

Use Internal Marketing to Grow Your Business Every Day

Do more with less. Stretch the dollar. Work fewer people harder. We're all too familiar with the pressures on businesses today to perform better.

Yet you might have a way to dramatically increase your profits, just by using internal marketing. We're not talking about different hiring practices or training employees better in their skill areas.

We're talking about marketing any major organizational change – in a coordinated way – to your employees, *before* you market to your prospects and customers.

As your company's face – and voice – to the world, your employees need to know first. And it's best if they are brought into the change process early enough to support that change, rather than resist it.

What is Internal Marketing?

We define internal marketing as a four-part integrated communication process targeted to all your employees.

First, you want to make sure that they comprehend your company's brand. Think of your brand as that unique combination of goods and services and personality and promises that differentiate your company from any other.

Second, you want to tell them – before you tell anyone outside the company – when you are planning to launch major change, like introducing new products or services or realigning your company.

Third, while they're learning about this change, you want employees to understand precisely how it will benefit your customers.

Fourth, you want them to understand and embrace how each of them can contribute to the company's success. Of course, along with this, you want to be sure they know how the company's success will bring them rewards.

When Internal Marketing is Ignored

We've all seen examples like these:

- A soft goods company spends thousands to advertise a new product. You call the toll-free number to inquire, but the receptionist doesn't know about the product – and doesn't know where to direct you.
- A newspaper article announces that a computer technology company will now offer services to small businesses, like yours. You congratulate your neighbor

who works for this company. He is in accounts payable; he knows nothing about the service.

- A telecommunications manufacturer has peerless sales reps; customers love them. After installation, though, the once happy customer has to deal with grouchy technicians and the honeymoon period for the rep and new account ends unhappily.

These lapses result in untold numbers of missed opportunities.

This story is all too common: A company develops a brand statement and visuals to introduce a new service. But they fail to include employees in either program development or rollout. Employees eventually find out and express, at least among themselves, hostility to the concept. When this happens, you have a problem that no amount of external marketing dollars can totally overcome.

Snapshot of an Internal Marketing Initiative

So what does an internal marketing program look like? A major research company decides to spin out a new division. Management, in concert with a marketing agency, meets with groups of people from throughout the new organization to gather information about existing culture, strengths, and weaknesses.

Using this information plus research, the management/agency team develops the new organization's unique selling proposition.

As the agency creates the critical pieces – corporate identity, brochures, advertising, website, public relations strategy – various groups from within the organization are brought back for more input, to aid subsequent buy-in.

But not one ad or direct mail or press release goes public until after an inside launch. At this event, the management/agency team creates a “ta-da” moment – balloons, cake, and customized mugs, for instance, to build anticipation. More important, top honchos show their excitement, answer questions, and fire up the troops.

Internal marketing doesn't stop here, though. At regular intervals, small and large group opportunities reinforce how each person can contribute to the team effort. What do you say at trade shows? If you're speaking to a group, how do you present the company? How does your response to a client inquiry – its timeliness or thoroughness or friendliness – reflect on the your company's brand?

Internal marketing, then, is that combination of fact and emotion, training and passion, which fuels your employees to grow your business every day.

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