Chapter 5.11

Information Technologies as a Vital Channel for an Internal E-Communication Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

The use of traditional marketing tools with the purpose to increase effectiveness and efficacy within organizations has been studied among different authors. This topic known as internal marketing (IM) starts defining employees as internal clients to whom the organization must satisfy a group of needs and expectations to achieve their engagement and motivation on work, looking forward to increased productivity and competitively within the organization.

Among the most important aspects and maybe the least discussed on IM are the information technologies (IT), in first place, as a method to ease the work increasing the labor life quality (LLQ). Furthermore, the information technologies are a vital channel to develop an internal e-communication (internal electronic communication) effective strategy. In both cases, the new technologies give enormous possibilities as supporting strategies to IM, allowing the organization to have a direct and permanent relationship with its workers in any place, important aspect to have a successful integration, and participation on the global economy.

The present article talks about the challenges and possibilities that offer the IT as IM support, mainly, being an important channel to the internal e-communication.

BACKGROUND

As Weill, Subramani, and Broadbent (2002) point, one of the most critical decisions that directors have to make today is related to the investment they have to do on IT. These decisions could allow, or impeding business initiatives could be, in fact, a platform to implement future strategies. And this is also true to develop an IM strategy and especially, decisions related to internal communication that use as an IT base, the same as internal communication.

To understand the IM model it is useful to have present a definition given by Barney (1991), who points out that this model consists on using marketing tools to develop a human resource, which represents a true value to the company for its capacity on implementing strategies that will make the organization more effective and efficient.

Authors as Berry (1981) proposes in this sense, those workers should be seen as internal clients, visualizing the work as an internal product that should satisfy the needs and desires of these internal clients. Quintanilla (1991) says that companies should convert themselves on personalized organizations, in which should be taken as an important fact working satisfaction and self-esteem development of every employee.

The IM proposes that satisfied workers could be more productive, and in fact, their organizations more profitable. Relating to the motivation reached by the employees as Levionnois (1992) documented, there are some successful experiences that collect IM benefits and virtues.

In a consistent form with the IM model, Peppard (2003) points out also that, on the IT within organizations, the users should be treated as internal clients, to whom should be offered a services portfolio. In these services, we could have available to the workers channels of communication with the company in two ways, company-employees and employees-company.

Ahmed and Rafi (2003) established an IM conceptual model, in which they refer to the "4 P's" of traditional marketing, it means, product, price, place, and promotion, which are complemented with additional "P's," that is service, process, and physical evidence, on described terms by Kotler (2001).

Ahmed, Rafiq, and Saad (2003) propose an IM mix that include the following aspects: a) strategical rewards; b) internal communication; c) training and development; d) organizational structure; e) executive leadership; f) physical environment; g) staffing, selection, and promotions; h) interfunctional coordination; i) incentives system; j) empowerment; and k) process and operations changes.

However, we could point out that IM is still on development. In this sense, is important to mention Papasolomou-Doukakis' (2004) opinion, who affirms that IM development has been produced by a mix of ideas and theories that had been set together under the IM umbrella. On this IM development, there is still a lack of unanimity about its definitions and basic principles, which has produced a variety of implementation forms on practice.

Regarding internal communication, using the proposal of Frank and Brownell (1989) who define it as communication transactions between individuals or groups in different levels and different areas of specialization within the company, with the intention to design or redesign the organization or coordinate the day by day activities. Ahmed and Rafi (2003) point out the importance of the internal communication indicating that is necessary to establish a link that allows selling the internal clients the values and needed attitudes to reach success on their strategies. Soriano (1993) says that it should be sold and communicate the company's identity and image, and its corporative values, its plans and projects to develop, its organization, its management model, the possibilities of individual development, the work conditions that it offers, the atmosphere and existing working environment, its products and services, its

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