

RECRUITING HUMAN RESOURCE USING PR COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:

Internal communication channels and public relations are rich sources of the right information for the employees of the organization. Optimal design and use of the internal communication system along with the pursuit of the corporate social responsibility agenda contribute to improving the company's human capital management.

The present paper focuses on the perception of the role of in-house communication and the use of PR tools to strengthen the human capital and mitigate staff turnover. The questionnaire survey administered in various organizations in the two selected regions of the Czech Republic yielded a total of 164 responses, the outcomes allowing to cover the applicability of particular communication tools towards employees and job seekers.

Introduction

An effective human capital management scheme is a significant aspect of running an organization, providing the conditions that encourage the staff to work hard and develop their skills and abilities (see Litsareva, 2015). The achievement of this objective is based primarily on the quality of HR management and company leadership (cf. Fedorova, 2016). Most research to date on the value of human capital shows that people are a critical resource in all organizations (Laskowska and Danska-Borsiak, 2016).

Current labour market situation in the Czech Republic (low unemployment, labour shortages) requires enterprises to enhance the job satisfaction of their employees and to attract new recruits. In this respect, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and PR tools facilitating smooth internal communication are of utmost importance. The use of in-house channels of communication – apart from social networking and emailing – is preferred by Millennials (Generation Y, born between 1980 and 2000) in particular (cf. Legnderová, 2014).

The present paper deals with the various internal communication tools utilized by companies in selected regions of the Czech Republic, allowing them to develop their business and stabilize work teams, increasing job satisfaction of their members. The engagement and retention of

promising employees poses a major challenge for organizations, which is even amplified in a global environment (cf. Aguenza and Som, 2012).

Due attention is also devoted to corporate socially responsible initiatives whose attractiveness for employees – the key stakeholders in the company – is constantly rising. Bagińska (2019) claims that “[e]very enterprise should implement CSR rules in its activity”. As Sorensen, Tyson, McKim and Aaron (2014) argue, when choosing an employer, along with the very job offered, candidates consider internal socially responsible activities available. An example of a CSR-related arrangement is a work-life balance sought for especially by Y-generation employees (Legnenderová, 2014). To induce their commitment thus stabilizing the employment in a given firm, it is crucial to offer some competence development opportunities and employee benefit schemes (see Naim and Lenka, 2018).

In addition to pay, job characteristics, professional recognition and personal development, socially responsible behaviour is also a significant factor in retaining employees – work-life balance maintenance representing a good example (Aguenza and Som, 2012). Effective means of achieving this balance are flexible work schedules, part-time work or job sharing as Dizaho, Salleh and Abdullah (2017) point out.

Having examined in-house staff relations, Gawke, Gorgievski and Bakker (2018) confirmed the positive correlation between employee engagement and benefits and rewards available. Among the benefits are also socially responsible practices such as corporate volunteering during work hours, job sharing, offering pet-friendly offices or arranging public collections. According to Basil, Runte, Easwaramoorthy and Barr (2009), corporate support for volunteering benefits both employees and the entire organization. The research showed that Canadian companies passively support employee volunteering in a variety of ways such as unpaid leave (71 %) or work schedule adjustment (78 %), these sensitive CSR efforts boosting employee morale.

A study conducted by Kim, H. R., Lee, M., Lee, H. T. and Kim, N. M. (2010) indicates that corporate social responsibility is related to employee-company identification, CSR initiatives strengthening employees’ commitment.

Apart from pay, an important role in recruiting and motivating employees is played by the benefits offered. Many enterprises rely primarily on a diverse range of benefits to attract the job seekers. Hitka and Kozubíková (2018) maintain that the main motivation factors include basic salary, job security and a good work team. Workforce motivation, however, is a complex continuous process, managers striving to find the optimal motivational mix for performance-oriented employees (cf. Panait, C. A. and Panait, N. G., 2018)

1. Objective and method

The aim of the paper is to assess the perception of traditional PR communication tools with respect to socially responsible activities as a component of human capital management. The article is part of a broader research project focused on public relations and the corporate social responsibility agenda in Czech companies.

The main survey objective was to determine how different communication channels are applied and assessed in recruiting staff and meeting internal corporate goals. At the same time, the perception of CSR communication within the workplace was investigated.

For the survey purposes, staff of various organizations in selected areas of the Czech Republic, namely the South Moravian and Zlín regions, were randomly addressed. The method adopted for collecting data was an online questionnaire developed and administered using a Google Docs form. The questionnaire was submitted throughout the period between May and July 2019. A total of 164 responses were obtained, 81 from the South Moravian Region and 83 from the Zlín Region, women accounting for 70 % and men for 30 % of all the respondents.

The survey was completed by ordinary employees (64 %), heads of departments (17 %), recruiters (5 %), managing directors and executive officers (10 % and 4 %, respectively). A 54% majority of participants attained secondary education, 39 % had a university or college degree and 7 % acquired higher professional education. 64 % of respondents have been employed in their current job for less than 5 years, 12 % have worked in the company for 5–10 years, 10 % have been employed for 11–15 years, 9 % for 16–20 years and just 5 % for more than 20 years.

Individual responses were filtered by frequency in each region.

2. Questionnaire survey results

2.1. Communication tools and their use

In terms of the communication tools applied, most of the respondents agreed that they did not use the traditional media to reach out to potential employees – regardless of current labour market shortcomings –, the most used communication channels being online advertisements followed by the company's website. It is noteworthy that less common communication instruments utilized for recruitment purposes, namely social networks and intranet, were mostly reported by respondents as equally frequent ones.

A similar ranking is given to individual tools in terms of assessing the effectiveness of recruitment. For many respondents, however, advertising on their own website seems more effective than online campaigning and social networks are considered more powerful than the intranet. In any case, the above four instruments are rated as the most useful ones.

Television and radio advertising, on the other hand, were largely chosen to be the least used and least effective tools, the former being considered as slightly more powerful than the latter.

For the internal communication, respondents mainly use email, followed by the intranet. Other traditional methods of internal information transfer are common business meetings.

Audio recordings, mobile applications and teleconferences are the least used instruments of internal communication for respondents in all regions. Despite being utilized only occasionally, interviews – both individual and group ones – are of considerable importance in in-house communication; contrary to yearbooks, which are also rarely used.

The person who most often performs internal communication is the head of the department in the majority of 102 cases. The second and third are the company's executive director and HR manager, conducting communication in 62 and 52 cases reported, respectively.

The most frequent primary internal communication target chosen 81 times by the employees was fulfilling the requirements of the parent company, allowing to infer that a lot of companies

carry out their in-house communication under the direction of an external superior authority. The second and third most common primary goals are to prevent side effects and disseminate specific strategic information, the two options being selected 68 and 67 times, respectively.

2.2. Socially responsible activities

Corporate social responsibility practices have the potential to be significant competitive advantages for all enterprises, regardless of their size, core business or territorial scope. Particular activities are considered socially responsible if they go beyond legally required standards. They are broken down into three pillars – social, economic and environmental. This paper deals with employee-centred activities, i.e. the social pillar, focusing on the benefits that can be described as socially responsible.

When selecting or changing employers, candidates also compare work climate and the team they are currently working for with a potential new job environment. They often ask for a workplace visit or a short meeting with future fellow workers. Before deciding to take up a job, it is also usual for the candidates to check the policies of a new workplace on social networks by questioning current employees.

The two most commonly enjoyed CSR benefits are flexible working hours and part-time jobs – chosen by 54.3 % and 45.1 % of respondents in the South Moravian Region and 32.4 % and 64 % in the Zlín Region, respectively. In both regions, the third most used and recognized CSR activities are ethical behaviour and a good working atmosphere. Surprisingly, job sharing scored the lowest in both the regions, which may be due to the fact that this activity is not yet widely offered in the Czech Republic. The table below presents a list of the most frequently used CSR benefits.

Table 1: CSR benefit utilization (in %)

CSR benefit	South Moravian Region	Zlín Region
Flexible working hours	54,3	32,4
Part-time work	45,1	64,0
Ethical behaviour, good working atmosphere	39,6	47,0
Children's Day in the company	22,0	33,5
Public benefit collections	20,1	22,0
Combating corruption, anti-corruption measures	19,5	35,4
Corporate volunteering during working time	16,5	28,7
Corporate psychologist	14,0	7,9
Compressed working week	9,8	11,6
Dog-friendly office	9,8	8,5

Corporate kindergarten	9,1	10,4
Job sharing	9,1	12,8
None	7,3	4,9
Outplacement	5,5	4,3

Source: authors' own elaboration

Of the total number of respondents, 7.3 % in the South Moravian Region and 4.9 % in the Zlín Region do not reap any socially responsible benefits. In the South Moravian Region, the least used CSR benefits (below 10 %) include a compressed working week, dog-friendly office, corporate nursery school, job sharing and outplacement services. Within the Zlín Region, the least enjoyed advantages are the company psychologist, dog-friendly office and outplacement assistance.

Although CSR benefits are pretty much used – 40.2 % of respondents being aware of their importance –, they do not seem relevant enough when considering job changes. The offer of CSR initiatives is crucial in deciding on the employer change for only 7.3 % of employees, while being meaningless to 52.4 %.

In general, the results of the survey suggest that CSR activities hold a certain attraction, their promotion is justified and can even grab the attention of would-be employees.

Moreover, 63 % of employees surveyed reported that they communicated CSR practices internally when, for example, organizing collections, philanthropic activities or corporate volunteering.

Recommendation

It is apparent that many enterprises do not fully exploit the potential of individual communication tools, ignoring the obvious fact that the most important bearer of information is their very employees. The addressed respondents often do not realize the purpose and effect of in-house communication. Companies are to be therefore encouraged to intensify internal PR and to share information with their staff.

Since many employees recognize neither the specific objectives nor the impact of various forms of communication, executive management should focus primarily on informing their core staff about its intentions and motives. If organizations manage to convince their employees of the rationale behind each phase of the communication process, they will grasp it, engaging in the implementation of the goals set.

Examples are socially responsible activities where the engagement of individual staff members is desirable. Current employees can also make a significant difference in recruiting new staff by word-of-mouth marketing in particular. Investments in various communication tools are wasted if one's own employees are indifferent or even discredit their own business.

Conclusion

164 respondents took part in the survey of the use of internal communication channels for human resources management and in-company PR procedures, encompassing the corporate social responsibility agenda. The results of the questionnaire survey show the usability of communication and motivation tools (CSR benefits in particular) for employees and businesses, which are increasingly faced with labour shortages and high staff turnover.

Many organizations tend to communicate online to reach prospective employees. Candidates then seek out the benefits offered, the most sought for being education allowances.

Corporate social responsibility is considered important by both workforce and organizations, the most commonly used CSR tool being various working time modifications (e.g. flexible working hours). Employees, however, do not perceive CSR benefits as a strong enough incentive to change their employer.

Research still ongoing, the present results do not allow the authors to draw definite conclusions. Essentially, nonetheless, they confirm the findings of previous studies.

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