

THE PROFILE OF HUMAN RESOURCES INVOLVED IN MARKETING - OIL COMPANIES APPROACH

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Abstract

By its own role, interface between the internal and the external environment of the company, the marketing function needs highly trained human resources, capable to sustain the activities that must be ventured in order to achieve the strategic objectives allocated and to offer to the top management, in real time and in accuracy conditions, with the support of a performant information system, the data needed in order to update the strategy, at this firm function level being concentrated the most important part of the feed back mechanism.

Also, owing to its special character, the labour relations must be developed on trust, a higher value having, compared to the formal, written contract, the so called psychological one, this being the base for realising the dynamic equilibrium between employee desires (how is he appreciated, his expectations, his possibilities to prove his competence, involvement, workplace stability, etc.) and the company's requests (loyalty, responsibility, commitment, professionalism).

Key-words: human resources, marketing, conflict, negotiation

I. The human resources policy for marketing function

As all company's functions, the marketing one needs, maybe the most, a special resource: *human beings*. This is the reason why approaching this subject involves some particularities, because having results in such activity on the entire cycle of obtaining, retaining, motivating and developing the human resources who are supposed to occupy the workplaces designed for the marketing function it will be necessary **to define a professional profile** focused on the human qualities necessary to manage the conflicts and to undertake negotiation activities.

By its own role, interface between the internal and the external environment of the company, the marketing function needs *highly trained* human resources, capable to sustain the activities that must be ventured in order to achieve the strategic objectives allocated, and to offer to the top management, in real time and in accuracy conditions, with the support of an adequate information system, the data needed in order to update the strategy, at this firm function level being concentrated the most important part of the feed back mechanism.

Thus, here the *people* became the most important "*assets*", they must be treated as *critical investments*, having a strategic character. This feature, doubled by their adaptability, potential and values system, identifies every generation, being directly correlated with the results of the activities they are involved in, and, consequently, establishing the premises on which the company's competitive advantage will be built.

Recruiting the personnel who will occupy the posts into the marketing function must be realised according to the companies' *strategic objectives*, internal and external *environment* conditions and correlated to the *organisational culture* particularities, in order to obtain performance, into the oilfield industry being met, from this point of view, a higher frequency of Ivancevich-Glueck and Fisher models, that sustain the development of competitive products/services and which pay attention inclusive to the uncountable efficiency, aspect related to the intangible assets.

In the same time, *when conceiving the human resources strategy* it is preferred, for the marketing function, a **strategy focused on people**, because entering on new markets, maintaining the market share or, generally speaking, the economic success are fundamentally related to the quality of the company's human potential.

In the new context, generated by the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy into the European economy, to the investment character of the already mentioned strategy, it must be added a formative one, in order to facilitate the development of the best organisational frame for starting the continuous learning process at every employee level, for each of them being necessary to assure the conditions for going through the stages of: socialising, specialising, development and valuing, thus to develop the know-how transfer system.

In the human resources activity it is, first of all, necessary to take account of the *people characteristics*, who present individual particularities, have different attitudes and behaviours, own approaches and tasks to fulfil.

The marketing involves *good motivation* for the human resources, who occupy its workplaces, on both sides of it: intrinsic and extrinsic, the link between effort and performance having to be correctly realised, the marketing personnel assumed commitment (attachment and loyalty) being an essential criteria for realising the strategic objectives.

At this function level, owing to its special character, the labour relations must be developed on *trust*, a higher value having, compared to the formal, written contract, the so called psychological one, this being the base for realising the *dynamic equilibrium* between employee desires (how is he appreciated, his expectations, his possibilities to prove his competence, involvement, workplace stability, etc.) and the company's requests (loyalty, responsibility, commitment, professionalism).

Taking account of the direct contact with the external environment and the need of capacity to permanently receive and release new complex knowledge, the personnel involved in realising marketing tasks needs to be *systematically trained* as a consequence of the continuous learning process at the entire organisation level, the recruitment of human resource being recommended to be done according to this criteria when we are talking about marketing departments/divisions.

In the personnel strategies conceived in order to select future employees for marketing it can be applied all three known types: "the suitable man" approach, adaptation at the employee skills and the flexible approach, designed to develop a competitive organisation.

Oil companies, by definition, are large, and because of it, most of them use the first type and, as a modern tendency, it must be emphasized the fact that it is paid attention to *train new young managers* (aspect characteristic for the flexible type personnel strategy), in order to replace, step by step, the expensive workforce represented by ex-pats.

In the same time, because of the dynamism involved by the marketing activity, the personnel who fulfil tasks of this nature must be accordingly motivated and rewarded, because firm results are tightly correlated with this factor, a direct link between rewards (basic salary, bonuses, flexibility, recognition) and performance management having already scientifically proved.

The presented situation can be synthetically presented as it follows:

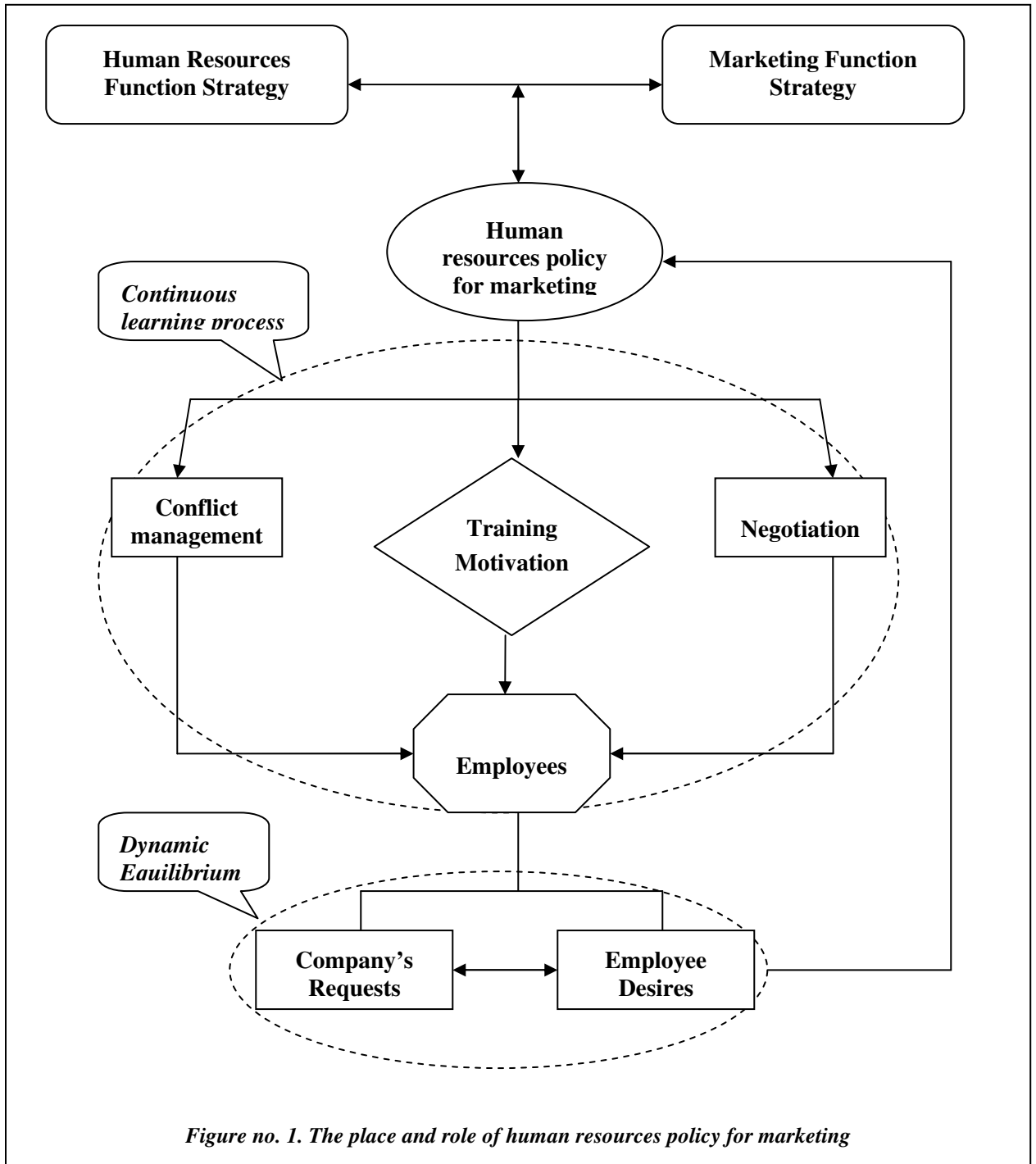


Figure no. 1. The place and role of human resources policy for marketing

II. Conflict management – a challenge for companies

The conflict, result of the progress and change, is *inevitable* at the companies' level, appears where inter-human connections are and involves communication. It starts from intrapersonal phase, than it became obvious at the interpersonal level, going further at certain forms for a group or appears at inter-groups relations.

From the presented features it is obvious the fact that, at the marketing function level, differently from all other functions, the conflict is present with a **double nature**: internal and external. Internal, because it appears and develops among the own employees and interdepartmental and external because through marketing it is sustained the largest part of the relationships with the external environment.

Managing efficiently the conflicts is a priority of companies' strategies because the negative effects can be higher when such situations go deep. Some of the most **often met causes** are: the frustrations, the aggressiveness, different objectives and values, envy and, sometimes, cultural differences. In the same time, it is considered that *maintaining a certain level of conflict represents a sign of well organising*, because it stimulates the competition and the performance.

In order to **exemplify** the theoretical terms presented, we bring into attention the training which PETROM SA offered to some categories of employees responsible into the marketing function by special training in the conflict management.

Thus, in 2007, in partnership with BRAINOVATE SRL Bucharest, there have been presented to the employees advanced terms in this field, emphasizing the way in which the conflict could be efficiently solved. Analysing this study, it results that, in order to make an easier understanding, the conflict is pragmatically structured in **constructive** and **destructive**, the main differences being represented of the fact that the first shape is based on **dialog**, while the second one on **dispute**.

Among the **main causes** of the conflict there can be found out: unsuitable communication, lack of resources, different personalities and leadership problems. Conflict approach can be done, according to the involved parts, through: *domination, capitulation, negotiation, postponement, and collaboration*. In the same time, there are also shortly presented types of personality involved in the conflict, grouped as follows: *introverted and extraverted, sensitive and intuitive, rationalist and emotionalist, judger and receptive*.

The **main stages** in solving the conflict are:

- establishing the problem;
- presenting reasons;
- conceiving and evaluating the alternatives;
- solving and agreement.

The solving strategy is based on **certain tactics**, which have been proved **efficient**: reframing, paraphrasing, openness, minimising, sustaining the needs, discussing at the first person, and feeling recognition.

In the same time, the **inefficient tactics** in solving this are: blaming, attacking, sarcasm, negation, redirecting, minimising, fixation, suppressing, projecting and sounding.

For the cases when the conflicts get worse, its positive solving can be done in two ways: by **mediation** or by **arbitration**. The mediation is useful when the emotions and the relationships appear, being met at inter-human level, while arbitration is mostly used at corporative level and involves a final result, imperative and irrevocable from the legal or contractual point of view.

III. Negotiation – the conflicts solving path

From the already presented aspects it can be observed the fact that the most important way in which the conflicts can be solved is **the negotiation**, process characterised by an uncertainty climate in which the negotiator aptitudes (analyse capacity, planning, empathy, interactivity and communication) are vital and every marketing employee need them.

This is necessary because of the fact that when working in marketing, each of them is involved in many negotiation situations, reason for which they must to be prepared to make mutual concessions, to offer alternatives to understand the sources of the met conflicts and deal with the situation in a manner which maintain a winning position.

From this point of view, it worth to be noticed that PETROM SA trained a part of its personnel for understanding the **four basic principles of Harvard Concept**, more precisely:

- separating people from the problem;
- focusing on objectives, not on positions;

- creating mutual advantageous alternatives;
- using objective criteria for evaluating the negotiation results.

In the same time, the company's management training program included the introduction of **BATNA** (Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement) specific terms, also known under Plan B name, alternative or retreating scenario, which main scope is to develop the negotiator confidence and to create a feasible alternative for the negotiation process.

During the negotiation process, a key role is played by the **value motivation system**, defined as a central concept designed for achieving the self management and relationship management abilities, depending on genetic influence and early experiences.

Into a study from 2005 of Personal Strengths Publishing Inc. (USA), also presented to PETROM SA employees in 2006, there have been structured **seven types of motivational systems**, as it follows: *altruist* (based on looking for the others welfare), *directive* (focused on fulfilling the tasks in order to achieve the objectives), *analytical* (careful to planning), *flexible* (emphasising the group welfare and the feeling of belonging to it), *assertive-protective* (obtaining the other welfare by realising the objectives), *correct-competitive* (pay attention to fair competition) and *cautious-offering support* (preoccupied to obtain self and others autonomy by respecting the rules).

In the same year, 2006 and in the already mentioned company, in cooperation with the BPP Professional Education firm, the human resource from marketing departments has been trained in order to clearly identify, according to the relationship and substance preoccupation, five **negotiating styles**: *compromise* (the conflict is decreased by successive concessions), *cooperation* (the problems are systematically approached in order to obtain an agreement), *accommodation* (the attention is focused on building the relation, despite the result), *retreat* (accept what is offered) and *defeat* (take as much as he can, ignoring the relationship). Their correct usage means to establish the partner **needs**, these ones being structured in three types: *emotional*, *rational* and *political*.

The negotiation process is based on **influence** (feature that involves effects by verbal and non-verbal communication, related to the subconscious) and **persuasiveness** (characteristic for the rational, conscious part).

When **leading the negotiation**, it must be established from the beginning if the situation is one of "feelings" type (based on influencing abilities as *reflection* – the capacity to listen the subliminal message sent by the other person, not necessary what he says, and *assertiveness* – understood as sustaining the own needs and expectations into a unyielding, not aggressive manner) or "facts" type, which involves skills of asking efficiently and suggesting responses.

The negotiation is sustained by "**dealing with objections**" **techniques**, among the most used being *curiosity*, *inoculation* (anticipating the partner complaints and mention them before he can be able to do that), *justification*, "*understood, felt, found*" (based on example, expressed as the favourable experience of other person who accepted your offer).

IV. Conclusions

From the presented aspects it can be observed the importance paid by the large oil companies to the human resources integrated in the workplaces from the marketing function, offering them *special training from the conflict management and negotiation point of view*.

Thus, it became evident the fact that, in order to resist to the competition, the *marketing knowledge must be completed with terms from human resources and psychology area*, being proved once more its multidisciplinary character.

Taking account of the discussed things, we can appreciate that **a profile of the marketing employee** implies **two main dimensions**: one of the **natural abilities**, among which that of *excellent negotiator* must to excel, and one of the **continuous professional training**, which has to be doubled with *advanced knowledge of conflict management*, these aspects being necessary to be first of all considered when the personnel from this function is recruited.

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