

Communication Strategy aimed at Strengthening the Presence of Training Providers on the Labor Market of the South-East Region

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Abstract

Deming emphasizes that professional training is not only performed by organizing training sessions for staff or users. Professional training should be organized so that the employee learns how to optimally carry out an activity within the culture of the organization to which he belongs. When considering adult education, communication and participation are of paramount importance. Making and implementing the right managerial decisions are inconceivable without perfect communication between the manager and the rest of the members of the organization, and between the internal and the external environment. The promotion activity includes a wide variety of types and modes of manifestation, in terms of content, role and form of achievement. By implementing the continuous training system within the framework of the training / education / public organizations, it is possible to develop a human resource training plan with the use of minimal (time and personnel) resources, carry out an evaluation of the economic, financial and social results of the training programs, and to have permanent control of the established budget, so that it can be a valuable tool for the management of the Romanian organizations.

Keywords: Communication strategies, Strategy training, service management, service quality.

JEL classification: I25, I28, M31, M53, Z18.

1. Introduction

When considering adult education, communication and participation are of paramount importance. Making managerial decisions and implementing them in the right way are inconceivable without perfect communication between the manager and the rest of the members of the organization, and between all those involved and the external environment. The promotion activity includes a great variety of types and modes of manifestation, in terms of content, role and form of achievement, so that we meet classifications according to various criteria: the content and form of promotional actions; their recipients; the immediate purpose; the nature of the communication channel. Occupational structure within 2016-2030, detailed by occupation categories, will go through the following percentage changes in Romania:

Table 1 Relative change of employment, at the level of Romania, in the period 2016-2030, by occupation categories

Occupation	Realistic change
Officials	11.7
Managers	-1.95
Specialists with intellectual and scientific occupations	29.78
Operational workers in services and trade	20.05

Source: Cedefop

2. Methods

The research was based mainly on quantitative methods, the area of investigation focused on issues that were found, in the form of questions, in questionnaires sent to institutions but also through documentary analysis, interview, case study, multicriteria comparative analysis. The documentary analysis included both specialized publications, studies and research in the field, as well as normative acts, relevant documents issued by institutions and authorities in Romania or at European level, other documents issued by relevant entities.

From the quantitative analysis conducted among employees and employers in the southeast region, a sample of 87 providers of continuing education with 335 training programs and interviews with local actors show that there are obstacles in knowing the labor market and the need for training, local economic strategies are missing; The involvement of local decision-makers is more declarative than effective and there is a tendency to shift responsibility to higher levels of decision-making; The image of the labor market and, in particular, of vocational training is unclear; Communication between political, economic and social actors, between the public and private sectors, in all areas, including in the field of vocational training, is deficient and local cooperation resources are not valued; lack of communication between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, CNFPA, trade unions, employers and between the provider and the authorization commission, inadequate monitoring of vocational training programs, lack of correlation, training with the real needs of the labor market (especially for graduates) . The promotional activity is carried out by the contact staff, advertising having a smaller role, often restricted due to lack of funds (see tab. No. 2 and tab. No. 3).

Table 2. Opinion on available sources of information

	Total weight (%)
Extern	51,72
Intern	48,28

Table 3. Share of media used by respondents

	Total weight (%)
TV	6,17
Radio	20,99
Press	67,90
Talks with friends, relatives	4,94

The main function of communication in education is to facilitate a correct and effective exchange of values, goods and services between the continuous training institution and the community. However, it is important for the institution to carry out a correct segmentation of the market in order to obtain the necessary information, in a clear form and at the right time. If these aspects are neglected, the marketing mix will be incorrectly designed and applied. Therefore, it is very important for each institution to use the marketing tools to study the market and know its requirements, to be able to provide the most important goods and services, to

communicate the information the customers need in order to get adequate knowledge of the offer.

Through promotional activity, the training institution obtains a visual market identity. It is supposed to inform its customers about all the activities they carry out and the services they provide. Within the structure of promotional activities, a significant place is held by print advertising, free advertising (especially oral) or public relations, service promotion, promotional events, image promotion, direct marketing, marketing events, use of brands, sales forces.

Promotion refers to those official or unofficial statements submitted by the educational institution. Through the promotional activity carried out, the educational institutions obtain a visual market identity, informing the clients about all the activities they carry out and the offer of services they provide. In the structure of promotional activities, a significant place is occupied by print advertising, but also free advertising (especially that expressed orally) or public relations. Particularly frequently, a series of actions are used to cultivate an attitude of pride to all those who graduated from a certain educational institution, by establishing associations of graduates, by establishing the habit of organizing the review of graduate promotions, issuing jubilee plaques, etc. Among the specific actions are the organization of symposia, scientific communication sessions, etc. The most used forms of communication are public relations and advertising.

Usually, the communication strategy used by educational institutions is based on promoting the global image permanently, offensively, undifferentiated and, as far as possible, with their own forces. In particular cases, especially in the case of launching new products, strategic alternatives can take the form of an exclusive product promotion, intermittently, possibly through specialized institutions. The purpose of public relations is to form, maintain or change the public's attitude towards the educational institution. To accomplish this mission, the public relations person, department, or institution must be able not only to identify the target audience, but also to measure the images and attitudes that may influence that audience in order to accurately define the required budget. Public relations specialists must demonstrate excellent communication skills, the ability to write materials and communicate through modern systems, as well as direct contact with target people or institutions.

As a rule, the communication strategy used by the educational institutions is based on the constant, aggressive, undifferentiated promotion of the global image, performed as far as possible by internal means. In the case of the launch of adult training projects, the strategic alternatives may take the form of an exclusive promotion of the product / project, which is performed intermittently, possibly through specialized institutions.

By comparing what happens with companies to what happens with educational institutions, several particular aspects of using promotional communication in educational marketing may be pointed out:

- the educational institutions place greater emphasis, compared to the companies, on the personalized relations than on mass communication;
- the educational institutions use, in comparison with the enterprises, less expensive forms of communication;
- the educational institutions avoid the communication means with a too obvious commercial character.

In schools' public relations are used to a large extent, cultivating a favorable attitude among those population groups that can support them or favorably influence the organization's work: underwriters, the media, opinion leaders and prescribers, some target groups, etc.

The activity of the training institution is, especially in small localities, aimed at the whole community and the manner in which it is perceived is extremely important. Even if the image

is the basic result of the activity of the institutions, we cannot neglect aspects related to techniques of promoting any service in a competitive market where the providers of private professional training services are particularly dynamic.

Private competitors have much easier access to funds that lead to extremely large course budgets, with performance indicators well below those that public education institutions have, being forced to do more and better so that the image of professional training services could improve. Advertising is the compulsory condition for the sale of any product and training services are no exception.

An important place is also held by the free publicity that these organizations benefit from, due to both the mass media interest for the educational problems, and the public relations actions directed to the mass media representatives. On the contrary, certain traditional promotional formulas - in particular, those that use the corporeal components (form, packaging) and incorporeal components (brand, price) of the product, such as using brands and / or promoting sales through temporary price cuts - are quite rarely present in the activity of these organizations, the motivation being related not only to the predominantly intangible character of the activity carried out, but also to the desire to distance themselves from events with a too obvious commercial character, which could have negative consequences on the image.

At the level of the educational institution, the existence of the "spokesperson" has improved the relationship with the media, but the message must also reach the less accessible areas, such as the rural areas. To do so, apart from the compulsory display panels in any work place, with a distinct area for vocational training services, the relationship with the local media is essential, the more so since, most of the times, it is free because it responds to its commercial needs to sell its products. There are cases when the messages related to needed to enroll in, start, or graduate school courses arrive faster and cheaper through the local media announcements. Also, those authorized to deal with the media must have regular meetings to get the attention of the clients. Communication with the identified market segments is an essential task during and after market analysis. The purpose of the communication may be information, but also manipulation, making a decision or obtaining feedback from the client.

The purpose of public relations is to form, maintain or change public attitude towards the educational institution. To complete this mission, the person, department or institution in charge of public relations must be able to not only identify the target audience, but also to measure the images and attitudes that can influence that particular public in order to be able to accurately define the budget required. Specialists in public relations must demonstrate excellent communication skills, ability to write materials and communicate through modern systems, as well as direct contact with the target persons or institutions.

The public relations of the institution involve many types of activities:

- writing and editing messages, press releases, press, radio and television news, letters, announcements, talks, activity reports, newsletters.

- maintaining the contact with the press, contacting journalists, placing materials in the press, facilitating the connection between journalists and managers or trainers, identifying the categories of public that are involved in school, collecting information inside and outside the organization on the opinion of the different public categories, etc.;

- Management activities, counselling, organizing special events, public speaking, lobbying, etc.

In conditions of strong competition, the communication between the institution and the client becomes a decisive success factor, as there is displacement of the traditional communication activity focus towards the dialogue with the client. Push and pull communication is expected, as a positive influence on the decision of the choice of potential

clients is attempted, as well as direct communication because there must be a dialogue between the school and the potential trainers; dialogue is possible because the need for client interaction and self-fulfillment is met by providing information and interactions in the most diverse media expressions. The challenge for the institution lies in integrating and correlating the new tools oriented to dialogue and interaction with the communication mix existing in the adult training institution.

Unit slogans, central messages, arguments and key images are used as common threads. We will have to check to what extent each instrument is fit for its purpose and if the two are compatible. The purpose of the integration among the clients is the personalized approach of each client in the different phases of the life cycle. For example, there will be communication measures that respond to the purpose of informing and initiating a dialogue, or communication tools that are oriented towards customer loyalty (Matis, 2019).

It may be said that the communication objectives are in the service of the marketing objectives which in turn are subordinated to the objectives of the overall policy of the organization. It should be noted that the objectives regarding the image of the products and the organization were at the center of the concerns.

Advertising is the main activity of a promotional nature, being considered the "nerve of communication policy of the company" (Sylvere, 1983) and defined by (Bruhn 1999) as "a special form of mass communication, which, through the chosen means of communication, is addressed to target groups specific to the enterprise, in order to achieve its communication goals."

The basic tools used by the organization in relation to the media are: presentation materials, press release, press conferences, news, articles and interviews for print media, and radio and television broadcasts.

Among the presentation materials we find in the activity of the school, especially in the case of European funded projects, there are: brochures, presentation leaflets, leaflets, the organization's newsletter, the organization's bulletin, journals, the final report.

Sales promotion is defined as a set of techniques by which the customer is stimulated to purchase the product and the service providers are mobilized to become more efficient. The most common means of promoting sales are the price cuts, through which the company aims to attract new customers, increase the frequency of purchases.

The forms that price cuts may take are the following:

- special offers - when the services are distributed at reduced rates only around or during the development of special events;
- group sales: "assorted" sales, grouping several different services in one package and selling them at a global price lower than the sum of the costs of individual services;
- "multipack" sales, the offer is presented in the form of a service package of the same kind, the global price being digressive in relation to the volume of services, which is ensured by practicing a regressive tariff per unit of service.
- definitive reductions, are based on large cost reductions.

Informing the general public about destinations, products and services can also be done by organizing seminars, conferences or workshops, which, in a short time and with relatively small funds, a large number of people can be informed.

Another means of promoting sales is also the advertising at the place of sale, which is performed through posters, panels, banners, displays or electronic materials (DVDs, CDs), in order to attract, orientate and direct the interest of consumers in a particular service. The advantage of this method of promotion is the fact that, immediately after a service catches the eye of a customer, it can be purchased.

All this is the result of the fact that the use of the sales force, in the process of the promotional communication, grants a number of advantages, one of them being the fact that the communicative message is conveyed in a much simpler manner and it is better adapted to the information needs, the wishes and reactions of the customers, and, more often than not, it is transmitted exactly to the one to whom it is intended (the target segment).

Another advantage of the use of the sales forces in the communication process is their ability to monitor the progress of this process, as well as its effects in terms of sales (Balaure, 1999). The involvement of the sales personnel in the activity of promoting tourism companies is so great that they manage to personify a whole series of attributes that bear the image of the organization, becoming even part of the brand of the company they work for.

Communication via supports customers, as well as people who in one way or another have become aware of the company or its services. Although such a communication medium is difficult to control, its existence raises distinct problems about the way in which information is received by the public, and consequently on the way in which the other promotional activities are carried out (Olteanu, 2006).

Direct marketing uses direct marketing techniques that allow capitalization on the numerous and inexpensive human resources available (students, learners), while emphasizing the personalized character of the concern for the problems of different target groups.

The increasing scope that this type of promotion acquires is explained by a series of advantages that it offers, almost exclusively: it is fun and comfortable, it saves time, it establishes a continuous relationship with the customers, the strategy used is less visible to competitors, it allows the quantification of the responses (and therefore the efficiency) of the campaigns carried out. Direct marketing, used by adult training companies, uses mailing - mail advertising or mail order, it involves sending personalized (or not) letters, leaflets, flyers, etc.

One cannot discuss the forms of direct marketing without mentioning the basic tool used by this form of promotion, namely the database, which is, in fact, a structured set of comprehensive information, about individuals and companies that can be consulted at any time, in order for the organizations to make decisions regarding the products, targets, promotion and dissemination of their products.

For database use to be effective, it must be built on a homogeneous community, be recent (updated), be made up of actual and potential buyers, contain as much identifying data as possible. These can be built by the company itself or can be rented or bought from companies that own databases (population records offices, research institutes, statistics, etc.).

Recent technological developments, which are also being used in Romania, have promoted a new tool used by direct marketing companies, i.e. online marketing. By means of this new tool, two categories of objectives can be attained: image and sales-related objectives.

The stages of applying direct marketing by training companies:

- establishing a schedule of staff visits to the headquarters of the economic agents, potential employers, for finding vacancies and job analysis;
- contacting employers by phone;
- organizing "round table" direct meetings with economic agents from a certain field of activity where there is a clear shortage of labor force: establishing the field of activity, establishing the topic, date, time and place of the activity, contacting the economic agents from the respective fields of activity, implementing the activity, assessing its results.

The expected feedback aids in retrieving essential and precise information regarding the impact of the forms of promotion on the market and professional training. Databases are thus created, and periodic monitoring is instituted. The indicators whereby the promotion impact on demand can be quantified are: for direct marketing (number of economic agents visited, number of jobs found, number of economic agents contacted by telephone, number of round

tables / meetings held, number of participants in the round tables), for advertising (number of press releases, media types used, number of leaflets / brochures / posters / posters / banners), for public relations (number of signed partnerships, number of implemented / on-going partnerships).

The indicators by which the impact of the promotion on the offer can be quantified are: for advertising (number of press releases regarding the number of students grouped by gender, age, professional training, types of media used, number of leaflets / brochures / posters / posters / banners), for public relations (number of round tables, meetings with representatives of other institutions that are connected to the issue of employment and vocational training, number of persons participating in round tables, number of persons employed, number of persons enrolled in vocational training programs), for direct marketing (number of participants attending meetings, round tables).

Following the analysis of these indicators, the types of promotional means used can be changed or improved. The main index that measures the market reaction or response is the number of clients (economic agents, jobseekers, etc.).

Regardless of the nature of the promotional activity, the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the forms of promotion used, their action over time, the economic effects that they have, the organizations must permanently take into account their complementary character. An active and efficient marketing strategy presupposes their use in a unitary framework, incorporated in a well-defined and operational promotional strategy, capable of contributing to the organization's objectives.

Results

One of the factors that influence the accurate foundation of promotional strategies is the nature of the information available for this purpose. This information can be of two types, respectively:

General information:

- the advertising means that can be used for a certain market and their accessibility (radio and television stations covering the geographical area of the market in question; newspapers, magazines, special publications that are broadcast in the respective area, telephone networks and their accessibility); the promotional events that will be organized during the period covered by the promotional strategy (exhibitions, fairs, etc.), the requirements and the cost of participation in these actions; the possibilities of editing special media : catalogues, leaflets, bulletins, brochures, notebooks, calendars

Special Information:

- the services of the school / training institution and their success elements (qualitative characteristics, brand, etc.); forecasting of the educational demand , educational supply, prices (tariffs); the position of the competition on the educational market: the market share held by the main competitors, the characteristics of the competition supply, promotional activities carried out by the competitors; promotional expenses incurred by the institution, their structure and the effects obtained previously; the image of the clients (actual or potential students) about the institution and its educational offer;

The personnel of the training companies must be aware that the services they provide are perceived by the clients through their attributes (promptness, professionalism, politeness, transparency) and contracted for the advantages they offer. They should be aware that all the marketing tools used are not for an isolated service but for a sum of services that includes all the associated elements, the whole environment. In addition, the competition from service providers is increasing. The consequence is the rapid increase of the competitiveness in the field of adult training, so that attracting a loyal clientage becomes decisive.

The communication coordination policies and decisions are made to a large extent when the organization is in the initial stage and must create a type of communication specific to the resource company. However, there are other circumstances when managers have to make decisions on the communication and coordination policy in order to change one or more specific communication resource companies, for example in cases of repositioning the brand and overcoming the reputation crisis.

The marketing strategy approached by educational institutions aims at:

1. Increasing the number of pupils / students through the intensive use of internal means of communication and especially of external media;
2. Intensifying the collaboration relations with the media and developing a pro-active attitude on strengthening these relations;
3. Development of collaboration relations with companies / advertising agencies;
4. Development of applied scientific research (practice base for pupils / students and services for society) in order to increase the role of the school beyond the limits of the campus;
5. Development of working tools in order to achieve a communication policy: newspaper, radio station, TV, web page;
6. Strengthening the local, regional, national or international role of the institutions.

Only in this way does the management of training institutions consider that it will be able to ensure the increase of sensitivity to the dynamics of the education market. Clients pay tuition fees, opt for one institution or another after exposure to advertising campaigns of these institutions, choose one area or another depending on their usefulness, claim a certain quality of services received, which if they do not receive, can give up to the services of the institution and opt for market competition. A marketing policy, sometimes even aggressive, is the solution for an educational institution to be known by both customers and funders. Communication with the identified market segments is an essential task during and after the market analysis. The purpose of communication can be to inform, but also to manipulate, to choose a decision or to obtain feedback from the client.

These situations usually involve changes in the positioning expressions of an organization and decisions to coordinate the necessary policies, for example, aimed at:

- redefining common starting points / thematic messages, thus adapting them to basic themes around which an organization can concentrate its actions and distinctiveness;
- restoring common process rules to stimulate bidirectional communication and dialogue with internal and external stakeholders, enabling the organization in question to adapt to environmental changes;
- necessity to enhance the emotional appeal in order to allow an organization to be perceived as transparent and coherent (by keeping organizational purpose, values and beliefs in line with the employees, managers and the CEO behaviour);
- rethinking storytelling and / or codes of corporate conduct in order to convey the statements and behaviour of a more credible and transparent organization in certain situations.

At the same time, practitioners are frequently focused on allocation and coordination decisions regarding the best use of a company's communication resources. Such decisions can be useful in a variety of different ways to increase the visibility of communication initiatives. This would involve a quite different use of company-specific communication resources. For example, an unusual or alternative way of using the corporate blog might be an appropriate type of allocation decision.

References to the history of the organization are another case in point. Such references can be important manifestations of corporate identity and "may be especially valuable for corporate communications, because of the reliability that age can offer" (Blombäck and Brunninge, 2009). Communication managers could make allocation decisions that involve the

selective use of corporate history to legitimize ideas about the distinctiveness of an organization (Schulze 1987; Blombäck and Brunninge 2009). This technique specifically allows aspects of the history of the organization that managers want to highlight within companies, which is a type of communication that needs to be emphasized from time to time (Lundström, 2006).

The data we obtained from the research and education statistics in various European countries showed that public relations are not normally studied from a scientific point of view. In addition, scientific journals rarely contain articles by European researchers. While this may be partly due to translation difficulties, we consider that part of the reason is also the lack of good research. It is obvious that in European countries it is common practice, and science is not very interested in the development of public relations theory. The country reports drawn up by our participants made it clear that the picture is the same when it comes to education; researchers and educators do not exactly form a critical mass. Clearly, public relations have yet to develop as a large area of research or teaching. This may be due to cultural and theoretical differences or approaches to the theoretical field. Another factor, we believe, may be the lack of public relations identity as an interesting scientific activity (Siano A. 2013).

Conclusion

The first conclusion, and perhaps the most important, of the research undertaken, is the major disinterest of the institutions to answer the questionnaires submitted.

In media advertisements, as well as on web pages, institutions are more concerned with illustrating educational spaces and less with highlighting the particularities or benefits of the offers themselves or the opportunities that training provides from the perspective of labor market integration and career development. Only occasionally do explanations appear about the job prospects in the field offered.

The second significant conclusion that emerges from this study is the reorganization of the educational market by fields of training, by prestigious centers or institutions, but also by the polarization of the candidates' option.

Without the existence of an own development strategy, based on an internal audit correlated with a coherent analysis of the external environment, and the pursuit of the results according to the defined indicators, one cannot speak of marketing strategies, but only of common or “fashionable” ways”. For the presentation of the faculties.

After studying the answers and searching for a description of the domain characteristics, we grouped all statements and ideas into four aspects: reflective, managerial, operational, and educational, as follows:

Reflective: to analyse changing standards and values and standpoints in society and discuss these with members of the organization, in order to adjust these standards and values / standpoints of the organization accordingly. This role is concerned with organizational standards, values and views and aimed at the development of mission and organizational strategies.

Managerial: to develop plans to communicate and maintain relationships with public groups, in order to gain public trust and / or mutual understanding. This role is concerned with commercial and other (internal and external) public groups and with public opinion as a whole, and is aimed at the execution of the organizational mission and strategies.

Operational: to prepare means of communication for the organization (and its members) in order to help the organization formulate its communications. This role is concerned with services and is aimed at the execution of the communication plans developed by others.

Educational: to help all members of the organization become communicatively competent, in order to respond to societal demands. This role is concerned with the mentality and behaviour of the members of the organization and aimed at internal public groups.

Communicating and creating the image of the educational institution on the market - through public relations and advertising - in marketing strategies is a very important objective, because it contributes fundamentally to increasing the number of requests for specific services provided, but also their perceived quality. The communication, within the analysis and research systems undertaken by the educational institution, allows the collection of information and their subsequent use in the processes of optimization or transformation of educational offers according to market requirements.

The call for these common promotion tools is due to the fact that faculties need many students only to be able to cover the budget deficit generated by inflation or salary increases of certain categories of teachers and not as a result of special development or development strategies. increase the quality of services provided. Very few resorts to other methods, and these are related to the specifics of the faculty. In these cases, ways of promoting and marketing are chosen depending on the profile of the faculties and the specific environment in which they carry out their activities, which proves the lack of specialists to deal with marketing activity, limits of thinking in developing policies. and own tools, but also to appreciate the benefits they could have.

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