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Marketing is Change Management

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So many companies struggle to twizzle people back towards a 'relentless focus on the customer'.

**By Jennifer Kirkby
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“Businesses turn people the wrong way around so they operate with their face towards the boss and their ‘ass’ towards the customer” is a picturesque line from Kjell Nordstrom’s Funky Business. Little wonder then that so many companies struggle to twizzle people back towards a ‘relentless focus on the customer’. How can current techniques of change management and internal marketing help? .



Triggering Change

Cultural change is easiest when a disruptive event hits the organization eg a new strategy, new CEO or market threat/opportunity. For this is when people seek leadership, and are more receptive to changing working practices. If no change is at hand then either, one is engineered, or, more 'savvy' work is needed to reach a 'tipping point' – an expedient build up of actions that suddenly catapults the change into the 'big time'.

So those struggling with internal brand alignment should find a disruptive event (maybe a CRM project!) to gain attention and draw staff into co-creating a more compelling culture. Those in the luckier position of having a disruptive change already, should press ahead with change management plans – yet few do. Not only do they lose out on an opportunity to align culture they jeopardise the success of their work. The failure of BPR and process led IT projects is the failure to take account of social and organizational transformation.

Principals of a Change Plan

- Crucially cultural change doesn't mean chucking out the old culture, thereby making people feel their behaviour is wrong and their skills obsolete. A company often needs to rediscover its heritage and the passions of the past that built it. When Carly Fiorini took over at HP she resurrected the founder's vision of innovation, rather than starting anew.
- Change is a process, like a butterfly you have to pass through all stages. So the plan needs phasing with respect to the psychological patterns of change for individuals, teams and organizations. It can take at least two years for new behaviour to replace old ways of working.
- Staff need to understand what's in the change for them and, more importantly, contribute to new ways of working then they will own it. It is highly likely that you will be starting from a position where staff feel like disposable assets, and have devised informal ways of looking after their own welfare.
- It should be done IN CONJUNCTION with the strategy.
- The plan is iterative not linear, constantly review it and research the effect of different techniques, pay great attention to detail.
- A change plan eventually melts into 'business as usual' internal marketing. Both align promised and delivered brand values. Neither is 'just' a communication plan, but a recipe for building knowledge, leading to collaboration, leading to co-creation. Marketing = change management.





Planning for Change

Phase 1 Uncovering Context

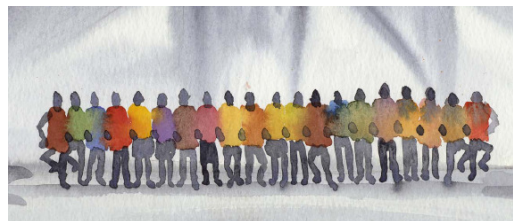
Whilst change needs leadership, leadership needs convincing. Phase 1 therefore, examines the current customer and staff experiences against promises. What is happening and in what context – people act according to their environment, a brutalising environment will brutalise the gentlest of characters.

Some Techniques

- Use story techniques with staff and customers to get behind what is really happening on the front line. Where are the gaps and why.
- Examine staff satisfaction questionnaires, and any feedback system in place
- Examine staff relationships if you have the budget, if not do at later stage

Phase 2 Executive Leadership

Leadership is a 'must have' but leadership with little knowledge can be worse than none. Phase 2 is about getting executive backing for a customer strategy, an understanding of the current cultural and agreement (if not passion) for that required. .



Some Techniques

- Politically map senior managers -who are the influencers, advocates and detractors
- Conduct a personalised 'lobbying' campaign with each one – and their influencers
- Bring customers themselves, and customer/staff knowledge to the boardroom. Link it to the objectives or operational pain points that senior managers care about eg shareholder opinion call centre inefficiencies
- Create with senior managers a story, or picture of where the company wants to be – use storyboard format so that emotions as well as practicalities can be expressed.



Phase 3 Preparing the Ground

Now, with luck, there is budget, a team and positive intentions. However, change programmes are often victims of cynicism and derision. So the ground needs ploughing to remove the stones of resistance. Establish the degree of collaboration and inhibitors in the organization. Finish any work not done in phase 1. Decide who needs to do what - and put in measures to monitor progress.

Some Techniques



- Create a staff impact and adoption map. Who will be affected, to what degree – what is the expected reaction.
- Relationship mapping if not done before. Where are the informal and formal teams/groups in the organization? Who are the acknowledged experts, persuaders and networkers
- Look to balanced scorecard measures to establish the links between culture and customer objectives.

Phase 4 Collective Change Management

In phase 4 the programme must hit hard and energise staff. The main task is bringing the vision to life so people identify with it and quickly get through the psychological barriers. Staff will be catapulted out of their comfort zone and have to think harder about what they do. Involve them fully in the work harness their ideas and ambitions. Sow the seeds of change but reap quick wins to act as exemplars. This phase succeeds when momentum comes from top down encouragement, and bottom up enthusiasm; it fails if it stays roots in the boardroom

Some Techniques

- Create 'voice of the customer' workshops, surgeries, and communities of practice to keep all staff up-to-date with customer knowledge, but more importantly encourage the use of customer information in decision making.
- Establish staff feedback – ranging from suggestion to regular reviews between brand managers and call centre staff. Ensure senior managers 'walk the floor'.
- Build a model office for cross functional teams to experiment with new practices.
- In training and education use staff to put over new ideas in their own words eg video, or even customer advertising as the Halifax Bank have successfully done.
- Material should anchor learning, be useful and entertaining. Packaging is all – encourage 'stickiness' with creative writing, quality and the use of all the senses.
- Synchronize customer and staff messages - don't promote top class customer service whilst telling staff cutting cost has primacy. Link both to corporate social responsibility initiatives.



Phase 5 Internal Marketing

The momentum for change can now be siphoned off into business as usual, as supporting capabilities (organizational structures, rewards, systems, and skills) are built. Constant training, surveys and away days get in the way of work and become tiring. Whilst phase 4 kick starts the change and overcomes conflict, phase 5 weaves internal marketing of brand values into the fabric of the organization. .

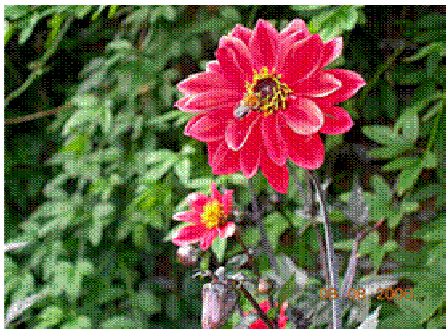
Some Techniques

- Turn training into brand coaching, people learn better when customer knowledge relates to experience and is immediately useful
- Encourage team working with the right support eg virtual team rooms, communities of practice.
- Every department and project plan should say how brand values will be brought to life; it should be as natural as the cost/benefit analysis. .
- Nike employ a corporate 'storyteller' to compile a 'compendium' of 'how things have got done around here'.



Phase 6 Stakeholder Marketing

Cultural change should now be well underway so the emphasis can turn from staff to external stakeholders eg partners and suppliers. Whilst these groups should be involved in the previous phases this phase is specifically aimed at them.



Some Techniques

- Choose suppliers who have similar or complimentary brand values
- Set up supplier feedback, relationships are two way.



Recommended Reading – Books

- **Making Sense of Change Management, Ester Cameron & Mike Green (Kogan Page) – excellent overview of both the theory and practice, very readable**
- **The Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell (Abacus) – the number one best seller that reminds marketers what real marketing is, excellent storytelling**
- **The Psychology of Personal Power, C Johnstone (self published, www.chrisjohnstone.info) – how to make change happen against the odds from the Doctor who led the campaign to reduce doctors hours, packed full of tips and very readable**
- **The Social Life of Information, John Seely Brown & Paul Duguid (Harvard Business School Press) – you'll never forget the human side of BPR and technology implementation again ! Excellent storytelling.**



BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Kirkby

Jennifer Kirkby is acknowledged as a leading analyst and writer on marketing and customer management. She is Director of Mutual Marketing; contributor to many books and journals; and lectures at business schools. She has a degree in economics and following a career in marketing covering everything from research and development to brand management, was a director at Gartner and advisor to the UK Government... She has worked with many Fortune 500 companies worldwide, on customer management and continuously researches its implementation.





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