through a discourse analysis to understand the intentions of Microsoft. Theories of employer branding and discourse analysis were applied to answer the research question. To examine Microsoft’s intentions of the external employer brand, these theories has proven sufficient. However, this method and
analysis only examine the values and messages Microsoft tries to communicate. To encompass the entire Microsoft employer brand, research of reception analysis would need to be conducted to examine whether the employer brand is understood and perceived as desired by Microsoft. This would also enable research to establish employer brand association - and awareness and, thereby, whether Microsoft has been able to create an attractive employer brand.

Furthermore, to gain a holistic perspective of Microsoft’s employer brand, an analysis of the internal employer brand should be conducted as well. Similarly, this could be realised through analysis of Microsoft’s communication material produced for employees, and accompanied by a reception analysis among current employees. Additionally, future research within the area of employer branding could examine the relation between employer branding strategies and corporate branding strategies. Employer branding is part of the corporate branding umbrella, however, research could determine the possibility of organisations applying employer branding strategies as a means to build a positive reputation.

6 Bibliography


http://www.microsoft.com/about/default.mspx#values


Appendix 1: Backhaus & Tikoo model: employer branding framework

Copy of Backhaus & Tikoo figure 1 (2004, p 505) produced by author. The model creates an overview of how employer branding creates employer attraction and employee productivity.
Appendix 2: Microsoft Career’s front page, U.K.

1 Arouse interest

2 Create desire

Imagine

You have unique experiences, skills and passions—and we believe you can bring them all to Microsoft for a rich, rewarding career and lifestyle that will surprise you with its breadth and potential. Just imagine the excitement and satisfaction of what you can do, where you can go, and the difference you can make with the resources of Microsoft behind you.

Here at Microsoft U.K., we help change the way the world lives, works and plays. Explore our job opportunities and, if you like what you see, consider joining us—our people are some of the most extraordinary people you’ll ever meet.

3 Induce action

4 Accuracy

What others are saying

Don’t take our word for it. Leading employer surveys consistently rate us as an employer of choice.

Hear it from us

Stay up to date with some of our popular employee blogs.

Steve Clayton: ‘Geek in Disguise’
My day job is cloud computing guy. My other job is generally helping to put a human face on the company on the web.

Andrew Fryer: ‘Insufficient Data’
Information for IT Pros on BI/ SQL server, Microsoft’s BI client tools, plus assorted articles and state of play in the industry.