

Internal Marketing and Political Marketing

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Abstract

Internal Marketing is nothing new in politics. From the earliest of political endeavours, politicians have realised the need for internal organisational support as a basis of electoral support both internally and externally in the political arena. However the appropriateness, limitations and efficiency of internal marketing has received little critical appraisal from the academic literature. The objectives of this paper are firstly to review the concept and critique its appropriateness for political parties. Secondly, to explain the potential benefits and limitations of the internal marketing process in the light of nearly 30 years of academic literature. Thirdly, to review the methods in which internal marketing can be used more effectively. Finally, to introduce generic tools for assessing and improving the internal marketing process in the context of political marketing.

Key Words: Political Marketing, Internal Marketing, Members, Political Parties.

Origins of Internal Marketing

The internal marketing (IM) concept was first proposed in the mid 1970's as a way of achieving consistent service quality (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2004). The underlying premise was that to satisfy external customers, it was desirable, if not a necessity to have satisfied internal customers, namely employees (Sergeant, 1999). The logic of this is that by satisfying the needs of internal customers, an organisation should be in a better position to deliver the quality desired to satisfy external customers.

In the 1980s, the internal marketing concept started to emerge in service quality literature (Gronroos, 1978; 1981; 1985; Berry, 1981; Ling & Greenley, 2005). Later IM appeared in service management literature (Carlzon, 1987; Norman, 1984) and latterly in the industrial and relationship marketing literature (Gronroos, 1985; Gummesson, 1987). Heskett (1987) noted that there appeared to be a shift towards internal marketing because '*high performing service companies had gained their status in large measure by turning the strategic service vision inwards*'.

Despite nearly 30 years of development, the concept has not achieved wide spread recognition among managers and the potential benefits to the organisation may be overlooked (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2004; Ling & Greenley, 2005). More interestingly only 5 of the 10 major texts in general marketing and relationship marketing that the author examined, mentioned internal marketing. The texts that did introduce the IM concept, devoted less than a few pages to the subject. It is not then surprising that the issues raised have not been comprehensively debated, developed or addressed. Certain authorities in the IM field consider the empirical research conducted so far as embryonic and descriptive (Frost & Kumar, 2000; Varey, 1995; Wilson, 1995).

Definitions of Internal Marketing are plentiful:

1. Holding that an organisation's internal market of employees can be influenced most effectively and hence motivated to customer-consciousness, market orientation and sales-mindedness by a marketing-like internal approach and by applying marketing-like activities internally (Gronroos, 1985)
2. To get motivated and customer-conscious employees (Gronroos, 1981)
3. Attracting, developing, motivating and retaining qualified employees through job-products that satisfy their needs. IM is the philosophy of treating employees as customers - indeed 'wooing' employees...and is the strategy of shaping job-products to fit human needs." (Berry & Parassuraman, 1991)
4. Aligning, educating and motivating staff towards institutional objectives the process by which personnel understand and recognise not only the value of the program but their place in it (Winter, J. 1985)
5. Internal marketing is a planned effort using a marketing-like approach directed at motivating employees, for implementing and integrating organisational strategies towards customer orientation (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2004)

Whilst these definitions all have the same key words, namely *employees*, *motivating* and *customers*, the author would like to broaden the definition to embrace all actors of the value chain who can be considered stakeholders. The logic of this is to integrate all IM activities towards actors that impact on the exchange of value with external customers. The IM concept, if defined as the enhanced satisfaction of all stakeholders, can be extended to include groups such as suppliers, government, public sector organisations, members, lobby groups, families of employees, shareholders, investors, regulatory bodies, charities and local community who are not initially identified as external or internal customers but are important nonetheless i.e. all direct or indirect interactions of the organisation with stakeholders in the organisation's value chain.

Definition: The exchange of value within an organisation's value chain between the organisation and its stakeholders with the intention of adding value, facilitate the processes of implementation and developing a sustainable competitive advantage.

This begs the question, is this defining IM as PR? i.e. communication with all relevant bodies. Jobber (1995) defines public relations as:

The management of communications and relationships to establish goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics

PR is primarily to do with communications. IM encompasses a broader range of management activities over and above communications such as marketing research, marketing segmentation, product development, strategy and communications strategy (over and above PR).

Traditional definitions have implied assumptions that satisfied employees are:

- more motivated
- willing to become advocates of the organisation
- less likely to seek alternative employment
- better team performers
- willing to add value internally and externally

- potential customers
- have goal congruence with organisational objectives
- more likely to share the vision of a successful co-productive future.

Whilst the assumption appears to have internal validity, there is at best scant evidence to support these assumptions (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Mudie (2000) argues that IM is not equipped to cope with the complexities of organisational behaviour and that it is unable to show a close link between job satisfaction and performance. Employee satisfaction may operate via an intermediary variable such as organisational commitment (Brown & Paterson, 1993; Caruana & Calleya, 1998; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Satisfied employees may indeed be more committed to the organisation, however this does not inherently make them better performers. In fact satisfied employees may be in a comfort zone that is inherently undesirable, inefficient and untenable. For voluntary membership organisations, the performance of the member is probably of secondary concern to their commitment and loyalty to the organisation. For political parties, where all senior positions are appointed by acclaim or by a democratic election, the need for effective internal marketing seems particularly relevant and important. However, most of the academic literature concentrates on employees as internal customers (Varey, 1995; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; 2004; Frost & Kumar, 2000; Gronroos, 1981:1985; Heskett et al, 1994; Oakland, 1993; Bitner et al, 1990; Zeithaml et al,1988).

Gummesson (1999) identifies 30 relationships that an organization may have with customers. Four of these relationships appear relevant to the concept of members as customers:

Relationship 11 Gummesson (1999:98): The customer as a member relationship
 For example, owners of Harley Davidson are made members of the Harleys Owners Club. The club offers insurance, emergence assistance, networking events with other owners and magazines. This is a profit driven pseudo-membership as genuine membership is non-commercial or commercial in a cooperative voluntary sense. However Gummesson fails to address genuine membership but instead refers to cooperatives where: *members themselves own and run the operations as an economic and democratic association* Gummesson (1999:99). Membership of political parties is voluntary, non-commercial and the members own and run the operations as a non-economic and democratic association.

Relationship 24 Gummesson (1999:181): This refers to the marketing between units within the organisation. Traditionally, units were tied to receiving products or services internally. Market mechanisms are brought inside the company. For example, internal pricing mechanisms are subject to market forces. Internal business units are no longer tied to internal purchases and as a consequence can become more efficient. Members can choose to receive products and services from within the organisation or seek alternatives externally. Economists would refer to this as market governance versus hierarchical governance.

Relationship 25 Gummesson (1999:186): Internal Customer relationships
 This is the interaction and relationship between employees, teams and functions with the intention of becoming operational more effective and efficient. This is an area that political parties could investigate as a potential area for adding value to

members. Internal networks for mutually beneficial exchange, whether social, political or business may be fostered by the organisation. Pooling purchasing power for local campaigns is a practical example of the benefits of internal networks to achieve economies of scale.

Relationship 27 Gummesson (1999:197): Internal marketing - relationships with the employee market. Marketing is directed towards the employees as a way of enhancing the product offering to the external customer. As can be seen from the discuss below, addressing employees as internal customer can be problematic but may be more relevant to marketing to members.

The concept of employees as internal customers (whilst admirable) is problematic and needs to be challenged:

1. Employees are paid to provide service (under a contract for services), usually customers pay (however, customers are never paid)
2. Employees create the products/services, their jobs create a combined product offering for the external customers
3. Employees are hostages to the product on offer as long as they remain employees. They have no choice regarding the product offered to them
4. The costs incurred may be considerable, undesirable, yield immeasurable added value and not enhance competitive advantage from the external customers perspective
5. Employee expectations/behaviour/performance within an organisation may be to serve the individual's or employees' interests e.g. work for the pay packet or highly unionised workforce in conflict with the organisations interests i.e. lack of goal congruence
6. Employees may indeed purchase the organisations products/services, however they are acting as economic agents with a vested interest in the success of the company
7. The exchange of value is the service provided to the organisation by the employee for a wage. The relationship could be viewed as an organisation/supplier transaction within the value chain i.e. *employees as suppliers not customers*. This is not to imply that relationships with suppliers are unimportant, only different. Suppliers are an integral part of all organisations' value chain.

A closer examination of the literature reveals 3 distinct areas within IM (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2004):

1. employee motivation and satisfaction
2. customer orientation
3. implementation of IM and managing change

Internal Marketing and Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders are any group or individual who can affect or can be affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives i.e. has a stake in the success of the organisation (Freidman, 1984). A common tool for reviewing relationships within organisations is the application of a stakeholder framework. If we apply stakeholder analysis theory from strategic management (Grant, 1998; Johnson & Scholes, 2002), they clearly identify customers, employees and suppliers as separate, unique stakeholders with their own identity and expectations. Fig. 1. is a simplified stakeholder framework that identifies the major stakeholder for the majority of organisations.

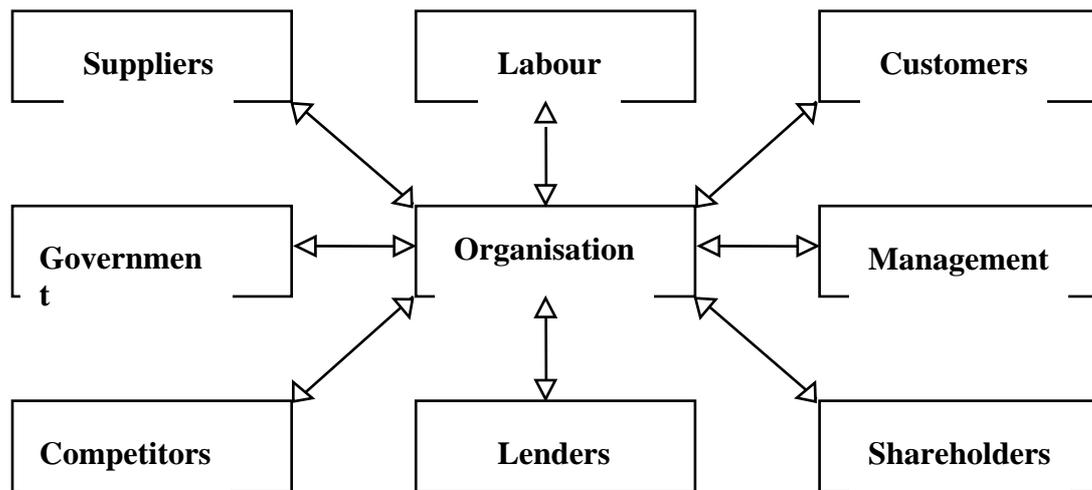


Figure 1 Stakeholder Diagram

Employee expectations of mutually beneficial exchange with their employer can be directly at odds with the expectations of customers, suppliers and shareholders. An organisation exists to serve their purpose of its owners, the shareholders. In a commercial environment the purpose of the organisation is profit maximisation leading to long-term share value appreciation. Employees desire higher wages, longer holidays, less work, career development and job tenure; this would appear to be in direct conflict with the objective of shareholder value. The same conflict can exist between shareholders and government. Both have a legitimate right to exercise their powers, however their objectives and expectations may vary. All stakeholders are not and cannot be equal. Trade-offs and balancing of stakeholder objectives is required.

Lynch (2003) makes the distinction between two types of stakeholder; those that have to carry out the actions necessitated by the strategy and those who have a stake in the outcome. Argenti (2003) presents another analysis in identifying stakeholders as either primary or secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders include managers, employees, customers, shareholders and communities. Secondary stakeholders include media, suppliers, government, creditors and NGO's.

Winstanley (1995) developed a stakeholder map (fig. 2) for aiding the assessment of stakeholders and the identification of key stakeholders. Criteria power is the right to have legitimate power i.e. owners (shareholders) and government. This gives these stakeholders the power to define the goals, objectives and purpose of the organisation. Operational power resides with the senior managers and directors who control the everyday operations i.e. the power to determine the product/service offering and the allocation of resources. Managers are supposed to act as an agent for the principal or owner. As with most agent/client relationships, a potential conflict in interest can arise; this referred to as moral hazard i.e. they act in their own interests.

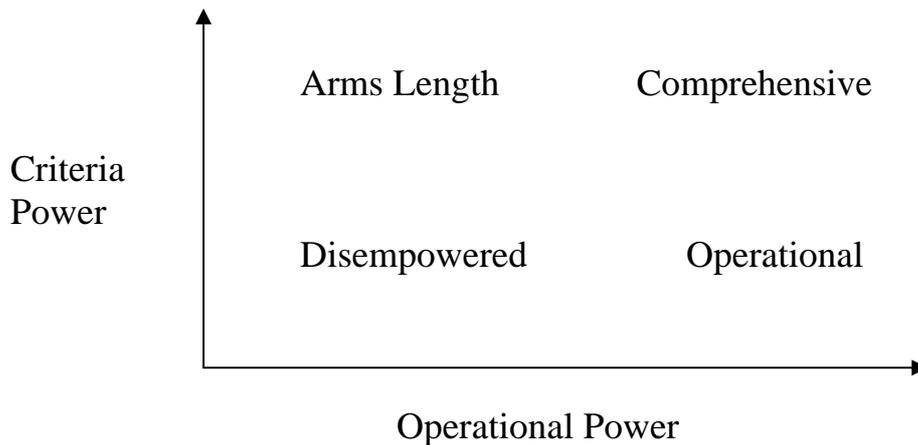


Figure 2 Stakeholder Map (Winstanley, 1995)

Figure 3 depicts the likely distribution of stakeholders for a commercial organisation, where large shareholders have criteria power and can if they wish can collectively remove the CEO and appoint board members. Arm's length power is enough power to indirectly influence the business whilst remaining hand-off.

Comprehensive power is possession of both criteria power and operational power (usually owner/managers). Stakeholders that are mapped into these two quadrants are classified as key stakeholders and their expectations need to be developed into success criteria for the organisation.

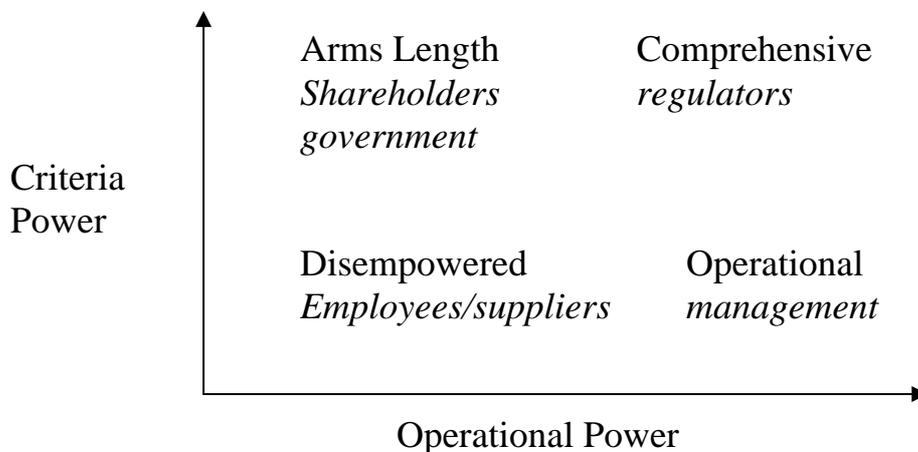


Figure 3 Stakeholder Map for a commercial organisation

Within membership organisations' where individuals are not employees most of the above problems are not relevant and internal marketing appears more relevant. Members:

- voluntarily join
- barriers to entry and exit are low (usually)
- are at liberty to control their participation and their own degree of involvement
- do not take orders (however members are open to persuasion, coercion and may have obligations)
- are generally unsupervised but may be offered training
- levels of satisfaction, motivation and commitment vary and are fluid
- members can not be dismissed for poor performance, only disciplined and expelled for breaking the organisations rules
- *members are the organisation, no members, no organisation*
- members are the organisation and at the same time are the customers. They pay a membership fee and have expectations of the service they should receive
- expect the leaders/managers of the organisation to provide a service that is of value. Leaders/managers attempt to promote involvement, participation, support for their own activities/positions and create advocates of the organisation from within the membership
- collectively can remove/deselect senior officials of the organisation if they wish, withdraw support or leave the organisation (arms length power)
- members are supporters of the organisation and as such have entered into a relationship that is altruistic and may have low expectations of the benefits they receive other than an opportunity to demonstrate solidarity.

It is in the organisations interests to have satisfied, motivated, committed members who value their membership, participation, and outputs created. It is the responsibility of the organisations' management to achieve degree of satisfaction. In return the organisation thrives though growing membership, goodwill, donations, involvement etc. IM would appear to offer a philosophy and be a vehicle for achieving this. Figure 4 depicts a stakeholder map for a membership organisation, were members have *arms length power*.

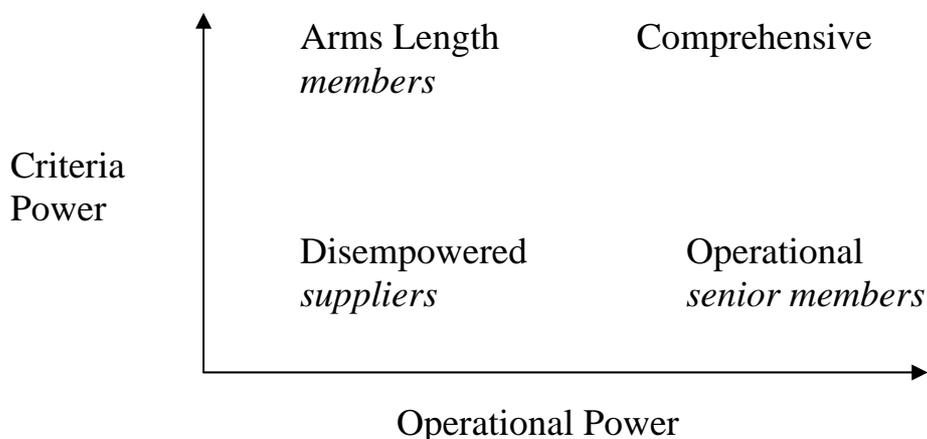


Figure 4 Stakeholder Map for a membership organisation

The Winstanley (1995) approach to stakeholder mapping is partially supported by Agle et al (1999) who introduce the issue of the salience of the stakeholder. Salience of the stakeholder is based on three factors:

1. the power of the stakeholder over the organisation (similar to criteria power)
2. the legitimacy of their claim to be a key stakeholder (the right to have power)
3. the urgency with which the organisation feels it needs to respond to a stakeholder's claim.

Whilst other stakeholder mapping criteria exist in the literature, namely power/interest and power/predictability maps (Johnson & Scholes, 1993:176), the Winstanley approach is favoured by the author and other Strategic Management writers Vinney et al (2004).

Most members are generally not involved in the operations of a political organisation; that is not to say they are uninterested. When members collectively decide to intervene in the operations of the organisation, they are deemed to have comprehensive power. Internal elections are an opportunity for members to use their criteria power in the appointment of officials who are responsible for the operations of the organisation.

Membership and Political Parties

Membership of all of the mainstream British parties is declining and has been for many years (Granik, 2003). The electoral commission and political parties are also concerned about the decrease in electoral participation (Bannon, 2003). Members do not re-join a party if they believe they are not receiving value. Granik's research highlights the increase in membership retention where members are actively involved and where a targeted approach to involvement is adopted i.e. give members a role and enhance their involvement.

Political parties require a thriving membership to:

- Produce funds and donations
- Participate in internal debate
- Act as an electorate to validate internal party appointments and selections
- Provide local information
- Campaign locally; the effects of local campaigning are much underestimated (Egan, 2000; Jackson, 2003, Bannon, 2004)
- Act as potential local ambassadors
- Lend support for party policy or campaigns nationally and regionally
- Encourage thriving branches
- Act as a socialisation mechanism for family and friends
- Recruitment of new members

The degree of involvement is a function of the individual member's motivation and the success of IM activities. The type of IM activities commonly undertaken include:

- Leadership and senior party visits, letters, communication etc
- Direct mail, e-mails
- Newsheets, both electronic and hard copy
- Party websites
- Daily electronic bulletins

- Marketing research (Hawthorne effect)
- Debates
- Visiting speakers
- Social events (usually fundraising in nature)
- Conferences and workshops
- Branch meeting
- Media exposure

However, the vast majority of members are not active and paying their membership dues is as active as they have become or may want to become (Granik, 2003). Activities that stimulate participation, would surely be welcomed by political parties. The potential spin-off will add to the resources of the organisation and enhance their political competitive advantage. IM programmes may be a vehicle to enhance participation.

Internal Marketing and Political Parties

Internal marketing is more likely to be successful with a subtle approach that will lead to a shared vision rather than overt packaging (Stapleton, 2001). Communication is critical (Helman & Payne, 1995). IM is an evolutionary process not an event and is more than just a corporate magazine (Gronroos, 1990).

IM facilitates better communication, integrates resources in a manner that creates capabilities. The result should be enhanced goal congruence and fosters a sense of membership community. Information sharing reduces barriers to change and stops re-invention of the wheel. Failure of IM activities can be due to several factors: too formal communication; top down driven; unrealistic objectives; culture; resource availability; skills and knowledge deficiency; deadlines unrealistic; personal animosity; secretive nature of changes; poor communication and implementation; sabotage; political agendas; incompetence and poor project management.

Adapting Piercy's framework of internal customers and external customers, one can equate employees with members and the electorate with customers, Figure 5 relates member satisfaction to electorate satisfaction.

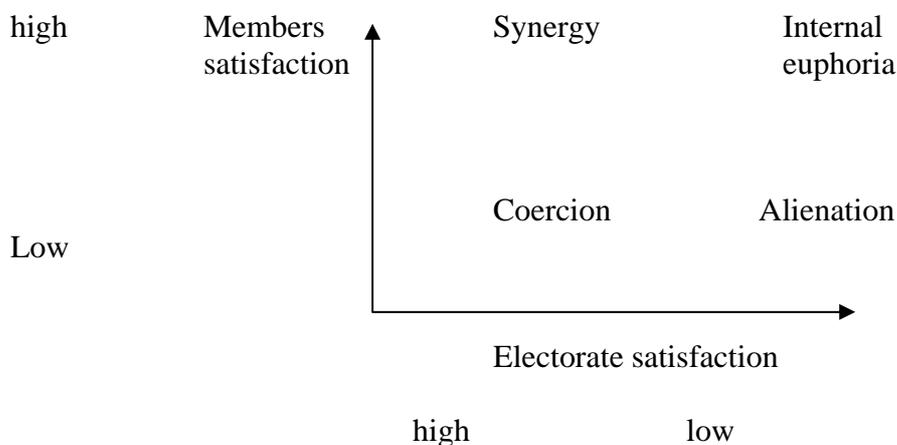


Figure 5 Customer satisfaction and Internal Marketing (Piercy, 1998:218)

Synergy - when both are happy, ideal situation
 Coercion - electorate are happy and coercion of membership is evident
 Alienation - both internal and external customer are dissatisfied. Evidently leading to higher churn rate of members and supporters
 Internal euphoria - high internal satisfaction that is not replicated in the satisfaction levels of the electorate (Piercy, 1998:218).

Implementing IM programme requires:

1. Creation of internal marketing awareness
2. Identification of internal customers and suppliers
3. Communication of expectations to internal suppliers to discuss own capabilities, obstacles and requirements
4. Make changes to be able to deliver the service required
5. Measure internal customer satisfaction
6. Feedback to all parts concerned

Source: Reyneso and Payne (1996)

The buy-in of members to the vision of the organisation is both an emotional and intellectual proposition.

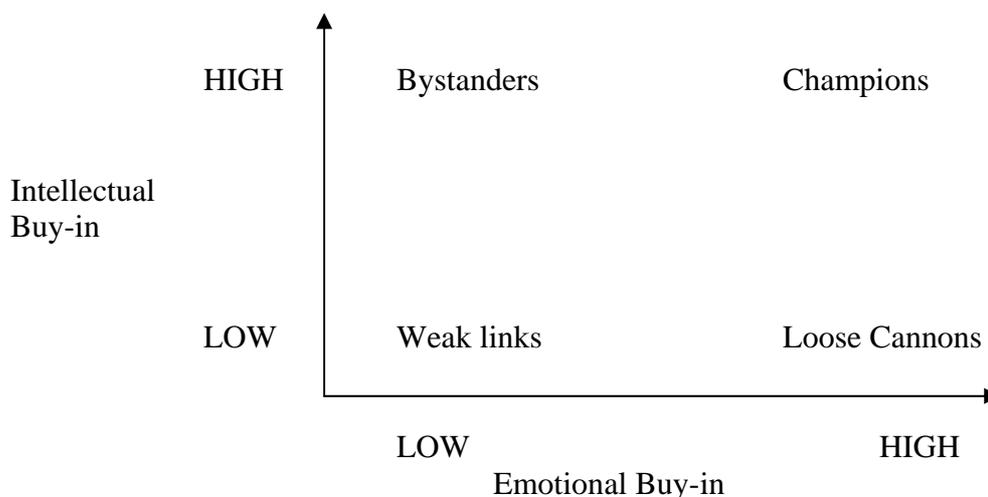


Figure 6 The MCA Matrix of buy-in (Jobber, 1996)

Members can be graded or segmented based on their relationship with the political party. For example: *Champions – Active Members – Members – Supporters*. Each group will have specific requirements for mutually beneficial exchange. IM programmes can be developed for each segment. The traditional internal mass marketing of political parties is failing to differentiate the product or service offering. A systematic, professional and cost effective set of activities tailored to the needs of members could strengthen the relationship between the member and the organisation with long-term benefits being accrued.

The Internal Marketing Programme

Membership may be viewed as a mass resource that is partially utilised as a resource of a political party. Tapping into a well of goodwill of supporters needs to be planned in

a systematic manner to accrue the benefits. Members can feel isolated and taken for granted (interviews). Politicians may view members as regular voters and supporters not requiring conversion or their time. This is an understandable position for a politician in a safe seat, not concerned about selection or re-election. However this is myopic and is not maximising the strength of the competitive position.

There are 5 key areas to address when considering an IM programme namely, membership segmentation, relationship development, communications strategy, product/service offering and cost/benefit analysis.

Relationship development - The values, attitudes and beliefs of members are germane and are usually overlooked. Closeness to the members is a requirement needed to enhance the existing relationship .

They say they listen, they even do listen sometimes but they don't do anything about it (Interview, Feb 2003).

On-going internal members surveys could serve as an opportunity for all members to feedback to the organisation their opinions, expectations, ideas and level of satisfaction. This internal research can form the basis of internal marketing segmentation and generate appropriate products and services.

Communications strategy - The nature and style of communications techniques selected should match the requirements of each of the identified segments so as to inform, persuade and encourage continued support and involvement. Joint ownership of policies is sought and this requires the articulation of a shared vision starting from common ground. The communication needs to be responsive to concerns and queries of members and the elimination of misconceptions addressed.

Cost/benefit analysis- there is a cost involved in the internal marketing process both to the organisation and the members. Non-financial costs include e.g. additional effort, removal from comfort zone, need to enhance skills, time etc

Party Fundraising

IM programmes need resourced. Political parties require finance to run campaigns and whilst key individuals and corporate donations are larger, membership donations are vital. Whilst individual high profile donors such as Paul Sykes (UKIP); Paul Dryson and Lord Sainsbury (Labour); Lord Irvine Laidlaw (Tory); Sean Connery (SNP) and Robert Durward (New Party) are important, the capacity of members to increase donations is vast. Large political donations can attract questions of corporate governance and ethics. Whilst specific *political favours* may not be granted or sought, any major donor is open to public scrutiny and potential accusations of political impropriety. The Electoral Commission was set up in November 2000 and part of their remit was to oversee and scrutinise political donations. The Electoral Commission publishes quarterly, all major donations to political parties in an attempt at enhancing transparency. This openness may deter major donors who would prefer to donate anonymously.

Members will only increase donations if they are committed, motivated and believe the money will underpin the success of their party. In terms of IM, the Labour Party received more than half their donations (£2.8 million) from the trade unions. The Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) require their elected representative to donate half their salary. The SSP received all its donations from their MSP.

	£ million		£ thousands
Labour	4.4	New Party	90
Conservatives	2.4	Scottish Socialists	45
Liberal Democrats	0.49	Scottish National Party	17
UKIP	1.2	Scottish Greens	0

Table 1 Recorded donations, excluding public funds 2nd quarter 2004
Source: Electoral Commission Report, 2004

The author interviewed 47 individuals from various political organisations in the UK. General common themes emerged:

1. Fundraising is key to electoral success, *no funds, no campaign*
2. Parties depend on members donations as an important source of income
3. Parties ask for donations all the time. This has led to *fundraising fatigue* and annoyance in some cases. This can leave members feeling abused and the relationship damaged. One senior official said: *there is never a good time to ask for money, however if you don't ask you don't get* (Interview, June, 2002). This creates a dichotomy; if you ask you run the risk of alienating members, if you don't ask you are not maximising resources. Maybe it is not the asking that is the issue, possibly it is how the proposition is presented and the targeting of communications.
4. The majority of members of political parties interviewed believed they could donate more to their party. However views expressed against higher levels of donation include: *why should I; what good would it do; I donate enough; if I donate more they'll hound me for more; I suppose I should but I haven't got around to it*. This raises important questions of efficiency, effectiveness, targeting of communications to different segments of membership and relating donations to outcomes i.e. connecting donations to benefits rather than donations as a good thing in its own right. Fundraising projects need to be more specific. This has been highly successful with charity fundraising where donations are allocated (in principle) to a specific child, group of people or project.
5. Fundraising events need to be more social and enjoyable, interesting quotes include:
 - sometimes I go out of duty, not because I want to;*
 - I hate fundraising events;*
 - I'll just send the money;*
 - I avoid them like the plague;*
 - if I go along they'll ask me to do something else*
 - there are too many (fundraising events) to go to*
 - I don't know anyone;*

*I don't want to get involved;
I'm a single parent;
I'm too busy;
Costs too much;
I'm on a pension, it's for the people who are working
It's a necessary evil*

Source: Interviews 2001-4

The Tools of Internal Marketing

There are a variety of tools and techniques that can be used for IM. Gronroos (1981) asserts the distinction between strategic and tactical tools. Strategic IM dimensions include:

1. The adoption of a supportive management style that is seen to support IM. A culture of openness, honesty and integrity that encourages improvements in the internal and external service.
2. The setting of internal service standards and the procedures for monitoring performance.
3. Procedures for corrective action and re-assessing internal requirements.
4. Service quality on-going training plan.

Tactical dimensions of IM include:

1. Training
2. Encouraging informal, interactive and valued communication (not just another newsheet or e-mailed circular or website page hidden in a maze of websites).
3. Formal communication supporting IM activities.
4. Internal Marketing Research. Identification of issues, ideas, changing environment and feedback from internal sources.
5. Cross-disciplinary teams that foster communications, goodwill, flow of information and ideas that minimises silo effects found particularly in large organisations.
6. Staff secondments. These encourage understanding of other parts of the organisation as well as spreading and developing skills of individuals and teams.
7. Improvement teams and encouragement of innovative improvements.

Barriers to implementation are usually cultural, attitudinal or resource based. Barriers to any change management can be overcome with the required amount of senior management support, determination, communication and re-structuring of working practices. Barriers can be identified by examining each employee segment and taking appropriate action (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003:46). Implementation barriers can be classified into 3 levels conceptual, people and tactical aspects.

Level 1: Concept barrier – the concept is not supported by employees and management.

Level 2: People barriers – goal congruence has not been achieved

Level 3: Tactical issues such as mechanisms for change, cost/benefit analysis, skills, awareness, local environment.

Working from level 1-3 leads to further diagnostic research that feeds back into the product, thus acting as a homeostatic monitoring mechanism, as well as creating cybernetic closure (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003:47).

Conclusions

Members are both part owners and customers of political parties. Internal Marketing activities seem desirable and necessary if organisations are to maximise the benefits derived from a more satisfied committed membership. Outcomes should manifest itself in enhanced member retention, increase in membership, party funding and members involvement in social and political activities. Further research is required to identify specific issues arising from IM programmes in political and membership organisation if IM is not to be seen as just another management fad that is a blinding flash of the obvious.

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