

DENYING THE PROMISE?

The crucial role of HR in delivering marketing success

The first thought of many readers may be that we are talking here about the best way to recruit a new brand manager, or some trendy team-building techniques for the product group. But the role of HR is much deeper, and much more crucial, than this.

Because, in essence, the marketing department only makes the promises on behalf of the company. The crucial *delivery* of those promises, though, depends on staff in all the other departments. Not just the front-line teams, for example in sales, delivery and customer service that touch customers directly, but also the back-room boys. Just think of your own frustration with a tedious automated telephone system or a hard-to-navigate website and you will see what I mean.

This focus is so important that the Forum has set up a new special interest group to examine and debate the key principles and to drive forward best practice in the industry, as Anthony Thomson describes on p21.

Susan Hetrick is chairing the new SIG, and she and Professor Graeme Martin of the Edinburgh Business School review the latest academic and industry thinking on the crucial role of HR in helping companies to define and sustain both brand and reputation.

Part of this role is through the establishment of a proper culture – the underlying mutual understanding that allows, or perhaps empowers, employees

individually to “do the right things” and, collectively, to deliver a coherent whole. Ian Buckingham relates the recent experiences of three very different organizations in driving through a new focus on culture.

A related theme is employee engagement – the extent to which staff feel attached to the organization and its aims. Neil Barber describes some of the key principles, and shows how a high level of engagement can deliver real value to companies, customers and the employees themselves.

And Peter Hutton develops this further by explaining his concept of brand energy. He outlines the way in which internal communications – often delegated by default rather than design to HR and given a low priority – can focus this energy on delivering a company’s marketing promises.

In a new feature, *Editorial briefing*, I have set down a few thoughts on the generally-ignored topic of lifetime *employee* value – which reveals the real cost of managing recruitment and retention badly, and the true value of doing it well.

And finally, we asked a few practitioners to give us their views on the ways in which marketing and HR do, or should, work together, in about two hundred words. Brief and to the point, but some interesting perspectives and insights.