

Hobby Internal Marketing of Company's Internal Activities to Encourage People Doing Their Job Better – The Case of Georgian Railway

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Abstract

Hobby is a big part of person's motivation to do something well. According to the hypothesis described and explained in this article, many people do their job well because they want to fulfill their dreams at home. Some of these dreams can be described as people's hobbies. We know that hobby is an activity done regularly in one's leisure time for pleasure, but how a company can use this activity regularly to increase either the human capital of its workers or to improve image or organization remains unclear.

To find links between hobby marketing and high moral, image and positive awareness of company in the mind of public, special marketing research was conducted in the Georgian - European Marketing Association. Qualitative marketing research methods have been used in the survey that have shown many surprising things about the importance of hobby marketing in the 21st century. The purpose of the study, to open new directions of the company's internal marketing activities, was achieved.

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Introduction

As the Wall Street Journal wrote, Winston Churchill's hobby was painting landscapes. "For Churchill art was a passionate hobby" (Mcwhirter, 2014). Why should such phenomenon not be used by organizations as a part of their internal marketing?

The question "What is your hobby?" is often asked in job interviews. But who utilizes the factor of personal hobby of the employee? This question is part of the internal marketing research conducted at Georgian Railway Company, one of the oldest companies of Georgia.

In the beginning of hobby research at Georgian Railway, the most meticulous research agent was selected, whose task was to interview employees not only in the head office, but also in several big, average and small railway stations of this prominent organization. We found out that hobby was entertainment mostly for the employees of the Headquarter of this organization, rather than for those who worked at the suburban offices. "It could not be easy to link hobby to some level of income", I thought when the first results of marketing research was obtained. But it is also meaningful assumption to think that hobby as a phenomenon can be well explained by famous Maslow Pyramid.

We would like to encourage business organizations to know more about their employees' free time, go deep into their dreams, ideas, and even participate in their hobbies.

Hobby as a Part of Organization's Internal Marketing

Churchill once wrote that "Painting is complete as a distraction...I know of nothing which, without exhausting the body, more entirely absorbs the mind. Whatever the worries of the hour or the threats of the future, once the picture has begun to flow along; there is no room for them in the mental screen" (Mcwhirter, 2014).

If Churchill was overcoming his great challenges with his hobby, painting, perhaps companies could utilize their employees' hobbies to help them in completing their tasks more efficiently. Somehow encouraging employees through their hobbies looks like philanthropy. "Business literature examines three rationales for corporate philanthropy: through-the-firm giving, corporate statesmanship and profit-motivated giving" (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

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Hobby encouragement by an organization is called Hobby Internal Marketing. This activity should be part of organizations' behavior in the internal affairs. "Internal marketing focuses on achieving effective internal exchanges between the organization and its employee groups as a prerequisite for successful exchanges with external markets" (George, 1990).

How does internal marketing work and how well can it work? This question inspired the special marketing research at Georgian Railway, the biggest Georgian action company, with biggest social responsibilities to its audience and employees.

"The concepts of 'internal marketing' and the 'internal customer' may be applied operationally in two ways. The internal marketing program may be seen as a direct parallel to the conventional external marketing program, using the same concepts and elements, and the same process of customer and segment targeting. Also, the internal marketing concept provides a language for analyzing organizational issues such as the impact of organizational power, political behavior and corporate culture" (Piercy & Morgan, 1991).

If we critically examine the internal marketing concept and delineate its scope by tracing the major developments in the concept, we discover that hobby of employees is still not used for touching a person's heart (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). The question of how leaders act without touching people's hearts is very relevant today.

Marketing scientists understood that "the firms that do not or will not embrace the issues of internal marketing and incorporate those ingredients into their strategic marketing plan will see their market share and profit base erode. Internal promotion can create a positive and/or superior image of the firm and its products in the mind of the customer" (Greene, Walls, & Schrestm, 1994).

Job satisfaction and pride should be used as an internal marketing tool (Arnett, Laverie, Debra, & McLane, 2002), but in order to create a more ambitious plan, companies should utilize their employees' hobbies.

The Research, Problem, Hypothesis and the Methodology

Having read that "most people see their work as either a Job (focus on financial rewards and necessity rather than pleasure or fulfillment; not a major positive part of life), a Career (focus on advancement), or a Calling (focus on enjoyment of fulfilling, socially useful work)" you can have an idea to soften the situation of employment (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997), I had an idea to have employees regard their work and family as interchangeable.

Some companies are symbols of nation. We believe that company, especially one of the biggest symbols of nation, such as Georgian Railway, can turn its employees to big-company-family-members if it uses new type of internal marketing that we called Internal Hobby Marketing.

The questionnaire developed and reported on in this paper was designed to provide initial evidence of the usefulness of the employee-hobby discoveries and distinctions. We asked how easy it is for subordinates of Georgian Railway to classify themselves through their hobbies, and what hobby features are the most significant. Finally we undertook SPSS analysis to find the correlations and linear regressions between highly important variables of hobby related aptitudes.

Accordingly, three hypotheses were established:

- H0 (Zero hypotheses): Probability to increase subordinate's working activities, skills, motivation through encouraging his/her hobby during internal hobby marketing will be equal to the same subordinate's working activities, skills, motivation without encouraging a hobby;
- H1: probability to increase subordinate's working activities, skills, motivation through encouraging his/her hobby during internal hobby marketing will be higher than the same subordinate's working activities, skills, motivation without encouraging a hobby;
- H2: probability to increase subordinate's working activities, skills, motivation through encouraging his/her hobby during internal hobby marketing will be lower than the same subordinates working activities, skills, motivation without encouraging a hobby.

The Method of Survey and the Results

The research method that we used was in-depth interviewing of managers of Georgian Railway Company. The Sampling method the research process utilized was convenience random sampling. The Questionnaire, created together with the Georgian-European Marketing Association, was called "Marketing Questionnaire to Study Interrelations between Hobby Encouragement and Working Motivation" (Appendix 1).

The headquarter employees participating in this survey are professionals of technical sciences. 20 percent of them are scientific degree holders. Others have graduated from universities and most of them have master's degrees. Their education and social status should encourage them to have hobbies. Before we started hobby marketing research, even he colleagues that are close knew nothing about each other's hobbies. The results of the research were astonishing, as more than 85% of people working at the headquarter of Georgian railway had hobbies. But as we guessed from non-direct questions, because Georgian economy was not sustainable, these persons could not afford to sustain their hobbies.

How frequently were they engaging in their hobbies? Only 11% of the interviewed population used their hobby as sustainable, periodic and systematic entertainment. Others, 89% of the interviewed persons would engage in their hobby systematically and periodically "if they had enough time".

After our qualitative marketing research with the headquarter employees, the research group started to interview those members who strongly believed that hobby had no influence on their ability to work better and it was only entertainment. We asked them in the final part of the marketing research to describe an image of their abstractly imagined colleague who returns to his/her office after the weekend. As a matter of fact, Georgian population has no strong tradition of weekends, but despite this some have adopted it from Western countries. So the answers were the following:

- "I see my success-oriented colleague coming to his job after he spent some time with his family and kids", said one interviewed person who did not believe in hobbies.

- "And what was he doing there?" asked the psychologist from our research team.

- "He was playing with kids and also cultivating his grapes at Dachá", was the answer.

The psychologist identified later that some employees did not like to identify their hobbies in order not to be detached from their family activities. When this man was cultivating his grapes, although such activity could be linked to the traditions of his ancestors, in reality he was engaging in his hobby.

The questions about the possibility of the company to invest in or to encourage the hobbies of its railway managers resulted in some doubtful thoughts among interviewed persons.

“Why should the company encourage my hobby?” A manager said angrily. The research group assumed that this person had no trust in the intentions of his own organization. Some others also shared the idea that hobby can be a secret, but others, 34% of interviewed managers, show their willingness to find such employer, investing not only in their working places but also into their free hours to fulfill their dreams and participate in hobbies.

The research analysis was made when all the results were gathered. We carefully structured all answers, and discussed the possibility of success through Hobby Internal Marketing in the company encouraging its employees to follow some interesting leisure activities.

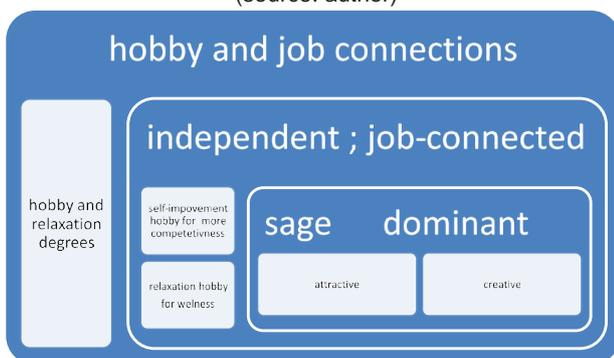
The Matrix of Hobby Internal Marketing

The above mentioned research shows that having a hobby, even secretly from others, makes people come to their jobs with high optimism, high morale, and a priority to exchange their own skill for salary better. According to our assessment, having a hobby is related to a person's working capacity, regardless of their profession.

For example, for a historian, teaching history at an university, the hobby of collecting swords and daggers of the period of great King Tamar of Georgia would be great advantage to his/her professional image and reputation. Hobby has some advantage in personal branding too. A person with a hobby is distinguished from the persons having only daily duties. Accordingly, the human resource manager with a hobby of jogging and hiking will recruit mainly sports-oriented people, thinking that they can be more competitive than those who are dwindling on the sport place. So the idea of understanding our colleagues through their hobbies is also attractive. If the president of a bank knows that his accountant has hobby, alpinism, he/she will think highly of the strong character of his employee, given the alpinist's preparedness to overcome difficult challenges and risks.

Our research team found some categories of hobby inclusion in the internal marketing approaches of the company. The following degrees of hobby and relaxation on the vertical axis of our matrix were assumed (see Table 1):

Table 1. MHIM The Matrix of Hobby Internal Marketing (source: author)



- Relaxation hobby for wellness;
- Self-improvement hobby for more competitiveness;

From research it was also possible to establish another category on the horizontal axis, divided into:

- Independent hobby;
- Job, profession connected hobby.

What Explains the Matrix of Hobby Internal Marketing (MHIM)

The Matrix of Hobby Internal Marketing makes it easy to understand human resources of the company to explain their motivations, their attitudes, and the activities of their free time. Why do people run out of their offices? They leave their offices to rest. But how do they rest, and what is rest for them? Through this research, I found that people either in Georgian Railway or in any company around the world can be divided into following types:

- Attractive – engaging in a hobby for relaxation and wellness, independently from their profession not linked to their professional goals. They rest from their profession and especially from their jobs, which they don't hate but also don't love. The professionals of the internal marketing of any company can utilize these interesting people, and make them come back to their company. Internal marketing can return these people from their virtual, abstractly built reality to their colleagues. The hobby of such Attractive people can influence the motion of any enterprise to a new level. The teams in a company can be built by the people who share similar hobbies. In such modern type of company, people must find their hobbies and utilize them.

- Creative people –have some great hobbies that help them to relax but at the same time, their hobby equips them better with professional skills. If the marketing manager of a corporation collects the labels of wine bottles and whiskies, this person finally can turn this collection into his/her own creativity, which can be desired for any marketing department and company.

- Sage – is the person who has a distinguished hobby that improves his/her competitiveness, but has no direct linkage to his/her job or profession. The Sage person, improving his/her competitiveness, for example reading old history books, annals, gathering literature in bookstores, collecting postmarks, in some cases can be valuable to the company. The Sage, through his/her improved knowledge and sharpness of mind can find solutions either for the corporation or his/her distinguished wants.

- Dominant person - has a job-connected hobby and is devoted to his/her self-improvement. He/she is like an inventor who, while even seating at home during the holidays, builds the new model of space rocket or satellite and improves the details of landing on the Red Planet.

If the internal marketing managers know about the above mentioned types of hobby followers, they can start working on special projects that meet the desires of their employees.

Results

If probability to increase subordinate's working activities, skills, motivation through encouraging his/her hobby during internal hobby marketing will be higher than the subordinate's working activities, skills, motivation without encouraging a hobby, than company managers must move to another level. This level, called Hobby Internal Marketing, can be divided into following stages:

- Companies with well-shaped mission, goals and objectives can include some benefit plans for protecting its employees through supporting their free time activities, especially hobbies;

- Internal marketing professionals must identify different hobby followers according to the abovementioned matrix.

- Identifying the four types of hobby followers - attractive, creative, sage and dominant - will help the internal marketing strategist to establish four different benefit packages for those employees who can participate in the process of turning any organization into corporation with team culture and competitiveness on the market.

- Hobby as a part of human capital of the employees of the company must either turn into intangible asset of the company or some asset improving brand equity of the corporation.

Conclusion

As our study shows, the hobby of one's subordinates can become an effective tool of internal marketing in modern companies. These companies can use the strategy of encouraging human resources by rewarding their abilities to fight stress using interesting and attractive hobbies, just as Winston Churchill tried to defeat his own stress by painting. Corporations can study their own staff, as well as their spiritual and intellectual desires to encourage them to develop as professionals and individuals.

From my point of view, the hobby of human resources remains yet to be fully used and understood by today's corporations. The Matrix of Hobby Internal Marketing (MHIM) actually offers practical tools of dividing the hobbies of one's employees into job-connected and independent ones. Then they can be utilized in the planning of the process which turns any entity from simple firm into successful corporation.

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Appendix: The questionnaire

The Questionnaire:

A. 1 What is your hobby? Please describe it:

A. 2 How many hours do you spend on you hobby weekly?

A.3 Is your hobby supporting your professional activities?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Don't know

A. 4 Is this hobby protecting your career rise?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Don't know

A. 5 Do your colleagues know about your hobby?

1. Yes

2. No

A. 6 Can you openly speak about your hobby at your job?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Don't know

A. 7 Is possible if your boss encouraging your hobby by material stimuli?

1. Yes

2. No

A. 8 What you could say if your boss was encouraging your hobby by some stimulus?

1. I could be surprised

2. It could be awesome

3. I could not be surprised

4. I would continue to work in the same way

5. I would continue to work better

6. In my job I would feel myself better

7. In my job I would not feel myself better

8. I would not allow my boss to reward me for my hobby

9. I would not change

D. 1 Your income:

a) More than 500 GEL, b) more than 500 GEL to 1200 GEL, c) more than 1200 GEL to 2000 GEL, d) more than 2000