An often-overlooked Opportunity for Agencies: Inward Marketing
By Robert Lauterborn

Often overlooked by marketers, Inward Marketing can significantly enhance the impact of an IMC campaign. It’s also an overlooked opportunity for agencies to deepen relationships with clients.

“Think of employees as your first and most important customers,” Rick Kash advises in The New Law of Demand & Supply. He’s not just talking about marketers trying to sell products or services to their own workers, although that all by itself is an overlooked opportunity for agencies planning IMC campaigns, and maybe a great place to start.

But Inward Marketing has a far bigger role in a marketer’s potential success than whatever incremental volume might accrue from sales to employees. A mentor of mine used to shake his jowls and say, “Management proposes, but the organization disposes.” Liberally translated, what he meant is: “If you don’t have the company’s employees lined up behind what it is you’re trying to accomplish, it isn’t going to happen.”

This can imply anything from making sure that your client company’s employees have seen and understand the purpose of advertising before the public sees it, to building a Behavioral TimeLine® to assign roles and responsibilities to employees for the success of a program.

One of the most successful Inward Marketing programs ever was Avis’s famous “We try harder” campaign, where the involvement of its employees was the essence of the campaign itself, not an optional add-on. The car rental company offered nothing materially different from any of its competitors and charged higher prices than many, but it used its employees to create a Unique Buying Proposition® – that Avis people would go the extra mile for customers. Employees at every level were motivated and trained to perform their assigned tasks at a consistently high level, and their performance was evaluated not just by supervisors but by customers. Every customer was asked to rate the service he or she had received, and encouraged to single out employees who had “tried harder” to please them. Employees thus recognized were celebrated and rewarded, and so were work teams with consistently high scores. Morale soared, and so did Avis’s share of market. So did the income of the agency (Doyle Dane Bernbach) that not only developed the advertising campaign but produced all the collateral material to support it, inside and out – including buttons saying “We try harder” in 38 languages, which became collector’s items! (Anyone who’s rented cars from Avis recently probably agrees they need to revive the campaign.)

Another inestimable benefit for DDB was the intimate involvement the inward marketing part of the campaign gave it at every level of the client organization, from the Chairman of the Board who proudly wore his button for a photo op to the Mexican guy who washed the cars and got his own button in Spanish. Talk about barriers to exit!
Second Wind will be offering a workshop on Inward Marketing this fall to help agencies identify and implement inward marketing opportunities for clients.