

THE CHALLENGES OF INSIDE MARKETING GENERATED BY THE NEW CONTEXT OF EXTENDED TELEWORK

*Elisabeta Andreea BUDACIA¹
Marian Florin BUSUIOC²*

Abstract: *Marketing is omnipresent in the field of business and not only; in fact, it is hard to avoid in our daily lives, in general. The current context of the pandemic changed radically the coordinates of marketing in general, and those of inside marketing in particular. Inside marketing (i. e. within one company) can be viewed as an integral part of human resources management due to its indirect, but valuable contribution to maintaining the relations with external customers. An obvious change refers to the manner in which internal communication is realized, as a result of the transition to telework. The companies' preoccupations, within the new context, are focused in order to provide the adequate technologies for communicating, motivating the workers and maintaining and building an attachment to their own brand.*

Keywords: *inside marketing, communication process*

JEL Classification: M31.

1. Introduction

Marketing is omnipresent in the field of business and not only; in fact, it is hard to avoid in our daily lives, in general. The current context of the pandemic changed the coordinates of marketing, in the sense that an accelerated digitalization process can be noticed, which has profound implications within companies, but also within a certain market.

Seth Godin (2018) states: "Marketing means the generous act of helping others become who they are looking to become." Even if he refers to an internal component or an external one, we believe that he is right, as both the customer and the employee need support in order to attain their goal.

¹ Senior Lecturer, PhD, at the Romanian – American University, andreea.budacia@gmail.com

² Senior Lecturer, PhD, at the Romanian – American University, mf_busuioc@yahoo.com

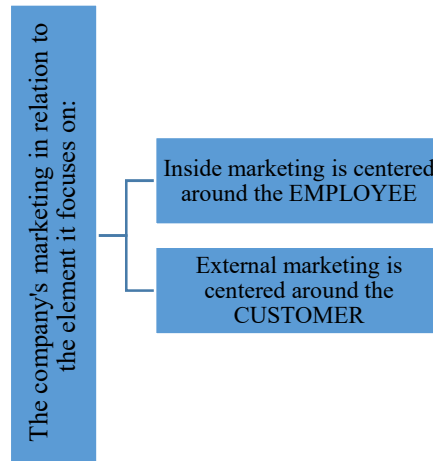


Fig. no. 1 The elements of the company's marketing in relation to the component they center around

Thus, the concept of marketing should be analyzed from a double perspective: inside and out. In short, external marketing, i. e. outside the organization, centers its preoccupations on the customer and targets the optimization of the relations with the market. Inside marketing aims at winning the “inside customer”, namely the employee, and implies hiring, training and motivating qualified personnel, who is willing to offer quality services to clients. Therefore, inside marketing should precede external marketing.

Inside marketing can be viewed as an integral part of human resources management due to its indirect, but valuable contribution to maintaining the relations with external customers. The successes or failures of the marketing plans of a company depend on the employees of the respective company. The people (employees) represent the first client standard. (Kotler, 2004)

Communication is also an important component of inside marketing, even more within the new reality of telework, which, in its turn, imposes a new reality of communication, instruments and media used for communicating and interacting at the workplace.

2. Evolutions and tendencies in the field of inside marketing, generated by telework

Telework is a necessary, useful and effective variant for carrying out economic activities whether we talk about the survival, maintenance and/or development of businesses, on the one hand, or the saving of the employees' jobs, on the other

hand, within the new socio-economic context that we face, namely the context of the SARS-COV-19 pandemic.

The reality is that telework/ working remotely will continue to have a great importance in the future, possibly even a greater one, and companies should adapt their management and marketing policies to the new paradigm.

The adaptation to the new context is completed, given the fact that the pandemic began over a year ago, and now the main issue is to perfect the adaptation methods, as well as to discover or use new ones, which can generate performance and added value. These include a series of implications of a managerial nature, in this context of extended telework, and the most obvious challenges are: organizational aspects (organizational chart, co-working), the company's internal logistics, enhancing the loyalty of customers and employees.

The shift towards telework determined a series of changes within companies and they refer to:

- a) introducing additional flexibility into the activity planning in order to respond to the needs of employees (isolated at home and having to carry out their activity in an inadequate space, together with family members);
- b) the necessity for the company to have a higher level of agility;
- c) organizing the access into the work space in accordance with the social distance restrictions;
- d) marketing's new attributes, as it was mostly moved online.

Hanson (2000), on the one hand, and Vervest & Dunn (2000), on the other hand, state that marketing in the virtual world, using the internet, is not conceptually different from the classic one, but it knows different manners of expression and an unprecedented dynamic. The evolution of marketing had a series of stages, from the classic one to *telemarketing* (realized through phone or television), *e-marketing* (realized through the internet) and *cyber marketing* (realized through all the facilities offered by the new information and communication technologies). Nowadays, adding to the previous affirmations, we can state that marketing is omnipresent online, whether it is inside or external marketing, as it is carried out through all possible media.

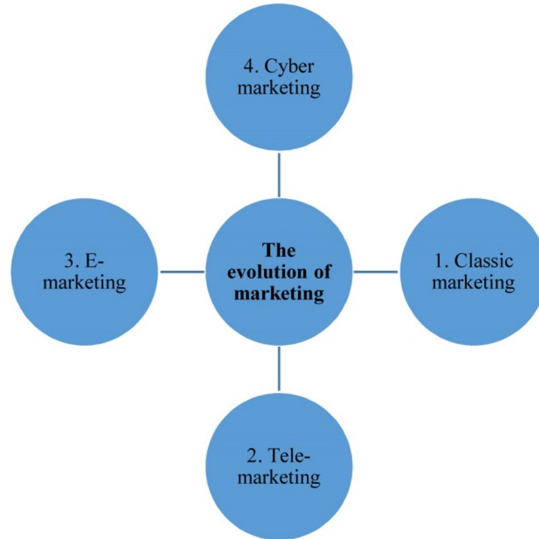


Fig. no. 2 Stages in the evolution of marketing

In the context of telework, external marketing, centered around the customer, is indissolubly linked to the activity of selling, to e-commerce, to the company's businesses, in general, which were moved online. Cyber marketing can be found at the intersection of three domains: marketing, economy and technology. The force that governs internal cyber marketing is the employee.

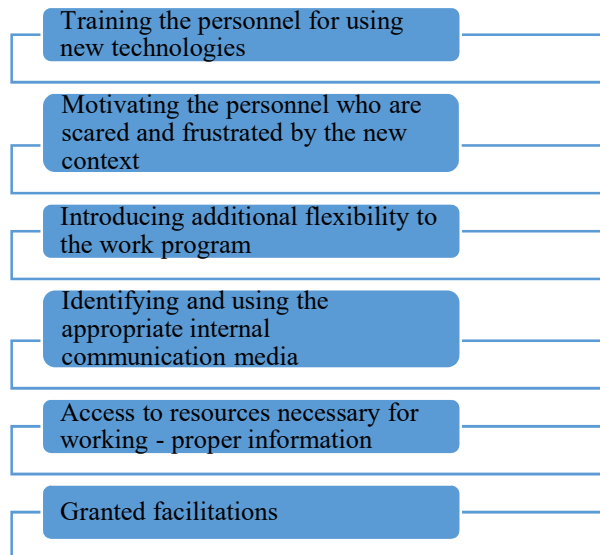


Fig. no. 3 Determinants of inside marketing in the context of telework

Inside marketing, centered on the employee, is subject to certain important challenges, such as:

- a) understanding all aspects which have an impact on the new marketing style within the current context;
- b) identifying the media, the key components of technology, which correspond in the best manner to inside marketing activities;
- c) the exact establishment of the technical and technological characteristics which will merge with the theoretical aspects of classic marketing;
- d) the interactivity of employees;
- e) confidentiality, the right to a private life, intrusion in the personal life.

3. Particularities of the communication process – a basis of inside marketing

Referring to communication, Ph. Kotler & Nancy Lee (2008) state: “In the case of communication, more means less and not more efficient. The overuse of communication in order to resolve numerous economic and social problems overcrowded so much the communication media that only a small part of the messages actually reaches its target. And these messages are not necessarily the most important ones. There is a blockage on the highways of the mind. Engines overheat. Tempers flare.”

An obvious change refers to the manner in which the internal communication is realized, as a result of the shift towards telework. The companies’ preoccupations are oriented towards ensuring the appropriate technologies for communication; those already in place were used (e-mail addresses used only for work, phone, WhatsApp, Signal or Telegram groups – the last two are more recent), and also other free platforms (for example, Zoom, Meet or Microsoft Teams). Therefore, communication in the context of telework is mostly online, especially when it cannot be carried out face to face at all or in a hybrid format.

The lack of social interaction among employees (the formal one, but especially the informal one – which has positive or negative effects that reflect in formal communication) generated longer meetings, tensions among the team’s members, the need for additional clarifications, extra time spent for carrying out certain work tasks. The interaction among employees is of major importance and necessary in order to maintain the motivation, health and productivity of employees. Starting from the above mentioned elements, we propose a chart for the process of internal communication, as a basis of inside marketing.

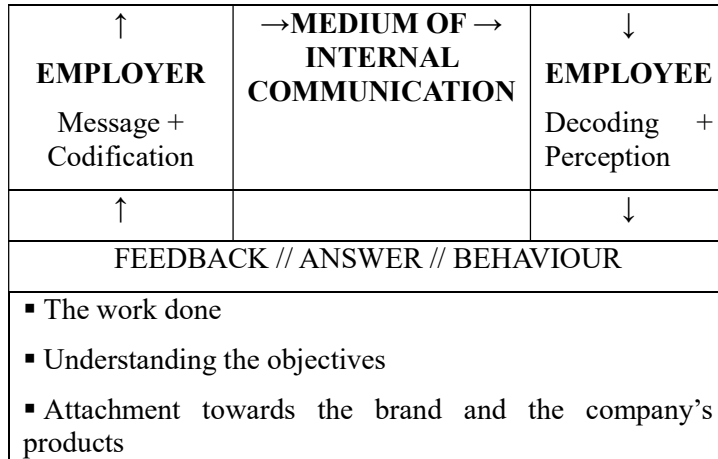


Fig. no. 4 The communication process in inside marketing (adaptation after Ph. Kotler, *Managementul Marketingului* (translation), Ed. Teora, București, 1997, p. 759.)

Al Ries, Jack Trout (2004) support the idea that: marketing is, in fact, not a battle of products, but a battle of customers' perceptions regarding the products. Thus, we can state that conceptual delimitations and typological classifications of different forms of marketing are no longer necessary, because the consumer becomes a generic concept and the first consumer of the products is the employee of the company that produces the respective products.

In this context, the first "product" of the company is its very message about its offer. Before being sold, the company's product/ offer communicates, transmits to those around, information, promises, emotions, sensations, commitments, experiences. And the first people who can hear the product's message are the company's employees. They are responsible for transmitting the promise of the brand, but they are also the guarantors of this promise in front of the consumers. This is the reason why their behavior (for instance, their fashion style, their tone of voice and other details about them) should be in line with the values expressed by the brand they represent. An appropriate behavior, in accordance with the company's values, which generates added value reflected in the volume of sales and in the company's profitability, is obtained through an efficient inside marketing, based on a strong internal communication process.

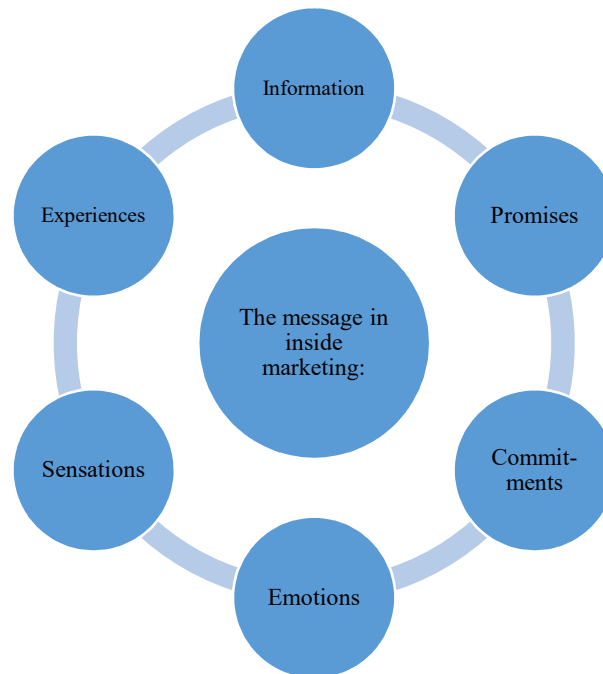


Fig. no. 5 The components of the message in inside marketing

Perju – Mitran (2015) supports the idea according to which all individuals involved in communication activities should possess a certain knowledge regarding the mission, values and objectives of the organization and its products in order to ensure the consistency of the message.

Nevertheless, why is inside marketing so important? The main element that inside marketing should build is the help of employees in order for them to establish a strong emotional connection with the company's products and services. If this connection is not created, the worst case scenario is that the employees eventually undermine the expectations that were initially established. In many cases, this happens simply because they do not understand what was promised to customers or beneficiaries, so they end up working without understanding the established objectives. In other cases, which are much worse, it is possible that they do not actually believe in the respective brand and show hostility towards the company.

Inside marketing has the role of making the employees care, believe in the brand, of motivating them, because motivated employees tend to work more and their loyalty towards the company is greater.

The commitment towards the brand displayed by the employees of an organization (Employee Brand Engagement) establishes a critical link between employees and customers; in essence, it is all about informing, inspiring and involving employees

in order for them to want to support and promote the company's brand. In this sense, there are three major aspects:

- a) The emotional commitment of the employee becomes an ambassador, actively disseminating positive information about the brand;
- b) By understanding the brand strategy, employees understand who are the targeted clients of the brand, how the brand is positioned in relation to the competition and what the unique and valuable brand does from the client's perspective;
- c) Through a loyal relation with the brand, employees have access to instruments and data about the manner in which the brand is perceived by the clients and cultivate and actively strengthen the brand every day, with each interaction with potential or actual clients.

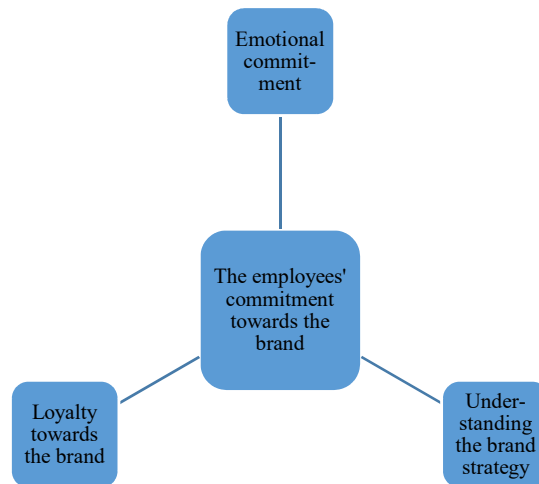


Fig. no. 6 The key elements of Employee Brand Engagement

Employee Brand Engagement does not only produce happy employees; it develops happy, involved employees, who produce the correct results. The company is not only acknowledged as a wonderful work place; creation, work itself, becomes great. And the company does not assert itself only as an employer; it lays the foundation for an excellent relation with the customers.

Conclusions

In accordance with the accepted meaning of the new normal, where telework is used and practiced in a significant proportion, we consider that the transformations

in this field are not over; in fact, they have just begun. We think that some of the challenges of telework will be: an increased emphasis on creativity and thought, the capacity to extract and understand the essence, the capacity to prioritize tasks, the creation of intangible, knowledge based “products”, finding a balance between private life and work, but especially establishing clear boundaries between the two.

Regarding inside marketing, carried out within the companies that adapted to the new reality, we consider that the main aspects which should be taken into account are the following: an emphasis on the globalisation of labour, managing a multicultural team, the need for further training (as a certain certificate or diploma is necessary, but not sufficient), work relations based rather on cooperation and not on subordination, using the truly important and essential communication media.

Bibliography:

- [1] Seth Godin - *This is marketing*, Ed. Penguin Group, 2018
- [2] Hanson W., *Principles of Internet Marketing*, South-Western College Publishing, Ohio, SUA 2000
- [3] Ph. Kotler & Nancy Lee – *Marketing în sectorul public*, 2008
- [4] Perju – Mitran – *Rolul comunicării de marketing online prin intermediul rețelelor sociale în modelarea comportamentului consumatorului*, Ed. ProUniversitaria, București, 2015
- [5] Al Ries, Jack Trout - *Cele 22 de legi imuabile ale marketingului*, Editura BrandBuilders, 2004, pag 30
- [6] Vervest P., Dunn A., *How to Win Customers in the Digital World*, Springer, Germania 2000