Integration of HR and Internal Marketing: Developing Organisational Branding and Equity

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to establish the role and importance of employee belongingness in developing overall organisational branding and ultimately its equity. By formulating an integrated link between Internal Marketing and human resource practices, it explores the development of belongingness through work devotion and dedication, which later enhances the organisational branding and thereby equity.

First of all, the present paper reviews the relevant literature about Internal Marketing. In the next step, the required support from the top management (peers), analysis of employee needs and elements of Internal Marketing are introduced. Then, the main objective of developing and realizing the sense of belongingness among employees towards their work and organisation is clarified.

By describing the link between Internal Marketing and Human Resource Management, an Internal Marketing Belongingness model is proposed, which illustrates how the linkage between Internal Marketing and Human Resource can produce job satisfaction among employees and develop the sense of belongingness that leads to enhanced firm's overall branding and ultimately benefitted from its equity.

Thus by this model, it is illustrated that organisations must have market-oriented Human Resource practices in order to make an impact on employee belongingness. Human Resource strategies of an organisation should be such so as to make a conducive environment for their employees developing work devotion and sense of belongingness.

INTRODUCTION

Taking a look at the past, traditionally the companies were engaged in producing quality products and services and then develop their branding and equity. They even promoted and marketed their outputs in a commanding way and win the hearts of their ultimate customers. They put enormous efforts to build their branding and equity for their present and future products and services. All such efforts and researches were focused only on markets, marketing strategies and customers.

But due to extensive competition and greater demand of market share, the business world has changed the concepts and methodologies in reaching out to their customers. In the present age of penetrated competitiveness, the researchers are oriented towards a new dimension by linking the ideologies of their workforce with the ideologies of the market and their customers. This leads to the concept of Internal Marketing, The fusion of Human Resource and internal Marketing was well advocated by the research work of Damianos, Harker and Baum (2015). They emphasize the re-

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casting the focus of marketing from products and transactions to services and relationships Companies are now focusing more on developing their employees in addition to their products and services. The development of internal market should be such so as to build work devotion and dedication among employees. This later helps in creating a sense of belongingness, which transforms into organisational branding and equity.

i) Defining Internal Marketing Concept

Internal marketing is an approach of motivating the employees to adopt the philosophies of customer and service orientation. Organizations have to establish certain values for a better service climate in the minds of employees. According to Rafiq and Ahmed (2002) Internal Marketing requires:

- The acceptance of marketing techniques and philosophy within an organization
- Customer orientation and a market orientation
- A participative approach to management
- A strategic approach to human resources management
- The coordination of all management activity to achieve customer or market orientation or customer focused management.

Gronroos (1981) model of Internal Marketing describes the ideas about the mind or consciousness to give priority to customers and interaction with the market. He believes that Internal Marketing is concerned with ensuring that employees are consistently conscious of delivering service quality. The model highlights how internal marketing should be supported by management with information exchange, recruitment and training and employee decision making (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2002) A remarkable work done by Grayson and Sanchez, (2010) which argues that internal marketing is a powerful tool for engaging employees in corporate responsibility (CR) because the authors believe that: Marketing CR goals internally makes external efforts much more likely to succeed. It is necessary to have market-oriented HR managers in order to make an impact on the success of an organization. Regarding the problems in implementing the internal marketing concept, it will be premature to judge the implementation problems, but the study done by Asiedu and Acheampong (2014), will be more helpful. It highlights comparative findings

between different approaches of internal marketing analyses.

ii) Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction

Employee engagement can be defined as workplace motivation characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Moura, Orgambidez-Ramos & Goncalves, 2014). Macey & Schneider (2008) propose that engagement can either be a psychological positive effect, high job enthusiasm and involvement, integration of organisational identity with individual identity, pride in the workplace; or behavioural actions of engagement including organisational citizenship behaviours, pro-activity in the workplace as well as showing initiative and dedication to tasks and objectives.

A cross-sectional study by Moura, Orgambidez-Ramos & Goncalves (2014) found that role conflict and work engagement significantly predicted job satisfaction. They suggest that when unrealistic demands are expected from an employee, there is a chance they may experience a decrease in engagement with a domino effect likely to occur on the positive relationship between engagement and satisfaction.

iii) Work Environment and Job satisfaction

According to Vroom (1964), Job satisfaction is an orientation of emotions that employees possess towards the role they are performing at the workplace. Spector (1997) observed that most businesses ignore the working environment within their organization resulting in an adverse effect on the performance of their employees. According to him, working environment consists of safety to employees, job security, good relations with coworkers, recognition for good performance, motivation for performing well and participation in the decision making process of the firm.

iv) Sense of Belongingness

Belonging means acceptance as a member or part. It is a feeling of aligning with someone or something. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling of belonging is of utmost importance in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions. Belongingness in the organisational context is a psychological need of every employee to be an accepted member of a working group. When we feel

a sense of belonging at the workplace, it leads to more than just a good environment and big associations. Belonging provides a sense of psychological safety and employee engagement. A supportive environment can result in better collaboration and problem-solving attitude among employees.

In general, a sense of social support has been shown to have a significant correlation with work-related outcomes including burnout, job satisfaction and employee performance (Baruch-Feldman, Brondolo, Ben-Dayan, & Schwartz, 2002). Similar findings were reported by Mark & Smith (2012), where high satisfaction in the workplace was related to social support, job control and personal factors such as coping strategies and attribution styles. Baumeister & Leary (1995) came to the conclusion that belonging is a strong innate desire to connect with others. They suggest that people make social bonds with very limited encouragement with quality rather than quantity being important when it comes to relatedness and belonging.

According to Cockshaw & Shochet (2010), workplace belongingness can be defined as the extent to which a person feels included, supported and at one with their psychosocial workplace environment. This indicates that workplace belongingness is related to emotional well-being (depression, anxiety, stress). Van Dick et al, (2004) proposed that organisational identification is linked with job satisfaction and influences turnover intention. Thus they suggest fostering identification and belonging in an organisation could have positive effects on job satisfaction and decrease turnover intentions.

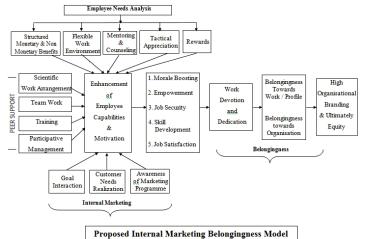
v) Organisational Branding and Equity

Organisations are increasingly encouraging employees to embrace their role as brand ambassadors (de Chernatony et al., 2006), brand equity research from an employee perspective is warranted. It is considered essential that all employees have an opportunity to understand the brand as it relates to their roles so that they, in turn, can deliver the brand promise (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006). This is because it is becoming increasingly critical for employees to be able to consistently demonstrate positive organisational behaviours for organisations to perform effectively (Parker, 2007).

Proposed Internal Marketing - Belongingness Model

The proposed model is the original and true work on the basis of Internal Marketing and Human Resource practices, which are interlinked to have a positive impact on employee capabilities, which is later derived to realize the sense of belongingness. By going through the above-mentioned literature, figure 1 shows the proposed Internal Marketing Belongingness Model.

Starting with the model, firstly we discuss the three basic approaches applied to the workforce i.e. the required Peer support, Employee Need Analysis and Elements of Internal Marketing. These three approaches establish the so-called integrated link of Internal Marketing and Human Resource. Also, these are somewhat similar to the 5-P strategic integration model, Schuler (1992) that deals with five Human Resource activities (Philosophies, Policies, Programmes, Practices and Processes) with strategic needs.



A) PEER SUPPORT REQUIRED

For a transformational program in an organisation, support of top management people is widely required to achieve success. This support works on a commanding basis in the pan organisational activities.

i) Scientific Work Arrangement

In this section first and foremost requirement is the Scientific Work Arrangement among the workforce. By the term Scientific, we mean that work should be arranged in such a manner so as to make a subjective utilization of available talents. In accordance of scientific work arrangement, it is suggested that work arrangement should take care of the following aspects:

- Employee Potential capabilities
- Technical and social aspects of work
- Choice, interest and specialization
- Risk and challenges affiliated

The objective of the scientific arrangement is that the employee should feel ownership, satisfaction and capable of performing the required task instead of feeling imposed. Also, there should be a regular monitoring and control of work activities being performed as per the required goals.

ii) Team Work

Next, the management should develop and synthesize a concept of collaborative Teamwork with synergy. Harmony, cooperation and technical complementariness should be the key to any team being developed. The members must be given some time to build such relationship before assigning the task. The team so developed should have clarity of goals and dedication towards its success. Autonomy and resource management of the team should be left discretionary with confidence.

iii) Training

Training is an important aspect concentrated on required skill development, innovation and myriad techniques. Apart from balancing time and cost factor, On-the-job and off-the-job methods both are essentially required to fix the current skill deficit and make employees mobile and versatile. With the thorough Training Need Analysis, prospective

candidates should be provided selective training. Organisations should build or develop their own customized training modules, so as to cater differentiated needs on a regular basis. Vestibule methods and case-based study should be used to provide hands-on expertise and actual realization of activities. The more important part of the training process is its effective utilization of gained skills.

iv) Participative Management

Further Participative Management should be encouraged, which must be based on the realization that when the worker is investing his efforts and time in the organisation and bestowed his fate in the workplace. Encouragement, high morale and better understanding of the problem are the basic outcomes of the participative management. In return organisations would be enriched with innovative ideas, increasing involvement and work ownership. It should not be restricted to merely suggestions taking, instead valuable and deserving contributions should be integrated into the final decision or implementation. There should be careful planning and control to execute participation.

B) EMPLOYEE NEED ANALYSIS

In order to retain and sustain potential employees, organisation has to explore and understand their employee needs. Such needs should be analysed as per the feasibility of the organisation. Employee needs may be of varied nature and types, but to a greater extent can be accommodated within the defined purview. By fulfilling their needs by the organisation, an employee becomes overwhelmed and will be ready to perform with ultimate abilities and efficiency. Though there may be some needs, which cannot be accepted to consider but can be convinced for some other options. Here we have covered some of the most coveted issues under this topic.

i) Structured Monetary and Non-Monetary Benefits

Every employee in an organisation feels satisfied by his monetary and non-monetary benefits only when the organisation has established systematic, structured and predefined policies. In the absence of these, the employee always becomes more and more demanding and have a doubt and confusion of discrimination. This is a crucial issue, where an employee always places her/his personal emotions and makes the issue intolerable. Structured Monetary and Non-Monetary benefits require a defined compensation strategy that must be affordable, structured and competitive. Compensation strategy must be designed so as to meet the exclusive business conditions. Organisations should consider a combination of pay, incentives and benefits in order to attract and retain key employees.

There should be clarity of grades and pay structure with proper demarcation of increment size and limits. Flexibility of upgrading from one grade to next higher grade (without promotion) on meeting certain conditions will be an added benefit to the prospering employees. In addition to this developing certain innovative non-monetary benefits becomes a point of attraction. Star examples may be free life insurance, medical checkups, health insurance schemes, adopting certain employee personal liabilities, mentoring programs, tuition assistance, and children education and care. This helps in retaining the talent for a longer period of time and reduces the cost of employee turnover and recruitment.

ii) Flexible Work Environment

Flexibility in the work environment does not only mean flexibility of work, time and place, but it also includes conducive work culture, greater autonomy and better communication. Flexibility is something where employee and employer both unanimously have to initiate changes to the working culture and making it so convenient and pleasant that it becomes advantageous to both the employer and employee and result in better performances.

Flexibilities may be of various types and forms and cannot be counted. It is totally based on mutual agreements and benefits of employee and employer, where the goals are only defined to achieve. It may be Flexibility of work, work place, time, and other work conditions. It may be formal and informal where policies are not written down but prevails on discretion. Apart from these flexibilities, many more processes can be initiated at employee discretion, such as

Freedom to establish own work practices, No uniform or dress conditions,

- To make changes in office sitting setup,
- Allowing to discuss work-related issues in common chat rooms,
- Employee discretion to convert nonmonetary benefits to monetary means.
- Job sharing among the employees
- Leave policy, salary deductions, compressed work week

iii) Mentoring and Counseling

Continuing to employee needs, Organisations should develop their own customized Mentoring and Counseling program after conducting the need assessment and defining proper goals and roadmap with feasibility. Such a program should be well supported by the top management with strategic intents. Mentors so appointed must be qualified and have an expertise in mentoring people. It is a process of assisting a person by a more experienced person in a professional learning and development relationship for developing specific skills and knowledge. Mentors must focus on character rather than on the competence since it is the character of the employee, which makes him competent. Also, mentors should be more loyal to the mentee than to the organisation.

Often employees show their inability and feel segregated due to certain work-related problems. Employees in such situations realize a sense of insecurity and even not able to communicate with others. Here the process of counseling will be more helpful and supportive to address the problems of employees in a systematic way. Organisations must give value to the counseling process as a management tool and as a means to help people grow. A counselor must be the right person, who should be a good listener and must respect confidentialities. Counseling is a relationship of trust where confidentiality is supreme.

iv) Tactical Appreciation

Further appreciation of employee performance is always fruitful in motivating them for better performances. It is an act of management people for gaining continuous and long-lasting return performances by just appreciating their usual activities. By the term Tactical Appreciation, it means the use of appreciation strategically with the help of some behavioural tact. Under this, the

superiors should appreciate an employee in regular intervals with or even sometimes without properly analyzing the performance done by the employee. If an employee is not working properly, even then after getting appreciation, he or she feels and tries more to give best out of him.

Superiors may use some more simple ways to recognize their workforce performances like by calling every time by their proper name, use of some gestural words (Thank you, My pleasure, I am delighted), by just thumping their back, by saying motivational statements (keep it up, good going, its good, well done) etc.. These acts cost nothing and can be performed easily with some more gracious manner. Further by remembering the employee's wishes and wants and fulfill them (if possible) at the time of appreciation develops the emotional bonding.

v) Rewards

The next most important need of an employee is to get rewards, which are the most influential method for motivating quality performances Rewards are always given to expect and gain better performances. Organisation should design and develop an effective reward system in which employees should be chosen on some predefined criteria for conferring a reward. Employee rewards systems should be the part of organisational policy and programs toward performance. They may be monetary or non-monetary in nature and beers a cost to the company.

C) INTERNAL MARKETING

Under the core concept of Internal Marketing, employees are considered as internal customers, what is presumed to improve the internal relations with the aim of developing the efficiency of the company (Helman and Payne, 1992). It is a philosophy to manage the staff in a systematic way for developing a customer-oriented working culture". Internal Marketing helps in nurturing the employees so that they will be in a position to think, understand and act in accordance with customer needs.

i) Goal Interaction

To start with, firstly the workforce must have a good interaction with organisational goals. Generally, the employees have to perform in accordance to the task and the related instructions. But here the workforce should be strictly oriented towards their ultimate goal i.e. winning the heart of the customer. Under this issue, employees have to understand that, the goal is not to produce or deliver quantity or quality but to retain and build relationships with the ultimate customer, which can be later transformed into profitability and growth of the organisation.

Employees at all levels and in all functions including management people should be educated and informed about their company, its activities and basic objectives, the mission and vision of the company. The basic objective is recognizing company's products and services and developing total buyer orientation. All sorts of programs and policies for employee orientation have to be planned and continuously monitored. Employees must be provided with clarity of goals, where each and every task performed by them is aligned to customer consciousness. Such systematic orientation of employees results in better understanding of customer orientation and thus helps in analyzing the customer's need.

ii) Customer Needs Realization

The human capital of every organisation is itself a customer for their personal and family needs. So this becomes an easier task when employees themselves realize the customer needs. To give impetus, organisations should build a culture of realizing customer needs by their workforce in every task and activities assigned to them. They have to rethink and discuss how to design, develop and produce strictly in accordance of customer wants and wishes. Employees have to believe that correctly recognizing and responding to their customer's motivations ensures their customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In order to provide good customer services or products, employees need to be trained and develop skills to explore and understand customer orientation and how it can be reflected in their products and services They have to identify who are their target customers and from which market they belong. Further in what ways our product or service meets their needs. It is necessary to observe what, why and with what frequencies their customers are buying. It may be useful to know details such as their customer's lifestyle, occupation and interests.

iii) Awareness to Marketing Programme

Employee Awareness to organisational marketing activities is crucial to enable employees to make a strong emotional link to the products and services they produce. With this link, employees are likely to estimate the expectations set by their advertising campaign. Employees can simply understand what the organisation has committed to the public, and what values they have attached to it. It is established that by applying various principles of consumer advertising to internal customers i.e. employees, leaders can guide them to a better understanding of, and even create a passion for the brand vision. And when employees work up to that vision, customers experience the things and the whole company in a way which is more consistent with what the organisation has promised. Employees need to review the same messages which are being sent out to the marketplace.

D) ENHANCEMENT OF EMPLOYEE CAPABILITIES

According to the proposed model after getting dynamic support from the peers, a more balanced team of personnel can be developed with proper work arrangements. Various employee needs are analysed and thorough corrective measures in proper application of human resource functions along with the concept of Internal Marketing are taken. This leads to the evolution of a strong, motivated and capable workforce. Employees become professionally trained and thus become capable of performing challenging roles as per the desired goals. When their intellectual assets become proactive to achieve customer attention, the task of producing and delivering in accordance with customer needs will be looking extremely positive. In continuation of the discussion on psychologically exerted measures, the proposed model covers some of the most coveted options for the management to apply like morale boosting, empowerment, job

security, special skill development and job satisfaction.

i) Morale Boosting

The management people should be a powerful contributor of boosting employee morale positively. Morale of an employee defines the overall attitude, confidence and satisfaction towards their work. There should be regular and positive dosage of morale-boosting activities, which should be in the form of confidence in company leadership, company's vision, communication, harmonious relationships, respect and values and employee recognition, coaching, better opportunities etc.. These measures bolster the employee morale in a positive way and leads to a better working environment.

ii) Empowerment

Giving authority, responsibility and autonomy to employees leads to their empowerment. Empowerment helps in increasing motivation, effectiveness, creativity, proficiency, better preparedness to overcome obstacles and not the least happiness. This can be imparted to employees to set their own objectives, make discussions about their tasks, priorities and deadlines, putting greater trust and providing feedback to assess their own performance and solve issues on their own.

iii) Job Security

For the employees, an assurance to work for a longer period of time without any fear to lose their job brings a sense of being valued by the organisation. Job security is the most important factor of job satisfaction amongst others. It provides an opportunity to do and accept more challenging and creative tasks with the highest of their abilities. The employee-employer relationship has been characterized as a psychological contract, in which employee commitment to the organisation is exchanged in return for employer offerings such as job security and other protections from the variability of employment associated with outside markets (Cappelli et al. 1997, 10) It also provides great economic benefits to the organisation in reducing transition cost as well as in gaining employee loyalty. Job security makes the employees feel happy and concentrate on their work-health balance.

iv) Skill Development

Employees should be provided regular opportunities to develop their skills and abilities. Development of skills also provides a security to every employee and can be engaged for a better period of working life. They always have some challenging and newer goals and thus can be utilized for more and more diversified fields of work. It gives immense pleasure and satisfaction to the employee in achieving new skills while performing challenging roles.

The above discussed all the measures have an ultimate objective of achieving greater job satisfaction. It must take into minds of every decision makers that only satisfied workforce can bring laurels to the organisation. Satisfaction is a psychological never-ending phenomenon and is a factor of employee devotion and dedication towards the assigned work.

E) WORK DEVOTION AND DEDICATION

The efforts of an organisation in developing a more capable motivated workforce equipped with customer-oriented capabilities results into a more satisfied workforce and ready to go to new heights for their organisation. This sort of satisfaction brings a positive psychological impact on the minds of employees. Such conditions make an employee work with ownership of their responsibilities and goals. Employees will now be in a position to apply all of their capabilities for the achievement of organisational objectives. This leads to the development of dedication and devotion to work. The devotion to work articulates the moral imperative that orients managers toward preoccupation with their own advancement (Jackall 1988, 43) and helps motivate them to put in long work hours.

Devotion is said to have a strong loyalty and care for something with complete passion and zeal to achieve the desired goals. It is referred to the complete surrender of wishes and application of best of intellectual, physical and psychological capabilities towards the achievement of desired goals. This can also be inferred that the personal life of an employee is nothing but the working life, which matters only. Further dedication is the ultimate commitment by a person to do something.

The person becomes a great envoy of his desired work. Dedication to work in the organisational context implies the completion of the task at all cost with strict adherence to organisational rules and regulations. A dedicated employee is known for his work completion qualities with complete qualitative and resource management.

Work devotion and dedication in the workforce enables them to usually spend their personal time in proactive learning, volunteering solutions, contributing their unique skills and thus will be totally free from job hopping activities. They show a great sign of commitment towards organisational objectives and this becomes a success of Internal Marketing concept having dedicated and devoted workforce for achieving a high level of customer consciousness. Such qualities when available in a workforce help in developing a sense of belongingness towards work as well as for the organisation.

F) EMPLOYEE BELONGINGNESS TOWARDS WORK / PROFILE AND ORGANISATION

Belongingness towards work implies giving high value and self-attachment to the work-related activities. It leads to ownership. Theory Y people are known for their high belongingness towards their work or assigned task. They create their own methodologies and set targets to accomplish the desired goals. They lead and collaborate themselves with other people of similar attitudes on their own.

When we talk of belongingness towards the organisation, it gives a feeling of attachment with the processes, policies, work activities, outcomes and even the overall profit, growth or losses of the organisation. People with a high sense of belongingness enjoy a better say and control over organisational activities. They place a high stake on themselves for organisational growth and developments.

Developing a sense of belongingness is not an automatic process and neither a self-developing activity. Though it can be built and developed as a part of organisational culture. There are certain policy measures, which can be initiated to create a strong sense of belonging among the workforce within the organization. When employees'

belongingness is developed towards their profile and organisation, their soul, mind and energy will automatically focus on to achieve higher level social need i.e. organisational branding and equity.

G) Organisational Branding and Equity

Belongingness of employees towards their organisation becomes itself a reflection of high organisational branding and finally its equity. Employees become ambassadors of their healthier work environment and communicate to the external environment about its key customer values and customer consciousness. They give value to the organisation and its standings. Employees themselves defend the organisational standings to make others feel holistic towards the organisation and their products and services. They promote the organisational culture, practices and policies to the outside world, by which the customer orientation is considered and engraved into their working routines. Employees may even help customers to determine which products or services are better to choose.

Organisational equity is uniquely attributable to the organisational branding. Companies can generate a competitive advantage by improving the efficiency and customer focused delivery. This develops their brand-equity. Equity is the share of tangible and intangible accumulated wealth in the form of relationships and reputation. Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006) advocate high brand equity as being evident to the extent that organisations exhibit characteristics such as higher brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, strong brand associations and credibility. Thus a firm's reputation is directly related to its values, system and finally, it's branding. People outside the organisation especially the customers use the reputation as an attribute which affects the pride that customers expect from organizational relationship.

CONCLUSION

In the present environmental context, Human capital is considered as the most important intangible assets, that plays a major role in the current era of competitiveness. These are more sustainable and have a lesser chance of being duplicated. This includes knowledge, skills and

attitudes of the employees. Organisations are concentrating more to develop them, retain and sustain them through their systematic efforts in a planned way. In order to achieve this, organisations are refocusing on their human resource practices on one hand, and on the other side using Internal Marking approach to train and develop them for future customer-oriented approach. This brings the relevant importance of the linkage between Human resource and Internal Marketing concepts. Such linkage enables their human capital to work with high devotion and dedication for the organisation.

The proposed Internal Marketing Belongingness model illustrates this linkage between Internal Marketing and Human Resource, which can produce job satisfaction among employees and develop the sense of belongingness that leads to enhancing firm's overall branding and ultimately benefitted from its equity. Thus by this model, it is illustrated that organisations must have market-oriented Human Resource practices in order to make a positive impact on employee belongingness towards their work profile and also to the organisation. Such employee belongingness towards their organisations creates the organisational branding and ultimately the equity for the outside people.

The proposed Internal Marketing-Belongingness model so developed in this paper describes the application of Internal marketing to develop employee belongingness, which now becomes a potential area for future empirical researches. Though we have left this task for future researches, we strongly believe that this paper provides a concrete platform from where future research can be initiated.

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