

Marketing the HR Function to Improve HR's Image

Dianne B. Eppler

William J. Heisler

Troy University

Subject Areas: Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior, Marketing
Article Type: Viewpoint

ABSTRACT

Recent academic and professional publications suggest that the leaders of corporate human resource (HR) functions should play a larger role in addressing their company's most strategic issues. Yet, despite these studies, the heads of many HR functions do not find themselves invited to join the corporation's inner circle of executives. Instead, many CEOs report being underwhelmed by how their HR organizations are performing and therefore undervalue the contributions of HR to achieving corporate objectives. Clearly, HR executives have considerable work to do to fulfill senior executives' expectations. This paper focuses on how the HR function can use selected marketing concepts to improve the perception of HR within their organization and become a key member of the executive team.

INTRODUCTION

All too often in organizations, the human resources (HR) function is thought of primarily as the enforcer of policy, the group that plans the holiday party, the pay and benefits administrator or the department to go to get assistance with employee issues and complaints. Like Rodney Dangerfield, all too often HR doesn't get any respect (Galford, 1998; Lachnit, 2001; Lochbihler, 2006). Functions that serve in a support capacity, but do not produce financial results directly, often are overlooked and undervalued in organizations. The results of a global study by Gurchiek (2005) indicate that only 43% of HR professionals believe that senior management regards HR highly. Considering the fact that, for most organizations, people are what makes an organization successful (or not), the role of HR in achieving an organization's goals is critical. Particularly during this period of economic uncertainty and global competition, the strategic importance of the workforce has never been greater (Tewari, 2010).

HR's ability to become more influential strategically depends on two major factors. First, HR must demonstrate its competence in what is referred to as the "transactional" or "tactical" role that HR plays, such as processing leave requests and ensuring correct processing of pay and bonuses. HR cannot present itself as worthy to play an enhanced role, particularly a strategic one, unless it first carries out its historical and traditional day-to-day responsibilities in a highly effective and efficient manner (Galford, 1998). Second, HR must ensure that its competence is recognized. Often times, senior management's opinion of HR is negative and its leadership role

is undervalued because of a perception that HR managers lack business acumen (Dempsey, 2007). Performing the transactional role effectively will improve the credibility of HR professionals, which is necessary to develop the legitimacy needed to champion more strategic initiatives (Galford, 1998). However, excellence in the transactional role is not sufficient to gain access to the executive suite. Additionally, HR professionals must prove their value to top management by demonstrating how their policies and practices positively impact the bottom line (Donkin, 2006). Employing concepts from the field of marketing can help HR achieve both of these objectives. In the following sections of this paper, we will identify a number of marketing concepts that HR functions can use to enhance their visibility, image, and reputation within their organization.

Marketing Concept #1: Creating Value

In 2004, the American Marketing Association (AMA) changed its definition of marketing from one focused on exchange to one emphasizing value (Sheth & Uslay, 2007). Under the new AMA definition, marketing is seen as "... the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (www.ama.org, retrieved 7/17/2016). Kotler and Armstrong (2014, p. 4) define marketing as "managing profitable customer relationships. The twofold goal of marketing is to attract new customers by promising superior value and to keep and grow current customers by delivering satisfaction." Value is defined from the perspective of the receiver, not the giver (Ulrich, 2007). For example, a man might give a gift of Super Bowl tickets to his wife. While he may value the tickets highly, she may have little interest in football or attending the game and, therefore, ascribes low value to the gift.

So, how does this apply to HR? Employing these definitions, HR should involve itself in activities that create value for its "customers." The obvious question then is who are HR's customers? Numerous answers are possible but the most common response is the organization's employees. However, that is a limited definition. In a broader sense, there are many others in the organization who are potential customers for whom value is important. One could consider employees, managers, and executives as HR's primary "customers" (Orr, 2002). But others define HR's customers in an even broader context to include employees, line managers, customers, investors, and communities (Ulrich, 2007).

Employees are the recipients of various HR services and programs such as compensation and benefit plans and training programs. For them, value depends on how well the bonus and recognition programs recognize and reward their performance and how well the training program enables them to do their job better or be promoted (Wiley, 2012). Line managers want to implement corporate strategies successfully and achieve performance objectives. HR provides value when its policies and practices align with business strategies and help execute them (Ulrich, 2007). Too often, many managers see HR as providing products and services that fail to meet the test of value. For example, a revised benefit package that doesn't help reduce turnover or the foreman training program that doesn't result in a reduction in grievances does not provide value for the line manager. For top management, creating value might include showing a cost/benefit analysis of how a new incentive program will increase productivity or reduce absenteeism. In other words, for top management the question of value is how the HR initiative improves the bottom line (Donkin, 2006).

Truly, in applying this marketing concept, HR's first step is to identify who its customers are, what they want and need, and what they value in the way of products and services. Then, HR needs to create products and programs designed to provide value from their employees'

perspectives. Communication of these programs must translate the details or features of these offerings into the benefits sought by their employees and deliver those outcomes (Orr, 2002; Rose, 2007). HR executives must ask themselves the following question: Given the resources I have, which products and services can I provide that will yield the most value and greatest ROI for the company?

Marketing Concept #2: Target Marketing

To facilitate the understanding of needs, HR can employ the concept of target marketing. The central precept of this concept is that “one size does not fit all.” That’s why automobile manufacturers produce vehicles in multiple models, styles, and colors, why Proctor and Gamble has eleven laundry detergents (www.pg.com, retrieved 7/17/2016), and why Crest ® has 38 varieties of toothpaste (www.crest.com, retrieved 7/17/2016). Target marketing entails four steps (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014). First, customers are divided into segments or groups based on similarities (e.g., where they get their information, their sensitivity to price, desired product features, etc.). Next, the decision is made as to which market segments will be targeted based on the attractiveness of each segment. Segments should be homogeneous based on needs and benefits desired. The third step involves differentiating the product by creating a value proposition (i.e., the sum of benefits derived from the product) which resonates with the target segment. Finally, the product must be positioned so that its value is understood by the customers and differentiated from the competition. Positioning is all about the perception of your offering from the point of view of your customers (Canhoto, et al., 2013).

Applying this concept to the HR function, HR executives must discern who their customer segments are and develop products and services that will appeal to each segment. Among its various customer groups, HR might categorize the organizational population in a number of ways. For example, the workforce could be divided into hourly, salaried, and executive employees. HR’s customer segments might also be viewed in terms of non-supervisory employees, first-level supervisors, middle managers, and top management or the segments might be functionally-oriented (e.g., finance, engineering, manufacturing). Additionally, HR’s market could be segmented by age (generational categories), gender, union vs. non-union, family status, benefits sought, etc. While marketers choose the segments they want to target first, HR professionals work backwards by segmenting their workforce, then determining which programs and policies will best motivate each group. In other words, while marketers choose segments to match internal strengths, HR professionals choose products or programs that will best satisfy the needs of each group (Wilkinson, 2006).

For example, in one organization with which the authors are familiar, HR wanted to improve relations with its hourly employees and targeted a special options program for that group that would help to link hourly performance more strongly with the company’s stock performance. Similarly, research indicates that Generation Y employees (Gen Yers) are among the most dissatisfied group of employees in today’s workforce (Smith, 2008) and, relative to generational segmentation, Gen Yers are looking for personal fulfillment in a job (Executive Interview, 2013). Other research indicates that a flexible working schedule is among the benefits most desired by this group (Moir, 2008). Additionally, a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the University of Southern California, and the London School of Business about millennials (Gen Yers) found that a company should adopt more flexible work schedules and work-life friendly policies to increase job satisfaction and help avoid turnover. If they were able to make their current job more flexible, 64% of Millennials would like to occasionally work from home, and 66% of Millennials would like to shift their work hours (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013). Therefore, a company could adopt

more work-life friendly policies to help avoid turnover among Gen Yers and increase their job satisfaction.

There are numerous other ways that HR can create value by using targeting techniques and technology. For example, software exists today to personalize the HR experience to various market segments and even individuals. This software can deliver HR solutions to various employee groups or individuals how, when, and where they prefer to receive them. Instead of one-size-fits-all training programs, training can be developed that matches the specific needs of the group or individual and delivers it to them when needed. To illustrate, consider sales training. Rather than providing fixed training programs to this group, HR can develop computer-based training modules that provide information to sales representatives in the field that highlights needed product features and applications via tablets and smartphones when and where needed (Jass, 2013). Overall, the real challenge with market segmentation is to understand your diverse customer segments and provide products or services that are valued by each (Moir, 2008). Effective communication is paramount to get the right message to the right audience via the right media and another tool that HR managers are using to make communications more engaging is social media, particularly relevant to millennials (Wes, 2015). Thus, HR can utilize technology to customize communications and make them more relevant to various employee segments.

Marketing Concept #3: The Marketing Concept

The marketing concept is not new. The term “marketing concept” was coined by GE in its 1952 Annual Report (Berry, 1988). The marketing concept holds that “achieving organizational goals depends on knowing the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions better than the competitors do” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013, p. 10). Marketers use multiple research techniques to determine wants, needs and perceptions of its customers. The main premise of the marketing concept is that companies must focus all elements of its strategy from the customer’s perspective, not that of corporate management. The perception of its customers defines the corporation’s reality (Webb, et al., 2000).

Focus groups are often used to identify the needs and wants of various target markets. For example, marketers might conduct focus groups to understand what services family members want when considering assisted living arrangements for elderly family members. If an issue is well defined, a questionnaire may be developed and administered to quantify overall attitudes and opinions about a topic. For example, a short time after you purchase an automobile the manufacturer might send you a survey asking how satisfied you are with your vehicle, the car dealer, etc. This information helps the manufacturer make improvements to products as well as services. HR can apply this concept by understanding the varied needs of its “customers” and developing products and services that deliver satisfaction (i.e., create value).

So how does HR determine the needs of its customers? As in marketing, HR can use focus groups to determine the attitudes, perceptions, and needs of various employee groups and not rely on what management views as important. Typically, a focus group consists of six to twelve people who are gathered together with a moderator to explore areas of interest that may be less well defined than the issues addressed through survey methodology. HR can employ focus groups to examine issues and areas of concern or importance to its workforce. Focus groups can be used to help improve the planning and implementation of new program initiatives or assess the effectiveness of existing practices (Nolan, 2012). For example, a study by Kaliannan, Abraham and Ponnusamy (2016) found a gap between expectations of employees versus managers with regard to talent management practices. In order to effectively motivate

employees you must understand what programs and practices are of value to them from their perspective, not necessarily what management thinks is important. If employees identify specific concerns or needs, HR can work to develop remedies or implement programs to improve performance.

As in marketing, to better understand the results of focus groups, employee surveys can be developed to probe key issues in greater depth. To further investigate the importance of an issue identified in the focus groups survey research can be conducted to quantify its importance to employees. For example, the results from a focus group might reveal that employees desire to have more-flexible working hours or job sharing arrangements because of work-life conflicts they are experiencing. HR can determine what percentage of employees might desire such arrangements and which employee groups might be inclined to take advantage of that opportunity. The important take away from conducting focus groups, employee surveys, or other research methods is that HR will be better able to understand the needs and wants of various constituent groups so that HR can target its actions in a way that will create the most added value for the company.

Marketing Concept #4: Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a business strategy that is based on the theoretical foundation of relationship marketing (Kumar, et al., 2011). Relationship marketing is based on establishing and maintaining long-term buyer/seller relationships (Reinartz & Kumar, 2003). Hansotia (2002, p. 121) states that “at the heart of CRM is the organization’s ability to leverage customer data creatively, effectively and efficiently to design and implement customer-focused strategies.” The goal is to increase the breadth, depth, and length of their relationship with the organization (Kumar, et al., 2011). Because different groups may require different strategies, effective CRM begins with segmentation analysis (Bland, 2003), a concept discussed previously. CRM focuses on the customer’s point of view rather than the internal perspective of the firm to provide customer-centric products and services that create value (Chan, 2005). Using CRM techniques companies can target their customers on an individualized basis and help develop long-term relationships (Gillenson & Sanders, 2005).

Businesses have used customer relationship management techniques throughout most of commercial history. Historically, business transactions have been conducted in a face-to-face environment between a shop owner and the customer. Information about each customer was cataloged and retained by the shop owner. Since WWII, people have become more mobile and business transactions are now more distant and impersonal. However, information technology has allowed businesses to recreate that personal relationship, albeit not necessarily face-to-face, by recording personal information and transactional data from its customers. Numerous companies provide software for this purpose (Gillenson & Sanders, 2005). As an example, grocery stores use a common strategy for CRM in the loyalty programs they offer. Customers are given a free card that gives them access to special deals and discounts, which are activated when the card is swiped at checkout. The card actually tracks everything the customer purchases and enables the grocery store to create and maintain a detailed customer profile. With that information the store is able to offer special promotions “custom made” for each customer and motivate the customer to increase the number of products purchased from the store. The goal is to increase store loyalty (Meyer-Waarden & Benavent, 2006).

By the same token, HR can play a critical role in “Employee Relationship Management” (ERM). One objective of ERM is to attract and retain loyal employees. HR can help create strong employee relationships by listening to their needs and wants (and complaints) and responding

to them in a reasonable and fiscally responsible manner. HR will not only add value, it will generate higher levels of management and employee satisfaction. As with CRM, information technology can enable a company to maintain a personal relationship with its employees (ERM), even if they number in the tens or hundreds of thousands. An employee might have a good relationship with his or her supervisor, but that may not translate to a feeling that the company cares about him or her. "Having a loyal workforce can be as important to a company as having a loyal customer base" (Gillenson & Sanders, 2005, p. 46). Many leaders from diverse entrepreneurial organizations understand that retention practices for top employees incur costs, however, replacing them is even more costly. Examples of ERM practices include support for employee development, bonuses aligned with corporate performance, and maintaining open and honest communications (O'Connor & Fiol, 2004).

So how can HR employ employee relationship management? As with CRM, HR needs to provide customer-centric products and services that create value. The approach centers on effective communications and employing the methods that were discussed previously regarding target marketing. Different customers and customer groups (different target segments) get information on products through different sources and channels. It's the same with employees. Some constituent groups (employees, managers, retirees, etc.) may prefer email communication; others (such as executives) may prefer face-to-face communication. Some may want more frequent, but less detailed, communication and in a multi-media format (e.g., Gen X and Gen Y employees) than others (e.g., traditionalists and baby boomers). Some may prefer one-on-one communication, while others may be more comfortable expressing opinions and seeking information through more anonymous methods. Some will want extensive facts and details; others will want primarily "the bottom line" (Knouse, 2011). HR can manage the internal communication process to customize the company's relationship with its employees, thereby increasing company loyalty.

Some companies, such as Siebel Systems, that provide software for CRM have also developed applications for ERM. Examples of applications that have been developed include personalized home pages for employee performance management, including skills inventory management, performance reviews and feedback, as well as employee learning modules, including virtual classroom training environments or online learning (Gillenson & Sanders, 2005). The goal is to customize and personalize the relationship the employee has with the company and increase employee engagement and commitment. In other words, make them "brand" (i.e., company) loyal. This is totally the realm of HR management and another tool to demonstrate the value HR provides for the organization.

Marketing Concept #5: Branding

The history of the term "brand" is quite mundane. A brand was the heated iron tool used to mark cattle to indicate ownership. Over the years, the term has evolved to demarcate the identity of particular product, company or even an individual by using symbols or words. "The term 'brand' came to designate all the characteristics and experiences that make a particular object or a combination be unique from another, as experienced by the consumer" (Irimies, 2012, p. 112). The goal of branding is to position the brand in the mind of consumers to create a perception that the brand provides benefits (value) to the customer. Building a brand relationship enhances the company's ability to maintain "a long-term relationship whose purpose is to create and maintain the brand loyalty" (Irimies, 2012, p. 112). It aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers. Research has shown that there are significant financial rewards, such as higher profits, better perceived

quality and stronger customer loyalty, from well-known brands (Kotler & Keller, 2016). A positive employer brand can show similar positive results with internal customers (Cascio, 2014).

There are numerous examples of successful brands in business. “Coke” has been one of the few truly global brands. Joseph V. Tripodi, executive vice president and chief marketing and commercial officer at the Coca-Cola Company, credits Coca-Cola's consistent brand essence as the primary reason for its success for decades. He states “The brand stands for the same thing around the world, the notion of positivity, happiness and bringing people together” (Choueke, 2009, p. 25). Coca Cola held the position of being #1 in brand value for 13 years before being replaced recently by Apple as #1 and Google as #2. Coke now ranks third (“Apple, Google bump Coke down to no. 3 in brand-value ranking,” Sept. 30, 2013).

Innovation is often a key to creating successful brands. Apple, for one, has produced numerous innovations that generate interest and visibility for its products (Aaker, 2013). Apple's marketing genius is that it has been able to have the brand become a lifestyle. Its success spans generations and international boundaries and is based on the ability to focus on its customers and satisfy their needs (Cuneo, 2003).

While branding of consumer products is a well-known and studied practice, a more recent focus is “internal branding.” Internal branding is a strategic process designed to create committed employees and to align them with corporate objectives. The goal is to develop your employees as brand ambassadors who will portray the company as an employer of choice (Asha & Jyothi, 2013). Internal branding can build a bridge between strategy and execution. Customer experience can be enhanced by using your internal communication to reinforce and explain the values and behaviors that reflect your brand. The growing popularity of “employer branding” reflects attempts by marketers to use the tools developed to create consumer brand equity to secure the commitment and engagement of the internal audience (Simmons, 2009). External branding and internal branding can be viewed as two sides of the same coin (Simmons, 2009). Marketers seek to create value for customers and HR's goal is to bring a value proposition to current and potential employees (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). Companies that adopt a collaborative approach between HR and marketing for internal branding are more likely to develop a successful branding strategy (Simmons, 2009).

In business organizations, HR has typically been the leader for internal communications. Thus, it makes sense for HR professionals to work with marketers to develop an internal branding strategy, both for the organization and for HR itself. HR can play a crucial role in developing a communication strategy to enable employees to “live” the brand (Smith & Blomqvist, 2005) and truly become credible brand ambassadors for their employer's brand (Hathi & Carmody, 2012). HR professionals can utilize marketing tools to project a favorable image to attract a large pool of prospective employees by positioning the company as a leading brand or an employer of choice (Saini, et al., 2014). A strong employer brand enables a firm to secure and maintain the most desirable employees who can ensure their brand success and ongoing profitability (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Employer branding also ties in with creating value and employee relationship management. Just as a strong consumer brand creates value for its customers, a successful employer brand is one that creates a “value proposition that is relevant to, and resonant with, their prospective and current employees” (Moroko and Uncles, 2008, p.164). By assuming the lead role in internal/employer branding, HR can help to elevate HR's image as a strategic partner.

As baby boomers retire and companies seek to replace the “brain drain,” the importance of talent management increases and HR, as the function most responsible for the management of

human capital, has an opportunity to assume a greater strategic role within the organization. HR leaders can add value and elevate the credibility and influence of the human resources function by applying branding strategies to its employee customers. Also, HR can strive to brand itself as an important internal function by developing common themes and a logo for its products and communications, just as marketing does with external communications. A common “look” and expressed set of values that can be evidenced in all of its products and services can reinforce the image that HR wishes to communicate internally.

Marketing Concept #6: The Marketing Mix

The marketing mix is better known as the four P’s of marketing: product, place, price, and promotion. The term “four P’s” was coined by Borden in the 1960s to reflect the fact that marketers have these four “ingredients” essentially with which to craft a marketing strategy (Borden, 1964). “Product” represents the tangible (goods) or intangible (service) aspects of the company’s deliverables. “Place” refers to distribution (i.e. where can customers purchase or obtain the product or service). The objective is to have products available when and where customers are likely to want them. “Price” is what is charged for the product and the concept of value, discussed previously, is an important factor in determining pricing strategies. Finally, “Promotion” refers to how companies communicate with the customer about their products. Promotion can take many forms, including advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, e-commerce, sales promotion, and public relations.

While all elements of the marketing mix can apply to efforts to improve HR’s performance and, hence its image, promotion can be one of the most useful marketing tools available to HR professionals. “Promotion” refers to disseminating information or communicating about a product, brand, or company. Fundamentally, there are three basic objectives of promotion. These are to (1) present information to consumers as well as others, (2) increase demand, and (3) differentiate a product (Kurtz, 2010).

While “marketing communication” is directed primarily toward external customers, HR communication focuses primarily on internal customers (i.e., employees, managers, or executives). In a sense, promotion involves taking advantage of every opportunity within the company to “make the case” for the HR function – telling what HR has accomplished, promoting the value created by HR programs and services, and being visible in multiple forums with a consistent HR message (e.g., People Count!). Because of the importance of this process, this paper will conclude with a more in-depth look at how promotion can aid the HR function to achieve its objectives within the organization and improve its image.

Promoting the HR Function

The tools HR uses to communicate with its constituents are key to enhancing its image within the corporation. Companies need to sell their brand inside the company in much the same way that marketing does with external customers utilizing similar techniques (Mitchell, 2002). Personal selling is one component of promotion that HR can employ readily. A common definition of personal selling is an “interactive, personal, paid promotional approach between a buyer and seller” (Tanner & Raymond, 2010, p. 222). A meta-analysis of 155 samples of sales representatives demonstrated that adaptive selling behavior increases customer orientation and job satisfaction leading to improved performance (Franke & Park, 2006). Marketing organizations rely on personal selling to market complex products to consumers, such as computers or investment portfolios, as well as business to business marketing. Many of the products and services that HR provides, such as retirement plans and options, are also complex

and require greater interaction and personal communication to facilitate decision-making by the employee.

In an HR context, personal selling is the communication that occurs between HR personnel and others within the organization, whether it is employees, managers, or those in the executive suite. Unlike advertising's one way communication, personal selling allows for interaction between the parties to clarify and confirm issues. It is most effective in "closing the deal." So, if the goal is to obtain commitment for new HR policies or programs, personal selling can be a very effective mechanism. For this reason, key HR managers should make an effort to get on any stage available within the organization to "sell" what HR is accomplishing, to indicate that it is interested in what others have to say, to make itself available for help others accomplish their goals, and to promote its value to the organization.

Sales promotion is another potential communications tool. In marketing, the general purpose of sales promotion is to get people to try something or keep them as loyal customers. For example, coupons, rebates, samples, sweepstakes, buy one get one free, etc., are all intended to get customers to try a product, and hopefully like it enough to continue purchasing it. An application for HR would be sponsoring an employee sweepstakes to promote the introduction of a new program such as a new online benefits enrollment program or a new safety program. Consider, for example, the introduction of an online benefits enrollment program where employees are initially given the opportunity to enroll online or use a hard-copy form of submission. A sweepstakes could be provided whereby employees who use the new online benefits enrollment program are given an opportunity to win one of several prizes (e.g., an iPod or a flat-screen TV). The objective would be to generate excitement about the new product or service, encourage its use, and create ambassadors for the new program. The benefits of online enrollment can be greater accuracy and cost effectiveness as well as saving time for employees (Teems, 2003).

HR can also engage in "public relations" to build good relations with internal stakeholders in support of its external relationships. Employees can serve as company ambassadors. By creating a strong internal brand employees are more likely to spread the positive image to external constituents in various non-commercial venues. For example, HR can seek opportunities to talk about HR functions and community outreach or "green" initiatives at various meetings or social media posts throughout the organization, clip and send items from newspapers and journals that may be of interest to various executives or department heads within the company, or take other executives and managers to lunch periodically to discuss HR issues and programs. HR must collaborate with other functional areas to provide consistency between internal and external communications relative to corporate reputation and internal and external branding (Friedman, 2009). By doing so the organization creates internal and external synergy.

Finally, direct marketing, a marketing tool which traces its roots back to the mid-fifteenth century using direct mail of trade catalogs as the advertising medium and mail order as the selling platform (Scovotti and Spiller, 2006), also can be employed by HR. As cited by Scovotti and Spiller (2006, p. 192), the Data and Marketing Association (previously known as the Direct Marketing Association) defines "direct marketing is an interactive system of marketing which uses one or more media to effect a measurable response and/or transaction at any location." What differentiates direct marketing from other forms of communication is the provision of a mechanism to respond. It may be a printed postcard mailed to customers with an 800-number or a web address included for response or an advertisement in a newspaper with an "offer code" and an 800-number listed for response. The objective of direct marketing is to engage

customers and stimulate them to respond to the communication. The significant advantage over other forms of communication is the ability to track what works.

HR can employ the direct marketing approach for programs where employee engagement is a necessity. One example is the annual health benefit open enrollment period where everyone must complete new benefit enrollment forms for the next year. Various methods of communication could be employed to reach employees regarding this need: email, snail mail, newsletters or the company intranet. Each could have a different response mechanism to enable HR to determine the most effective way to communicate this important information and achieve maximum employee response rates. Another example where direct marketing approaches could be used is internal recruiting. HR could provide job vacancy information to employees using the variety of communication methods cited above. When people apply for a position, HR can ask "How did you learn of this position vacancy?" and record the responses for subsequent analysis and application. Hence, the best approaches for communicating the availability of internal positions can be determined. Each of these promotional approaches can help HR improve its effectiveness and efficiency in providing products and services within the organization and better communicate the value of its function within the organization.

CONCLUSION

This paper has identified and reviewed selected marketing concepts and demonstrated how they can be employed by HR to enhance the image of HR within the organization. Many of these principles and techniques are used by HR functions without fully recognizing the marketing theory upon which they are based. With a clearer understanding of the marketing concepts underlying many of their activities, HR professionals can become even more effective in adding value to what they do and demonstrating their support of corporate goals and deserved role as a strategic partner. By doing so they will improve the image of HR and show why HR deserves place in the C-suite.

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. (2013). Your brand needs energy. *Marketing News*, 47 (4), 16. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1355558338?accountid=38769>
- American Marketing Association (2016). Retrieved July 17, 2016, from <https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx>
- Apple, google bump coke down to no. 3 in brand-value ranking. (2013). *Advertising Age*, 84 (34), 3. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1439119215?accountid=38769>
- Asha, C. S., & Jyothi, P. (2013). Internal branding: a determining element of organizational citizenship behaviour. *Journal of Contemporary Management Research*, 7 (1),
- Berry, D. (1988). The marketing concept revisited: It's setting goals, not making a mad dash for profits. *Marketing News*, 22, 26-27.
- Bland, V. (2003). Customer relationship management: Keeping customers loyal - case studies show the way we all know that competitive companies have a strong customer focus. *New Zealand Management*, 53. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/201644016?accountid=38769>

- Borden, N. (1964). The concept of the marketing mix. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 4, 2-7.
- Cascio, W. F. (2014). Leveraging employer branding, performance management and human resource development to enhance employee retention. *Human Resource Development International*, 17 (2), 121-128. doi:10.1080/13678868.2014.886443
- Chan, J. O. (2005). Toward a Unified View of Customer Relationship Management. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, Cambridge, 6 (1), 32-38.
- Choueke, M. (2009, October 1). Interview - Joseph Tripodi: Putting some fizz into drinks marketing. *Marketing Week*, 24-25. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/228250224?accountid=38769>
- Canhoto, A. I., Clark, M., & Fennemore, P. (2013). Emerging segmentation practices in the age of the social customer. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 21 (5), 413-428. doi:10.1080/0965254X.2013.801609
- Crest. Retrieved July 17, 2016, from <http://crest.com/en-us/products/toothpaste#viewtype:gridview/facets:/category:toothpaste/page:1/sortby:popularitydesc/productsdisplayed:undefined/cwidth:3/promotilesenabled:false/pcwidth:/cwidth:3/pscroll:>
- Cuneo, A. (2003). Apple transcends as lifestyle brand. *Advertising Age*, 74 (50), S2, S6. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/208338070?accountid=38769>
- Dempsey, K. (2007). HR business blindness is cause of lack of respect. *Personnel Today*, 14.
- Donkin, R. (2006, June). HR suffers a mid-market malaise. *Human Resources*, 14. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/228226054?accountid=38769>
- Executive Interview. (2013). *Workforce Solutions Review*, 4 (5), 42-43.
- Franke, G. R., & Park, J. (2006). Salesperson adaptive selling behavior and customer orientation: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43 (4), 693-702.
- Friedman, B. A. (2009). Human resource management role: Implications for corporate reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 12 (3), 229-244. doi:10.1057/crr.2009.17
- Galford, R. (1998). Why doesn't this HR department get any respect? *Harvard Business Review*, 76 (2), 24-26.
- Gillenson, M., & Sanders, T. (2005). Employee relationship management: Applying the concept of personalization to U.S. Navy sailors. *Information Systems Management*, 22 (1), 45-50. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/214129874?accountid=38769>
- Gurchiek, K. (2005). Global survey finds little respect for HR. *HR Magazine*, 50 (4), 32-42.
- Hansotia, B. (2002). Gearing up for CRM: Antecedents to successful implementation. *Journal of Database Marketing*, 10 (2), 121-32.
- Hathi, S., & Carmody, L. (2012). Can employees be credible brand ambassadors for an organization? *Strategic Communication Management*, 16 (10), 8. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1265770370?accountid=38769>

- Irimies, C., (2012). Basic notions of branding: Definition, history, architecture. *Journal of Media Research*, 5 (3), 110-117. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1372159296?accountid=38769>
- Jass, B. (2013). Take the Mobile Learning Plunge. *T+D*, 67 (2), 29-31.
- Kaliannan, M., Abraham, M., & Ponnusamy, V. (2016). Effective talent management in Malaysian SMES: A proposed framework. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 50393-401.
- Kotler, P., and K. L. Keller. (2016). *Marketing Management*. 15th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2014). *Principles of Marketing*. 15th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Knouse, S. B. (2011). Managing generational diversity in the 21st century. *Competition Forum*, 9 (2), 255-260. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/912867882?accountid=38769>
- Kumar, V., Sunder, S., & Ramaseshan, B. (2011). Analyzing the diffusion of global customer relationship management: A cross-regional modeling framework. *Journal of International Marketing*, 19 (1), 23-39. doi: 10.1509/jimk.19.1.23.
- Kurtz, D. (2010). *Contemporary Marketing*. Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Lachnit, C. (2001). Why HR don't get no respect. *Workforce*, 80 (12), 14.
- Lochbihler, L. (2006). The evolving role of HR. *Canadian Manager*, 31 (1), 8-9.
- Meyer-Waarden, L., & Benavent, C. (2006). The impact of loyalty programmes on repeat purchase behaviour. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 22 (1-2), 61-88.
- Mitchell, C. (2002). Selling the brand inside. *Harvard Business Review*, 80 (1), 99-105.
- Moir, S. (2008, February). Segmenting benefits to suit staff is beneficial. *Employee Benefits*. 24.
- Moroko, L., & Uncles, M. (2008). Characteristics of successful employer brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16 (3), 160-175. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/bm.2008.4>
- Nolan, M. (2012). Focus groups can shape new HR initiatives. *Canadian HR Reporter*, 25 (22), 15-16. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1268705524?accountid=38769>
- O'Connor, E. J., & Fiol, C. M. (2004). Spinning a winning web: Attracting and retaining top performers. *Physician Executive*, 30 (5), 40-42.
- Orr, B. (2002). Customer service an elusive concept for HR. *Canadian HR Reporter*, 15 (21), 6, 8. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/220810150?accountid=38769>
- PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2013). NextGen: A global generational study: Evolving talent strategy to match the new workforce reality. Retrieved June 10, 2016, from http://www.pwc.com/en_US/us/people-management/publications/assets/pwc-nextgen-summary-of-findings.pdf
- Proctor and Gamble (2016). Retrieved July 17, 2016, from <http://us.pg.com/our-brands>

- Reinartz, W. & Kumar, V. (2003). The impact of customer relationship characteristics on profitable lifetime duration. *Journal of Marketing*, 67 (January), 77–99.
- Rose, M. (2007, August). What can HR learn from marketing? *Employee Benefits*, p. 24.
- Saini, G. K., Rai, P., & Chaudhary, M. K. (2014). What do best employer surveys reveal about employer branding and intention to apply? *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(2), 95-111. doi:10.1057/bm.2013.10
- Scovotti, C., & Spiller, L. (2006). Revisiting the conceptual definition of direct marketing: Perspectives from practitioners and scholars. *Marketing Management Journal*, 16 (2), 188-202.
- Sheth, J., & Uslay, C. (2007). Implications of the revised definition of marketing: From exchange to value creation. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, 26 (2), 302-307. doi: 10.1509/jppm.26.2.302
- Simmons, J. A. (2009). "Both sides now": Aligning external and internal branding for a socially responsible era. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 27 (5), 681-697. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02634500910977890>
- Smith, J., & Blomqvist, K. (2005). Strange bedfellows. *Marketing Management*, 14 (1), 38-43. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/194200925?accountid=38769>
- Smith, S. (2008). Gen Y workers report low job satisfaction levels. *Occupational Hazards*, 70(10), 18.
- Tanner, J., & Raymond, M. (2010). *Principles of Marketing: How Marketing Gets Done*. Nyack, NY: Flat World Knowledge.
- Teems, Y. (2003). Employees benefit from online enrollment. *Business Insurance*, 37 (32), T6.
- Tewari, R. (2010). HR and recession: A challenge among HR professionals. *Global Management Review*, 4 (4), 68-72.
- Ulrich, D. (2007). Has HR finally arrived? *Workforce Management*, 86 (12), 51-52, 54. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/219793006?accountid=38769>
- Webb, D., Webster, C., & Kreppa, A. (2000). An exploration of the meaning and outcomes of a customer-defined market orientation. *Journal of Business Research*, 48 (2), 101-112. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/196322035?accountid=38769>
- Wes, W. (2015). Social HR: Leading edge HR necessity? *Workforce Solutions Review*, 6 (2), 18-20.
- Wiley, J. (2012). What do employees really want? *Strategic Communication Management*, 16(2), 8. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/935870819?accountid=38769> .
- Wilkinson, A. (2006, September). Segmentation will yield better buy-in of perks pie. *Employee Benefits*, 5. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/224690379?accountid=38769>