

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING COMMUNICATION CASE STUDY: COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

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Abstract:

The current situation, of unprecedented development of the internal marketing and of the communication within it, commits any researcher who is drawn to this field, to accuracy, clarity, coherence and astuteness while identifying the mode in which the internal communication plan can be elaborated in tight connection with the organization's relational marketing objectives (hired personnel's satisfaction). Communication remains the main interaction element in the internal marketing. However, the indicators with maximum impact on employees' satisfaction must be discovered and tested. The present study takes into consideration a series of communication variables and submits them to ergonomic tests (descriptive and causal) in order to add value to the managerial planning of the communication strategy.

Keywords: relational marketing, internal marketing, communication, employees' satisfaction

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Successively, marketing gained new valences: it moved from orientation towards consumption, to that towards transactions, and further towards competition, and later towards clients. All these determined the almost natural evolution towards relational marketing. Much was written about the network of relations (Gummeson 1994, 1999, 2008) that needed to be build, but the importance of configuring the communication plan's structure, adapted to these trends, appeared relatively recently in the scientific pursuit range.

In direct relation with this range of significant issues we also come across the frequency with which the national and international specialty literature authors bring into discussion the matters of communication channels, techniques and tools capable of sustaining the modern organizations' ambitious objectives. The current situation of unprecedented development of the internal marketing and of the communication within it, commits any researcher who is drawn to this field, to accuracy, clarity, coherence and astuteness in his investigation.

2. Literature review

A thorough analysis of the current stage of knowledge entitles us to act in the direction of emphasizing our national authors' contribution to enriching the reference conceptual spectrum. One of the latest approaches of the concept of relational marketing introduces new elements that accompany the strategic endeavor: "increase of the capacity to involve all market actors within an assembly of long-term connections; the participative involvement, along with the manufacturers, of the request bearer; the development of some long-term connections between the exchange relationship partners" (Pop N. Al. 2006, pp. 39-40).

"In essence, relational marketing refers to the strategic management of the relations with all relevant categories of stakeholders" (Bălan C. 2007, p. 8). The attempt to increase the value perceived by the clients, implies the orientation of the organization's efforts towards all members of the relations networks, which they themselves represent a value generating chain, and therefore an important aspect in the strategic planning of relational marketing.

Traditionally, the external interested parties (consumers, intermediaries, financial groups, etc.) have been the target of marketing communication. The importance, at internal level, of all persons implicated in the changing process and in orientating the communication effort in this direction, lead to the appearance (in the 80's) and development of the concept of internal marketing. More and more organization understood the role that employees hold in attaining the global strategic objective.

By coherently planning the internal communication, the organization can stimulate its employees to adhere to their own values and beliefs, strategies and objective, thus making possible the mission to eliminate the difference between the consumers' perception regarding the brand and what the organization really transmitted (Fill Ch. 2006, p. 325).

Communication remains the main interaction element in the internal marketing. In the internal marketing, the communication means can be grouped in two categories: customized and un-customized or medial, as presented in table no.1.

Table1. Typology of the internal communication

Mode of addressing Fluency of endeavor	Customized	Un-customized (medial)
Continuous	Continuous customized internal communication Example: • trainings and schooling • group projects • mentorship	Un-customized internal communication (medial) Example: • employees' newsletter • intranet • video
Sporadic	Sporadic customized internal communication Example: • workshops • discussions with the employees	Sporadic un-customized internal communication (medial) Example: • news-board • circular (letter)

Source: Bruhn, M., 2007, p. 233

The creation of partnerships represents a priority for the top management. The first stage is represented by the need to carry out a complex investigation of the communication flows found at internal level in the organization. Finalizing this action presents the persons responsible with elaborating an internal communication strategy, a comprehensive image containing the following indicators of interest:

- *Dimension of communication* (inferior management, team, project team, superior management);
- *Level of communication* (coordinators, teammates, project colleagues, top managers, top managers);
- *Direction of the communication flow* (predominantly bidirectional, bidirectional, bidirectional, unidirectional);
- *Participants to the communication process* (coordinators, employees, top managers);
- *Message content* (role of employees, personal impact, information on the project, on everyone's tasks, organizational objectives, launch of new products)

The results associated to the investigation are contained in five columns, as observed in the table below, no. 2:

Table2. Internal communication matrix

Dimension	Level	Direction the communication flow	Participants in the communication flow	Content of the message
Management inferior	Coordinators	<i>Predominantly bidirectional</i>	Coordinators ↕ Employees	Employees' role, personal impact, etc.
Team	Teammates	Bidirectional	Employees ↕ Employees	Necessary information, discussion on the team's tasks, etc.
Project team	Project colleagues	Bidirectional	Employees ↕ Employees	Information on the project, etc.
Superior	Top managers	<i>Predominantly unidirectional</i>	Top managers ↓ Employees	Organizational objectives, development, launch of new products, etc.

Source: adaptation after Welch and Jackson (Fill Ch., 2009, p. 898)

3. Case Study

Defining the research problem: identify the mode in which the internal communication plan can be elaborated in tight correlation with the organization's relational marketing objectives. In these conditions, it is compulsory to find the optimum communication versions that can increase the employed personnel's degree of satisfaction.

The connection between the internal communication and employees' satisfaction is the object of a complex analysis presented in a recent study. Its results form a valuable premise for the present study:

- "Between cultivating satisfaction among the employees and internal communication there is a positive connection, but not a strong one. The role of internal communication is not crucial with reference to employees' satisfaction, as it explains only 31% of the total" (Neagoe C., 2012, p. 178).

The purpose of the quantitative research is defining and testing some internal communication indicators with reference to their impact on employees' satisfaction. The quantitative research has the role of offering support for designing future complex, conclusive studies that offer clear and adequate premises. In order to ensure support while coherently developing the endeavor, the questioning took place with the help of interview-operators – as they are prepared to offer the possibly necessary clarifications.

The research sample is made up of a number of 250 employees, excluding the ones in a management position as it has been intended to present the personnel's perception regarding the manner in which the degree of satisfaction can be increased at the work place. The studied collectivity has been selected randomly from different divisions, positions and metropolis field organizations and the *collection period* for the answers has been March-June 2012.

Main obtained results:

□ Descriptive analysis

- The employees' preferences regarding the communication tools are mostly orientated to those that allow face-to-face or phone contact (the phone being the most used means of communication at internal level – this statement has been registered for 65% of the questioned personnel);
- The communication flow described as containing an increased efficiency by most of the questioned personnel (87%) is the bidirectional one; but only 41% of the questioned personnel consider that the internal communication plan is characterized by such a flow.

□ Econometric analysis

The analysis of the results in terms of regression coefficients leads to obtaining information that mostly reflects:

- "*The organization's reputation*" has a substantial impact on employees' satisfaction and on the way they perceive the organization's internal climate (value of coefficient – 0.186). This result can be explained by the fact that the organizations' reputation leads to the perception of high performances on the part of the organization.
- "*The degree of information*". Since the regression incline is positive, it shows a direct action of the degree of information on the employees' satisfaction. Results' interpretation show that should the degree of personnel information increase with 1%, satisfaction modifies to positive by 0.112%.

4. Conclusions and managerial implications

The main communication problems at internal level are related to the absence, in most part, of the bidirectional flow communication. The natural recommendation for managers is to surpass the stage of communication to the employees towards the stage of implicating them in the communication process by stimulating feedback or interactive type participation. The econometric studies complete the image resulted from interpreting the descriptive information in order to offer a real support at strategic level. By correlating the results of the econometric analyses, we can observe that for the organization's intangible values (e.g. organization's reputation) to be reflected in the hired personnel' satisfaction, managers have to ensure continuous information at internal level, in a management – employees flow, with reference to financial results, future strategies, marketing, branding results, etc.

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