

COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN THE FUNCTIONS AND INSTRUMENTS OF INTERNAL MARKETING AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

This paper aims to present comparatively the Internal Marketing and Human Resource Management' domains, firstly through a theoretical perspective, and secondly, through a practical outlook. Therefore, in the first part of the paper, our main objective is to cover a complex literature review concerning the two concepts, in order to identify and analyze their functions and instruments. Moreover, in this first part of the paper, aiming to contribute to the approaches identified in the existing literature, we framed and presented a personal point of view regarding the functions and instruments of Internal Marketing. The second part of the paper is dedicated to the study of the managers' perception regarding the interaction between Internal Marketing and Human Resource Management, in terms of functions and instruments. We carried out a qualitative analysis of the data obtained from guided in-depth interviews with managers from various hierarchical levels, in order to identify whether the interaction between the two domains can be perceived as overlapping, inclusion through extension, complementarity or independence. The results distinguish the complementarity between the above mentioned domains, from the point of view of the managers from different hierarchical levels involved in our research. The final part of the paper, draws a schematic list of the conclusions regarding the interaction between this two domains, as well as of several recommendations for companies in order to optimize their relationship with the employees, to improve their motivation, and, implicitly, to improve the individual and organizational performance.

Key words: internal marketing, human resource management, functions, instruments, complementarity

1. Introduction

The present research aims to address the controversial topic of

internal marketing functions and instruments analyzed by comparison with the functions and instruments of

human resource management. So far, the literature in the field allows a general theoretical understanding of the similarities and differences between the two areas, but little research was done to present the practical outcome of these theories.

In this regard, the present article addresses the theoretical and practical problem of the difficulty regarding the practical differentiation of functions and instruments proper to Internal Marketing and, respectively, to Human Resource Management. Thus, our approach is a bidirectional one, distinctively analyzing the two areas, subsequently presenting theoretical correlations resulting from the literature review but also practical correlations resulting from the development of a qualitative research. The paper is completed with proposals and recommendations for organizations and by suggesting a structure of a hierarchical-relationship type on the use of certain instruments to carry out the functions of the two analyzed areas. The relevance and the contribution of our research is reflected in complementing the existing work in the field, and, respectively, in offering a stepping stone for future thematic research.

The innovative character of our research is derived from its ultimate goal, which is to investigate the extent to which the interaction between the fields of Human Resources Management and Internal Marketing can be considered as overlapping, the inclusion of one field by extending the other, complementary or independence. Additionally, the paper highlights the individual approach which is specific to human resource management, holding individual capabilities, as having the opportunity to become a marketing capability, as a result of Internal Marketing becoming more procedural

and instrumental.

In terms of structure, the first part of the research presents a review of the literature in the field focusing on the concepts of Internal Marketing and Human Resource Management, particularly on their functions and instruments. The research further displays the research methodology and subsequently the analysis and interpretation of results. The paper concludes both theoretical and practical findings of the conducted research. In addition, it identifies the limitations encountered in the conduct of the current research, recommendations being formulated and future research directions identified.

Literature review

Internal marketing

Definition, emergence and development of Internal Marketing

Internal marketing concept emerged in 1976, following the proposal of Leonard Berry and his collaborators (Berry, Hensel and Burke, 1976). In this first mention of the term, the concept was proposed as a possible solution to the problem of consistently providing high quality services for customers, starting from the interest of organizations regarding situations in which employees who have direct contact with customers should be able to better meet their needs. In fact, internal marketing aims to become a part of the organization's strategy with the purpose of promoting a positive corporate image, not only externally but also internally.

From an evolutionary perspective, internal marketing has undergone a series of stages that capture the very essence of the way internal marketing theories have developed over time. The three stages of the internal marketing evolution are: Stage 1 - Employee

satisfaction and motivation; Stage 2 - Customer orientation and customer satisfaction, and Stage 3 – Strategy implementation and Change management (Naghi, 2013, pp. 12-18).

Regarding the definition of the concept of internal marketing, the literature in the field contain many definitions, some of which are closely correlated with certain stages of the concept's evolution, while other definitions address internal marketing as a whole, irrespective of the stages it has progressively undergone. As far as we are concerned, we consider as relevant the following definition: *“internal marketing is an effort / a strategy / a philosophy / a managerial ideology involving the inter-functional coordination of all internal resources, attracting, developing, motivating and retaining employees considered as being internal customers, through the use of marketing specific tools in order to “sell” a positive image of the organization both internally and externally in order to achieve the proposed organizational goals and to implement strategies”*. This definition represents the personal view of the authors on the concept of internal marketing. It was based on the definition put forward by Berry and Parasuraman (1991, p. 151) and on the key elements mentioned by Naghi (2013, p. 25) as being essential in order to define the concept of internal marketing.

Internal Marketing functions

A number of researchers analyzing the subject of internal marketing (e.g. George and Grönroos, 1989; George, 1990; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Kotler, 1991; Joseph, 1996) supported the existence of interdependencies between the functions of internal marketing and of human resource management.

Internal marketing is a complex concept that actually captures the dynamics of the entire intra-organizational environment. Internal marketing is undoubtedly an area that does not strictly focus on employee motivation only, having rather an overview of the entire process of communication and of the social and functional connections that are to be established within the organization. For this reason, its overall purpose, objectives and functions are discussed in various forms at theoretical level.

Thus, Ballantyne (1997) considers that the essence of internal marketing is based on activities that improve internal communication and increase the awareness regarding the importance of customers among employees, as well as the link between these activities and the external market performance of the organization.

For example, Arndt (1983, p. 52) discusses internal marketing functions in the context of the need to integrate economic structures and processes into the existing social-political phenomena, so that the organizations should be treated as what they actually are: dynamic, adaptive and internally differentiated social systems. The author believes that some of the most important dimensions of marketing are: models of authority and control, the way power is distributed, conflict management, and respectively various internal and external factors determining institutional change. Therefore, he believes that the focus should be in the following two areas where marketing holds responsibility: (1) inter-organizational management and (2) internal marketing. In this regard, J. Arndt (1983, p. 52) speaks of three major functions of internal marketing: information, skill development and motivation.

Information refers to the dissemination of information which must be accomplished within the organization so that the flow of information stays steady, bidirectional and transparent.

Skill development is a function of internal marketing whose importance is highlighted by the author especially in the case of service providing organizations where “the organization is the product”, and employees must perform to a very high standard.

Motivation is the function that ensures rewarding the employees' results and efforts, and respectively provides the necessary basis so that the work that is to be performed should be a qualitative one in the context of an increased degree of satisfaction, commitment and enthusiasm.

According to Lubbe (2013), internal marketing includes some functions that were traditionally considered to be under the control of the human resource management, such as, for example, staff recruitment and training. In the same vein, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) or Ahmed and Rafiq (1995) found that internal marketing involves the use of some functions of the human resource management, such as internal communication, recruiting, employee training, as well as the empowerment of employees, in order to encourage employees to become more customer focused. Moreover, throughout the evolution of this concept, it has been interpreted by some authors as representing the use of human resource management specific functions (Tansuhaj and Wong, 1987; Tansuhaj et al, 1991; Caruana and Calleya, 1998; Asif and Sargeant, 1998; Quester and Kelly, 1999; Ewing and Caruana, 1999; Davis, 2001).

Other authors (Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou,

2009) argue in favour of the need to integrate the functions of internal marketing and of human resources management, considering that this approach will allow the company to improve a range of capabilities such as staff recruitment, motivation, monitoring and training in relation to the company's capabilities to deliver value to customers.

As far as we are concerned, we believe information to be a function that the organization as a whole should perform, its effective implementation being the responsibility of the management team on one hand (which should communicate various decisions, status updates on the current situation in the existence of the company, etc.), and on the other hand, information is the responsibility of the Human Resources department that actually keeps a direct relationship with the employees, regularly organizing sessions for verbal / written information, having at least an administrative nature, if not being of a motivational character.

Therefore, we believe that the main functions of Internal Marketing are:

a. *the development function*: targeting a twofold perspective, since it is intended for the development of the individual (skills, knowledge and ability, as well as the broadening of the area of expertise) and for organizational development (process improvement, market share increase, product portfolio development and strategic business units' development, etc.). Inevitably, organizational development depends on individual development, which is why the organization focuses its efforts on the coordination of employees, of their personalities from a social, interactive and collaborative point of view.

Therefore, development can be analyzed from the following

perspectives: the development of employees' skills necessary for the position they hold (through training); the development of employees' skills related to the position they hold (similar to cross-selling, the organization would be able to suggest that the employee add new skills to the ones already developed, through activities such as: training, job-shadowing, job rotation); the development of employees as individuals (the building and the supervision of a career plan, counselling on professional situations, the balancing of personal-professional time, mentoring, coaching, career management); the development of a team of employees (by organizing team-building activities, by assigning various projects to new working teams, by assigning complementary roles that will require a certain behavior during professional interactions), and the organizational development through employee engagement (involving them in decision making, organizing brainstorming sessions).

b. the motivation function: is a function that we consider that it provides an answer to the question "What does the employee need in order to become the organization's brand ambassador?" An employee cannot become a brand ambassador while lacking motivation, so several indicators regarding the degree of motivation should be considered (Dinu, 2014): the frequency of suggesting new ideas; the competence and promptness regarding meeting the customer's expectations and needs; creativity and innovativeness of the approach and of the suggested solutions; working with pleasure; discretionary effort (the effort the staff make on their own initiative, not due to the obligation brought about by the job description); the level of commitment - defined as the employee's intellectual and emotional

commitment to perform at a higher level; compatibility of employee values with the organization's values - an indicator of the level of empathy and integration in the firm; pride resulting from holding a job within the organization; willingness to contribute to the success of the organization.

Therefore, the motivation function should ensure that the indicators mentioned above are met, which can be achieved through the following strategies and tools: the intensification of the process of transparent communication within the company in order to enable a better understanding of the organization, of its processes, decisions, information which may generate further opportunities for development; employee involvement in decision-making processes, integrating them into the organization's strategy and providing a recognized status of every employee; encouraging lateral and innovative thinking, stimulating employees (job rotation, job redesign, building a sequence plan, gamification); providing a positive environment, program and working atmosphere through various stimuli (flexible program, facilities provided at work, space ergonomics, social environment established and encouraged throughout the organization, awards, corporate discounts to retailers, etc.).

As can be seen, there are some tactics that meet both the need for development and the need for motivation, as is the case of career management, of the strategy regarding the "gamification" of the employee's role in the organization and the one regarding the employee's progress tracking exactly the way it happens in games, respectively all incentives regarding and working style environment. All these are designed to simultaneously motivate and develop both the individual and the organization.

Internal Marketing instruments

The discussion on the subject of internal marketing tools can be started from an opinion expressed by Foreman and Money (1995) who stated that, in essence, specific marketing tools and concepts can be used as effectively also in the relation between the organization and employees if they are treated as internal customers. The idea of similarity between traditional marketing tools and internal marketing tools has emerged, in fact, together with the term "employee as customer". Thus, Berry (1981) stated that "*the same marketing tools used to attract customers can also serve to attract and retain the best employees, who can be considered as "internal customers"*". Hence, according to the approaches of Berry (1981) or Foreman and Money (1995) internal marketing tools are actually largely traditional marketing specific tools adapted to be used in the domestic market of an organization.

Ahmed and Rafiq (2002) illustrate internal marketing tools based mainly on the marketing mix elements extended to be used in services' field. However, the authors present, first, the concept of "internal customers" as a tool of internal marketing (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2002, pp. 25-27). In the organizations which adopt internal marketing, employees are treated first as customers who need to be satisfied, subsequently they becoming valuable providers to the organization's external customers. This approach is typical of the first stage of development of the internal marketing concept (employee satisfaction and motivation), stage developed during the '70s and '80s. According to the leading orientation of this evolutionary stage, the most essential instrument for ensuring employee satisfaction is treating employees as customers and jobs as

company products (Berry, 1981). This approach can be seen as a process by which the organization delegates, in a formal and avowed way, the responsibility for ensuring the quality to every employee, responsibility that also has the purpose of motivating and mobilizing all individual efforts towards achieving the organizational goals. In their final posture of suppliers, the employees are encouraged to cooperate with other collaborating providers, encouraging and fostering internal cooperation. The level of production becomes supplier to the packaging level, which, in turn, becomes supplier to the seller. The quality perceived by the external customer will be the result of all efforts made by every supplier involved in this process, and the internal interdependence is the one that will determine employees to perform.

Effective internal marketing tools are addressed by Ahmed and Rafiq (2002, pp. 27-36) as extended marketing mix components, as follows:

At strategic level, the *product* element of the internal marketing mix may relate to marketing strategies, or to general organizational strategies that are to be implemented. At tactical level, the "product" element may include new ways of measuring performance or new ways of working with clients. Collins and Payne (1991) consider that at a deeper level, in the internal marketing the product even represents the workplace with everything that it entails (working conditions, courses and trainings offered by the Human Resources department, employment specific attitudes and values).

The *price* element refers to the psychological cost of adopting new working methods or new strategies, projects to be given up in order to meet the new policies (i.e. the opportunity cost), or to transfer the pricing policy

and the allocation of expenditures among departments. Since usually the opportunity cost is difficult to calculate accurately the general trend of the employees would be to overestimate the costs of a new strategy or of new practices. Therefore, any policy must be justified in terms of the benefits it brings to counteract the resistance to change. Ahmed and Rafiq's (2002) proposal is to regard price as a balance between utility and value versus cost, as they are perceived by the organization and by the individual.

Placement (distribution) involves the transmission channel of domestic products to employees, case in which we deal with appointments, meetings, conferences within which employees are submitted new strategies or policies of the company, and respectively we can deal with a market comprised of training consultants or companies that provide training programs, as a means of employees' development. From our point of view, taking into account the fact that in the case of internal marketing, the product is the workplace itself, we continue to sustain that the market for the distribution of this product is the entire organizational environment - not only at physical level (in terms of the geographical area where the company's headquarters is located), but also at a less tangible level, the level of the environment and of the characteristics that need to be taken into account when the product is "manufactured" - the atmosphere in the organization, attitude towards the workplace, etc.

Internal communication (Promotion) refers to all the techniques, tools and means of communication used with internal customers, many of which are already used by the Human Resources Department: short oral presentations, the company's internal newsletter, online communication,

offline communication, direct sales via presentations face - to - face, video systems at the corporate level. These are all important tools, which need to be interrelated to convey messages in a consistent manner, and, respectively, it should be considered that promotion entails providing benefits which the public should experience, to be able to engage the public in the desired action. The main means of communication that can be used in the context of internal marketing are: personal selling (face-to-face presentations prepared by individuals or by groups); incentives (cash bonuses, prizes, reward programs, lotteries and competitions intended for the staff) and advertising. Greene, Walls and Schrest (1994) consider that *advertising* is an important tool for selling products / services, but at the same time, it is a tool for motivation, education and communication with employees. According to Gounaris (2007), *informal communication* is another instrument of internal marketing. This tool has the potential for an increasing communication's ambiguity when used in an inappropriate manner (Johlke and Duhan, 2001), which could adversely affect job satisfaction (Gregson and Wendell, 1994).

Physical properties (characteristics) refer to the physical environment in which the product delivery takes place, where there is interaction between the staff and the customer, as well as other tangible goods which facilitate product delivery or communication.

The *process* refers to the way a "customer" receives a product. It makes reference, for example, to the way organizational policy changes are decided, how they are transmitted, received and implemented. The process can be considered to develop easier, as instruments are used for documentation, information, so as all

features and product properties to become known.

The *participants* element refers to both the people involved in product design and development as well as those supplying the goods, who may influence customer perception. It requires clear market segmentation in order to identify all of the needs and wishes of everyone involved, because then the process can be improved accordingly by enhancing the skills of the employees involved.

As far as we are concerned, we believe that the instruments should be defined as real actions / tactics used to perform a particular function, while the interpretation of the instruments as components of the marketing mix rather facilitates the understanding of the context in which the internal marketing works. Therefore, based on the functions identified above, we believe that the internal marketing tools used to achieve these functions are: *individual development tools* (training, job shadowing, counselling, mentoring / coaching); *organizational development tools* (team building, teamwork actions, brainstorming sessions, delegation of decision-making) and *motivation tools* (the promotion of a transparent image of the organization in the internal environment, transfer of roles in the organization's strategy, job rotation, jobs' redesign, creating and implementing the sequence plan, implementation of gamification practices, promoting a positive environment, working program and working atmosphere, with a stimulating design of the workspace).

In addition to these, a basic tool generally used in marketing, is also one of the most important instruments of internal marketing: *marketing research*. Any of the above instruments should better be applied only after performing an research at intra-organizational level

so that the need for that measure, and the expectations the employees have from their managers can be assessed appropriately, so that the employees may help create the future value that they will benefit from, thus increasing the long-term level of commitment and satisfaction as a result of concern shown by management for their desires.

Human Resources Management

Definition, emergence and development of Human Resource Management

According to Wielemaker and Flint (2005, p. 1), the development of human resources management towards strategic human resources management is due to the fact that the sources of accomplishing a competitive advantage started to be sought not only outside the organization, but also within it. Thus the newly emerged concept is a combination between the concept of human resource management and strategic management of processes within the organizations. However, the authors point out that the existence of a strategic role of the human resources does not implicitly assume that the function of human resource management has also become a strategic one.

Human resource management has developed over time, its complexity in terms of roles, functions and instruments pursued a steady development. This fact was observed by Armstrong in his research called *A Handbook of Personnel Management Practice* (Armstrong, 1996, pp. 32-33), who stated the steps described below.

During the period 1915-1920, in the context of the First World War, the interest in human resources was highlighted by ensuring the wealth and the working conditions that meet the basic needs of employees. Later, in the

'30s, in addition to welfare, increased attention is given to staff management, thus implementing recruitment activities, training and the record keeping of personnel. During 1940-1950 the stage of personnel management developed, time when the training function also emerged, so that specialized trainings for employees start being organized. During the following period (1960-1970), the previous activities are extended towards the organizational development level, so that a participative management is considered and more complex tools are used regarding the selection, the training, personnel management and performance assessment. Human Resource Management occurs first in an initial stage during the '80s, when it is acknowledged that human resource strategies should be correlated with the market economy and the organizational culture. The Personnel Manager becomes a "business partner" and efforts are directed towards aligning human resources with the organizational strategy, in order to find the link between the internal value of the staff-resource and the organizational development. In the second stage of the Human Resource Management development (the '90s), increased emphasis is put on individual development, but also on the development of teams, on the added value brought forth by employees so that the organization should gain the desired competitive advantage in the market. The debates are no longer around the topic of "a job for life", the labor market is more fluidly perceived, and jobs have to be adapted to the needs of the employees, in the same way that the employees have to perform in order to keep their jobs. Organizations now realize that they

should consider a continuous learning process in order to survive.

Regarding the definition of the concept, Willman (1989) suggests the following definition: "*Human resources management deals with a set of decisions and policies through which the organization attracts recruits and motivates rewards and develops employees. In addition, it also deals with the ways in which the act of hiring is performed*".

Human Resource Management functions

Human Resources Management cannot be reduced to just a support function, regarding personnel management, especially due to the fact that the human resources department is the one often mediating communication towards and from employees. Therefore, the spirit of communication used by the human resources department will be the label that will accompany any intra-organizational interaction. Human Resource Management is designed to inspire employees, to determine them to perform, to coordinate the values and personalities as a whole, the organization depending on every person in particular and on the entire set of employees simultaneously.

To capture the complexity of human resource practices, below we display the functions of Human Resource Management according to Anucuța (2009, p. 13).

The assurance function regards the planning, recruitment, selection and integration of new employees within the organization. The function is par excellence a function of the Human Resources Department, being based on each organization's own procedures regarding the recruitment and selection policy. Moreover, the so-called "induction program" is actually a

training program that ensures that organizations provide the newcomer with the necessary information about the company, its history, organization chart, working procedures, values and principles, so that from the start the employee is provided all prerequisites for a positive job experience within the organization.

The maintaining function involves employee discipline, safety and health, counselling and stress management. This function is intended to ensure a healthy and comfortable environment for employees, both from the perspective of an external environment (safety of equipment used, the physical safety of staff) and from a psychological perspective, of the internal environment (showing interest to the mental status of the employee, his social balance in the workplace, reporting to colleagues and superiors, time and stress management). Thus, the focus will be on maintaining a psychological-professional balance for the employees, which is one of the basic needs in order to ensure work satisfaction.

The motivation function involves rewarding, performance assessment, job analysis, design and redesign. This is a function which we consider necessary for the human resource practitioners to continually develop, as in the employee motivation lies the power of an organization's self-improvement and, respectively, to increase its performance.

The development function requires employee training and development, organizational development and career management. In this regard, human resources departments often hold trainings for employees' improvement, or in order to widen their spectrum of skills, which contributes both to their development and increases their level of motivation.

Of course, many of the human resource's actions / tools are interconnected and may contribute to several functions simultaneously, i.e. some functions partially overlap with those of internal marketing, but these comparisons are to be discussed later.

As far as we are concerned, we believe that these are, indeed, the human resource management functions which are to be found in practice. The differences that may occur are of conceptual nature, regarding the tools / actions falling within each function. Thus, we consider that the maintaining function does not use so much stress management and professional counseling as they are not widely practiced by organizations to keep employees with the company, and when used they are rather motivation tools.

Human Resource Management instruments

As previously mentioned, when we discussed the tools used in internal marketing, tools must be closely related to the functions identified above, which is why this is the pursued aspect also in identifying instruments used in the case of human resources management.

Based on our own perspective, analyzing the human resource management functions' ramification, we believe that the instruments can be grouped as follows:

Assurance Tools: job advertisement, job descriptions, structured / semi-structured job interview, psychometric / cognitive tests for the assessment of candidates, integration (induction) training.

Maintaining Tools: computer management software systems and basic personnel management, organizational chart, operational regulations (Internal Regulations, Rules Regarding Order and Operation etc.).

Motivation Tools: key performance indicators (KPI's - are tools to measure and evaluate employee performance, allowing to quantify the extent to which results are obtained), counselling interview, feedback, career development plan, gamification tools (involving the set-up of some games that stimulate employees to follow certain stages of their performance's evolution, transposed in the form of a competition, a game ranked by levels of development).

Development Tools: courses and trainings, the succession plan, job rotation, job shadowing (requires tracking other colleagues during the development of daily activities in order to learn how they work and to acquire new personal skills).

Of course, all these tools will be discussed within this research to analyze their belonging to the field of human resources management or of internal marketing.

Research methodology

This paper aims to present research carried on the field of human resource management and internal marketing in order to analyze the nature of the interaction (as overlapping, inclusion, complementarity or independence) between the two fields.

In the present research, the research problem identified is the difficulty to practically distinguish between the functions and tools of Human Resource Management and of Internal Marketing. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following questions: *What do consider the representatives of companies to be the functions of human resource management? Which do they consider to be the tools used by human resources management? Which do they consider to be the internal marketing functions? Which do they consider to*

be the internal marketing tools? What is the perception of company representatives on the interaction between the two fields?

Regarding the last question, will be analyzed following general view: (1) *Overlapping* - it would require a full intersection of the two fields, in which case the simultaneous existence of both fields would not be justified; (2) *Inclusion by extension* - one field would be perceived as the main one, which may extend over the currently practiced version in order to include the other related field, perceived as being too close to be independent; (3) *Complementarity* - would require the simultaneous existence of two fields, as separate functions / departments of the organization, but interdependent, complementing each other, having at least one common goal and (4) *Independence* - implying the separate existence of departments and fields, the collaboration between the two not being justified, due to their different orientations and objectives.

Regarding the method used, given the qualitative nature of the research, we chose a semi-directive in-depth interview, considering that in the less practiced (at least consciously) field of internal marketing, an added value can be achieved through open discussion with company representatives who could express their views independently of a particular measurement scale.

Firms that were selected representatives who participated in interviews were chosen from companies operating locally, which met two conditions

The firms, among which the representatives who participated in the interviews were selected, have been chosen from among companies operating locally, which met two conditions: (1) *they are large firms* (we considered that the large size of the

company may affect the way employees are treated, whether the organization enjoys recognition for specific Human Resources Management / Internal Marketing actions or not) and (2) *firms that constantly perform various activities for employee* (we considered that in the case of organizations developing particular strategies on increasing motivation, satisfaction, retention and employees performance, the object of the present research will focus on distributing this activities for employees as belonging to human resources management or to internal marketing).

The discussions were held with a representative of each organization. In identifying the representative of the company, two requirements were considered: (1) *the representative was a person involved in the management of the organization / closely related to the management, with solid knowledge of internal procedures;* (2) *the representative was not a subjective, biased person and therefore was not part of the company's human resources or marketing department.* Meetings were planned with the representatives of each company, they being informed on the research topic and asked for their agreement to be interviewed for less than 1 hour.

The instrument used in this research was *an interview guide* based on some questions / topics having the role of guiding the conversation.

Research results

Once the data obtained from the interviews was analyzed, we concluded that there are three main perspectives on the subject of research, the interviewees' responses falling into one of the following views: (1) *The field of human resources management is comprehensive, including internal*

marketing, which would not need to be a self-contained field - approach supported by 22.22% of the subjects; (2) *The field of internal marketing is complementary to the one of human resource management, but placed on a higher level, given the added value brought about by this field to the entire organization - approach supported by 44.44% of subjects;* (3) *human resources management and internal marketing are complementary their approach not being hierarchical, but simply analyzing importance of their collaboration - approach supported by 33.33% of the subjects.*

The first topic of the interview guide aimed at probing the subjects' level of knowledge about the differences between human resource management and internal marketing. The analysis showed that most of those interviewed had no certainty of correct understanding of the concept of internal marketing, but most subjects could intuit, at least partially, its role and the main differences compared to human resource management. Only about 11% of the respondents did not understand and could not guess what the concept of internal marketing was, being faithful to the perception of a marketing focused only outside the organization. In the situations of misunderstanding or lack of the exact knowledge about the field of internal marketing, the respondents were provided instructive information. One of the strongest differences noticed by respondents refers to the exclusive administrative role of human resource management, while internal marketing was perceived as the one that involves communication with employees, internal positioning, and employee retention, being directly involved in employee development and motivation, so that they are determine to act in the strategic direction required by the organization. From this

perspective, internal marketing was positioned at a higher level relative to human resource management by most subjects, or was considered as a future step that human resources management must take. Other subjects found that both human resources management and internal marketing are involved in increasing individual commitment to the company, considering internal marketing as company internal advertisement that could be included in the area of human resource management. Other views emphasize that human resource management rewards employees by offering mainly material benefits directly linked to performance and job requirements fulfillment while internal marketing rewards by offering other types of benefits (direct and indirect), involving employees in creating value and in job customization. Many respondents considered that both human resources management and internal marketing focus on achieving employee satisfaction in order to increase their performance. The two differ, however, in that the human resources management provides the frame, while internal marketing delivers substance, results, and added value. In the case of internal marketing, employees are treated as brand ambassadors in relation to the organization's external public, their motivation being dependent on both their own performance and personal attitude towards the services provided by the company. If performance may depend on assessments performed by the human resource department, the attitude towards the company and its products / services was covered by internal marketing. In addition, distinct from human resource management, internal marketing involves promoting jobs and promotion opportunities internally.

The second topic aimed at identifying the subjects' perceptions on the possible overlapping, in practical terms of actions / tools used by the two fields compared. After analyzing the responses received, there seems to be a consensus on the intersection of the two fields, especially in large companies: actions / tools used for employee satisfaction overlap, but human resource management has additional personnel management specific tools, which do not fall into the responsibility of internal marketing. From this perspective, one out of five respondents considered that the overlapping of the two fields is inevitable, assuming that a human resource department is also implicitly responsible for internal marketing and therefore the two cannot be separated either theoretically or in terms of tactics used in practice. However, very few respondents considered that, unfortunately, at present, the marketing department is exclusively achieving external marketing and, therefore, the two departments do not overlap. Therefore, these respondents suggest that the two departments should remain separate, but to establish a human resource - internal marketing responsible who should closely work with management and coordinate the activities of both departments to merge the efforts which the organization can accomplish for the benefit of its employees. There were also some viewpoints considering that there are certain tools that are specific only for internal marketing. Thus, although both fields have a plan and make the employee promises related to achievable professional targets, internal marketing uses particular tools that support the employee in a more direct, constant and sustained way to achieve the intended objective and involve in workplace customization according to

his desire. From this perspective, it is considered that any interaction with marketing is likely to generate contentment, satisfaction due to the nature of marketing activities transposed to employee level.

The next topic was meant to validate the initial hypothesis from which we started on the interactions, in terms of specific actions between the two fields. Thus, we investigated the subjects' perception on who within the organization uses currently specific tools / actions (human resource management / internal marketing / general management) and, respectively, who they consider should use those tools / actions in the future (a choice between the same variants). For almost every instrument / action discussed during the interviews, the respondents were influenced by the context of their own organization. Therefore, the responses regarding clarification of the way human resource management and internal marketing are disputing the tools is difficult to achieve in the context of this research, the answers often involving some departments which cannot be found in other organizations, respectively connections which divert attention from

The marketing investment lays at the base of the marketing strategy and,

the two analyzed fields. There are very few tools to unitarily consider belonging to a particular domain. Of course, this research requires further developments of the subject, as the analysis of these perceptions may allow certain correlations on reporting to the authority depending on the size of the organization, perhaps also on the business field. Strictly generally speaking, we can apprehend the interest towards a future correlation of internal marketing with existing activities in the field of human resource management. In principle, it appears that internal marketing is perceived as bringing added value to the following prevailing areas: the use of gamification, the psychological (non-material) rewarding, the working environment designing, including location and atmosphere, organizing training activities and coordinating the inter-departmental efforts of the organization.

The fourth theme aims to delimit the two areas' functions. Thus, we suggested the subjects an approach of the functions of the two fields (see Table 1) in order to validate its structure.

Table 1

The functions of Human Resource Management and Internal Marketing

Human Resource Management functions	Internal Marketing functions
1. Assurance	1. Motivation
2. Maintaining	
3. Motivation	
4. Development	2. Development

All subjects agreed to this model, therefore the overlapping of the two fields will be further considered not just from the partial perspective of the

instruments, but also in terms of the motivation and development functions.

The next topic focused on the subjects' perceptions on the

atmosphere created by the human resources department within the organization of the interviewee. Over three quarters of the responses received mention the primarily administrative, bureaucratic role of the department, ensuring minimum standards for the existence of employees within the company. The interaction of the employees with this department is generally neutral or, at best positive. Some interviewees have even noticed that most innovative ideas on activities or events that the organization undertakes for employees come from management without involving the human resources department. Only very few respondents (slightly over 10%) have noticed a motivational role of the human resources department, citing several benefits, events, activities organized by this department. Thus, it is justified why these subjects considered that human resource management can be extended in the future with the possibility of including internal marketing, the human resource management being already actively engaged in satisfying and motivating employees, not finding any rationalization for the separation of the two fields that could even double in practice.

Topic number six aimed to identify factors that lead employees to remain in the organization. Employee retention is founded on their commitment towards the organization. According to research participants, the main elements that determine a high level of commitment are: *positive atmosphere of the workplace and work environment; appreciation from the direct manager; commitment to the team; middle management availability towards more flexible work program; internal rules and working conditions that can simplify and facilitate the employees work, contributing to lowering the stress*

levels; opportunities for career development within the organization and implementation of transparent and fair principles for getting higher up the hierarchy; personal branding - the pride of being part of a large organization internationally recognized; the dynamism of activities, the challenge felt by nature of the activities carried out; additional benefits to the salary; job security.

The seventh topic tried to identify the subjects' opinion about their workplace and the extent to which they act as brand ambassadors. The interviews concluded that employees disseminate prevailing positive information about their organization. The positive nature of the information provided was justified by the employees' high degree of motivation, the feeling that they are involved in the organization and develop a sense of belonging. Another aspect mentioned by most subjects was that the workplace tends to be appreciated especially by comparison with other jobs previously held by the employee. It was also stressed that the way employees talk about the company depends heavily on the employee's hierarchical position, the positive character increasing with the level of seniority and according to the relationship with the direct manager. Consistent with this subject, we also tracked and analyzed the extent to which motivated employees can have a role in recruitment, promoting in their entourage job offers available within the organization. All respondents considered that more than 50% of the organization's employees would recommend positions within the organization, recognizing that so far, hiring was also made based on the recommendations of company personnel. The "word-of-mouth" effect is thus used in the field of human

resource management as a result of the application of marketing tools.

The last theme was designed to identify the perception of subjects on the interaction between the two fields, being considered four options: overlapping, including a field by extending the other, complementary or independence. Almost a quarter of the respondents opted for the inclusion of internal marketing by extending the field of human resource management, while the other subjects preferred the complementarity of the two fields, emphasizing the need to clearly establish the boundaries of each field to avoid their overlapping. Also, it has been noticed by some of the subjects the need to respect the hierarchy and grant responsibility to the general management of the organization regarding action initiation, decision-taking and strategy implementation. Another perspective was that of creating a position in the area of general management, which should take responsibility both for human resources management and internal marketing, and should coordinate everything accomplished by the two departments in the favour of employees, without the human resource management field to creatively expand to include internal marketing, or that internal marketing should become "bureaucratic" and include human resource management.

Research conclusions, recommendations, limits and future directions

Conclusions

The research conducted allowed analyzing the participants' perceptions on the complementary application of human resource management and internal marketing instruments. According to the results gathered, we

note that the interviewees have a good understanding or insight regarding the meaning of the internal marketing concept. In case they had no knowledge of the field, they rapidly managed to sense the differences between human resource management and internal marketing, the most frequent response highlighting the creativity of internal marketing, complementary to the more administrative character of human resource management.

Invited to justify or imagine the way in which they consider that the two fields should cooperate, some interviewees mentioned that it would be beneficial to reduce the number of mandatory activities from the task of the marketing official, thus leaving more room for creativity, generating genuine added value for the company. Human resource management could focus further on recruitment and selection activities, where the internal marketing can add value by diversifying and refreshing those processes. Additionally, one of the main activities of human resource management would remain staff administration, including maintaining a reasonable level of satisfaction and motivation.

We can consider, therefore, that human resource management is necessary for personnel management (field which may be permanently subject to innovation), and to cover current and immediate needs on employee satisfaction. On the other hand, internal marketing plays a more strategic role, allowing the company to open up towards new opportunities and directions of development that stem from the very feedback received from employees on company products and services.

Thus, we consider that internal marketing promotes on long term a general vision oriented towards

marketing within the organization, stimulating the implementation of a participatory and inclusive type of management.

Based on data gathered from the research, we consider that the implementation of this type of participatory management is greatly hampered by organizational inertia, perceived as the tendency of mature companies to continue moving towards the same current direction. The belonging of local companies to an international group whose rules apply unitarily to all companies, regardless of their specific cultural needs, can be considered one of the main reasons why most interviewees considered employee consultation on the matter of the organization's strategic decisions as being very low.

However, one of the solutions brought forth by some of the companies included in the survey consisted in setting more flexible regulations applied internally according to the employees' wishes. Thus, the feeling of involvement and personalization at the workplace is carried out at a basic level, creating an average level of motivation, commitment and attachment to the company. So, although employees cannot be involved in the process of strategic decision-making, due to administrative reasons, they can be involved in the decision-making process at local level, as far as the context allows.

As regards the differentiation between human resource management and internal marketing, some uncertain aspects and "gray areas" were indicated, which do not allow a clear demarcation between the two fields. Thus, many answers have sorted many actions / tools as belonging to both areas, which made it difficult to carry out a practical delimitation thereof.

Regarding the motivation function, were identified several main instruments. In terms of *offering rewards*, the general perception reflected the distinction between non-material, psychological rewards (associated with internal marketing in the form of public worth recognition) and material rewards (associated with human resource management in the form of material benefits). *The permanent motivational strategies* aim at setting up the working environment, atmosphere and space design, and respectively the gamification tools (associated mainly with internal marketing due to the tools' creative character). *Communication and feedback* are tools considered to be purely administrative, but which, once filtered through the marketing department could get brand value and become more valuable as impact. Similarly, *personal and professional counselling*, as basic activity on which the tool of *mentoring and coaching* will subsequently be developed, is basically a human resources management tool. However, depending on its frequency, the way it is integrated in the workplace context, the way it is used to encourage and apply principles of employee empowerment can be considered an internal marketing tool. *The succession plan* is a plan that requires the intervention of human resource management, having also an administrative character, dealing with the organization chart and the responsibilities of each position. However, the way the tool is used to strategically develop the organization and motivate employees, makes it part of internal marketing creative strategies. As for some motivation specific events / actions, these are tools that bring the employee the sense of accomplishment, of belonging to the organization and attachment to their

colleagues' acknowledgment (corporate events organized by the company, or teambuilding activities and events occurring on certain special occasions). *Employee involvement in the organization's strategy* implies delegating the decision-making, requesting feedback from employees on the organization's products / services, consultation in decision-making, having both a motivational and a development purpose.

Regarding the development function, the instruments are sorted according to their purpose, into instruments of personal development or of organizational development. Individual development focuses on training and improvement through courses or trainings, mentoring / coaching and on using the succession plan, which are considered to be at the boundary between internal marketing and human resource management. Regarding organizational development, the subjects considered that the *actions based on team organization* can also be placed at the boundary between the two fields. *Individual actions of organization development*, consist of job shadowing, regarded as a human resource management tool by most subjects, while job rotation was perceived as belonging also to internal marketing.

Recommendations

The main recommendations arising from this research address organizations and aim towards two main directions.

First, we recommend that innovation and the development of employee directed actions should be considered as distinct strategies and separate from management. The research revealed that most analyzed companies develop activities for

employees, but the right person responsible for these activities could not be identified, the activities being usually carried out by the management of the organization. The disadvantage of carrying out these activities by management is that there is no permanent strategy, only random efforts. Therefore, employee motivation activities do not fall within the responsibility of a specific department, and thus inter-departmental interactions, or sharing inter-regional best practice do not enjoy any facilitation. We recommend that opportunities regarding internal communication and employee motivation should be stimulated by management, but maintained by another department that can pay constant attention to this subject.

Secondly, we recommend that a clear distinction be made between activities that fall into the responsibility of the human resource department, marketing or of the general management. Similar to previous recommendation, we believe that the partial detachment of management involvement in employee motivation would be necessary, but also necessary would be to make clear distinctions between human resource departments and respectively the marketing ones. In some of the analyzed companies, the interviewees identified the overlapping of the human resource department (which motivates employees by sending them e-mails on their birthdays, e-mails to the entire company to highlight various achievements of the organization) and the marketing department (which organizes teambuilding activities, or offers incentives to high performers etc.). Thus, there is overlapping in the sense of carrying out activities for employees by both departments, but

there must not be a repetitive activity in both departments.

Other companies, on the other hand, exclusively address employees through the human resource department, without the support of a marketing department, at least locally or nationally. In these cases it would be necessary to analyze the workload and the type of work that falls into the responsibility of every person in the human resource department to facilitate creativity, respectively the focus on administrative issues without much interference from activities of different nature which could be distracting.

Limitations of the research

In the present research, we consider that the main limitations identified concern the lack of an accurate knowledge and a general spread on ideas related to the internal marketing field. Although the interviewees sensed the field's area of expertise, depending on the particular context of each company, they were influenced by the way things developed at that time in their organization. Thus, if the company's management was the initiator and organizer of many employee directed actions, the interviewees tended to generalize the answer, considering that in the future management should be equally involved. On the other hand, if an organization's human resource department is very involved in employee development and motivation, even using instruments indicated herein as internal marketing tools, the subject tended to consider that internal marketing is, or should be in the long run, included in the human resource management. This aspect of organizational inertia seems to continue being an obstacle in developing internal marketing, but this resistance can be addressed through greater openness at

national / local level regarding the flexibility of internal rules and by the involvement, as much as possible, of personnel in the decision-making process.

Another limitation is represented by the lack of accurate practical knowledge on internal marketing field of people from the organizational management / close related to organizational management. This has resulted into confusion when trying to differentiate internal marketing from human resources management. Also, the comparison of the two was hampered by the absence of marketing departments in some companies (either the department does not exist at the local / national level of the organization, or the organization is small and was not provided a specific marketing department).

In addition, another limitation was notified of subjects reporting on the research methodology. In the categorization of human resource management tools or of internal marketing tools from a given list, the interviewees tended to respond by referring to the theory and to what they believed usually happened practically, based on assumptions and generalizations, not necessarily by true reflection of the situation of the organization in which they work. In this regard, in the future we would consider interviewing more people within each organization, to provide the responses with extended validity.

Additional, the small number of companies, and respectively the interviewed representatives reflects a limitation. However, the research can be considered a starting point for future more extensive qualitative and / or quantitative research.

Future research directions

As previously mentioned, the main contribution put forward by our research considers adding to the theory the perceptions of people in the management area, or even belonging to the organizations' managerial level, on the interactions between human resource management functions and tools and those of internal marketing. At this stage of research, the main result is reflected in the understanding of the business environment opening towards building on the complementarities between the two areas for the organizations' development.

Thus, in the future, further investigations would be pursued on

aspects regarding human resource department members' perception of internal marketing, respectively the marketing department members' perception on human resources. This could be an interesting research direction that would allow identification of the two fields' opening towards cooperation.

Also, the research will be further quantitatively developed in the form of larger research, or an analysis will be considered, even of qualitative nature, of some companies that may constitute a research panel, analyzed over a longer period of time.

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