



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE WORKPLACE

In a marketplace turned upside-down, sell the brand from the inside-out.

Technology has fractured the effect of mass media advertising. The time is over when an advertiser could simply lob a national advertising campaign into the landscape and effectively reach consumers. There are too many outlets, too many commercial skipping technologies, too many 18-25 year olds on the Internet, too many different channels to tune into, that national television campaigns cannot have the tsunami effect they were once capable of delivering. The market is turned upside down, and global brands are entertaining every conceivable iteration of channel marketing, from zip code specific spot broadcasting to dual Internet/TV programming (watching TV simultaneous to surfing the Internet).

All of this speaks to the notion that companies must focus on those audience channels that they can reach effectively. . . especially when those channels turn out to be carriers of the brand. So while the fragmenting of mass markets has hamstrung mass media and has made the challenge of communicating to consumers more daunting, it has also opened the door to communicating with an audience that wants to believe deeply in the brand, and to pass on that belief to consumers.

Unfortunately, this audience is often disillusioned, disassociated or just plain angry.

By most accounts, workforce engagement is at an all time low. The dispirit in corporate America, growing out of layoffs, wage freezes, give-backs, senior management greed, scandals and general terror in the world, leaves many companies without a roster of brand ambassadors.

And those very same factors that inhibit enthusiasm inside companies, have also made consumers more critical, more demanding and less patient than ever before. Which is why customer relationship management is now everyone's top priority.

But skeptical employees and a high maintenance consuming public are a devastating combination. How do you get the workforce back in the fold?

You market to them.

BUYING AND SELLING

Much of daily life is transactional: buying and selling.

But life in the transactional marketplace goes well beyond the trading of goods and services. One could argue that these obvious staples of commerce are actually the smallest part of what is bought and sold.

Most of what is transactional in our lives concerns ideas, loyalties, commitments, schedules and passions. Nowhere is this in plainer view than at work. Everything, from salary to assignments, from promotions to changes in corporate policy, is ultimately rendered on the level of: 'If you do this, then, I'll do that'. It is a transaction.

Certainly, the roles of buyer and seller are not completely fixed. Employees often find themselves in the position of 'selling' to management: selling improvements, selling dissatisfaction.

But for the most part, it is management that finds itself selling to those close-in audiences that include employees, franchisees, dealers, the investment community, even vendors; every constituency just short of the end-user. And in this model, it is incumbent upon management to begin to look at this extended workforce for what it really is: the first line of customers.

Once the 'employee-as-customer' ethos becomes the operating point of view, time tested marketing tools become available: for the sale of new ideas, shifts in policy, and even bad news. Most of all, this transactional approach---treating the employee as a customer--- is critical in securing the holy grail of all commercial enterprises: a workforce that lives the brand.

STRATEGIES FOR INTERNAL BRANDING

- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Keep employees informed about upcoming operations, product, marketing and policy initiatives and changes
- If a topic merits external telling, then be sure to inform employees FIRST
- Foster relationships between senior management and your employee population through: company-wide emails, newsletters, company or division meetings, etc.
- The more locations (offices, operations, sales), the more frequent the communication needed to create a shared vision, shared culture
- Produce an advertising campaign aimed at employees – to build the company's culture, integrate after a merger, generate understanding, enthusiasm and motivate collective contributions towards workplace deliverables
- Launch external-style campaigns with the most likely and most important cheerleaders
- Conduct company employee volunteer programs with genuine company support

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