

Проблеми маркетингу інформаційних продуктів та послуг

The role of internal communications for image formation in higher education institution

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Abstract: The paper describes importance of internal communications for effective functioning of organisations, its specifics, different levels of internal communications and its importance for image formation in higher education institutions.

Key words – internal communications, image, employees’ involvement, higher education institutions, levels of internal communications.

Any organisation can’t operate successfully without internal communications. Internal communications consist not only of internal documents cycling and informing employees about the changes in institution, but also different types of employees’ motivation, involving them to a management process and improving the activities inside organisation.

Internal communications (IC) could be defined as “...the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations across a number of interrelated dimensions...” [1]. Obviously, the types of IC could differ according to activities and goals of global strategy of the institution, its business type and market specifics, the place of internal communications in the structure. But the instruments could be similar to all kinds of organisation. So, institutions can influence on formation of its image with the help of these relations which will play the role of internal public relations.

By using marketing approaches for its internal life, institution could receive a significant help to create a solid team with shared values and a strong sense of belonging to the company. Effective implementation of IC could lead to quick staff integration into organisation’s life, to create, develop and maintain a favourable social climate [2]. The list of mentioned above objectives of IC is not full. And such objectives of this kind of communications could be divided on several levels [3]:

- informational – to inform, anticipate, sensitize, calmer employees,
- image – to create strong and cohesive institutional identity, confidence, consideration,
- behavioral – to mobilize employees, prepare them to changes, stimulate initiative, anticipate the conflicts, to let everyone to express own ideas.

It’s necessary to say that one of the peculiarities of higher education institutions from the point of communications is the fact that students could be considered as

consumers and as employees simultaneously. So, communications addressed to students must be internal and external (commercial) at the same time.

Another peculiarity is simultaneous fulfillment of different functions by higher education institutions: social (meeting the needs of society in education) and business (need of funding activity, image management). In this case such institution must use not only internal and commercial communications, but social also.

Counting that there is two target audiences for IC (students and other institutional staff), we should analyze levels mentioned above for each of the audience.

1. Students:

- Informational level. Students are more recipients of information than providers. Main aim on this level is to inform students about all the changes and news in university, to explain their reasons, to indicate how they'll influence on students' life and propose the possibilities of their solving if it's needed.

- Image level. These are the steps which university should do to stimulate students act as instruments of increasing institutional image and reputation. Special uniform, presence of logos and slogans, transmission of positive information by students to the third parties could be used by institution as instruments.

- Behavioral level. The main goal is to stimulate student behave (voluntarily) in the way as required by university – relations “student-professor”, creation a desire to learn, loyalty to institution, high activity in terms of volunteering, participation in overtime works etc.

2. Staff:

- Informational level. Staff is recipient of information from top-management and info's provider to the students. The quality of information, it's reformatting close to students' comprehension and speed of supply depends on the staff motivation and competence.

- Image level. These are the steps which university should do to stimulate staff act as instruments of transmission of institutional image and reputation to students and third parties.

- Behavioral level. Staff is the main motivator of student in IC. Staff's behaviour is role model to students. So, the behaviour of the staff directly affects the behaviour of students and indirectly on the image of institution.

As we can see, the question of IC utilization by higher institution is complicated, it has some specialties and related levels, which must be taken into account by top-management of universities during the process of decision making regarding image formation.

References

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