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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES IN INTERNAL MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. This paper explores the impact of team-building activities on enhancing internal marketing by emphasizing their role as a strategic tool for fostering employee engagement, satisfaction, and alignment with organizational goals. In this regard, it highlights how team-building initiatives contribute to a cohesive work environment, which, in turn, strengthens internal marketing efforts. To achieve this objective, the study adopts a conceptual approach by synthesizing existing literature on team-building and internal marketing. Consequently, it develops a theoretical framework that explains how team-building interventions influence key internal marketing dimensions, including employee motivation, communication, and organizational culture. Moreover, the analysis reveals that team-building activities play a crucial role in enhancing trust, collaboration, and communication among employees. As a result, these improvements lead to a stronger internal brand and a more engaged workforce. Furthermore, they contribute to higher employee satisfaction, productivity, and commitment, thereby reinforcing internal marketing strategies. Ultimately, this paper offers a novel perspective by positioning team-building activities as a key driver of internal marketing effectiveness. More importantly, it provides actionable insights for organizations aiming to cultivate a unified, high-performing workforce through structured team-development strategies.

Keywords: team building, internal marketing, employee engagement, organizational culture, productivity

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INTRODUCTION

Internal marketing is a process organizations engage in to communicate core values, organizational culture, and mission to employees as "internal customers." It seeks to maintain the motivation of employees, engage them, and channel them toward organizational goal achievement to build a better workplace that fosters employee satisfaction as well as increased effectiveness. Against today's competitive corporate landscape, this concept has gained robust endorsement, as companies today more than ever appreciate that it is a dedicated workforce that enables them to deliver excellent customer service and attain business success (Berry, 1981; Gallup, 2023). It is

therefore critical that organizations become aware of the mechanisms that drive internal marketing if they wish to sustain long-term success.

Again, the value of internal marketing is that it directly impacts employee engagement, job satisfaction, and loyalty. Indeed, research has shown that engaged employees are 17% more productive and 21% more profitable for their organizations, and these, in turn, have a direct influence on customer satisfaction and financial performance (Gallup, 2023). To achieve such outcomes, organizations employ internal marketing strategies such as communication campaigns, training programs, reward schemes, and incentives, all of which contribute to creating a collaborative and integrated working environment (Grönroos, 1990). Among these tactics, nonetheless, team building is also a highly significant factor but whose position within internal marketing is less extensively researched.

Team building has for a long time been described as a set of activities to improve teamwork, communication, and trustworthiness (Tuckman, 1965). However, in addition to improving interpersonal relations and problem-solving skills, team building fosters a sense of belongingness among the employees. For instance, activities range from structured workshops and retreats to informal activities such as virtual escape rooms, which became a hit during the height of home work in 2020 and 2021 (SHRM, 2021). A good example is Salesforce's "VTO" (Volunteer Time Off) initiative where employees engage in community service together, fostering relationships while aligning with the social responsibility values of the company.

Besides, even though team building is widely recognized as a strategy to enhance the performance and unity of teams, its overall impact on internal marketing practices is under-researched. Yet, they go hand-in-hand in the sense that both have the ultimate purpose of employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational culture (Dyer, 2007). Indeed, team-building sessions enhance open communication, trust, and collaboration, which are intrinsic cornerstones of internal marketing. Additionally, internal marketing has extended to include tangible and intangible aspects of the work environment, encompassing communication, motivation, work-life balance, and career progression (Keller, 2012). On this basis, team building becomes significant since it facilitates proper interactions among employees conducive to a favorable workplace culture.

Besides this, team building contributes a huge part to employee motivation, which is the foundation of internal marketing. A motivated employee owns his job, pursues shared goals, and demonstrates greater initiative. In a 2021 LinkedIn report, they discovered that 63% of employees who had participated in team-building activities demonstrated greater feelings of belonging, and thus their commitment towards the organization was enhanced. Thus, this camaraderie yields improved performance, which eventually adds to the organization as a whole.

In the modern work environment, with talent retention posing a significant issue, internal marketing activities that integrate team building represent an innovative solution (PwC, 2023). By connecting workers with organizational values, these programs not only drive satisfaction and productivity but also help long-term business prosperity. Nevertheless, although team-building exercises are a common practice, their impact on internal marketing outcomes must be examined further. This article therefore aims to bridge this gap by examining team building as an internal marketing strategy, and its implications on motivation, satisfaction, and performance. From a conceptual framework, existing literature has been integrated to put forward a theoretical basis for understanding the relationship. Lastly, it seeks to deliver organizations with actionable recommendations on how to leverage team building to create an engaged, productive, and satisfied workforce, thereby enhancing their internal marketing efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of Internal Marketing

Internal marketing is a conscious strategy that companies take to inform, engage, and inspire employees through organizational goals, regarding them as "internal customers" (Berry, 1981); the

fundamental objectives of this practice are employee satisfaction improvement, workforce alignment with organizational mission and values, and general organizational effectiveness. The foundational axiom, articulated by Grönroos (1990), is that a motivated and engaged workforce is the key to providing exceptional customer experiences and organizational excellence; indeed, Berry's (1981) seminal hypothesis—"An organization must first 'sell' to its employees before it can hope to sell effectively to its customers"—holds today, with a 2023 Gallup study demonstrating that firms with high employee engagement have 23% greater profitability.

Besides, internal marketing is a strategic means of creating a workplace environment that is marked by informed, motivated, and empowered employees, to enhance their job satisfaction, increase levels of engagement, and realize sustainable organizational success (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003); treating employees as internal stakeholders, it increases their perception of value, leading to behaviors that are consistent with corporate objectives (Varey, 2002).

Internal marketing provides a substantial advantage to organizations by extending beyond employee satisfaction to encompass performance enhancement and the promotion of long-term sustainability. This method improves employee retention by responding to their needs and creating a setting in which they feel appreciated, ultimately decreasing turnover and promoting a stable workforce. It also enhances employee productivity; engaged employees exhibit enhanced efficiency, commitment, and proactive behaviors in their jobs. Research by Bakker et al. (2008) has confirmed a strong link between internal marketing practices and higher levels of employee engagement.

Additionally, internal marketing plays a critical role in enriching organizational culture as it weaves the firm's mission and values into daily work, thus creating a homogeneous working environment in which employees align with common goals and trust the firm's leadership. According to Schein (2010), the process is critical in encouraging uniform corporate identity and strengthening teamwork cooperation. Alignment in an organization has a considerable impact on customer service quality, as motivated and well-trained staff deliver outstanding service experiences, which, in turn, increase customer satisfaction and build brand loyalty. The idea is supported by Varey (2002), who argues that successful internal marketing leads to better interactions with external customers.

Besides its impact on customer experience, internal marketing also plays a vital role in the recruitment of high-quality talent by building an organization's reputation as an attractive employer. Keller (2013) underscores the value of effective internal marketing initiatives in the creation of an attractive workplace environment that draws experienced workers who are interested in challenging career prospects, thus making the company more competitive. Also, internal marketing cultivates creativity and innovation as it enables employees to share ideas, be initiators, and try out new solutions. Amabile (1996) argues that employees who are supported and appreciated are likely to indulge in innovative thinking processes, thereby leading to continuous business growth and improvement continuously.

Lastly, internal marketing is an essential tool for increasing workers' satisfaction, aligning employees with corporate objectives, and general business performance. Those organizations that place strategic communication, ongoing training, motivation, and engagement programs at their core develop environments in which workers feel appreciated, productive, and strongly committed to the organizational cause. This, in turn, translates into long-term success in a growing competitive business environment (Berry, 1981; Grönroos, 1990; Harter et al., 2002).

2. Key Elements of Internal Marketing

Internal marketing relies on several strategies and tools to foster employee engagement and alignment, thereby forming the foundation of a supportive and motivating workplace. One of the key elements in this process is communication, which serves as the cornerstone of internal marketing (Ballantyne, 2000); organizations utilize both formal and informal communication channels to ensure transparency and keep employees informed about company objectives, expectations, and changes. Clear and consistent communication not only helps employees

understand the organization's goals but also clarifies their roles in achieving them, thus strengthening their sense of purpose and connection to the company.

Beyond communication, training and development play a crucial role in internal marketing, since continuous learning is essential for both personal and professional growth (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012); training programs enhance employees' technical skills while simultaneously aligning them with the organization's values and strategic vision. Berry (1981) argued that investing in employee development signals a company's commitment to its workforce, reinforcing a sense of belonging and increasing job satisfaction; by providing opportunities for skill enhancement and career progression, organizations can cultivate a highly competent and motivated workforce.

Equally important, motivation and recognition are key drivers of internal marketing success (Deci & Ryan, 1985), as employees are more likely to stay engaged when their efforts are acknowledged and rewarded. Recognition can take many forms, ranging from monetary incentives and promotions to verbal praise and public acknowledgment; according to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966), recognition acts as an intrinsic motivator, fostering a sense of achievement and reinforcing goal alignment. When employees feel valued for their contributions, their dedication to organizational success increases, creating a positive feedback loop that benefits both the workforce and the company as a whole.

Additionally, employee engagement programs contribute significantly to the effectiveness of internal marketing by strengthening the emotional connection between employees and their organization (Saks, 2006); encouraging engagement requires fostering a culture that prioritizes open feedback channels, teamwork, and participative decision-making (Harter et al., 2002). Organizations can achieve this through various initiatives such as team-building exercises, social events, and leadership development programs, all of which help cultivate trust, respect, and collaboration among employees (Robinson et al., 2004); by creating an environment where employees feel heard, supported, and empowered, companies can enhance job satisfaction and long-term commitment.

Incorporating these strategies into internal marketing efforts ensures that employees are not only informed and skilled but also motivated and emotionally invested in their organization's success; through effective communication, continuous development, meaningful recognition, and engagement-driven initiatives, companies can build a resilient and dedicated workforce that drives both employee well-being and organizational performance.

3. Understanding Team Building

Team building involves creating and nurturing interpersonal relationships while enhancing communication and motivating individuals to collaborate effectively by fostering interdependence among team members, with its primary goal being to build trust and mutual respect, enabling teams to unite around shared objectives (Tuckman, 1965), a process that is essential for developing both the technical and social dimensions of teams, ensuring their cohesion and efficiency in achieving collective goals (Salas et al., 2005).

By optimizing members' skills, competencies, and relationships, effective team building enhances problem-solving abilities, facilitates better decision-making, and fosters innovation, as Katzenbach and Smith (1993) emphasize that well-structured teams leverage diverse expertise to drive creative solutions and operational efficiency, which in turn strengthens an organization's capacity to adapt and succeed in a competitive environment. Beyond these functional benefits, team building plays a crucial role in shaping a positive workplace culture, where collaboration and mutual support become ingrained in daily interactions, contributing to higher engagement and morale.

Moreover, successful team building strengthens the foundational elements of trust, communication, and cooperation, which serve as key drivers of both individual and organizational success, as Cohen and Bailey (1997) highlight that teams built on strong interpersonal connections exhibit greater resilience, higher productivity, and an increased capacity for innovation, reinforcing

the notion that effective teamwork is indispensable for achieving long-term business objectives and sustaining a thriving corporate culture.

Effective team building significantly influences morale, productivity, and engagement by strengthening relationships, fostering open communication, and enhancing team cohesion. One of its primary impacts is increased employee engagement, as it nurtures a sense of belonging and commitment within teams, reinforcing their emotional connection to the organization (Harter et al., 2002). Salas et al. (2008) emphasize that team-building activities create a supportive community, encouraging employees to be more invested in their work and workplace relationships.

Beyond engagement, team building directly enhances productivity by fostering collaboration, trust, and seamless communication, all of which contribute to greater team efficiency (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Research by Morgeson et al. (2010) demonstrates that frequent team-building initiatives lead to sustained improvements in performance, as teams that communicate effectively and trust one another can complete tasks more efficiently and innovate more readily.

Another crucial benefit is its impact on morale, as positive interactions during team-building activities help reduce stress and prevent burnout, fostering a more motivated and resilient workforce (Gully et al., 2002; Lencioni, 2002). When employees feel valued and supported by their colleagues, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction and maintain a positive attitude toward their work.

Improved communication is another key outcome, as team-building exercises create environments where open idea-sharing and constructive feedback become the norm, minimizing misunderstandings and promoting clarity in interactions (Tannenbaum et al., 2012). Salas et al. (2008) highlight that effective communication within teams is essential for coordination, ensuring that tasks are completed efficiently and that employees can work together seamlessly.

Additionally, team-building efforts play a vital role in conflict resolution, as they promote mutual understanding and equip employees with the problem-solving skills necessary to manage disputes constructively (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). By encouraging collaboration and empathy, these initiatives help teams navigate disagreements more effectively, preventing minor conflicts from escalating into major disruptions.

Through these combined effects, team building becomes an essential driver of organizational success, fostering a work environment where employees feel engaged, supported, and equipped to collaborate productively.

4. Types of Team Building Activities

Team-building activities vary widely as they are tailored to team dynamics and organizational goals, incorporating diverse approaches to enhance collaboration, trust, and performance. Trust-building exercises play a crucial role in fostering strong interpersonal relationships, as trust is fundamental to high-performing teams, strengthening bonds by promoting open communication, interdependence, and vulnerability (Mayer et al., 1995). Among these exercises, trust falls require one member to fall backward, relying on teammates to catch them, reinforcing confidence and mutual reliance (Johnson & Johnson, 1995), while blindfolded tasks challenge teams to complete objectives without sight, compelling members to rely on verbal guidance and teamwork to succeed (Salas et al., 2005).

Collaboration-focused challenges emphasize the benefits of teamwork by engaging participants in complex, multi-skill tasks that demand coordination and problem-solving (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Problem-solving games, such as puzzles, simulations, or escape rooms, foster critical thinking and cooperation, enabling teams to navigate challenges collectively, whereas team projects encourage members to contribute their unique expertise, fostering shared purpose and accountability in achieving common goals (Lencioni, 2002).

Retreats and off-site events provide an opportunity to step away from daily routines and focus on team bonding and strategic reflection, blending formal and informal sessions to strengthen professional relationships (Zenger & Folkman, 2014). Whether through outdoor adventures,

strategy workshops, or skill-focused activities, these events create an environment where collaboration and trust can flourish beyond the workplace.

Role-playing and simulations further contribute to team development by enhancing empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict management, allowing employees to navigate workplace scenarios in a controlled setting. Simulations mirror real-world challenges, equipping teams with decision-making skills under pressure and reinforcing adaptive problem-solving techniques (Salas et al., 2008).

Finally, feedback and reflection activities serve as essential tools for continuous improvement, fostering self-awareness and open dialogue among team members. By engaging in structured feedback sessions, teams can assess strengths and identify areas for growth, ensuring ongoing development and alignment with organizational objectives (Schilling et al., 2011). Through these diverse activities, organizations cultivate cohesive, motivated, and high-performing teams, reinforcing a culture of collaboration and shared success.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The combination of team building and internal marketing is critical in constructing an effective organizational culture and employee satisfaction. Internal marketing, in terms of "internal customers," strives to generate enthusiasm, commitment, and alignment toward the organization's strategic objectives, emphasizing the requirement for a positive and cooperative work environment (Berry, 1981). Simultaneously, team-building activity encourages these same elements by ensuring open communication, trust, and cooperation, thereby strengthening the fundamental values of internal marketing (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000).

Internal marketing, as explained by Kotler (2003), is meant to develop employee commitment to the vision and values of the organization, a procedure where team-building activity forms an integral part. By fostering workplace relations and collaboration, team building strengthens significant internal marketing goals such as empowerment, motivation, and job satisfaction (Schneider & Bowen, 1985). Through such synergy, the workers feel a sense of belongingness and involvement, which assists the organization in its total purpose. Therefore, the alignment of internal marketing and team-building strategies offers an organizational workplace culture that focuses on individual fulfillment as well as long-term organizational effectiveness.

A strong organizational culture is the foundation of team building and internal marketing, impacting employees' behavior, interactions, and job satisfaction (Schein, 2010). Internal marketing initiatives strive to build a culture conducive to the organization's strategic direction (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000), and team-building initiatives complement these cultural values by infusing collective values into employees. This alignment generates a sense of belonging and unity among workers, further reinforcing the cultural base of the company.

Participation in team-building exercises not only enhances interpersonal relationships but also enhances organizational culture by endowing employees with core values and desired behaviors (Tannenbaum et al., 2012). Such exercises enhance trust and collaboration, which is in line with the internal marketing objective of creating a cohesive and nurturing work environment (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Lencioni (2002) further adds that effective team-building activities induce a deep sense of belonging and purpose, which are essential in sustaining a healthy and strong organizational culture.

Involvement and motivation are the pillars of internal marketing and team building since they influence employees' commitment, job satisfaction, and performance directly. Internal marketing seeks to stimulate employees via significant work, rewards, and opportunities for promotion (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). Moreover, team-building interventions boost motivation via interpersonal ties that promote a sense of belongingness to the organization, making work enjoyable (Gully et al., 2002).

Through encouraging free communication and the connection of personal expectations to organizational goals, team-building initiatives set a shared goal (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Alignment beyond this heightens job satisfaction, but it influences organizational performance (Lings, 2004), which tightens the ownership of employees and improves general performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Beyond this, they create a positive organizational culture in which workers are appreciated and developed, and their loyalty to the organization is heightened (Harter et al., 2002).

Collaborative problem-solving using a team approach strengthens affective bonds, leading to enhanced productivity and job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). This notion is also supported by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002), which asserts that motivation is reinforced through feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness—conditions that are naturally generated by team-building exercises (Schneider & Bowen, 1985). Therefore, team building is crucial in ensuring employee and organizational objectives are aligned, reinforcing one of the fundamental reasons for internal marketing (Schilling et al., 2011).

CONCLUSION

This article has thoroughly examined the intricate relationship between team building and internal marketing, highlighting how team-building initiatives serve as a strategic mechanism to enhance internal marketing effectiveness. Internal marketing conceptualizes employees as "internal customers," striving to foster a work environment where satisfaction, engagement, and alignment with organizational objectives drive success. Team building reinforces these efforts by cultivating communication, trust, and collaboration—fundamental pillars of a thriving workplace. Beyond strengthening team cohesion, it reinforces organizational culture, fuels motivation, and deepens engagement, leading to higher productivity, increased job satisfaction, and sustained organizational growth.

The link is evident: team building is a foundational element of internal marketing's mission. By fostering collaboration and shared values, it ensures employees align with organizational goals, creating a cohesive workforce. Its impact on motivation and engagement translates into concrete benefits—improved performance, lower turnover, and enhanced customer service. These outcomes collectively reinforce internal marketing's objective of cultivating a motivated, high-performing, and fulfilled team that drives broader organizational success.

Organizational culture, the core of internal marketing, thrives when supported by team building. Culture shapes employee behavior and interactions, and team-building activities embed shared norms and values, fostering unity and resilience. In an era defined by hybrid work models and retention challenges, team building bridges gaps nurtures a sense of belonging, and mitigates disconnection, ensuring a cohesive and adaptable work environment.

Looking ahead, integrating team building within internal marketing provides organizations with a strategic advantage. The evolving nature of work—encompassing remote setups and shifting generational expectations—demands innovative engagement strategies. Team building addresses these challenges by enhancing talent attraction, sparking creativity, and sustaining performance in an increasingly competitive landscape. When strategically implemented, it becomes a catalyst for resilience, innovation, and long-term organizational growth, equipping businesses to navigate an ever-changing future.

Organizations should adopt a structured and ongoing approach to team building within internal marketing frameworks to maximize this synergy. Key steps include:

- **Aligning Activities with Values:** Designing exercises that reflect and reinforce the organization's culture, fostering trust and collaboration to cultivate a shared purpose.
- **Ensuring Continuity:** Establishing team building as an ongoing initiative rather than a one-time event, maintaining alignment and momentum over time.
- **Customizing to Employee Needs:** Tailoring activities to accommodate diverse preferences and work environments, maximizing engagement and participation.

- Measuring Impact: Regularly assessing the influence of team-building efforts on engagement, productivity, and satisfaction, refining strategies accordingly.
- Involving Leadership: Encouraging active leadership participation to demonstrate commitment and unify the workforce.

Ultimately, team building extends beyond its traditional role, emerging as a transformative force within internal marketing. It bridges individual aspirations with collective goals, shaping workplaces where employees thrive and organizations succeed.

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ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ РОЛІ КОМАНДОУТВОРЮЮЧИХ ЗАХОДІВ У ПІДВИЩЕННІ
ЕФЕКТИВНОСТІ ВНУТРІШНЬОГО МАРКЕТИНГУ: КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНА МОДЕЛЬ

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У статті розглядається вплив командоутворюючих заходів на підвищення ефективності внутрішнього маркетингу, підкреслюючи їхню роль як стратегічного інструменту для зміцнення залученості працівників, їхнього задоволення та узгодженості з організаційними цілями. У цьому контексті акцент робиться на тому, як ініціативи з командоутворення сприяють створенню згуртованого робочого середовища, що, у свою чергу, посилює внутрішній маркетинг. Для досягнення цієї мети дослідження використовує концептуальний підхід, синтезуючи наявну літературу з питань командоутворення та внутрішнього маркетингу. В результаті розроблено теоретичну модель, яка пояснює, як командоутворюючі заходи впливають на ключові аспекти внутрішнього маркетингу, зокрема мотивацію працівників, комунікацію та організаційну культуру. Крім того, аналіз показує, що командоутворюючі заходи відіграють важливу роль у зміцненні довіри, співпраці та комунікації між працівниками. У результаті ці покращення сприяють зміцненню внутрішнього бренду та підвищенню рівня залученості персоналу. Більше того, вони сприяють зростанню задоволеності, продуктивності та відданості працівників, тим самим посилюючи стратегії внутрішнього маркетингу. Зрештою, ця стаття пропонує новий погляд на командоутворюючі заходи, розглядаючи їх як ключовий чинник ефективності внутрішнього маркетингу. Більш важливо, вона надає практичні рекомендації для організацій, які прагнуть сформувати єдину та високо продуктивну команду за допомогою структурованих стратегій розвитку команди.

Ключові слова: командоутворення, внутрішній маркетинг, залученість працівників, організаційна культура, продуктивність.