Developing Marketing and Communication

Case Tampere Chamber of Commerce and Industry

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to provide the customer, Tampere Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with knowledge about the current state of their marketing and communication, and an insight to what aspects of communication should be developed and how.

Prior to this research there was very little information on what the employees, other key people and stakeholders thought about the current state of communication and marketing in the organization. It was necessary to collect matter-of-fact data and opinions on all factors relating to marketing and communication.

Tampere CCI has taken steps towards more functional communication by hiring a person responsible of marketing and communications. This research is a result of a need to develop all aspects of communication as pointed out by the hired employee.

Research interviews and an online questionnaire were used as research methods, and these research methods represented both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Combining the broad numerical data from quantitative research and the detailed data from the qualitative research helps to better understand the research problem, while ensuring the most comprehensive approach.

There were ten research interviews carried out, five of the interviewees being employees of Tampere CCI, and 5 of them board members. The online questionnaire was sent to 581 recipients, of which 130 replied.

The research process resulted in finding the aspects of communication that were either problematic or lacking. In addition several ideas for development were presented.

This work enables Tampere CCI to start planning how communication and marketing could be developed in order to achieve better results. Tampere CCI is now able to create marketing and communication that will yield improved relations with all individuals and companies involved, while at the same time providing a more desired and fruitful company image.

This research is confidential, and thus chapters 4, 5 and the Appendices are not available for public reading.

Keywords: Communication, interviewing, developing

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1 INTRODUCTION

Tampere Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Tampere CCI) had the need to gain knowledge about the current state of their marketing and communications, and they also required insight as to what aspects of communication should be developed.

Prior to this research there was very little information on how the employees, other key people and stakeholders conceived the current state of communication and marketing in the organization. Tampere CCI has taken steps towards more functional and goal oriented communication by hiring a person to be responsible of communications. This research is a result of the need to develop all aspects of communication.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the process. Using two different methods increases the challenge, but also gives more comprehensive data to analyze and to draw conclusions on.

The practical part of this final thesis was started in February 2010 by first planning and then conducting and analyzing the results of the research interviews. Altogether there were ten interviews conducted.

The interview covered the main tasks of communication activities in Tampere CCI. Tasks of communication were divided into four categories and the interviewees were asked to evaluate the communication from these four aspects. The interviews also included discussion about Tampere CCI's brand identity and visibility in media.

The online questionnaire was created by using a questionnaire software called Digium. The questionnaire was sent to 581 recipients. The questionnaire was open for one week, and 130 replies were received. The online questionnaire was sent to 307 trustees, i.e. persons that represent the member companies' management and are also active in the Tampere CCI activities. Twelve of the recipients were Tampere CCI employees, and the rest were member companies of Tampere CCI.

The online questionnaire covered the organization's marketing material and communications elements in more detail.

This final thesis will cover the basic theories involved in successful research interviews. Also the concepts of qualitative and quantitative research will be covered.

2 THEORIES AND MAIN CONCEPTS

2.1 Four key elements of communication

According to the theory of profit driven communication the tasks of communication are divided into four categories (Åberg, 2000.). The categories are supporting of basic organizational functions, bonding, profiling, and informing. These categories vary from one another in their frequency of implementation and their main direction of influence; for example one action can be daily and routine that reflects both outside and in, but another may be planned and only directed outside the organization. These differences can be seen in figure 1 below.

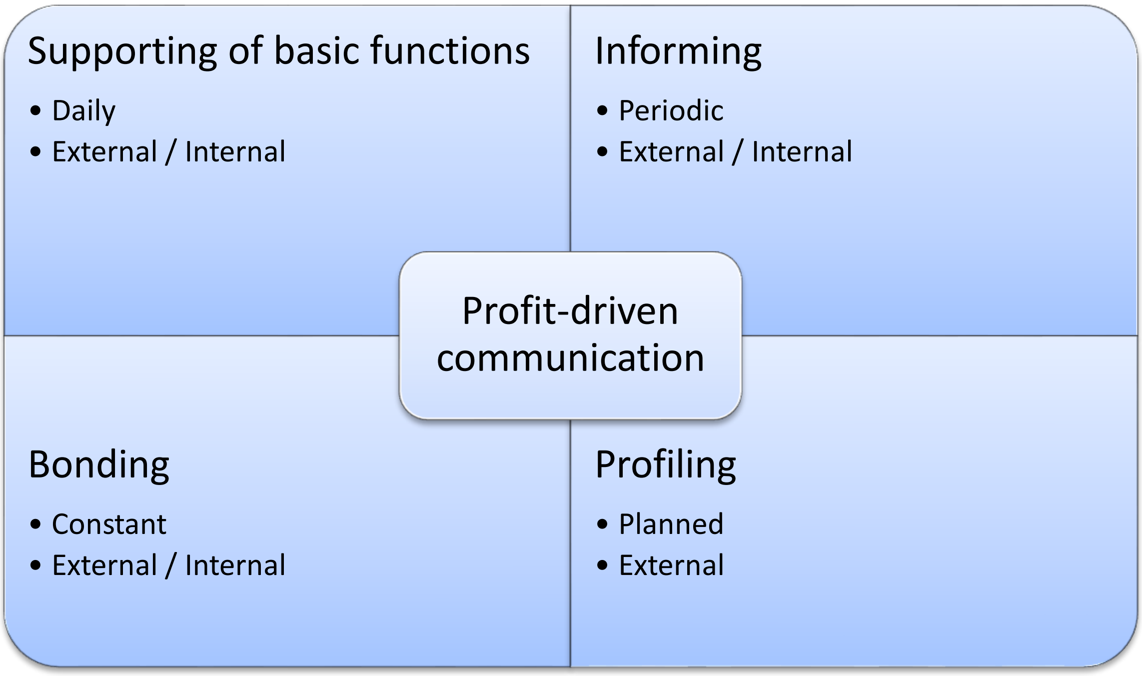

FIGURE 1: PROFIT-DRIVEN COMMUNICATION

In addition to the general differences as shown above, the four categories consist of completely different aspects of communication. These cover the areas of communication that form the theory of profit-driven communication, and the definitions of these four categories can be found in the next sections. (Åberg, 2000.)

2.1.1 Supporting of organization´s basic functions

Communication’s role as a supporter of an organization’s basic functions broadly consist of daily communication needs of e.g. customer service, sales, and marketing. Negotiations, meetings, offers and e-mails are more specific examples of communication as a support for basic organizational functions. (Åberg, 2000.)

2.1.2 Bonding

Bonding as an element of communication refers to enhancing the commitment of employees, stakeholders and customers to the organization. The goal of bonding communication activities is to get the employees, customers and stakeholders committed to the organization and its values and ways of operating. Bonding the employees is managed through intensive and comprehensive orientation and familiarizing to the tasks and the work place community. Providing information and an opportunity to have influence e.g. to the selection of products and services is a way to promote the bonding and commitment of stakeholders and customers. (Åberg, 2000.)

2.1.3 Profiling

Profiling as a part of communication comprises of building the organizational image. Profiling includes the visual look of an organization, which consists of logos, name, colors and fonts used in websites and publications, and the design of documents, forms, envelopes and all other printed and electronic materials. Also product packaging, premises, personnel, cars and corporate gifts are part of organizational image.

The concept of organizational image is twofold; the target image is the ideal image the organization wants to reach and the actual image is how the customers and stakeholders actually see the organization. (Åberg, 2000.)

2.1.4 Informing

Informing consist of all activities that are conducted to keep the personnel and stakeholders aware of current events. These activities include reportage and communication that aims at reaching a broad audience at once, e.g. customer magazines, weekly newsletters, personnel bulletins and media briefings. (Åberg, 2000.)

2.2 Research interview

Research interview is a very flexible method for gathering information. A research is a concept that includes many steps and phases that are dependent on each other. Understanding the nature of a research requires acknowledging the relationship between all these phases. The most important step is defining the research problem. Only after that decisions can be made about what kind of data is needed and what methods will be used to gather the needed data.

Ethics are always involved in conducting research interviews. The research plan should include information about confidentiality and consideration about what kind of consequences the research will have on the interviewees. Also the effects of the interview situation on the interviewees should be carefully considered. It should be defined in advance if the situation might cause stress or untypical behavior. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008.)

2.2.1 Planning and Preparation

The interviewer often faces the problem about how much information to give the interviewee before the interview. Information might distort the results of the interview or twist the behavior of the interviewee. It is hard to draw the line between excess information and relevant information, but the basic principle should be that the interviewee agrees to participate in the research process based on adequate information. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008.)

2.2.2 Implementation

The location of the interview should be considered carefully. The location has to be somewhere the interviewee feels comfortable and quiet enough for the recording of the interview to be successful. Mistakes in the questions and interview techniques are common. The interviewer should not follow the interview structure too strictly to be open to other relevant information. The interviewer must also be a good listener; if the interviewer monotonously follows the interview structure, he/she might ask a question the interviewee has already answered. These mistakes lower the motivation of the interviewee and thus compromise the results. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008.)

2.2.3 Interpretation and analysis

Transcribing the interviews includes many ethical questions, mainly in regard to how well the interviewee's answers are translated into text. Another ethical issue is that how deep an analysis can be derived whilst still remaining appropriate. In other words, it is inappropriate to draw too abstract conclusions from what the interviewee has stated. The final ethical consideration is to make sure that the published report doesn't cause negative implications to the interviewees. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008.)

2.3 Qualitative and quantitative research

It is common that either a quantitative or qualitative method is used during one study or research. In this final thesis these two methods are combined, which is called using a mixed method. Combining the broad numerical data from quantitative research and the detailed data from the qualitative research helps to better understand the research problem. Converging qualitative and quantitative data is called triangulation. Triangulation is often the most effective method to convey the needs of a marginalized group of individuals. (Cresswell, 2003.)

Organizational researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgments by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon. Campbell and Fiske (1959) who developed the idea of multiple operationism, or triangulation, argued that more than one method should be used in the validation process to ensure that the variance reflected that of the trait and not the method. Thus, the convergence or agreement between two methods enhances the belief that the results are valid and not a methodological artifact. (Jick, 1979.)

When a single research method is inadequate, triangulation is used to ensure that the most comprehensive approach is taken to solve a research problem. Simultaneous triangulation, which is used in this research, refers to the use the qualitative and quantitative methods at the same time. In this case there is limited interaction between the two datasets during the data collection, but the findings complement one another at the end of the study. (Morse, 1991.)

3 THE ORGANIZATION

The Chambers of Commerce aim to promote entrepreneurship and a favorable business environment in Finland. The Central Chamber of Commerce together with the regional Chambers helps businesses succeed in Finland, and in international markets. The 19 Finnish regional Chambers of Commerce represent approximately 16 800 member businesses or organizations in various fields and branches of trade and industry.

The Central Chamber of Commerce influences legislation, taxation and industrial and economic policies and issues recommendations as an expert organization. The central Chamber of Commerce also supervises auditing, goods inspection and property valuation in Finland.

The Tampere CCI was founded in 1918. From its founding days to modern times Tampere CCI has played an active role in many sectors that have made the Tampere region one of the most successful regions in Northern Europe.

Tampere CCI is an independent regional Chamber of Commerce operating in the Tampere region. It is a leading business organization in the Tampere Region influencing regional traffic and housing policies, town planning and education. Also training, advice and other services are provided to businesses by Tampere CCI. The activities also include publishing books and guides and establishing extensive networks.

The organizational structure of Tampere CCI can be seen in figure 2 on the next page. This research concentrated on the board of Tampere CCI and the office located in Tampere city center.

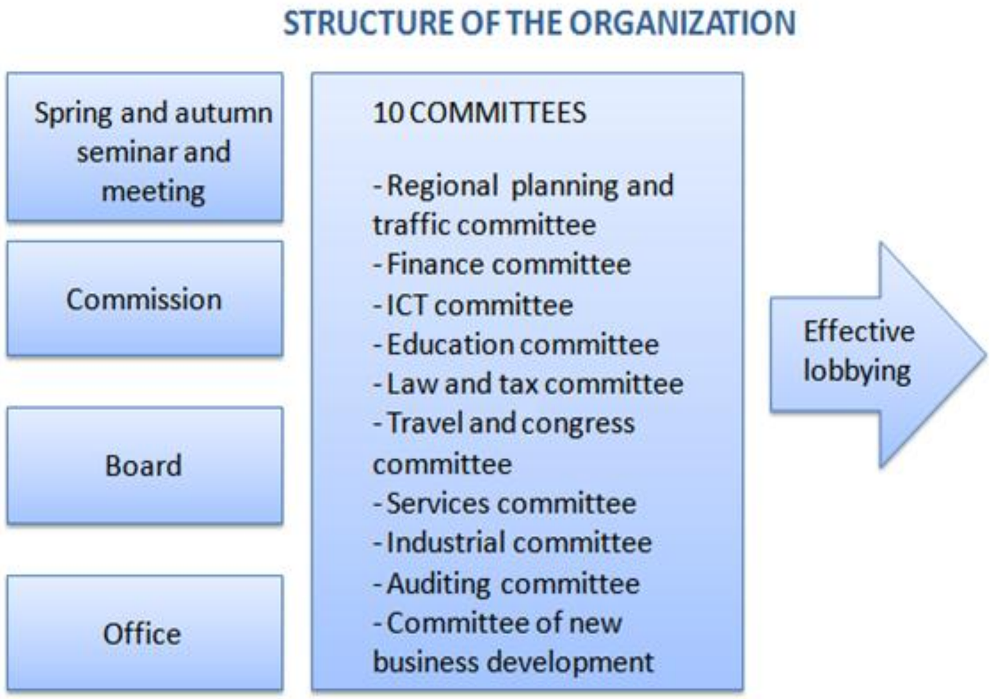

FIGURE 2: STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Tampere CCI represents over 1500 companies and members from the private sector, ranging from the industry to the service sector, and including companies of all sizes. Tampere CCI strives towards:

- Furthering and promoting the business interests of the community
- Providing networking opportunities
- Creating a strong local economy
- Promoting the Tampere region and it's opportunities for businesses of all sizes

Having more than 1500 members, Tampere CCI is the second biggest Chamber of Commerce in Finland after Helsinki.

Tampere CCI offers a wide variety of services for the business community. As a member of Tampere CCI a company will get all the services with a noticeable discount. Tampere CCI offers a company for example the following:

- Access to influence the company's operational environment through their networks and strong regional expertise
- General training and informative events related to issues concerning companies, such as tax and legal issues

- Networking opportunities
- Foreign trade documents. Tampere CCI issues documents such as Certificate of origin, ATA Carnet customs documents and other export documents
- Publications and seminars
- Monthly member e-newsletter

3.1 Goals of marketing and communication

The goals of marketing and communication in Tampere CCI have been defined in the organization´s internal operations guidelines as follows:

- Striving towards achieving a positive image among businesses and private persons
- Furthering and promoting the business interests of the community is one of the main goals of the organization; marketing and communications have to strongly support this
- Supporting the sale of services
- Gaining new members
- Making the community more aware of the organization and its important role in the community
- Providing information and services for existing members

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