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Marketing For Non-Marketing Executives

No marketing man needs to be told about the total marketing concept. And no marketing man needs to be brought up to date on the increasing importance of the marketing function within the total economy. Improvement in the art, if not the science, of marketing during the postwar period is dramatic. Literally hundreds of important industrial firms throughout the United States are now gearing their total business to the customer by orienting every function to the needs and desires of those customers. This is a healthy trend.

However, with the growth of this kind of marketing philosophy has come a whole series of additional problems to burden the shoulders of top management. Engineering, research, product development, financial, distribution, and pricing problems shift constantly in their shape and context as companies adopt a total marketing concept in their basic planning. One of the key problems, which has perhaps had less attention than many others, is that of the internal education and communications necessary as a company begins to use modern marketing philosophy and methods.

An oversimplified definition of marketing is "finding out what the customer wants and then giving it to him—at a profit." Within this kind of meaning, marketing is an attitude, a state of mind, and

a working philosophy which guides the entire operation of a business . . . including each individual department, function, and person. The frequent pitfall in living up to this kind of business philosophy comes in an internal breakdown of understanding and communications of the "how, what, where, and when" of marketing.

Historically, companies have conducted sales meetings to educate and stimulate all the marketing and sales people to do a better job. Unfortunately, many firms have stopped at this point. They have failed to realize that literally every key employee and every major department and function participate directly or indirectly in the total marketing operation. To participate successfully and profitably, each key employee must have at least a cursory understanding of the company's plans, objectives, and marketing strategies and tactics.

THREE METHODS

What is the best way for a company to educate non-marketing executives on the intricacies of the marketing function? There are three methods commonly used in industry today:

1. *An informal education program* consisting of an occasional meeting; group luncheon discussions; and routing of articles, bulletins, and

speech reprints covering a variety of marketing topics.

2. *A formalized program of education* in which a series of specifically developed and organized seminars and training programs are implemented throughout key administrative and operating levels of management.
3. *The use of external educational programs* developed by such organizations as the American Management Association, National Industrial Conference Board, National Sales Executives Clubs, and various schools of business.

A fourth method, of course, is to use a combination of these three techniques.

A variety of factors dictates the type of program most suitable to an individual organization. The size of the company, the nature of its products, the complexity of its markets and customers and buying influences, industry marketing patterns and trends, competitive practices, and past company marketing methods are a few of the factors which will contribute to the decision.

A pertinent point, however, is on the premise that the marketing executives must recognize, and must help the rest of top management recognize, the need for a continuous flow of marketing information. This information will provide the cross-fertilization and will act as the catalytic agent in insuring a truly total customer-directed operation.

Informal Education Program

The informal program is most useful to the smaller industrial company which has only a few key executives. It is likely that some of these executives "double in brass," wearing several job hats. In this situation the executives are working closely enough with each other so that an informal system of communication through the occasional distribution of articles and speeches, plus luncheon conversations, will accomplish the desired purpose.

Material on the total marketing concept and on the relationship of marketing to the other business functions is readily available from most trade associations, as well

as from the sales and marketing business magazines. Too often, however, this method, because it is informal, is likely to be put off, postponed, and never be really effective because of the press of day-to-day activities.

Formalized Program of Education

Many of the country's major corporations have conducted management schools and education programs for years. For example, IBM, General Electric, and the Koppers Company provide for their top- and middle-management people a variety of educational programs.

Some years ago the Koppers Company, recognizing that non-marketing executives needed additional guidance and background in marketing, established a series of three-week seminar sessions. Organized and conducted by an outside management consultant, this program included not only key marketing executives but top administrative managers, as well as key men from manufacturing, engineering, research and development, finance, etc. The program consisted of all-day sessions with assigned readings and case-history problems on such subjects as personal selling, new-product development, marketing research, pricing, distribution, and advertising and sales promotion. Some of the country's top experts in these fields were brought in to lead "shirt-sleeve" discussions throughout the meetings.

Permanent notebooks were provided each "student" so that he would have a ready reference to material discussed and distributed at the seminar sessions. Other companies, such as General Electric, provide longer and more intensified management programs which include not only marketing but discussions of the other key functions of business. Results of this kind of internal training must be weighed against the substantial investment involved, plus, of course, the amount of time each man loses from his own particular day-to-day job assignment.

External Education Program

Those companies which have felt that there were limitations or disadvantages in

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establishing an internal program of marketing education have sent their non-marketing executives to marketing seminars conducted by associations and universities.

For example, for several years the American Management Association has conducted a seminar entitled "Fundamentals of Marketing for Non-Marketing Executives." The aim of this seminar is to improve the understanding of the marketing viewpoint and of marketing objectives, processes, and problems among non-marketing executives. A seminar outline includes three solid days of the following subjects: the marketing function; the place of marketing in the organizational structure; organization of the marketing activity; relationship of marketing to other functions of the business; changing patterns of distribution; case studies of integrated marketing programs; marketing planning; control of marketing activity; and the future direction of marketing.

Co-chaired by outstanding marketing experts who are assisted by guest speakers, these seminars attract presidents, vice-presidents of finance, factory managers, controllers, product research managers, manufacturing and engineering executives.

The University of Wisconsin recently established "Marketing for Non-Marketing

Executives" seminars structured somewhat as the AMA seminars. And, of course, there has been a tremendous growth of executive and management courses at many universities during the last ten years. Some firms have utilized these courses as an alternative to a straight marketing course. Management programs at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Harvard, Northwestern, Illinois, Stanford, and other universities include marketing within a broad curriculum which also deals with many of the other functions of business.

MARKETING IS EVERY EXECUTIVE'S CONCERN

The importance of instilling a customer and marketing consciousness at all levels of management, regardless of function, has come a long way from the theoretical stage. The nation's industrial leaders now recognize that it is important to make certain that executives not directly involved with the marketing organization be aware of how their own functions relate and integrate with marketing.

Every executive performs some functions which contribute to the total marketing effectiveness of the firm. It is essential, then, that all executives have a fundamental understanding of marketing operations and principles.

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