

Internal Marketing

Traditionally marketing is viewed by companies as external activities engaged in so that a company can raise awareness and create interest within certain targeted consumer markets. The use of marketing, however, can also be a helpful tool within a company, with employees as the targeted market. The purpose of an internal marketing plan can include raising awareness of operational standards, increasing motivation, encouraging compliance, or announcing changes in policy. In all of these circumstances, the need to gain attention and agreement are critical to the successful execution of company policy. In each of these circumstances internal marketing is the only way to meet the company's needs.

The success of an internal marketing campaign rests on 4 fundamentals and 8 critical components. The 4 fundamentals are:

1. Engage – make certain you involve your employees in creating the vision that will be incorporated into your marketing effort. Some companies, for example, sponsor a contest among employees. Other companies invite employees (or representatives of the employees) to participate in strategy discussions.
2. Enable – your employees will not respond to a marketing campaign that is not delivered in a supportive and open environment. Your campaign needs to provide your employees with direction (as in what behavior is expected) and the tools (as in the instruments needed to succeed).
3. Empower – an internal campaign will not work if people are not given the ability to act on the message or call for action.
4. Ensure – people will not respond to a marketing campaign that is devoid of accountability. You need to make certain you measure the success of your internal marketing campaign (much as you would an external campaign).

The 8 critical components are:

1. Brand Your Internal Message – Just as you should brand your product into an experience so as to instill meaning and develop a relationship with your customers, so too you need to brand your internal message. Whereas in a traditional external campaign your tactical options include such message bearing channels as advertising and PR, in an internal campaign you not only have these options (internal ad campaigns and PR in internal company media) but also additional information channels (meetings, email) and training sessions. Use all the tools available to you to deliver your brand, but of course first you need to create it. In doing so you should follow all the rules of brand creation. Don't assume that just because it is for an internal campaign it needs or merits a less serious or professional approach.

2. Establish Your Goals – Setting your goals in advance is a standard business process, and yet, somehow when it comes to internal marketing campaigns this critical step gets overlooked. Again, this is partially because the idea of an internal marketing campaign is not taken as seriously as it needs to be. However, if you set your goals you will be able to engage in that other extremely important marketing process – measuring and assessment. Without pre-established goals you will have no way of knowing whether the internal marketing program you initiated is working – because you will not have defined what “working” means for you.

3. Target Your Campaign – The notion of targeting a marketing campaign is so standard that it does not require mentioning – unless the campaign is internal, in which case it needs to be stressed. The audience for this marketing campaign is your employee base, or perhaps a specific segment of your employee base. Your message needs to fit your audience. If you simply try to get them to buy into your external campaign, or you try to make the internal campaign an offshoot of the external campaign (both of which Tudog has seen attempted) then your audience will respond with the skepticism of consumers and not the obedience of employees.

4. Let Them Own the Idea – The most effective way of marketing internally is to provide your employees with something they can be proud of. Make certain that the positive outcome of the message (whatever it is you are communicating – higher quality, more efficiency, greater safety, and better customer service) is theirs to own and celebrate. By doing this you are not only communicating your message, you are also presenting them with a challenge and the chance to own and be proud of the result.

5. Encourage Teamwork – Teamwork should be encouraged even if under ordinary circumstances your company is designed to operate through the separate actions of individuals. One way to encourage teamwork is to set clearly communicated goals for a group of people, forcing them to work together, while letting them know how their collective success will be acknowledged and rewarded.

6. Reward Achievements – Internal marketing campaigns are geared toward driving improvement or change in an enterprise. The resistance or apathy often encountered can cause a well planned program to fail. One way to counter this is to include in the plan the rewarding of achievement. This can be done collectively or individually (selecting top performers and rewarding them). In both cases, the rewards serve as motivation for performance, as well as recognition for a job well done and a demonstration of appreciation.

7 Acknowledge Success – One of the primary mechanisms in developing motivation, employee compliance, and a successful internal marketing campaign is the acknowledgement of success. The goals you have set should be communicated and the little victories along the way should be celebrated. The small successes – which combined equal to the large success – are reason to celebrate and serve as a way for your employees to know they are achieving their mission, and that you appreciate their efforts.

8. Establish and Maintain Routine Communication Channels – Marketing is all about getting a message out. One of the requirements for successful message dissemination is the consistency and frequency of the message. An internal marketing campaign cannot work if the information and promotion needed to create the desired behavior is not delivered in the right way. Companies have intranet, newsletter, email, bulletin boards, meetings, parties and other opportunities to deliver the message. Make certain that you engage all these channels and that you do so in a strategic and calculated manner. If your information is delivered matter-of-factly so too might the employees respond half-heartedly. If your message is delivered consistently and professionally, your employees will engage it seriously.

Just as marketing is a powerful and vital tool for companies as they seek to engage the external markets so that they can influence behavior, so too is internal marketing an

imperative for the influencing of employee behavior. The logic is the same, now the strategic approach and execution has to be made the same too. Then, change within the organizational environment, while time consuming and complex, will not seem to be quite as daunting as it seems today.