

Chapter 26

Communication in a Healthcare Company

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ABSTRACT

The chapter discusses the marketing strategies of private Romanian healthcare clinics from a communication perspective, advancing methods to improve customer outreach. The study puts together data from the private medical services market and comparatively analyzes the marketing strategies, making recommendations towards the optimal cost-benefit mix.

THE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF THE PRIVATE CLINICS FROM ROMANIA

The Concept of Strategy in a Firm

The strategy in a firm is the pattern of the major objectives, purposes or goals and essential policies and plans for achieving those goals, stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or it is to be.

It is considered that a company needs a strategy when the resources are finite, when there is uncertainty about competitive strengths and behavior, when commitment of resources is irreversible, when decisions must be coordinated between far-flung and over time and when there is uncertainty

about control of the initiative. Strategy provides a unified sense of direction to which all members of the organization can relate (Payne, 1993).

Strategy is concerned with the deployment of potential for results and the development of a reaction capability to adapt to environmental changes. Generally, organizations have identifiable existing strategic perspectives, however not many organizations have an explicit strategy for the intended future. The absence of an explicit strategy is frequently the result of a lack of top management involvement and commitment required for the development of proper perspectives of the future within the scope of current corporate activities.

Strategy specifies the direction. Its intent is to influence the behavior of competitors and the evolution of the market to the advantage of the company making the strategy. A strategy statement includes a description of the new competitive

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equilibrium to be created, the cause-and-effect relationships that will bring it about, and the logic to support the course of action.

Defining the Marketing and the Communication Strategies

The *marketing strategy* can be defined as an endeavor by a corporation to differentiate itself positively from its competitors, using its relative corporate strengths to better satisfy customer needs in a given environmental settings. It is the marketing concept of building an organization around the profitable satisfaction of customer needs and it has helped firms to achieve success in high-growth, moderately competitive markets (Porter, 1981).

The formation of marketing strategy requires the following three decisions:

1. **Where to Compete:** That is, it requires a definition of a market (for example, competing across an entire market or in one or more segments).
2. **How to Compete:** That is, it requires a means for competing (for example, introducing a new product to meet a customer need or establishing a new image for an existing product).
3. **When to Compete:** That is it requires timing of market entry (for example, being first in the market or waiting until primary demand is established).

Many companies are trying to develop unique strategic marketing procedures, processes, systems and models. Experience shows, however, that most companies' marketing strategies are burdened with undue complexity. They are bogged down in principles that produce similar responses to competition. In order to be successful and competitive, companies should take into consideration several facts about the marketing strategy implementation that is as important as the strategy creation. So,

the following are the common problems associated with marketing strategy formulation and implementation:

1. Too Much Emphasis on "Where" to Compete and Not Enough on "How" to Compete

Experience shows that companies have devoted a lot more attention to identifying markets in which to compete than to the means to compete in these markets. Information on where to compete is usually easy to copy. "How" information, on the other hand, is tough to get and tough to copy. It concerns the fundamental workings of the business and the company.

In the next era of marketing, companies will need to focus more on how to compete in entirely new ways. In this endeavor, creativity will play a crucial role.

2. Too Little Focus on Uniqueness and Adaptability in Strategy

Most marketing strategies lack uniqueness. For example, specialty stores increasingly look alike because they use the same layout and stock the same merchandise. In the 1970's, when market information was scarce, companies pursued new and different approaches. But today's easiest access to information often leads companies to follow identical strategies to the detriment of all (Schultz et al., 1993).

Ideas for uniqueness and adaptability may flow from unknown sources. Companies should, therefore, be sensitive and explore all possibilities.

3. Inadequate Emphasis on "When" to Compete

Because of the heavy emphasis on where and how to compete, many marketing strategies give inadequate attention to "when" to compete. Any move in the marketplace should be adequately

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