THE BRAND INSIDE: THE FACTORS OF FAILURE AND SUCCESS IN INTERNAL BRANDING

Kai F. Mahnert & Ann M. Torres

Internal branding seeks to achieve consistency with the external brand and encourage brand commitment and the possibility of brand championship among employees. It is the concerted, inter-departmental and multi-directional internal communications effort carried out in order to create and maintain an internal brand. Thus, internal branding can be identified as a specific tool and placed in the wider context of internal marketing.

Based on an extensive study of relevant literature and previous studies, this article identifies 25 key factors or variables of failure and success in internal branding. These are grouped under seven headings of organisation, information, management, communication, strategy, staff and education. Integrating these dimensions with a number of extant models of brand development, the authors propose a consolidated internal branding framework (CIBF) to plan, execute and evaluate an internal branding programme. It is hoped that this conceptual framework contains both insights of value to scholars and practical recommendation to managers.

Introduction

Much of the literature on internal branding to date has been disparate and lacking in focus and definition. However, there are definite, identifiable trends within the internal marketing field, as is evident from the literature on the subject produced to date. This article attempts to organise and consolidate the literature into a comprehensive framework outlining the objectives, functions and tools of internal marketing. From this framework, internal branding may be identified as a specific tool and placed in the wider context of internal marketing.

The efficient and effective execution of internal branding programmes depends on a variety of conditions, which are not and arguably cannot all be met all the time. Critical to the success of internal branding campaigns is the identification of the points in the campaign process where failure may occur and to highlight these factors of failure by way of an implementation framework. Therefore, the intended outcome of this conceptual paper is the identification and organisation of these factors and their opposing counterparts, the factors of success, into meaningful patterns and frameworks to facilitate their further analysis. From this analysis, a consolidated framework for the design and implementation of internal branding is proposed.

Internal Marketing

The concept of internal marketing has been discussed in the literature of marketing and related disciplines for over twenty-five years (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). Yet, despite many attempts at the formalisation and operationalisation of internal marketing activities (Tansuhaj, Randall and McCullough, 1988; Bak et al., 1994; Ballantyne, 1997; Lings and Brooks, 1998; Sargeant and Asif, 1998; Quester and Kelly, 1999; Frost and Kumar, 2000; Straughan and Cooper, 2002), no conceptualisation or indeed definition has as yet found undivided acceptance by scholars and practitioners alike (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993, 2000). Consequently, there is a high degree of ignorance and reluctance towards the concept of internal marketing, resulting in a lack of application. To a considerable extent, the confusion regarding the subject is a direct result of its three-pronged historical development, leading to three separate sets of analytical and implementation frameworks (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993). These are:

- Internal marketing to internal customers (Sasser and Arbet, 1976)
- Internal marketing in internal markets (Flipo, 1986)
- Internal marketing as a strategy and change facilitator (Gröndoos, 1981).

This classification is consistent with the frameworks proposed by other writers (Lings, 1999; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). It is recognised that these major thrusts are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Indeed, the tendency to overlap is expected, given the shared origin of these orientations. However, for
The Brand Inside: The Factors of Success and Failure in Internal Branding

### Table 1: The Internal Marketing Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>ORIGIN</th>
<th>THRUST</th>
<th>KEY WRITER(S)</th>
<th>TOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IM to internal</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Jobs are generic products that must be marketed to employees to ensure employee satisfaction; satisfied employees will lead to satisfied customers.</td>
<td>Sasser and Arbeit, 1976; Berry and Hensel, 1976; Berry, 1981</td>
<td>Internal market research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employer branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM as a strategy</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Strategy is change and change must be implemented through employee understanding of organisational objectives and the creation of customer consciousness; employees must commit to the organisation and its brand(s).</td>
<td>Grönroos, 1981; Piercy and Morgan, 1991</td>
<td>Internal market research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilitator</td>
<td>marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM in internal</td>
<td>Services/TQM</td>
<td>Organisations consist of internal markets with an internal value chain; internal suppliers and internal customers need to be identified and their needs satisfied to achieve overall improved organisational service quality and consequential service quality to the customer.</td>
<td>Flipo, 1986; Foreman and Money, 1995</td>
<td>Internal quality control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The purpose of isolating a specific tool of internal marketing, namely internal branding, a categorisation into phases is useful (see Table 1).

A cyclical relationship is suggested between these functions, as committed employees and efficient and effective internal customer relationships are capable of attracting and retaining employees. Similarly, such efficient and effective internal customer relationships will also influence an employee's understanding of the organisation and its brand and thus increase the propensity for alignment with and commitment to the brand. It should be noted that these functions are traditionally not identified in the literature as occurring together, although some interrelationships are suggested (Tansuhaj, Randall and McCullough, 1988; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993; Varey, 1995). Thus, taking into consideration the above analyses, the following inclusive definition of internal marketing is offered:

Internal marketing is the accumulation and application of functions and tools aimed at the formation and maintenance of a consistent, efficient, effective and customer-oriented workforce. These objectives are achieved through the communication with and attraction, retention, motivation, education and management of suitable employees. Suitable employees in this context are defined as those employees who are conscious of and committed to the needs of the organisation and other employees at all levels in the internal value chain.

**Internal Branding**

Internal branding refers to the activities employed by a company to ensure intellectual and emotional staff buy-in (Thomson et al., 1999) into not only the corporate culture, but also the specific brand personality invoked within this culture. As brands can be described in terms of personality, character, attitudes, motivations and even emotions, they acquire meaning not only for the external customer, but also for employees who deal with the brand on a daily basis and thus represent it to the public in general and customers specifically. The core objective of internal branding is the attainment of competitive advantage not through easily replicated core business practices and policies, but through people (Jacobs, 2003). This objective is all the more relevant with a view to the recent trend to grow organisations through mergers and acquisitions. In such a setting, 'speaking with one voice' (Einwiller and Will, 2002, p. 100) is made more difficult, especially in multicultural organisations (Vallaster, 2004). Thus, in the reorganisation of diverse business portfolios into a 'synergised enterprise' (Irvin, Pedro and Gennaro, 2003, p. 10), internal branding plays a vital role.

Three core elements of internal branding transpire from the descriptions and definitions of internal branding found in the literature. The first is the reflection of brand values to consumers by committed employees. The second element is the realisation of the brand promise communicated to the internal
and external market. This element of realisation includes internal consistency of the brand image to ensure intellectual and emotional employee buy-in (Thomson et al., 1999). The third element is the importance of multi-direction, that is, internal branding needs to be applied at all organisational levels in order to align management and staff behaviour and values. Thus, a unified definition incorporating these three salient elements of internal branding can be offered in the context of this article:

Internal branding is the concerted, inter-departmental and multi-directional internal communications effort carried out in order to create and maintain an internal brand. Internal branding attempts to achieve consistency with the external brand and encourage brand commitment and the propensity for brand championship among employees. To this end, internal branding is the reflection of the values and the realisation of the promise of the brand internally and externally.

Factors of Failure and Success in Internal Branding
Throughout the literature, writers have pointed to a variety of potential pitfalls in the development and implementation of internal branding programmes. Due to the similarities in implementation issues, the list of factors of failure and success is compiled from the literature of internal branding as well as the wider field of internal marketing and related disciplines, such as communication, where references are made to internal branding. Table 2 lists 25 factors of failure and success, grouped into seven logical dimensions. The factors can be conceptually amalgamated into seven higher order dimensions representing the focal points to be considered in internal branding. The organisation of factors into these dimensions is undertaken according to the context in which factors were cited in the literature. The dimensions are not entirely mutually exclusive. However, the context in which these factors are presented in the literature suggests a categorisation in line with that presented in Table 2.

Organisation
Factors in the organisational dimension are difficult to change or indeed influence at all, given the scope and intangibility of many of these factors. Thus, while culture has a large impact on internal branding programmes, awareness, rather than change of this culture, may be appropriate (Hogg, Carter and Dunne, 1998). However, cultural change may be necessary where there exists no fit between the prevailing culture and the objectives of the internal branding programme (Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers, 2002). Cross-functional coordination and cooperation have been suggested to reduce internal competition and departmentalised thinking (Bak et al., 1994; Sartain, 2005).

### Table 2 Dimensions and Factors of Failure and Success in Internal Branding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Factor (number of citations in the literature)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Structure (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insular thinking and internal competition (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Market research (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measurement and feedback (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific knowledge of brand direction (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Jurisdiction (13)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership support (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deeds communication (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand teams (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Multi-directional communication (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formality of message (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alignment of internal and external messages (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constancy and adaptation (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal clutter (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Alignment of business and brand objectives (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budget (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timing (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Employee participation and support (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remuneration (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Segmentation (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Legitimacy and acceptance (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guidance (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental models (1)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The effectiveness and overall success of internal branding programmes is dependent on an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the internal as well as the external environment of the organisation. While market research provides such information (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Mitchell, 2002; Schultz, 2002; Beagrie, 2003), the measurement of target performances and collection of feedback from all organisational levels as well as from outside the organisation enables management to assess the suitability of the current programme to the organisation (Reynoso and Moores, 1995; Lings and Brooks, 1998; Bruhn, 2003) and highlights any necessary changes to be made (Jacobs, 2003).

Management
This dimension is concerned with the degree and nature of visible support given by management to the internal branding programme (Joseph, 1996; Tosti and Stotz, 2001; Jacobs, 2003; Thomson, 2003; Turpin, 2003). In order to be regarded as legitimate by the target audience, management has to lend its support to the programme, as well as visibly adhere to it (Farrell, 2002; Jacobs, 2003). In fact, as internal branding is concerned with the corporate brand, responsibility for the internal branding effort should lie with the CEO of an organisation, given that role's intensive association with the organisation's strategy and brand (de Chernatony, Drury and Segal-Horn, 2003; Lintemeier, 2005). It has been suggested in the literature that a multi-departmental approach may be most appropriate for internal branding (Joseph, 1996; Zucker, 2002; Thomson, 2003), particularly with a view to the importance of the HR function (Shipley, 1994; Harris and de Chernatony, 2000; de Chernatony, 1997).

Communication
Information needs to be made available to everyone in the organisation without exposing individuals to too much detail in order to avoid information overload (Haynes, Lackman and Guskey, 1999). Likewise, messages should be internally and externally aligned to avoid confusion (Yaniv and Farkas, 2005). Only where the objectives of the internal branding programme are in line with the overall business objectives and properly translated to the target audience (Davis, 1996; Straughan and Cooper, 2002) is a programme capable of achieving its intended outcome (Ind, 2001; Mitchell, 2002; Turpin, 2003). The effectiveness of communication depends on constant reinforcement on one hand (Ind, 2001; Mortimer, 2002; Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2002), and adaptation to internal and external changes on the other.

Strategy
Alignment should exist between all strategies and programmes employed by an organisation, including the fit between the internal (or external) brand and the objectives of the business (Jacobs, 2003). Conflict between these will reduce the appeal and believability of the brand and greatly reduce a programme's effectiveness. Further aspects under this dimension include scheduling the most suitable timing and budget (Heyman, 2000; Frook, 2001; Simms, 2003; Thomson, 2003) for the programme. For example, there may be times of general change in an organisation, when an internal branding campaign may be more opportune (Mitchell, 2002; Zucker, 2002).

Staff
Recruiting, motivating and rewarding staff (Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers, 2002) are all aspects that can influence the readiness among employees to adopt a new or altered strategic direction with respect to the internal brand. Consequently, like the organisational dimension, the staff dimension addresses the most favourable preconditions for internal branding (Thomson et al., 1999; Ind, 2001) as well as techniques capable of further enhancing the effectiveness of the programme (Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Kelley, 1993). Likewise, this dimension highlights the importance of gaining not only leadership support, but also the support of employees at all levels, since they constitute the largest audience for the internal branding programme. Internal branding is deemed most effective where the programme has been designed in participation with employees (Thomson et al., 1999; Davis, 2001; Jacobs, 2003; Buckley, 2002; Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2003). Also, segmentation of the target audience may be useful, or indeed necessary, where significant differences exist between employee groups, as for example in the case of geographically or culturally separated business units (Joseph, 1996). In addition, Gombeski et al. (2004) make a case for regularly informing employees about the organisation's strategic direction in
memos, publications and by way of an employee marketing committee.

**Education**

Out of the previous six dimensions arises the need for a seventh concerned with the education of staff and management (Barnes, Fox and Morris, 2004) to prevent some of the failures that may occur during internal branding programmes as a result of ignorance (de Chernatony, 1997) and flawed preconceptions. Thus, this dimension calls for the identification of such beliefs, attitudes, and mental models (de Chernatony, 1999) through market research and constituency assessments and their alignment with organisational objectives and policies through education (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993, 2000; Quester and Kelly, 1999; Varey and Lewis, 1999; Mortimer, 2002; Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2003).

**The Consolidated Internal Branding Framework (CIBF)**

Two models, Thomson et al.’s (1999) intellectual and emotional buy-in matrix, and Ind’s (2001) model of the power of brand champions, have been widely identified in the literature as helpful tools in internal branding. Furthermore, four other frameworks, Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers’ (2002) five category framework, Mitchell’s (2002) three principles framework, Mortimer’s (2002) 6 Rs framework, and Jacob’s (2003) ten-step framework, were also found to be relevant. The analysis and evaluation of these models, and their integration with the list of 25 dimensions or variables of failure and success, led to the generation of the consolidated internal branding framework (CIBF). See Table 3.

**Stage 1 – Planning**

According to Mitchell (2002), the timing decision is linked to general changes in the organisation, as employees are more likely to accept internal changes when they coincide with change on a larger scale as well. The identification of such turning points requires an analysis of the environment the company operates in and the forces of competition it is exposed to. Parallel to the timing decision, quantifiable targets need to be established in order to legitimise the internal branding programme and facilitate measurement and corrective action where necessary. Management should be outwardly invested in the success of the brand and embody the brand visibly for the internal audience. As mentioned above, the responsibility for the internal branding programme should ultimately lie with the CEO.

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**Table 3**

**The Consolidated Internal Branding Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Planning</td>
<td>I Preparation</td>
<td>1 Decide on timing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Establish quantifiable short- and long-term targets</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Gain managerial support and generate awareness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 Secure a suitable budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II Investigation</td>
<td>5 Constituency assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 Internal market research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 Cultural fit analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III Configuration</td>
<td>8 Align business objectives and brand values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 Link external and internal messages</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Segment where appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11 Ensure appropriate frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 Decide on language and message design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV Facilitation</td>
<td>13 Decide on degree of staff empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14 Obtain and sustain staff involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V Implementation</td>
<td>15 Utilise multiple channels in multiple directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 Reduce hierarchical communicative and executive boundaries to ensure organisational permeation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VI Remuneration</td>
<td>17 Develop a fair bonus system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Executing</td>
<td>VII Quantification</td>
<td>18 Offer brand-oriented education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19 Link measurable effective brand commitment and team spirit to promotional prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 Establish a coherent balanced scorecard measurement system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VIII Reaction</td>
<td>21 Regularly assess internal brand commitment and external orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IX Alteration</td>
<td>22 Facilitate constant, multi-directional feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: Evaluating</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Conduct regular review of programme and alter where necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: This model/framework is based on the consolidation of findings in the relevant literature, e.g. Thomson et al., 1999; Ind, 2001; Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers, 2002; Mitchell, 2002; Mortimer, 2002; Jacobs, 2003.)
While budgeting will determine the form and extent of the internal branding programme, the constituency assessment includes all stakeholders of the organisation including, but not restricted to, employees and attempts to gain a clearer picture of how the brand is perceived and what values are associated with it. The inclusion of former employees may give vital clues as to potential pitfalls in the organisation (Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers, 2002). Internal market research attempts to identify current values and attitudes among employees as well as behavioural patterns prevalent prior to the internal branding programme. The cultural fit analysis is essential in the identification of discrepancies between the values of the programme and the values expressed through the organisational culture.

To achieve alignment, organisational objectives, organisational culture and brand values need to be identified and analysed as to their compatibility. Likewise, internal and external messages need to be integrated (Mitchell, 2002; Zucker, 2002; Turpin, 2003). If a different message is heard by employees and consumers, conflict ensues and a gap between brand expectation and brand reality is created (de Chernatony, 1999).

The frequency of the message is crucial to its permeation. The initial internal branding effort needs to be followed up continuously with reinforcing messages, deeds communication and alterations of the initial message where necessary (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Ind, 2001; Mortimer, 2002). The constancy of the programme must be visible to employees to ensure credibility, buy-in and commitment (Thomson et al., 1999). In deciding on communication frequency, the language and message design should likewise be addressed.

Stage 2 – Executing

The degree of empowerment depends on the nature of the work, the willingness of employees to assume responsibility and the willingness of management to delegate it (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). To ensure employee participation and support, staff should be actively involved in the process of programme design (Jacobs, 2003). Identifying brand ambassadors or brand champions already active within the organisation and inviting them to focus groups is a good way of getting the necessary input from staff (Ind, 2001). Multi-directional communication is vital throughout the internal branding process (Sonnenberg, 1991) and is most successful where multiple channels are used as well (McKeefry, 2001; Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers, 2002). In this context it is important to ensure a permeation of the message throughout the organisation. If team spirit and transparency are some of the brand values, they need to be reinforced through open-door policies among management and an appropriate reward system (Mortimer, 2002).

Care should be taken when designing bonus systems to ensure fairness and avoid fostering internal competition (Bak et al., 1994; Kelemen and Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2004). Non-monetary and work-related rewards give the organisation the opportunity to educate employees as well as management on particular issues in brand building. Brand seminars in attractive locations and internal award ceremonies are examples of such rewards (Jacobs, 2003; Turpin, 2003). Furthermore, through education, 'loose cannons' (Thomson et al., 1999, p. 828) who are committed to goals but lack understanding can be converted into brand champions (Ind, 2001). Team spirit and brand commitment should also be visibly linked to promotional prospects to provide a further incentive for greater brand involvement. It is vital, however, to install objective measurement procedures for the assessment of such elusive concepts as 'brand commitment' in order to avoid rewards being arbitrarily or at least subjectively handed out by managers. Special treatment or bonuses awarded to colleagues without any visible difference to one's own performance will likely lead to frustration among the staff and reverse the motivational effect.

In all internal branding efforts, the role of the HR function should neither be underestimated nor reduced to the stereotypical, but often followed concept of defining codes of behaviour seemingly in line with the brand content, but based solely on a system of adherence to a catalogue of guidelines (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005). 'Cross-functional brand message synergy' is a term used in this context by Aurand, Gorchels and Bishop (2005) referring to the exploitation of the HR function and its numerous employee touch points in facilitating the internal brand message throughout the organisation. The desired result is a development of 'brand ethos', in which 'employee behaviour is automatically based upon the brand ... and the brand has become tacit' (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005, p. 626).
Table 4  Recommendations for Internal Branding

1. Create a flatter organisation with high levels of interaction
2. Ensure that the culture reflects the values of the brand
3. Conduct regular, ongoing 360° research internally and externally
4. Ensure that any activity has a suitable, achievable target
5. Ensure appropriate measurement metrics for each target
6. Make brand values and brand direction a mantra for every employee
7. Create a multi-departmental, heterogeneous internal brand team
8. Inspire leadership to support and enact the internal brand
9. Communicate constantly, consistently, and economically in every direction
10. Tailor communication to information needs
11. Ensure alignment between corporation and brand direction
12. Ascertain that budget and timing are realistic while reflecting internal branding needs
13. Involve employees in design and implementation
14. Recruit, train and reward employees with a view to brand values
15. Offer ongoing brand training and education for management and staff

Stage 3 – Evaluating

With a view to measurement in internal branding, two interrelated goals need to be considered: the achievement of brand commitment among staff and the effect of such commitment on brand performance. Therefore, a coherent balanced scorecard measurement system needs to consider indicators of brand performance, such as sales, brand recall and brand equity, as well as indicators of satisfaction, understanding and commitment among staff, such as Thomson et al.'s (1999) model of the buy-in benchmark and Mowday, Steers and Porter’s (1979) questionnaire for the determination of organisational commitment. To facilitate measurement as well as programme alterations, feedback is vital (Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers, 2002; Jacobs, 2003). Feedback needs to occur in all directions, thus reinforcing the notion of multi-directional communication. Through this feedback, the internal branding programme can be regularly reviewed and changes made where necessary.

Conclusion

This paper suggests an organisation of internal marketing into three distinct, but interrelated functions, (i) internal marketing to internal customers, (ii) internal marketing in internal markets, and (iii) internal marketing as a facilitator of strategy and change. Internal branding is identified as a tool within one of these functions, internal marketing as a facilitator of strategy and change. In this context, internal branding is defined as a concerted, inter-departmental and multi-directional internal communications effort carried out in order to create and maintain an internal brand.

Based on an extensive study of relevant literature and previous studies, this article identifies 25 key factors or variables of failure and success in internal branding. These are grouped under seven headings of organisation, information, management, communication, strategy, staff and education. Integrating these dimensions with a number of extant models of brand development, the authors propose a consolidated internal branding framework (CIBF) to plan, execute and evaluate an internal branding programme. It is hoped that this conceptual framework contains both insights of value to scholars and practical recommendations to managers.

Indeed, the proposed list of 25 factors of failure and success can be reduced effectively to allow for a series of managerial recommendations. These are outlined in Table 4. Some of the recommendations in Table 4 incorporate two or more factors at once, while other factors are omitted. Thus, insular thinking and internal competition are, to a degree, results of a departmentalised, highly hierarchical organisation. They are therefore associated with the first recommendation to create a flatter organisation with high levels of interaction, but the factor itself is not specifically addressed herein.

These recommendations, allied to the consolidated internal branding framework (CIBF) proposed in this article, enable practitioners to take a proactive and structured approach to internal branding, instead of the often short-lived 'knee-jerk-reaction' programmes prescribed by some consultants. Its intrinsic value lies in the grounding in the most commonly encountered factors of failure and success as well as in the consolidation of several models and frameworks proposed by leading academics and practitioners in the field of internal branding.

With respect to the CIBF itself, further research recommendations concern the applicability of the framework to various companies and industry sectors to evaluate the generalisability of the framework. It should be possible to monitor the design and implementation of an internal branding programme according to a structure similar to that of the CIBF...
within a company and analyse the results for validity of the framework in terms of producing an effective programme. Such research could then be widened to include different company types and sizes and different industries.

One last aspect worth investigating further is the notion of the applicability of the term 'customer' in the context of internal marketing and internal branding. As has been noted elsewhere (Mahnert, 2006; Mudie, 2003), the organisational reality encountered by an employee interacting with the corporate brand does not accurately reflect the reality of a customer interacting with a given corporate brand. Before more general research is undertaken into the area of internal branding, it may therefore be prudent to first investigate the intended audience or audiences for this practice.

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