

Anna Rogala
Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu

Komunikacja marketingowa skierowana do wnętrza i na zewnątrz organizacji – wzajemne relacje The relations between external and internal marketing communications

Adresatem większości działań komunikacyjnych prowadzonych przez przedsiębiorstwa są potencjalni klienci. Aby zyskać ich przychylność i skłonić do skorzystania z oferty firmy, wykorzystuje się szereg instrumentów komunikacji marketingowej. Większość opracowań dotyczących tego procesu w centrum zainteresowania stawia klienta i jego potrzeby, przy czym klientem jest ten, który kupuje produkty bądź usługi przedsiębiorstwa. Tymczasem nie mniej uwagi powinno poświęcać się tzw. klientom wewnętrznym, czyli pracownikom organizacji. Głównym celem niniejszych rozważań jest analiza relacji między zewnętrzną i wewnętrzną komunikacją marketingową. Szczególna uwaga zostanie poświęcona działaniom z obszarów: marketingu personalnego, marketingu wewnętrznego i wewnętrznego public relations. W artykule zawarte zostaną częściowe wyniki badań ilościowych (ankieta bezpośrednia i ankiet internetowa) prowadzonych przez autorkę, dotyczące wewnętrznej komunikacji marketingowej i jej wpływu na personel przedsiębiorstw.

Slowa kluczowe: komunikacja marketingowa, komunikacja wewnętrzna, marketing wewnętrzny, wewnętrzne public relations, wizerunek firmy

Introduction

Offering consumers the expected products or services in a more effective way than competition does, it is the basis of a proper functioning of an enterprise on the market in terms of marketing. To achieve this goal it is crucial to collect information about potential purchasers' needs, trends or activities undertaken by rivals, but on the other hand, it is significant to inform the market about one's own offer. It must not be forgotten that in spite of clients there are other groups of recipients of the company's communication activities, such as suppliers, local community, banks or local governments. Furthermore, communication is not limited only to external market but it includes internal market i.e. employees as well. Thus the scope of activity of marketing communications is much wider than one could expect. Taking into account the fact that all information a company sends out to the world build its complex image, hence its messages should be as cohesive as possible. Such cohesion helps build credibility and reputation, which is reflected in the results gained by a company. For this reason it is necessary to integrate communication activities directed to a client and the market with the internal part of an organization.

The main aim of this discussion is the analysis of the relations between external and internal marketing communications. A particular attention is given to: human

resources marketing, internal marketing and internal public relations. The discussion also includes partial results of the research conducted by the author. The subject of the research is internal marketing communications and its influence on employees' attitudes and opinions.

The diversity of marketing communications objectives

Marketing communications is an interactive dialog between an organization (an enterprise or an institution) and its external and internal environment. This dialog is to meet the addressees needs by company's market offer¹. This complex process must take into account the needs and expectations of different groups of recipients. The situation is reflected in a rich classification of aims, where the target can be both internal and external recipients (see table 1).

Table 1
The most important objectives of the organization's communications

Objectives	Adressees of actions
▪ create awareness of a new product offering	→ internal and external
▪ launch a new product offering	→ external
▪ stimulate trial purchase	→ external
▪ increase frequency of purchase	→ external
▪ increase consumption	→ external
▪ increase retail store traffic	→ external
▪ encourage brand switching	→ external
▪ reduce or eliminate post-purchase cognitive dissonance	→ external
▪ generate sales leads	→ external
▪ set up appointments for salespeople	→ external
▪ make a specific sales presentations	→ external
▪ reinforce brand loyalty	→ external
▪ render a public service	→ internal and external
▪ change perceptions or attitude towards a product or a company	→ internal and external
▪ convey positive information about the organization	→ internal and external
▪ build the image of the product or organization	→ internal and external
▪ improve employees' attitudes towards the organization	→ internal

Source: Own elaboration based on Koekemoer L. (ed.), *Marketing Communications*, Juta and Co. Ltd., Lansdowne 2005, p. 23

The necessity to identify different recipient groups and their expectations, and adjusting information and tools which are used to the recipient of the process are particularly important. Taking into consideration various objectives of marketing communications one can conclude that their main target are clients. However, employees play a significant role in the process, as they enable the company to attain those goals. Therefore, marketing communications should improve personnel's attitudes towards the organization in order to make them more dedicated to fulfill their duties and as a result more efficient in selling goods and services to the customers. On the other hand, it is worth remembering that employees contribute directly or indirectly, to achieve (or to fail

¹ B. Szymoniuk, *Komunikacja marketingowa – istota i proces projektowania*, w: B. Szymoniuk (red.), *Komunikacja marketingowa – instrumenty i metody*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa 2006

to achieve) other marketing communication objectives. They have a lot of occasions in their private lives to influence potential clients by spreading positive information about the firm they work for. Discussions with friends and family about good atmosphere at the workplace, being a consumer or a user of company's products and services, as well as simply being satisfied with the job, gives the impression that this specific organization is worth considering as someone's market choice². As a consequence, the personnel strongly assists in: reinforcing brand loyalty, rendering a public service, changing consumers' perceptions and attitude towards the organization or its offer and building the image of a product, a brand or a company. Therefore, employees should be treated as a marketing communication audience with the same level of interest as clients. Internal marketing communications activities will be analyzed in the subsequent sections of this paper.

Employees as recipients of marketing communications

Communication strategy of a company should involve all groups of recipients that are important for its correct operation. External customers are given particular attention while the importance of personnel – internal customers, is diminished. Yet the role of the employees in marketing communication process can be and usually is threefold. Firstly, they are a transmitting channel for the information sent from an enterprise to current and potential customers. Besides, sellers and people who deal with customer service are a communication tool as well since their posture, gestures and words are the reflection of an organization as a whole. The third and the most important according to the author is the role of the recipient of the information as it has an impact upon personnel activities while performing the other two roles. Employees who are underreported, omitted or unhappy about the organizational communication should not be expected to become convincing ambassadors of the company outside.

Moreover, numerous communication activities planned as internal activities influence marketing mix elements and may result deliberately or not in information transfer to external recipients.³ The activity of an enterprise in terms of internal marketing, internal public relations and human resources marketing, with special attention given to communicative aspect seems to be significant in the context of multiplicity of the areas which must be taken into account while considering the internal dimension of marketing communications.

The concept of internal marketing appeared in subject literature at the end of 70s. In contrast with traditional marketing, internal marketing brings internal clients' interests in its focus and is based on the necessity to meet their needs related to motivation and satisfaction. Satisfying these needs properly is to lead to high quality of products and services offered by a company. Different definitions of internal marketing stress its different features – employee orientation, customer orientation or support for

² See e.g. A. Rogala, A. Kaniewska-Sęba, *Internal Communication as a Marketing Communications Tool*, in: 13th International Marketing Trends Conference, pod red. Françoise CONCHON - Paryż : ESCP-AEP European School of Management, 2013. s. CD

³ P.R. Smith, Ch. Berry, A. Pulford, *Strategic Marketing Communications: New Ways to Build and Integrate Communications*, Kogan Page Limited, London 2002, p. 13

implementing the strategy and change in management processes.⁴ In every case it is treated as an essential support for activities directed to external clients. Contemporary studies on internal marketing concentrate on aspects related to gaining employees acceptance and support for strategic objectives accomplishment and including them in decision making processes. Effective activities in this area lead to better individual results and consequently to better results of an enterprise as a whole. Such a situation takes place as satisfied employees transfer their contentment to customers, which in turn makes the latter more loyal and profitable⁵.

Whereas, the main purpose of internal public relations is establishing and cultivating positive relations between a company and internal market. The target audience is the owners, managers, personnel, potential or retired employees. The realization of the tasks mentioned above is based on suitable management of information policy, frequently called internal communication. It is responsible for creating a positive corporate identity as well as personnel's motivation and training in order to make them behave properly in the contacts with company's external audiences. Moreover, employees should be informed about marketing actions or important decisions that concern or influence them. This motivates them to accept the decisions and to assist in implementing them⁶.

The third marketing concept which concentrates on employees is human resources marketing. It focuses on the activities undertaken by a company in terms of social system. These activities are to create and maintain the image of a company as a good employer. The recipients are employees, both the current and the potential ones, and each subsystem consists of different elements. The following elements can be distinguished in internal human resources marketing: internal communication, motivation system, training system, creating and maintaining a company image as an employer and the system of internal recruitment and selection. Whereas external human resources marketing concerns activities related to communication, recruitment and creating and maintaining image outside organization⁷. In case of this concept communicative aspect is clearly highlighted as well.

The analysis of multiplicity of tasks posed in front of marketing communications and in front of marketing concepts directed towards employees and the connections between them lead to the establishment of classification of internal goals of marketing communications. According to the author they include:

- providing employees with information about a company and its offer,
- interacting on attitudes and behaviors of employees towards clients,
- creating and maintaining a positive company image among employees,
- encouraging employees to use organizations' offer.

⁴ See: J. Egan, *Marketing Communications*, Thomson Learning, London 2007, p. 354; S. Finney, *Stakeholder Perspective on Internal Marketing Communication*, Business Process Management Journal, 2011, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 311-331; A. Olsztyńska, *Marketing wewnętrzny w przedsiębiorstwie: koncepcja i narzędzia wspomagające integrację działań wewnętrznych organizacji*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej, Poznań 2005, p. 11.

⁵ D.E. Shultz, *Building an Internal Marketing Management Calculus*, Interactive Marketing, 2004, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 112

⁶ P. De Pelsmacker, M. Geuens, J. Van den Bergh, *Marketing Communications: A European Perspective*, Pearson Education Limited, Harlow 2007, p. 298

⁷ A. Baruk, *Marketing personalny jako instrument kreowania wizerunku firmy*, Difin, Warsaw 2006, p.14-15

The hierarchy of the enumerated goals may but does not have to differ depending on the character of a company activity. In case of service sector impact on attitudes and behaviors of employees in relations with clients is significant, whereas for a manufacturing company shaping a positive image for personnel may be more important. What is more, the classification depends on the perspective on which it is based; it may be the perspective of an employee or an employer. Aims established and activities undertaken in the organization in terms of internal marketing communications constitute one of the areas of interest in the research carried out by the author of this paper. Partial results of the research are presented in the further part of this discussion.

Internal communications as a tool of integrated marketing communications

Efficient internal communications is a basic condition for effective realization of the activities of internal marketing and public relations and also human resources marketing. It enables arousing understanding among personnel for every decision that is taken in the company and building loyalty and identification with the firm. It is necessary to underline that the real commitment of management to the concept of good internal communications and employee relationships is needed to all concepts above mentioned to be successful.⁸ Moreover, internal communications play a vital role in motivating employees and a motivated employee equals a good quality of products and services offered by the company. It must be remembered that the effectiveness of motivation and training systems exerts impact on personnel's attitude while interacting with clients.

The idea of integrated marketing communications emphasizes the necessity of a coherent and complex transfer of messages to all interested audiences. Internal integration level of marketing communications requests informing and familiarizing all employees with new products, services, business partners or strategies, in order to motivate and prepare them to fulfill their duties properly. What should be remembered is that the quality and outcomes of relationships between a company and its personnel depend mostly on the way they communicate with each other. Furthermore, the employees take their "buying" decisions related to: buying into an organizational objective or project, sharing an organization's vision or living up to corporate values.⁹ Whereas one of the main reasons of company failure in gaining personnel's goodwill is frequently inappropriate, or missing, implementation of integrated internal communications.

Properly implemented and managed internal communications, which will be integrated with company's marketing activities, leads to high level of personnel satisfaction and commitment. Consequently, employees build more profitable relationships with external clients. Moreover, marketing-based internal communication is crucial for strengthening emotional contracts between individual and the organization, which in turn increases employees' emotional capital in the company.

⁸ J. Blythe, *Essentials of Marketing Communications*, Pearson Education Limited, Harlow 2006, p. 142

⁹ K. Thomson, L. Hecker, L., *Value-adding Communication: Innovation in Employee Communication and Internal Marketing*, Journal of Communication Management, 2000 Vol. 5, No.1, p. 48

Objectives and methods

The research concerning internal forms of marketing communications carried out by the author of the following paper started in October 2012 and it will have been finished by the end of March 2013. The major aim of the research is to determine the usage and effectiveness of internal communications as a marketing communications tool directed towards the personnel of an enterprise. The activities related to internal marketing, human resources marketing and internal public relations are considered to be internal forms of marketing communications.

The research procedure was divided into two stages:

- stage I – quantitative research in the form of a questionnaire placed on a dedicated website for office workers and in the form of a direct questionnaire for production line workers;
- stage II – qualitative research in the form of focus group interview conducted with groups of employees representing different levels of organizational hierarchy.

The research took advantage of manufacturing and service companies with the place of residence in Wielkopolska. Because the project is still being developed the author presents only a part of the results of quantitative research in the following paper. They are to be an incentive for discussion on the role of internal marketing communications and their influence on employees.

The results

Partial results of quantitative research conducted by the author discussed in this paper are related to a sample of 430 employees of manufacturing and service companies. The group of respondents consisted of 57% of men and 43% of women. The majority of the respondents, 64.2%, were the representatives of manufacturing companies (276 people), 24.4% were employees of service companies (105 people) and 11.4% were people conducting mixed activities (49 people). The highest percentage of respondents works in medium size enterprises which employ between 50 and 249 people (63%). The other respondents represented microenterprises (0.7%), small enterprises (11.9%) and big enterprises (24.4%). As many as 206 respondents had high education or higher occupational education, whereas the other people finished education at the level of elementary school (9), vocational (115) or high school (100).

The analysis included issues related to the classification of aims of internal marketing communications, the evaluation of the degree of their pursuance in the respondents' opinion, preferred tools and the influence of internal communications on image aspects of the organization. The part of the questionnaire which concerned the evaluation of activities in terms of marketing communications conducted in a company and directed to employees. First of all, the respondents were asked whether there is a system informing them about the new products which a company offers. The opinions differ – 40% claims that such a system exists while 35.3% states that it does not, and 24.7% do not have an opinion. It is worth mentioning that employees who marked the answer "I do not have an opinion" were mostly production line workers and those who complained about the system of communication were representatives of different departments.

The respondents were also asked about the degree of informing them about the company's offer. As much as 40.47% were not able to take a stand on this issue. Over 32% claimed to be well (28.6%) or very well informed (3.95%). Strongly dissatisfied or rather dissatisfied respondents constituted almost 27% of the total amount and they came from different departments. The number of discontented respondents was higher in manufacturing companies – 85 people in relation to 25 in case of service companies.

In the next question the respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of the targets of internal marketing communications from the most (1) to the least significant ones (4). The final ranking was created in accordance with the following pattern. Every place in the ranking was given a particular numerical value: for the first position – 4 points, the second – 3 points, the third – 2 points, the fourth – 1 point. Next the number of answers in a particular version was multiplied by the number of points given to every target which was evaluated. Then these values were added up. After repeating the operation for every target the ranking of goals of marketing communications directed to employees was created. Table 2 presents the register of the answers with the position they were given.

Table 2

The ranking of targets of internal marketing communication according to the respondents

The targets of internal marketing communication	1	2	3	4	Total	The final ranking position
Giving employees information about the company and its offer	188	55	152	35	1256	1
Impingement on employees' attitudes and behaviors in relations with clients.	104	114	145	67	1115	2
Creating and maintaining a positive company image among employees.	92	155	84	99	1100	3
Encouraging employees to use the company's offer	46	106	49	229	829	4

Source: own elaboration, N=430.

Giving employees information about the company and its offer is the most important target of internal marketing communications according to the majority of respondents (188 nominations which was 43.7%). This aim obtained the highest mark in summary evaluation. What is important, no major differences between the answers from manufacturing companies and service companies were determined. The second position was taken by impingement on employees' attitudes and behaviors in relations with clients, and the third one by creating and maintaining a positive company image among employees. Encouraging employees to use the company's offer was claimed to be the least important target of internal marketing communications (the lowest mark in summary evaluation).

The next question asked the respondents to evaluate the pursuance of the targets above-mentioned in their company. Five degrees' scale of answers was employed, and every version was given a particular value – from 1 for the option "definitely no" to 5 for the option "definitely yes". Summary value of an answer was calculated for every aim by multiplying the number of nominations by the value given to a particular version. Next, the obtained totals were divided by the number of respondents, which allowed the author to obtain the average evaluation for every target. Table 3 presents the distribution of the answers with the average evaluation.

Table 3

The evaluation of the degree of the pursuance of the targets of internal marketing communication directed to the employees

The process of marketing communication in my organization:	Definitely no 1	Rather no 2	Neither yes nor no 3	Rather yes 4	Definitely yes 5	Average
enables giving employees information about the company and its offer.	40	88	108	161	33	3,14
impinges on employees' attitudes and behaviors in relations with clients.	36	93	123	145	33	3,11
creates and maintains a positive company image among employees.	25	65	122	183	35	3,32
encourages employees to use the company's offer.	35	74	145	156	20	3,12

Source: own elaboration, N=430.

According to the respondents creating and maintaining a positive company image is the best pursued aim (average 3.32), this aim was classified by the employees as the third one in the hierarchy of importance. Relatively low marks were given to encouraging employees to use the company's offer (average 3.12), nevertheless the result is greatly influenced by the number of respondents who do not take a stand (145 respondents). Pursuing the aim of influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors in relations with clients (average 3.1) was evaluated the worst. Low average may be caused by large percentage of respondents from manufacturing departments who do not have a direct contact with a client and they may have lowered the evaluation of the realization of this goal. What is important, the pursuance of aims of internal marketing communications can be claimed effective. At least 41% of nominations for the answers: "rather yes" and "rather no" were gained for every version of the enumerated aims. However, the percentage of answers which were definitely or rather negative or neutral is quite high. Thus, it is advisable to pay more attention to activities related to giving employees information about the company and its offer, which was evaluated negatively or rather negatively by the highest number of respondents (128 nominations which is 29.76% of respondents).

The respondents were also asked to indicate the preferred tools by means of which they would like to receive marketing information directed to employees. The following were the most popular: direct conversation (255 nominations), e-mails (196), meetings (170), notice boards (115) and trainings (113). Production line employees did not respond to that question as no conscious activities in terms of internal marketing communications were carried out in the chosen companies for this group of employees.

The further part of the questionnaire focused on whether the general opinion on communication activities in the organization have impact on: the degree of informing employees about the company's products, general working atmosphere, the way the staff perceive the company, the willingness to recommend the company's offer to friends and family and the tendency to recommend the company as an employer. Five degrees' scale was employed for the versions of answers from the option "definitely no" to "definitely yes" with the numerical value 5. Next the average of the obtained marks was calculated for every aspect. The following question concerned the influence of the communication activities in the organization on the enumerated areas. Similarly the averages of the obtained answers were calculated. The comparison of both questions is presented in table 4.

Table 4

Relation between the opinions on the influence of internal communication on different aspects related to company functioning and the evaluation of this influence in the employer's company.

Aspects	Opinion on the influence (average)	Evaluation of the influence (average)
the degree of informing employees about company's products/services	3,60	3,15
general working atmosphere	4,03	3,39
how employees perceive the company	3,95	3,29
the willingness to recommend the company to friends and family	3,67	3,31
the tendency to recommend the company as an employer	3,77	3,37

Source: own elaboration, N=430.

As one can notice communication activities exert impact on all aspects discussed in both questions, with particular consideration for: general working atmosphere (average grade 4.03) and how employees perceive the company (3.95). Respondents claim that internal communications in their companies influence general working atmosphere (average grade 3.39) the tendency to recommend the organization as an employer (3.37) the most positively. What is interesting, the highest mark was given to the influence of communication activities on the degree of informing employees about the company's products (average grade 3.15).

The last question concerned the conformity between external and internal communications. The respondents were asked whether communication directed to the outside of the company is cohesive with internal communications. The answer was to be given according to the five degrees' scale from "definitely no" (numerical value 1) to "definitely yes" (numerical number 5). The obtained numbers for every area were added up and arithmetic mean was calculated. The results were presented in table 5.

Table 5

The evaluation of the conformity between external and internal communication based on answers to the question: "Is information directed to clients, suppliers, agents etc. in your company the same as the information directed to the employees, taking into account the following areas:?"

	Definitely no 1	Rather no 2	Hard to say 3	Rather yes 4	Definitely yes 5	Average
information about products and/or services offered by the company	25	40	180	153	32	3,30
employees' opinions about the products and/or services which are offered	19	44	186	163	18	3,27
company image	19	37	151	185	38	3,43
values hold in the company	16	51	187	144	32	3,29
employment policy	27	44	209	116	34	3,20

Source: own elaboration, N=430.

Based on the respondents' opinions the above-mentioned cohesion is moderate in the majority of the researched areas. In case of every area there are a large number of nominations for answer "hard to say". The percentage of hesitant respondents ranges from 35.1% to 48.6% and it may be the effect of lack of employees' knowledge in a

particular area. The respondents from manufacturing companies are the majority in this group. The highest ratio of conformity related to company image (average 3.43). On the other hand, the lowest mark was given to employment policy (3.20). A low mark results from a relatively high number of the nomination of the answer "definitely no" and "rather no" (over 16.5% of nominations), which may prove certain level of respondents' dissatisfaction in this area.

Conclusions

In the light of the research results presented in this paper it may be stated that the activities related to marketing communications directed to employees are undertaken with moderate effectiveness in enterprises in Wielkopolska. Providing employees with certain information about the company and its offer was given the lowest marks and that aim was the most important for the respondents. In addition, over 67% of the respondents felt underreported or it was hard for them to define their attitude towards this issue. Thus it is recommended to pay more attention to information policy inside the company in because it influences its external communication.

There are interesting conclusions from the analysis of the answers related to the influence of communication activities on different aspects of organization functioning, including its external image. The respondents claim that internal communications have impact on all aspects which were researched, which proves its significance for realizing tasks from internal and human resources marketing and internal public relations. What is important, respondents claim that communication activities conducted by enterprises in internal and external environments are rather coherent. The lowest level of conformity was gained by information about employment policy, which may be a sign of respondents' dissatisfaction.

It must be noticed that the presented conclusions are contributory. Final results will be formulated after analyzing the whole research material including the whole sample both in case of quantitative and qualitative research.

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Summary:

The recipients of the majority of communication activities undertaken by enterprises are their potential clients. A range of instruments of marketing communications is used to win their favor and persuade them to use the company's offer. The majority of studies related to marketing communications put clients and their needs in the center of attention; a client is considered a person who purchases the company's products or services. However, equal attention should be devoted to internal clients i.e. the employees of the company. The main purpose of the following paper is the analysis of relations between external and internal marketing communications. Special attention is to be given to the activities from the fields of: human resources marketing, internal marketing and internal public relations. The paper will present partial results of the quantitative research (direct questionnaire and on-line questionnaire) conducted by the author. The research was related to internal marketing communications and its influence on the employees.

Keywords

marketing communications, integrated marketing communications, internal communication, internal marketing, internal public relations, company image

Informacje o autorze:

Mgr Anna Rogala

Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu,
Katedra Strategii Marketingowych
Al. Niepodległości 10, 61-875 Poznań
e-mail: anna.rogala@ue.poznan.pl