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The impact of marketing/HR interactions on marketing strategy implementation

The impact of marketing/HR interactions

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Jacqueline Chimhanzi

School of Management and Business, University of Wales,
Aberystwyth, UK

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Abstract It is increasingly being recognised that cross-unit working relationships have a key role to play in the successful implementation of marketing decisions. Although there is a substantial body of literature on marketing's interactions with other functions, particularly technical units such as R&D, within the context of the new product development (NPD) process, linkages between marketing and human resources (HR) have not been empirically investigated although they are widely advocated in both the marketing and HR management literatures. The conceptual model presented and tested in this paper focuses on the antecedents of effective marketing/HR interactions and posits successful marketing strategy implementation as an outcome of these. Results from a study of UK service organisations suggest that implementation effectiveness is affected negatively by conflict and positively by communication and specifically, interpersonal, not written. In turn, these interdepartmental dynamics are affected by senior management support, joint reward systems, and informal integration. A number of conclusions are drawn which have important implications for managers and researchers alike.

Introduction

Strategy implementation has long been recognised as being critical for business success in both the strategic management literature (e.g. Carnall, 1986; Galbraith and Nathanson, 1978; Quinn, 1980) and the marketing literature (e.g. Bonoma, 1984a, b; Bonoma and Crittenden, 1988; Cespedes and Piercy, 1996; Piercy, 1989, 1997a, b, 1998a, b; Sashittal and Jassawalla, 2001). Essentially, until a strategy is implemented, it remains a plan not an operational reality. This observation led Gummesson (1974) to conclude that the ability and strength to execute a decision is more crucial for success than even the underlying analysis and similarly, Giles (1991) considered implementation the most powerful of the three stages in the strategy process.

Sashittal and Jassawalla (2001, p. 51) distil two principal conceptualisations of implementation processes within the literature; implementation as either organisational change or as operational-level actions. The realm of the paper lies with the latter. This conceptualisation does not view implementation as

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entailing substantive changes in the strategy or significant reconfiguration in the organisation but, rather, lays emphasis on actions and on controlling the process of deployment with administrative mechanisms. Marketing implementation, which constitutes the focus of this paper, has been presented by Bonoma (1984a, b) as a “useful, researchable and relevant research area for the marketing discipline”. The implementation area presents considerable scope for further inquiry for a number of reasons.

First, a review of the pertinent literature is indicative of an undue bias toward formulation almost to the neglect of implementation (Noble, 1999; Piercy, 1989; Walker and Ruekert, 1987). Bonoma and Crittenden (1988) attribute this literature imbalance to a long held, misguided assumption among both academics and practitioners that implementation inevitably supersedes formulation provided the plan displays analytical sophistication.

Second, what empirical evidence there is overwhelmingly suggests that implementation in practice is fraught with difficulties and generally falls short of expectations (e.g. Nutt, 1983). This is neatly captured by Meldrum (1996), who states that “one of the concerns about marketing as a management discipline is the inability of organisations to put into practice the policies devised in its name”. It is interesting to note that poor implementation is a long outstanding concern first brought to light by early writers (e.g. Barksdale and Darden, 1971; Felton, 1959) with Churchman (1975) aptly labelling it “the implementation problem”. It would therefore appear that research interest in strategy implementation is fuelled not so much by the anticipated positive link between implementation effectiveness and enhanced business performance, but rather, more directly by such research which consistently reports a general incompetence on the part of businesses at implementing strategies such that the competitive advantages to be conferred via implementation capabilities are not being realised.

In addressing the issue of implementation, a typical approach is for a researcher(s) to investigate a particular approach that might enhance implementation prospects. Sashittal and Jassawalla (2001) consolidate the main streams of research and observe that the literature is clustered around matching managerial characteristics with the strategy being implemented (e.g. Kerr and Jackofsky, 1989); tactics used by managers to influence participants (e.g. Nutt, 1989) and the association between organisation, strategy and implementation (e.g. Miller *et al.*, 1988). Also, the management of effective inter-departmental relations is one avenue that has been exploited for its potential to enhance implementation efforts (e.g. Ruekert and Walker, 1987). Underpinning these studies is a key tenet of early organisational science studies (e.g. Fayol, 1949; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; March and Simon, 1958); that the attainment of organisational goals success necessarily depends on inter-functional co-ordination and departments working in concert. In keeping with this research tradition, this paper examines inter-functional interactions within the context of marketing implementation. However, in a departure from

precedence, the paper focuses on the linkage between the marketing and human resources departments. A number of reasons are presented that justify this choice of focal dyad in impending sections.

The paper is organised to first, contextualise the paper by reviewing definitions of marketing implementation while highlighting the centrality of human resources to marketing effectiveness. Second, the conceptual framework and the theoretical premises underlying the study are discussed. Following, the research methodology is discussed and the empirical analysis and results are presented. Thereafter, the findings are interpreted and explained in light of extant theory and various conclusions derived. Finally, the implications for managers and researchers are highlighted.

Theoretical background

The extant literature has consistently conceptualised implementation as the translation of strategic plans into an operational reality. Mintzberg (1978), in a seminal study, conceptualised implementation as the process whereby “intended” or “emergent” strategy translates to “realised” strategy. Giles (1991, p. 75), along similar lines, viewed implementation as being concerned with “putting strategy into practice” and according to Bonoma (1984a, b) it is concerned with “the tactical execution of marketing plans, programmes or strategies”. Meldrum (1996) takes implementation to refer to “the actions performed as a consequence of policy decisions” while Sashittal and Wilemon (1996) propose a more comprehensive definition of implementation as a process that “involves translating strategic intentions into action steps, assigning relevant tasks and actions to people, ensuring that the tasks are executed, and accomplishing the predetermined objectives”.

Marketing implementation and human resources

From the above cited definitions of implementation, it is clear that strategy implementation is operational in nature and relies on a series of daily activities performed by employees at all organisational levels (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984; Webster, 1997). The relevance of investigating the marketing-HR interface is underscored by findings indicating that the people area is the greatest constraint to marketing strategy implementation (Giles, 1991; Piercy, 1997a, b). Kotler (1991, p. 71) asserts that “the marketing department’s effectiveness depends . . . on how well its personnel are selected, trained, directed, motivated, and evaluated”. Research broaching the barriers for which implementation is wanting consistently identifies human-related factors such as inadequate training (e.g. Alexander, 1985) and low motivation (e.g. Eisenstat, 1993). According to Gratton (1994), this is due to a lack of functional synergy which can often result in the HR function developing HR systems (training, reward, remuneration, development, appraisal) in isolation of the line and similarly, marketing developing ambitious strategies independently of HR with limited

awareness of whether employees' skills and attitudes are commensurate with the implementation demands. Thus the integration of the marketing and HR functions is seen to represent the alignment of workforce capabilities with customer focused marketing strategies (Gratton, 1994; Piercy, 1997a, b).

Glassman and McAfee (1992, p. 52) advanced a strong argument for the study of this dyad stating that: "the major issue facing business today is how to integrate marketing and personnel more effectively ... as they can no longer exist as separate entities". Other writers have forwarded specific questions to stimulate further research. Zeithaml *et al.* (1985, p. 44), for example, noting the centrality of selection and training in services organizations for the effective delivery of service strategies, posed the following:

- Should the marketing department control employee training?
- Does the entire human resources function belong in marketing?

They concluded that issues concerning employee performance and marketing's role in facilitating it are worthy of much additional work. Along similar lines, Piercy (1997a, p. 97) has questioned the logic of one department managing employee issues of recruitment, training and so forth (HR) while another set of people independently collect customer feedback and oversee aspects of marketing strategies concerning customer service and customer satisfaction (marketing) when an obvious and iterative link exists between these issues. He speculates tremendous benefits to be realized in synergising the two departmental efforts.

Ideally, the marketing/HR partnership, where successfully managed, should help achieve the following (Piercy, 1998a, b):

- the realignment training processes with customer issues;
- the reinforcement of employee ownership of the service encounter through an appropriate organisational climate;
- the tracking of both customer and employee satisfaction; and
- the establishment of linkages between customer satisfaction measures and training.

In practical terms, it is suggested that this synergy be achieved via marketing and HR collaboration in developing job descriptions, screening candidates, designing training programmes (Glassman and McAfee, 1992; Kotler, 1991; Wind, 1981) and linking employee reward systems to customer satisfaction (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Without knowledge of even communication patterns between marketing and HR, it is difficult to assess the potential of such an alignment. It is therefore the central objective of this paper to gauge marketing/HR interactions. Specifically, the aims are to model the antecedents of marketing/HR interactions and thereafter assess the impact of the latter on marketing strategy implementation.

Marketing's interactions with other functions

Although the marketing-HR dyad has been widely championed in the normative, it has not been subjected to any vigorous empirical analysis. Therefore, in light of an absence of a strong and directly relevant empirical body of work to guide the process of hypothesis development and the interpretation of findings, the paper draws on available empirical work examining marketing's interactions with other functions.

The marketing and R&D interface remains the most extensively researched dyad within the specific context of the new product development (NPD) process (e.g. Griffin and Hauser, 1996; Gupta *et al.*, 1986; Monteleone, 1976; Saghaifi *et al.*, 1990; Song and Parry, 1992, 1997; Souder, 1988). Other relationships that have received empirical attention, albeit to a lesser extent, include marketing, and accounting (Lusch, 1979), finance (Anderson, 1981; de Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000), manufacturing (e.g. Biller and Shanley, 1975; Clare and Sandford, 1984; Mukhopadhyay and Gupta, 1998; St John and Harrison, 1999; St John and Rue, 1991; Shapiro, 1977; Workman, 1993), engineering (e.g. Lancaster, 1993; Weinrauch and Anderson, 1982), quality (Morgan and Piercy, 1998) and finally, sales (Dewsnapp and Jobber, 2000). There are also those studies that have not focused on dyadic relations, but rather, marketing as only one of many departments within a network of relationships (e.g. Hutt, 1995; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Menon *et al.*, 1997; Ruekert and Walker, 1987).

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between organisational characteristics, interdepartmental (marketing/HR) interactions and marketing strategy implementation effectiveness.

The model draws on previous related works in its focus on interdepartmental interactions. Jaworski and Kohli (1993), for example,

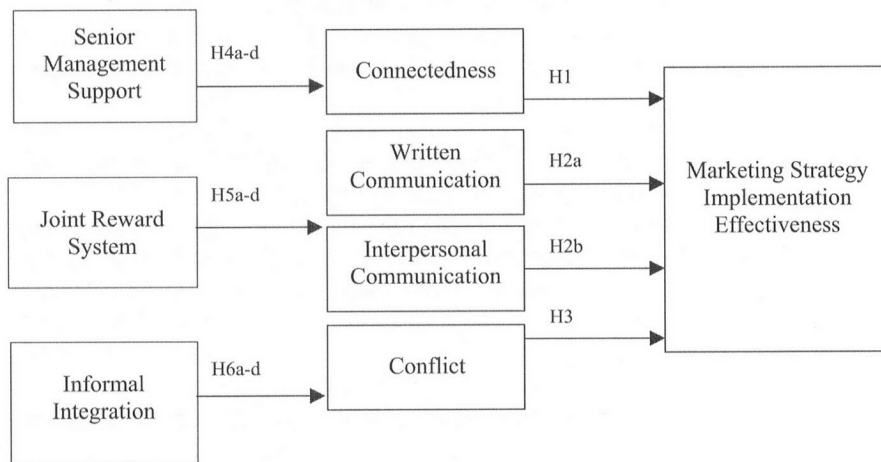


Figure 1. Marketing/HR interactions and marketing implementation: a conceptual model

examined interdepartmental dynamics (connectedness and conflict) within the context of market orientation. In a later study, Menon *et al.* (1997) considered the impact of interdepartmental interactions on product quality. Morgan and Piercy (1998) broadened the conceptualisation of interdepartmental dynamics to further encompass the variable communication frequency and examined the impact thereof on product quality. The product and marketing departments constituted the units of analysis.

This paper proposes that implementation effectiveness is influenced, positively, by the two aspects of interdepartmental dynamics, connectedness and communication frequency, and negatively, by conflict. These interdepartmental dynamics are in turn predicated on a set of organisational factors, namely senior management support, joint reward system and informal integration. The following sections focus on the conceptualisation of these variables as well as the rationale for which to expect relationships between them.

Interdepartmental interactions and marketing strategy implementation

Connectedness and communication. It is important to first, distinguish connectedness from the closely related construct communication as the lack of a distinction is a potential source of confusion. Morgan (1995) clarifies this conceptual ambiguity by expressing that connectedness may be seen as the degree of communication co-operation between departments, and communication as the frequency of information flows through defined, appropriate media. Communication and connectedness are therefore seen as representing two different dimensions of the level, process and context of communication co-ordination and information sharing between sub-units (Morgan, 1995, p. 213). It was mentioned that prior works (e.g. Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Menon *et al.*, 1997) focus only on connectedness and conflict. The focus here is on both connectedness and communication in keeping with Morgan (1995) and Morgan and Piercy (1998). There is no assumption that potential for communication (connectedness) necessarily equates to actual communication levels.

Connectedness and marketing implementation. Kohli and Jaworski (1990, p. 9) define interdepartmental connectedness as “the degree of formal and informal direct contact among employees across departments, referring to the extent to which individuals across departments are directly connected or networked”. In the operationalisation of this construct, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) identified its core aspects as the motivation of each party to communicate, the accessibility of staff in each area, and a “common language” that allows for communication effectiveness. This definition is reminiscent of and appears to be an elaboration of an earlier definition advanced by Johnston and Bonoma (1981). In a study examining the interaction patterns of members involved in the buying centre, Johnston and Bonoma (1981, p. 147) conceived of

connectedness as “the degree to which members of the buying centre are linked with each other by directed communications”.

Empirically, Barclay (1991) and Anderson and Narus (1990) found that connectedness, conceptualised in terms of dependence, lowered dysfunctional conflict as it is in the mutual interest of partners to collaborate. Deshpande and Zaltman (1982) established that connectedness facilitates interaction and exchange of information, while Menon *et al.* (1997) found interdepartmental connectedness to be important for product quality. It is therefore hypothesised that:

H1. The greater the interdepartmental connectedness, the more effective is marketing strategy implementation.

Communication and marketing implementation. In the organisational science literature communication has been described as the basic mechanism for handling interdependencies between subsystems within an organisation (Rogers and Argarwala-Rogers, 1976). In fact, organisations are conceptualised as information processing entities that must receive, process, and transmit information for survival (Rochford and Rudelius, 1992). Horizontal communication, that is, the lateral flow of communication occurring both within and between departments (Daft and Steers, 1986), has been highlighted for its crucial role in co-ordinating people and departments to facilitate the attainment of organizational goals (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993).

Moenaert and Souder (1990a, b), on the basis of Van de Ven and Ferry’s (1980) work, categorise communication media into two groupings: written and interpersonal. In a variation of this classification scheme Lengel and Daft (1988) classify communication media according to their potential to transmit “rich” information. Rich information is viewed as that which allows for feedback, facial cues, language variety and personalisation (Lengel and Daft, 1988; Mintzberg *et al.*, 1996). Interpersonal communication media satisfy these criteria with face-to-face conversation being the richest communication medium. Written communication, although considered “least rich”, has its merits, notably, high credibility, validity, and comprehensibility (Moenaert and Souder, 1990a, b).

As communication between marketing, R&D, engineering and manufacturing is associated with the effective performance of teams (Griffin and Hauser, 1992; Souder, 1980) and successful new products, it appears reasonable to forward that:

H2. The higher the frequency of (a) written communication and (b) interpersonal communication, the more effective the implementation of marketing strategies.

Conflict and marketing implementation. Conflict has been defined in the organisational science literature as the “collision of actors” (Katz and Kahn,

1978) and “tension between two or more social entities – individuals, groups or larger organisations - which arises from incompatibility of actual or desired responses” (Gaski, 1984). In the marketing literature, Menon *et al.* (1996) conceptualize conflict as “dysfunctional, task-based tension between department, which manifests in the form of ‘turf battles’ and ‘destructive self-serving efforts’ which are both counter to collaboration (Morgan and Piercy, 1998).

The deleterious consequences of conflict on organisational processes and marketing performance are well documented. Conflict can lower co-operation and the co-ordination of marketing strategy activities, effectively undermining the quality of marketing strategy in terms of both planning and implementation (Menon *et al.*, 1997; Ruekert and Walker, 1987). Conflict has been found to result in reduced inter-functional performance (Dutton and Walton, 1966; Souder, 1981; Weinrauch and Anderson, 1982) as it results in the absence of depth of communication and infrequency of contact between functional units (Menon *et al.*, 1997). There appears sufficient ground to propose that:

H3. The greater the degree of interdepartmental conflict, the lower the effectiveness of marketing strategy implementation.

Senior management support and interdepartmental interactions A number of studies suggest that successful interactions between functional groups depend on the extent to which senior management actively supports the value of interactions between functional groups (Dewsnapp and Jobber, 2000) and fosters “shared appreciations of interdependencies” (McCann and Galbraith, 1981, p. 68). Weinrauch and Anderson (1982, p. 299) observed that senior management’s efforts in instilling a collaborative culture resulted in greater inter-departmental collaboration, while Gupta and Govindarajan (1984) adopted a contingency approach and found perceptions of implementation effectiveness of various strategies to be associated with certain managerial characteristics. In a more recent contribution, Noble and Mokwa (1999, p. 66) specified a variable labelled as senior management support which they found to have a strong, albeit, indirect link implementation success through the mediating variables strategy commitment and role performance. The preceding discussion provides substantial grounds for proposing that:

H4. The more supportive senior management is, (a) the greater the level of connectedness, (b) the greater the frequency of interpersonal communication, (c) the greater the frequency of written communication and (d) the lower the level of interdepartmental conflict.

Joint reward system and interdepartmental interactions. In the strategy literature, Nutt (1986) highlights the potential role for rewards to reinforce

behaviors that enhance implementation prospects. Within the prescriptive marketing literature, reward systems have been posited as a complementary approach to the stimulation, better co-ordination and integration of marketing and other business functions (Wind, 1981, p. 262). Empirically, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) have examined how reward systems may be used effectively to generate and sustain behaviours consistent with an organisation's marketing orientation to help an organisation achieve its marketing and indeed broader strategic objectives.

Work into the use of reward systems in dyadic settings suggests that collaborative behaviours can be encouraged through reward systems that reflect the concerns of both parties as rewards emphasizing the separate performance of each department tend to constrain co-operative activity (Crittenden, 1992; Hutt, 1995; Ruckert and Walker, 1987; Walton and Dutton, 1969; Wind and Robertson, 1983). With specific reference to the marketing and R&D relationship, it has been observed that the use of joint reward systems enhanced co-operation as it encouraged both parties to share in success and failure. This is conceptually similar to what Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998) term "at-stakeness", that is, a situation where participants have equitable interests in implementing jointly developed agendas and feel equal stake in NPD related outcomes. High levels of "at-stakeness" are regarded as a key feature of effective cross-functional collaboration. It would therefore seem reasonable to expect that:

- H5. Joint reward systems are (a) positively related to connectedness, (b) positively related to interpersonal communication frequency (c) positively related to written communication frequency and (d) negatively related to conflict.

Informal integration and interdepartmental interactions. It has been noted that interaction between departments can be fostered not only within the realms of organisationally defined roles, but also through social, informal networking. Social networking refers to the activities undertaken to build and maintain links among people for various purposes (Yan and Louis, 1999). Barnard (1938) described the informal organisation as "any joint personal activity without conscious joint purpose, even though contributing to joint results" while other writers describe it as "a network of personal and social relations not established or required by the formal organisation but arising spontaneously as people associate with one another" (Koontz and Weihrich, 1990).

The importance of the informal organisation has been acknowledged (e.g. Dougherty, 1987; Ruckert and Walker, 1987; Shapiro, 1988). The rationale underlying this support for informal networking is that it is much easier for organisational members to seek help or to work jointly with other members that they know on a personal basis. Doney and Cannon (1997) observe that social settings provide an informal environment conducive to enhanced

information flow, building interpersonal relationships, and fostering better understanding of mutual needs. Griffin and Hauser (1992, p. 22) postulate that “developing informal cross-functional networks reduces the language, thought-world, and physical barriers to integration, allows more information to be communicated and used, enhances co-ordination and decision making, and reduces project uncertainty, leading to higher success...”. Galbraith and Nathanson (1978) and St John and Rue (1991) similarly found informal integration to encourage communication. On the basis of the literature reviewed, it appears reasonable to hypothesize that:

- H6. Informal integration is (a) positively related to connectedness, (b) positively related to interpersonal communication frequency, (c) positively related to written communication frequency and (d) negatively related to conflict.

Methodology

Sample and data collection

In order to test the research hypotheses, data were collected by way of a structured mail questionnaire. The key respondent was identified as the marketing manager at the strategic business unit (SBU) level across a range of UK service organisations. The SBU presented as the most appropriate level at which to collect data for a number of reasons. First, collecting data at the SBU level is consistent with earlier research efforts (e.g. Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Morgan and Piercy, 1998; Narver and Slater, 1990; Ruekert, 1992). Second, SBUs represent organisational units with a single defined business strategy and autonomous sales and profitability objectives (Lukas, 1999). Finally, that SBUs have autonomy over both marketing and human resources issues was central to the aims of the survey.

The services setting was deemed appropriate in response to a methodological limitation identified in the literature, namely, the bias of cross-functional research toward the study of, largely, marketing's relationships with technical units within manufacturing contexts. However, the interface of the marketing and “softer” disciplines such as HR provides an equally credible focus and constitutes a legitimate area for inquiry (Bowen and Schneider, 1988). This is reiterated by Zeithaml *et al.* (1985, p. 44) who have urged researchers to “think broadly about researchable issues” and stress the need for “marketing research to enter a new phase of empirical work that integrates various disciplines” and particularly the “need to cross the disciplinary boundary between human resources and marketing”. They also argue that the marketing/HR interface is particularly crucial to firms of a services nature. Finally, it has been observed that, “the services marketing literature tends to be characterised by empirical research within certain service industries and by conceptual work across service industries” Zeithaml *et al.* (1985, p. 44). It was therefore the intention to focus on a wide range of service

companies combined with geographical dispersion and a large data set in order to enhance the robustness and generalisability of findings. Thus, the study was set within the context of a wide range of UK service industries: hotel, airline, banking, insurance, financial services, telecommunications and travel services.

Having defined the selection criteria, the sample was derived from the *Financial Analysis Made Easy* database of UK companies. Initial contact was established with each company by means of a pre-notification letter informing the marketing managers of the study and requesting their participation. The questionnaire package consisted of a personalised cover letter on headed paper, a copy of the questionnaire and a self-addressed freepost envelope. Two weeks later, the package was sent out again to those who had not yet responded, this time with a reminder letter, instead. A final reminder was sent out after approximately three weeks. The response rate achieved of 31.2 per cent provided 230 usable questionnaires and compares favourably with other marketing studies undertaken in the UK. To test for non-response bias, the extrapolation method recommended by Armstrong and Overton (1977) was applied. This revealed no significant differences between early and late respondents across a range of constructs.

Measurement

All constructs were measured on a seven-point scale and had featured in other studies. To ensure face validity, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a number of both marketing and HR academics and managers. Following is a brief explication of the rationale informing the choice of approach in the operationalisation of each construct (see also Table I).

Senior management support was operationalised using items from scales developed by Saghafi *et al.* (1990) and Weinrauch and Anderson (1982). It captures the extent to which senior management is supportive of a collaborative working relationship between marketing and HR. It is measured on a seven-point scale with 1 denoting senior management's weak support and 7 indicating that senior management champions such an interdepartmental linkage.

Measures for joint reward system were adapted from the Song *et al.* (1997) study concerning marketing/R&D collaboration. These items collectively assess the extent to which the organisation has in place reward systems that reward marketing and HR people on the basis of joint involvement. On the seven-point scale, 1 indicates that reward systems are individualistic, and 7, that they are recognise co-operation.

Informal integration is a measure that has, surprisingly, little precedence within the marketing literature given the recognition of its importance (e.g. Dougherty, 1987; Ruekert and Walker, 1987). Informal interaction is conceptualized to refer to social interaction that takes place either within or outside the organization. It is operationalised on the basis of works by Doney

Table I.
Descriptive statistics,
reliabilities and
correlations

| Construct | Number of items | Mean | SD | Coefficient Alpha | X1 | X2 | X3 | X4 | X5 | X6 | X7 | X8 |
|---|--------------------|------|----|----------------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|-----|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Senior management support (X1) | 4 | | | 0.91 | 1.0 | | | | | | | |
| Joint reward system (X2) | 4 | | | 0.64 | 0.67** | 1.0 | | | | | | |
| Informal integration (X3) | 4 | | | 0.87 | 0.30** | 0.22** | 1.0 | | | | | |
| Connectedness (X4) | 5 | | | 0.66 | 0.22** | 0.21** | 0.38** | 1.0 | | | | |
| Interpersonal communication (X5) | 4 | | | 0.80 | 0.45** | 0.43** | 0.51** | 0.34** | 1.0 | | | |
| Written communication (X6) | 4 | | | 0.86 | 0.31** | 0.30** | 0.33** | 0.17** | 0.61** | 1.0 | | |
| Conflict (X7) | 5 | | | 0.77 | -0.19** | -0.26** | -0.12* | -0.37** | -0.19** | 0.07 | 1.0 | |
| Market strategy implementation effectiveness (X8) | 6 | | | 0.94 | 0.24** | 0.23** | 0.23** | 0.23** | 0.27** | 0.16** | -0.27** | 1.0 |

Notes: *Pearson correlations significant at the $p < 0.05$ level; **Pearson correlations significant at the $p < 0.01$ level

and Cannon (1997) and Shapiro (1988). While the work of Shapiro's (1988) suggestions provided a basis for operationalisation, some of the suggestions had to be modified to a great extent or altogether eliminated for purposes of the study. As the Shapiro (1988) study was developed within an American context it was decided that those social activities deemed appropriate within the American context were, perhaps, not entirely in keeping with British corporate context. The work of Hofstede (1983) in particular has been particularly useful in highlighting differences between national cultures. Measures that were eliminated pertained to activities such as weekend hiking trips, a bowling league, barbecues, picnics (Shapiro, 1988). Interviews with UK managers served to vindicate the exclusion of these items.

Conflict, connectedness and communication were both measured on a seven-point scale based on the operationalisation approach advanced by Jaworski and Kohli (1993). The perspective adopted in this study is that of interdepartmental conflict as dysfunctional task-based tension concerned with goal and action incompatibility (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Menon *et al.*, 1997; Morgan and Piercy, 1998). Connectedness was operationalised to capture accessibility of staff, existence of communication barriers, the ease of communication, and the potential for communication between the marketing and HR functions. The construct communication was operationalised to capture, at once, the frequency of communication as well as the media used in keeping with the works of Van de Ven and Ferry (1980), Moenaert and Souder (1990b) and Morgan (1995) and Morgan and Piercy (1998).

The items used in the operationalisation of marketing strategy implementation effectiveness were derived from the work of Miller (1997) and include the following aspects:

- completion, referring to the extent to which the decision was implemented within the anticipated time frame;
- achievement, denoting the extent to which the objectives of the plan are met; and
- acceptability, referring to the degree to which both the method of implementation and implementation outcomes are satisfactory to those involved in, or affected by, implementation.

With this latter dimension of the construct, Miller (1997) displays synonymy of thought with Piercy (1989), who stressed the importance of "perceived acceptability of the implemented strategy to the culture".

Findings and discussion

H1 positing a positive relationship between connectedness and implementation effectiveness is rejected ($\beta = 0.090$, ns). Presumably, this is because the construct connectedness gauges only the ease of and propensity for communication, which need not necessarily translate into actual levels of

communication. While the literature emphasises the efficacy of connectedness, it appears that it does not have as great a positive impact on organisational outcomes as anticipated. Similarly, Morgan and Piercy (1998) could only partially support their hypothesis concerning connectedness. They found that it had a significant positive impact only on quality outcomes but not on market performance nor financial performance (see Table II).

H2 receives partial support. *H2a* stating that greater written communication frequency is related to implementation effectiveness is rejected ($\beta = 0.074$, ns) and *H2b* linking interpersonal communication to implementation effectiveness is supported ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$). It is difficult to interpret this finding given the specificity of the variable and the lack of precedence within the literature. The marketing literature has generally tended to treat communication generically, not differentiating between the various forms. However, where there is measurement precision, studies (e.g. Moenaert and Souder, 1990a, b) have demonstrated that interpersonal communication is more effective than written communication and has a greater impact on organisational outcomes than written communication.

H3 concerning a negative link between conflict and implementation effectiveness is supported ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.01$). This result is congruent with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Menon *et al.*, 1996; Menon *et al.*, 1997; Morgan and Piercy, 1998) establishing the deleterious consequences of conflict on organisational processes and outcomes.

H4a positing a positive association between senior management support and connectedness is rejected ($\beta = 0.041$, ns). To reiterate, connectedness was measured to capture the extent to which marketing department members feel at ease with those of the HR department. It would appear reasonable to conclude that members are not likely to feel at ease with each other in their work roles in response to a management directive. *H4b* suggesting a link between senior management support and written communication frequency is rejected ($\beta = 0.13$, $t = 1.513$). Although not statistically significant, closer inspection reveals that the t -statistic, at 1.5, is marginally below the level of significance. *H4c* proposing an association between senior management support and interpersonal communication is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$). This would suggest that while senior management support is associated with greater interdepartmental communication, in general, it particularly has an impact on interpersonal communication. This finding complements the contemporary business press which, in extolling the virtues of a "paperless office environment", advocates a move away from bureaucracy and paperwork. *H4d* postulated that senior management support is negatively related to conflict. This hypothesis did not receive support ($\beta = 0.002$, ns). This suggests that where conflict between departmental members is due to deep-seated issues, then even senior management's encouraging of harmonious relations does not begin to alleviate conflict.

| Independent variables | Dependent variables | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| | Connectedness | Interpersonal communication | Written communication | Marketing strategy implementation effectiveness |
| <i>Antecedents</i> | | | | |
| Senior management support | ns | 0.20** | ns | - |
| Joint reward system | ns | 0.20** | 0.16* | - |
| Informal integration | 0.34*** | 0.40*** | 0.27*** | - |
| <i>Marketing/HR interactions</i> | | | | |
| Connectedness | - | - | - | ns |
| Interpersonal communication | - | - | - | 0.16* |
| Written communication | - | - | - | ns |
| Conflict | - | - | - | -0.21** |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.16 | 0.38 | 0.18 | 0.14 |
| F value | 14.50 | 47.09 | 16.40 | 8.68 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table II. Standardised regression coefficients: organisational characteristics, marketing/HR interactions and marketing strategy implementation effectiveness

H5a hypothesizing a positive link between joint reward system and connectedness is rejected ($\beta = 0.109$, ns). *H5c* suggesting that joint reward systems have a positive impact on interpersonal communication is supported ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$). The logic is reasonably straightforward; that where organisational members are rewarded on the basis of cooperation and joint effort, then they will communicate to this end as it is in their mutual interest to do so. However, financial incentives do not affect the extent to which they feel at ease with other. *H5b* suggesting that the use of joint reward systems is positively associated with written communication frequency is supported ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$). Again, here, as for *H5b*, the idea that members will collaborate if their reward system depends on it, is applicable. *H5d* suggesting that joint reward systems and conflict are negatively related is supported ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$). This finding highlights the capacity of joint reward systems to sustain desired behaviours and discouraging those that are detrimental to organisational functioning, such as conflict. This finding is very much in line with the key premises of the control literature.

H6a postulating a positive link between informal integration and connectedness was strongly supported ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). *H6b* linking informal integration to written communication is also supported ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$). The testing of *H6c* stipulating a positive link between informal integration and interpersonal communication was also supported and moreover, yielded the strongest relationship in the multiple regression model ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). This is perhaps inevitable given the interpersonal nature of both interpersonal communication and informal integration. These findings, interpreted in conjunction, support the expectation that when departmental members socially interact, they are more likely to feel at ease with each other and therefore communicate and consult each other within the organisation in their work roles. *H6d* advanced an inverse relationship between informal integration and conflict. Although the sign of the beta coefficient is in the anticipated direction, this hypothesis is rejected ($\beta = -0.069$, ns). It may be that informal social interaction which occurs at a perfunctory level is beneficial only where relations are amicable. Social interaction would not begin address deep-seated issues causing conflict.

Future research

A number of potential avenues for future inquiry emerge. The first issue that presents scope for further inquiry relates to joint reward systems. Unlike traditional systems, that are arguably myopic, predicated on the attainment of only financial goals, such as sales, this system is behaviour-based and fosters "good practice". In this study it was associated with enhanced communication flows and reduced conflict levels between the marketing and HR departments. There is, however, little research into this form of reward system. The literature that there is, is too "context-specific", examining the application of joint reward

systems to marketing and R&D teams in the NPD setting. Work positioned in other contexts would serve to validate the usefulness of such a reward system beyond the idiosyncracies of this dyad and thus allow for generalisability.

Another area worthy of further investigation pertains to informal integration or informal networking. There is surprisingly little empirical work that encompasses this variable given that social networks are acknowledged to enhance organisational processes. Future work should aim to develop more robust measures of this variable. It would appear that researchers have not treated this variable as it falls outside the realms of the formal organisation.

Current knowledge on intra-firm relationships would be enriched by more rigorous testing of the construct connectedness, which has had little application beyond the research stream on market orientation. Closer inspection of those studies in which it does feature (e.g. Morgan and Piercy, 1998) reveals that the variable does not have the anticipated positive impact on organisational processes and outcomes. Also, it would be useful if future research could test both connectedness and the related variable communication. In measuring communication behaviours, studies tend to measure only connectedness, presumably, on the basis of the assumption that connectedness, capturing the potential for communication, necessarily equates with communication frequency, that is, the actual levels of communication. Results reported in this study report to the contrary; that connectedness need not translate into actual communication, and conversely, that there need not be the potential for communication in order for people to actually communicate. Organisational members will communicate simply because they need to or due to some incentive, even if there is no propensity to communicate. Finally, it would be interesting if future research could delineate the circumstances under which potential to communicate translates into real communication.

Also, research needs to be more focused in its conceptualisation and operationalisation of the construct communication. Extant literature has tended to treat communication generically and in so doing fails to capture the impact of each form of communication. As was seen in the findings reported in this paper, written communication and interpersonal communication behave differently when both modeled as precursors of marketing implementation, and are also affected differently by the antecedent variables. Thus, measurement precision is important, especially given that guidelines for managers stem from these findings. A practicing manager, keen to build effective inter-functional relationships, would need to take cognizance of the conditions in which to encourage written communication and those under which interpersonal communication is more appropriate.

Finally, future work could also further develop the theme of collaboration. In the absence of any work focusing on the marketing/HR dyad, this paper sought to examine only interactions patterns between the two departments. It would

be interesting to gauge the extent to which marketing and HR departments actually collaborate, that is, actively work together, on a range of HR related issues that affect marketing personnel's ability to effectively implement marketing strategies. Kotler (1991, p. 71) forwarded that the two departments should be characterised by closer collaboration as "the marketing department's effectiveness depends ... on how well its personnel are selected, trained, directed, motivated and evaluated". Thus, still, a number of questions remain unanswered. For instance: to what extent does marketing work together with HR in the recruitment and selection of new staff, to what extent is marketing involved in training programmes and to what extent does marketing help HR tailor incentive schemes to desired marketing outcomes? Finally, what are the antecedents of effective collaboration and does collaboration lead to enhanced marketing implementation?

Managerial implications

The two aspects of marketing/HR interactions that were found to directly impact on implementation effectiveness are conflict, negatively, and interpersonal communication, positively (see Figure 2). In turn, a number of organisational characteristics were identified as impacting on these two variables. Joint reward systems were seen to alleviate conflict levels while senior management support, joint reward systems and informal integration all had a strong and positive impact on interpersonal communication. An obvious implication of these findings for management is that it may be possible to improve marketing effectiveness through the orchestration of organisational systems and structures.

It was seen that informal integration has a very strong and positive impact on interpersonal communication. Given that communication is, arguably, one of the most important organisational process (Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, 1976) with some writers even conceptualising organisations in terms of information processing entities, this finding has important implications for management. This finding underlines the salience of social interaction. Here, managers have a role to play in encouraging departmental members to integrate on a social level and can, for example, initiate social events or even periodically finance cross-functional social functions (Shapiro, 1988). Because informal integration falls outside the formal organisation, there may be a tendency for managers not to devote attention to it. While the development of informal networks cannot be managed through formal processes, the role of

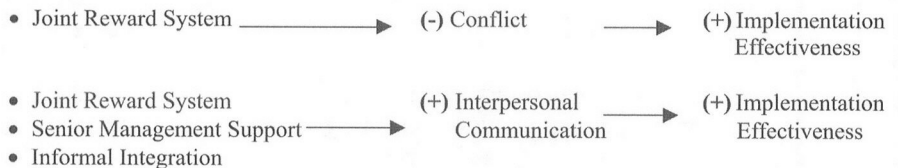


Figure 2.
Summary of key findings

managers in providing opportunities for organisational members to interact socially is recognised (Griffin and Hauser, 1996).

Finally, there may be advantages in implementing reward systems based on joint efforts across departments as they inherently encourage teamwork. Traditionally, managers have implemented individualistic reward systems based on financial criteria such as sales and profit. This approach has been criticised for being parochial and fostering a short term perspective. This study found support for the hypothesis that joint reward systems are negatively related to conflict and positively to interpersonal communication. A number of organisational theorists (e.g. Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967) have noted the centrality of co-operation to effective organisational functioning.

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Appendix

| Construct | Source | α |
|--|------------------------------|----------|
| <i>Senior management support</i> | | |
| Senior management commits resources to facilitate joint planning and interactions between marketing and HR. | Saghafi <i>et al.</i> (1990) | 0.91 |
| Senior management pushes for stronger links between marketing and HR | Saghafi <i>et al.</i> (1990) | |
| Senior management promotes improved communication between the marketing and HR departments | Saghafi <i>et al.</i> (1990) | |
| Senior management provides opportunities for the marketing and HR managers to know and understand each other | Saghafi <i>et al.</i> (1990) | |
| <i>Informal integration</i> | | |
| Participation in interdepartmental social events | Shapiro (1988) | 0.87 |
| Meet away from the work place | Doney and Cannon (1997) | |
| Talk about common interest besides work | Doney and Cannon (1997) | |
| Meet over lunch or dinner | Doney and Cannon (1997) | |
| <i>Joint reward system</i> | | |
| Formal evaluation criteria for collaboration exist | Song <i>et al.</i> (1997) | 0.64 |
| The marketing and HR functions share equally in the rewards from a well implemented market strategy | Song <i>et al.</i> (1997) | |

(continued) **Table AI.**
Measures and items

| Construct | Source | α |
|--|--------------------------------|----------|
| Senior management promotes interdepartmental loyalty over departmental loyalty | Song <i>et al.</i> (1997) | |
| Marketing managers' evaluations are based on joint performance with HR managers | Song <i>et al.</i> (1997) | |
| <i>Connectedness</i> | | 0.66 |
| Members of one department feel comfortable phoning members of the other | Jaworski and Kohli (1993) | |
| Members of one department are easily accessible to the other | Jaworski and Kohli (1993) | |
| The marketing and HR people here talk "different languages" which makes it difficult to communicate | Barclay (1991) | |
| Both departments volunteer information and ideas which they feel affect the other | Barclay (1991) | |
| Individuals in one department will only contact someone in the other when it is strictly necessary | Morgan (1995) | |
| <i>Written communication</i> | | |
| Forms | Van de Ven and Ferry (1980) | 0.86 |
| Reports | Van de Ven and Ferry (1980) | |
| Memos | Van de Ven and Ferry (1980) | |
| Fax material | Van de Ven and Ferry (1980) | |
| <i>Interpersonal communication</i> | | |
| Electronic mail | Moenaert and Souder (1990a, b) | 0.80 |
| Individual face-to-face contact | Van de Ven and Ferry (1980) | |
| Meetings between teams | Van de Ven and Ferry (1980) | |
| Telephone calls | Moenaert and Souder (1990a, b) | |
| <i>Conflict</i> | | 0.77 |
| When members of the marketing and HR departments get together, tensions frequently run high | Jaworski and Kohli (1993) | |
| There is often tension over the specific terms of the working relationship between the marketing and HR departments | Van de Ven and Ferry (1980) | |
| The objectives pursued by the marketing department are often incompatible with those of the HR department | Jaworski and Kohli (1993) | |
| Members of the marketing and HR departments feel that the goals of their respective departments are in harmony with each other | Jaworski and Kohli (1993) | |
| Protecting one's departmental turf is considered a way of life in this business unit | Jaworski and Kohli (1993) | |
| <i>Marketing strategy implementation effectiveness</i> | | 0.94 |
| Overall, marketing strategies are implemented | Miller (1997) | |
| Marketing strategies are implemented within the anticipated time frame | Miller (1997) | |
| Marketing objectives are met | Miller (1997) | |
| The methods of implementation are satisfactory to those involved | Miller (1997) | |
| Implementation outcomes are satisfactory to those involved | Miller (1997) | |
| Marketing strategies are implemented as intended | Miller (1997) | |

Table AI.