

# Effective Work Cultures: The Alignment Between Marketing/Communications and HR Efforts

Terry Arya<sup>1</sup>, Lesley Page<sup>2</sup>, Shelia Boysen<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chief Marketing & Business Development Officer, Christian Brothers Services, Romeoville, Illinois

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor and Chair in the Organizational Leadership and Management Department Lewis University, Romeoville, Illinois

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Organizational Leadership, Lewis University, Romeoville, Illinois

---

## Abstract

The complex nature of organizational culture and structures often rely on departmental cooperation and teamwork. The current paper focuses on two dominant organizational functions: HR and marketing/communication. It is common for HR to oversee the internal functions of an organization related to onboarding, training and exiting practices. In comparison, marketing/communication functions present the outward or external facing communication related to organizational mission, purpose and strategy. Both functions need to work seamlessly to support employees and customers alike, while expanding strategic and marketplace reach. Implications for enhancing a collaborative work culture are discussed.

**Keywords:** organizational culture; collaborative work practices; HR functions; marketing functions; organizational

## 1. INTRODUCTION: CULTURE AND CONTEXT

Organizations are complex structures guided by their principles, values and beliefs (Nahavandi, 2015, Wren, 1995). These factors directly create, influence and sustain an organization's culture. As a frequently studied topic of organizational behavior, organizational culture can influence the artifacts, policies and procedures of the organization, all of which can be considered formal mechanisms or levers of organizational culture. Examples include the organization's mission, vision and purpose as well as policies that inform hiring, training and performance expectations. Equally powerful are the norms by which leaders/employees work, methods of communication and the notion of "how things really get done," which reflect the informal mechanisms of organizational culture. Informal levers of culture include unspoken work patterns, preferences related to styles or modes of communication, and workflow norms. Both formal and informal aspects of organizational life are important when understanding an organization's culture (Schein, 2017).

Hall's taxonomy of cultural dimensions distinguishes between high and low context cultures (Hall & Hall, 1990). In a high context culture, artifacts of culture are more pronounced and it is typically easier to understand the purpose, mission and execution of workflow. In contrast, low context culture patterns become understood over time, through informal dialog or discussion, or trial and error when learning the "right" way to achieve results. There are parallels that can be drawn between high and low contextual dimensions and formal/informal culture respectively (Hall & Hall, 1990; Schein, 2017). In other words, when paying attention to organizational effectiveness, it is equally important to focus on those aspects of the culture which are overt or pronounced as well as the unwritten norms of organizational behavior.

Interestingly, organizational culture can be internal or inward facing in terms of the work experience created by leaders and employees within the organization itself. These inward facing aspects of organizational culture create

the norms and patterns by which work is completed, policies are followed and/or outcomes are measured. Organizational culture can also have an external or outward facing capacity too, sometimes referred to as organizational image or identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). An organization's image or identity is most impressed upon those outside of the organization (e.g., customers, vendors, suppliers, consumers, etc.) who see how the organization exists in the marketplace and among its competition. Organizational identity and image can affect employee awareness of the culture too, as the concepts often overlap with the mission and purpose of the organization.

Internal and external cultural awareness is especially important when considering different functional or departmental roles within the organization. Simply put, some functions may be responsible for external or outward facing constructs of organizational culture, while others may focus more exclusively on the internal or inward culture within the organization itself.

## **1.1 Organizational culture and structure**

As mentioned above, organizational culture can include functional and departmental divisions, which separate the organization by the operations it performs such as marketing, HR, production, sales, and manufacturing. The goal of this paper is to review the influence of organizational culture on two specific functional areas: marketing and HR.

### *Marketing Functions*

Marketing functions within an organization are multi-faceted and include communication channels (internal and external), promotional/product materials, and practices to keep employees and customers abreast of company activities, achievements and goals. Marketing can also provide social networks and connectivity points within the organization, which offer support to both employees and customers (Leung, Luthans, Jensen & Xu, 2013). Organizational culture can support increased performance through marketing responsiveness and product strategy change. Specifically, alignment of marketing strategy is fundamental to understand the competition (competitive intelligence insight) and improve responsiveness to secure scarce resources (Wei, Samiee & Lee, 2013). It is common for marketing to work with other departments within the organization to monitor internal/external communication and enhance performance in new and emerging markets (Wei, Samiee & Lee, 2013). These trends support marketing's role in conveying the organization's culture and identity externally.

### *HR Function*

In comparison, employees working in HR provide support for employees within the company (e.g., benefits, career planning, and training) as well as hiring/firing functions as well. Too often, HR exists as a "catch all" for organizational policies and practices that impact employees throughout the company. Additionally, HR practices are often governed by employment law and guidelines. However, as human capital and employee satisfaction grow in importance to overall organizational success, the role of HR has become even more prominent. HR can serve as a role model for internal practices, behaviors, and expectations that create a culture based on trust and respect, rather than one based on fear or compliance. Now more than ever, employees come to work to feel valued and add value. HR can play a large role in an employee's career cycle as well, from onboarding to training to career transitions to leadership/talent development (Becker & Huselid, 2006).

## **1.2 A more strategic future**

To adapt to the changing needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations, productive organizational cultures are emphasizing the strategic benefits that can be associated with both marketing and HR functions within today's organizations. This new paradigm focuses on the important need of human capital and building relationships (Berthon, Pitt & Morris, 1996). Marketing functions can be associated with relationship-building that is externally focused on customers, clients and consumers. These are undoubtedly important relationships to build and add to the strategic plan for

organizational success and expanded market share. HR functions complement those of marketing, yet have an internal focus on employee well-being and productivity within the organization. Together these form a powerful dyadic relationship that can add strategic value throughout the organization that is supported by its culture (Berthon, Pitt & Morris, 1996). In other words, a culture that supports open communication, fair employment practices, and opportunities for development and growth provides ample ground for strategic HR initiatives as well as the need to market such qualities both within and outside of the organization.

Recent research (Stokes, Smith, Wall, Moore, Rowland, Ward & Cronshaw, 2019) focuses on the need for resiliency and ambidexterity when it comes to fundamental functions within the organization. Resiliency and adaptability have traditionally been associated with more effective organizational practices, shining more attention on futuristic needs and a focus on multiple perspectives and stakeholders. This flexibility lends itself both to marketing and HR functions within the organization as there is a growing need for more fluid information sharing, data analytics and data-informed decision making (Weathers & Aragon, 2019).

Additionally, more strategic alignments focus on a connection between human resource management (HRM) policies with more targeted relationship marketing campaigns (Giannakisa & Harker, 2014). There is an opportunity for both marketing and HR functions to implement corporate level strategic competencies and alignment to company goals and outcomes. Specifically, there is a movement from product to service–centricity (Giannakisa & Harker, 2014). This service threshold connects to the stronger need for analytic and critical thinking competencies that pull both the internal and external focus of the organization, and its culture, together more cohesively.

The current paper explores the collaborative and adaptive relationship between marketing and HR functions in a non-profit organization. Survey results and employee input support the cross-functional and collaborative nature of this relationship and its benefit on organizational culture and employee well-being. The purpose of this study was to consider the research question: *How do effective work cultures leverage the alignment between HR and marketing/communications efforts?*

## **2. CASE NARRATIVE**

This paper provides a detailed analysis of one nonprofit organization. Programs and initiatives at the company have created a culture based on positivity, respect and trust. Specific examples of the company’s efforts and qualitative data collected from an annual culture survey serve as the basis for this analysis. IRB approval was received to conduct an on-site survey, and leaders of the organization approved using the company name and information about specific initiatives in the analysis.

### **2.1 About the Company**

Celebrating its 60 year anniversary in 2020 and headquartered in Romeoville, Illinois, Christian Brothers Services (CBS) is a nonprofit, Catholic organization that administers cooperative programs in the areas of health, retirement, property/casualty and technology as well as financial, administrative and Catholic school consulting to church congregations, organizations and dioceses internationally.

The CBS mission statement is, “CBS exemplifies the Lasallian tradition by understanding the needs of our members, protecting the human and financial resources of institutions and guiding member organizations in finding practical solutions to business needs” (<https://www.cbsservices.org/cbs-history.html>, 2020). The Lasallian traditions the company follows stems from principles established by Saint John Baptist de La Salle, patron saint of teachers and the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools who were known for educating the young, especially the poor.

Founded in 1960 by Brother Joel Damian, FSC, CBS began as a mutual cooperative purchasing group for Chicago area high schools conducted by the De La Salle Christian Brothers. Over the past 60 years, the company has grown to administer and serve seven Trusts. CBS and these Trusts are not insurance companies but are plans that provide a variety of programs to congregations, organizations, and dioceses both in the United States and internationally. As a

nonprofit organization, CBS contributes to the initiatives supported by the Brothers of the Christian Schools that continue today over 300 years after the passing of St. de la Salle. (<https://www.cbsservices.org/cbs-history.html>, 2020)

From its inception, CBS has orchestrated the concept of pooling resources to help define insurance and financial needs and requirements for Catholic organizations. Doing so allows such congregations and individual institutions greater financial strength and leverage to purchase better coverage, with higher limits, at significantly reduced costs; benefits that commercial insurance carriers cannot offer nonprofit organizations.

## **2.2 CBS' Work Culture Journey**

The CBS work culture journey started when the company formed. Over time and without dedicated effort, factors began shaping the work culture, including growth, technological advances, hiring practices and changing times. Decades later, the company intentionally works at instilling an effective work culture and is an employer of choice, largely because of the work culture.

### *Early Beginnings of CBS' Work Culture*

At first, like many organizations, the work culture at CBS developed organically. The work culture was impacted by such facets as its location on the campus of a faith-based university, the physical presence of Brothers, religious artifacts as office décor and norms to include prayer in gatherings. These early beginnings of a work culture would eventually take shape and evolve to best practice levels.

### *Hiring for Work Culture and Skill Fit*

The word about CBS' mission spread and made for a compelling backdrop to a growing company. Worldwide mission initiatives were being funded by CBS' modest margin. This benevolent giving continues, proving to be more than a competitive advantage, but also a way to draw mission-focused job candidates. CBS' work culture continues to be impacted by its ability to attract employees wanting to make a difference in both their role and in the world. Hiring for culture and skill fit is a critical part of what makes for a successful CBS work culture. Maximum levels of employee engagement and productivity result when job candidates are assessed through the dual lens of qualification *and* work-culture fit.

### *Intentionality and Work Culture*

As CBS continued to grow, a work culture began taking shape more intentionally. With added employees came an increasing number of company events and traditions, which framed a culture characterized by service, dedication, commitment, excellence, teamwork, respect and compassion. The company held fundraisers for colleagues going through hardship; established special service awards and recognition opportunities, and consistently showed employees appreciation. The company participated in nationwide initiatives like Customer Care Week and National Save for Retirement Week. In addition, employees were invited to attend CBS University, a program designed to enlighten participants about the CBS history, mission, values, structure, Lasallian heritage and vision. The work culture continued to form more purposefully with each activity, meeting, celebration, program and communication. CBS was routinely behaving in ways that would soon be defined in terms of core values.

## **2.3 Leadership and Work Culture: Company-Wide Culture Surveys**

After many decades, company leadership changed, and CBS hired a new president and chief executive officer. Brother Michael Quirk, FSC, Ed.D, came onboard as only the third company leader in 50 years. Under Brother

Michael's direction, the company distributed a work culture survey to employees to gather their perspectives and ideas. The survey gave employees the chance to rate the work culture and make suggestions for improvements. Survey results were reported to employees and included action items to further advance the work culture. Employees knew the company heard their input as ideas became a reality. In addition, employees felt respected because the leadership team listened and acted on suggestions.

### *CBS Culture Champions*

One of the action items resulting from the original survey was creating a team called the CBS Culture Champions (CCCs). The CCCs are a cross-divisional team tasked to promote the company mission, bolster company spirit and enhance team building. The CCCs achieve this in many ways and visit other companies with high functioning work cultures to hear their stories, glean ideas and be inspired. The CCCs helped catapult a good work culture to a great work culture and are entrusted with important work such as helping to define the company's core values

### *Core Values and Work Culture*

CBS leaders invited the CCCs to team together to modernize the company's core values. CBS was nearing its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and leadership recognized that after decades of growth and marketplace changes, the values should be reestablished. The process of determining core values was rigorous and included researching the core values of similar companies and those with admirable work cultures. As part of the process, the CCCs encouraged CBS employees to surface words that embodied the essence of the company. Since many of the words meant the same thing, they then grouped the words into categories. The employees discussed those categories, comparing them to the core values research then crafted overarching word choices to capture the essence of the common themes that had emerged. They announced the final set of core values as: Lasallian, Humble Stewards, Servant Leaders, Relational and One Company. The HR division of CBS explains that the company's core values reflect how employees behave both internally with coworkers and externally with stakeholders (B. Blanton, personal communication, July 24, 2019). Employees celebrated the core values, and every employee received a mug inscribed with those words. The management team facilitated lunch and learn sessions about each core value to clarify the meaning and engage employees with the core values.

**Lasallian.** As the company's spiritual touchstone, St. John Baptiste de La Salle established Lasallian principles as faith in the presence of God, concern for the poor and social justice, respect for all people, an inclusive community and quality education.

**Humble Stewards.** Being a careful steward of resources and operating with an approach of modesty.

**Servant Leader.** Choosing to serve others first by placing attention on the needs of members and other stakeholders.

**Relational.** Connecting in a friendly and personable manner. Relating well with others.

**One Company.** Working with attention on the company as a whole rather than individual divisions.

The company features employees that exemplify a core value on posters around the building. The posters explain how the employees demonstrate a core value and are periodically updated to feature a rotation of employees. The core values became common language used to recognize employees and were eventually included in the annual performance management process.

## 2.4 HR and Work Culture

To infuse work culture into performance management, CBS updated its employee appraisal process to include reflection about how employees demonstrate the core values, and introduced a section in the appraisal form asking for examples of how the employee exemplifies each one. Additionally, managers were encouraged to create ownership through cascading aligned goals. This goal-setting approach helps employees understand the connectivity needed to succeed with projects. The HR division provided oversight to the performance management evolution by offering training on the new expectations. They shared examples of cascading goals along with sample language describing how an employee might represent the core values. Linking performance management and core values has helped align the hiring and performance appraisal processes, contributing to an engaged and productive work culture. In addition, HR distributed total compensation documentation to employees to show the full value of their benefit package, including time off, health benefits, reimbursement programs, etc. Employees were further enlightened about the many ways the company compensates them for their efforts.

## 2.5 Signs of an Effective CBS Work Culture

An inspired and engaged workforce began driving breakthrough results. For example, the company started receiving awards in areas such as customer care and communications. Also, more companywide teams began to form, including a Health Initiative Team (HIT). The HIT focuses on employee well-being in ways such as providing exercise opportunities, healthy snack options, and educational information. Focus was placed on company festivities ranging from seasonal parties to unique celebrations. For example, employees reflect on the company mission with French pastries in honor of the company's French heritage on Founder's Day. CBS began encouraging employees to participate in community service projects and could do so on company time as part of a "Demonstrating Lasallian Values" initiative. Traditions were started like an annual "Office Olympics" day, allowing employees to participate in team activities that united employees from all divisions. The CBS leadership team remains committed to sustaining a highly-engaged and effective work culture, having experienced beneficial outcomes.

### *Maintaining a Flourishing CBS Work Culture at Every Level*

The CBS work culture is one of shared accountability and respect. Employees understand that they contribute to a company's work culture in the way they show up each day, participate, interact, perform, respect each other and contribute. The company offers leaders, managers, supervisors and team leads professional development opportunities knowing that their leadership skills drive an engaged work culture. Everyone in a company needs to recognize that they are an essential part of the work environment. Equally important is a strong communications effort to promote the company activity, which impacts work culture.

### *Marketing as a Work Culture Driver*

The CBS Marketing team is an important work culture catalyst as they promote the company mission, news and information, largely to external and outward audiences. The employee newsletter features segments about the core values, CCCs, mission, Lasallian heritage and other updates. CBS' magazine includes feature articles about the mission of its members. The company's social media channels promote the work culture in numerous ways, ranging from announcing employees who win the "CBS Spirit" awards to promoting employee involvement in community service projects. The marketing team also created the building's wall art featuring a collage of images depicting the CBS mission. They crafted a unique lobby display to promote stories of the Christian Brothers and a digital presentation consistently showcases company milestones on monitors throughout the building. The CBS marketing team instinctively and proactively surfaces opportunities to promote the company mission and values, which is a critical cog in a company running with an effective and dynamic work culture.

## **2.6 The Intersection of Marketing and HR**

A significant focus of the marketing function is to only promise what can be delivered. If a product fails to live up to customer standards, loyalty and trust wane and a brand can collapse. Similarly, if an organization promises a work environment that cannot actually be offered, it can hurt employee morale. While creating an image to attract top talent is important, this culture needs to be authentically created and sustained.

Markets change, and so do employee expectations. Just as brands need to evolve to stay competitive, employer brands have to change with employee expectations. It is important to stay on top of basic trends, such as salary data, and also know what benefits competitors are providing.

### **Connecting Work Culture and Strategic Planning**

CBS leadership includes work culture related projects in the company's strategic plan to sustain an engaged and productive work culture. For example, every employee is participating in an ongoing online education program designed to help employees understand the company's Lasallian heritage and better connect their role with the company mission. This project falls under the goal of fostering an organizational culture that values agility and innovation, which supports the larger objective to innovate and develop. Creating "I am Lasallian" posters is another example of a work culture project, which supports CBS' strategic plan. The posters spotlight employees who exemplify a specific core value.

### **Work Culture Surveys as a Key Performance Indicator**

Measures are important to gauging the success of the strategic plan, so the company routinely issues a work culture survey to employees. The CBS work culture is continually monitored and enhanced through these periodic employee surveys, which generate feedback and ideas. Historical data is used to benchmark survey scores to ensure employee satisfaction stays at top levels. Open-ended survey questions allow for ideas and input, so there is both quantitative and qualitative data collected. The CBS Board of Directors review the work culture survey scores as a key performance indicator. The survey process guards against workplace complacency and creates an important feedback mechanism. Results from the 2019 CBS work culture survey shaped the implications and conclusions of this paper.

### **Ongoing Commitment to Work Culture**

Perpetual dedication, passion, and drive are needed to sustain a desirable work culture. Nourishing an excellent work culture is a conscious choice made by CBS. The company realizes that it is not fully defined by the marketplace, the competition, past successes or any one dynamic. CBS recognizes that it is free to choose and develop an exceptional work culture. In doing so, the entire company enjoys knowing it worked together toward a more engaged and dynamic work culture. A culture of engagement and high performance motivates CBS employees to do their best for the success of the company and for the benefit of their customers and clients.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This paper provides a detailed analysis of one organization, Christian Brothers Services (CBS). Specific examples of the company's efforts and both quantitative and qualitative data collected from a culture survey serve as the basis for this analysis. IRB approval was received to conduct an on-site survey.

### **3.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to consider the research question: *How do effective work cultures leverage the alignment between HR and marketing/communications efforts?* There is synergy between these two functions and how that alignment is strategically controlled can enhance an organization's culture and effectiveness. As discussed previously in this paper, both HR and marketing functions can serve to align and inform employees around the

organization's culture. The aim of this paper is to explore those mechanisms and how both departments can work collaboratively to foster organizational effectiveness.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The current research used a case study to explore the research question within CBS. A 24-item survey was issued to employees of the organization. The authors of this paper and the company's leadership created the survey instrument. To ensure content validity, the survey was shared with one additional senior manager at the company to verify the survey questions were written effectively to elicit meaningful data (Leedy, Ormrod & Johnson, 2019).

The survey allowed participants to provide feedback and rate components of the company's existing work culture and communication with the assurance of confidentiality. Demographic data was collected from survey participants, including age and rank within the company. The survey contained both scaled and open-ended questions.

The qualitative, open-ended questions allowed participants to express their feelings and ideas and focused on how participants feel about their work culture and preferred communication methods at work. The quantitative questions included questions about the extent to which employees and leaders can impact organizational culture as well as the organization's communication practices. These quantitative questions incorporated a three-point Likert-type response scale with "to no extent," "to some extent," and "to a large extent" as response options.

#### *Setting and Participants*

CBS is a private, nonprofit organization that provides managerial services to organizations. In addition to departments focusing on specific products and services, the company also has divisions including administration, finance, HR, information technology, marketing, office services, and maintenance. With approximately 250 employees, the gender split breaks down to 76% female employees, the average employee age is 50.5, and the average employee tenure is 8.3 years. The survey was distributed to approximately 200 current employees who work at the company's headquarters. The participants represented all levels of employees, including senior management. The survey response rate was 72%, with 144 of 200 employees responding. The highest percentage of survey responses came from professionals with no managerial duties.

#### *Survey Process*

The survey was uniquely created for the company and distributed online to employees electronically. There were two steps in the survey process. Employees first received an email with a link to the confidential survey and information pertaining to informed consent. Next, a reminder email was sent to employees regarding participating in the survey approximately one week before the survey ended.

## **4. RESULTS**

The 2019 CBS employee survey reveals the underpinnings of the company's successful work culture is rooted in integrated HR and marketing. In the survey, employees were asked to what extent they feel well informed by the company (see Figure 1). Nearly all employees felt informed, either to some extent or to a large extent, which contributes to an effective work culture. In addition to employees being well informed, CBS' thriving work culture is also rooted in utilizing many communication channels to inform employees, including social media, newsletters, emails, automated phone messages, and texts.



<b>To what extent do you feel well informed by the company (overall)?</b>	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
<b>To no extent</b>	1	1%
<b>To some extent</b>	30	28%
<b>To a large extent</b>	61	56%
<b>No Responses</b>	16	15%

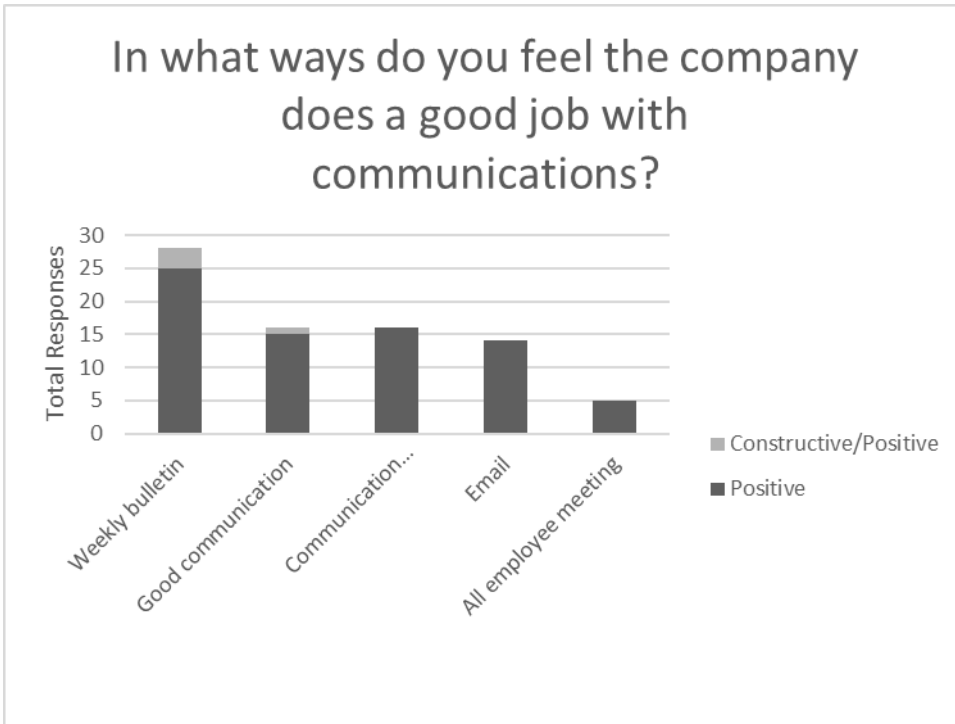
**Figure 1. Breakdown of CBS employees' responses to being asked if they feel well informed by the company.**

In the same survey, CBS employees were asked what method of communications they prefer for receiving various types of communication including company, departmental and policy updates as well as information about company events and programs (see Figure 2). The results support employees' preference to receive messages in different ways, which highlights the importance of an integrated marketing strategy in enhancing a work culture.

CBS employees also were asked in what ways the company does a good job with communication (see Figure 3). The responses indicate that various company communications methods are valued, which validates the significance of using numerous communication channels when communicating with employees to enhance work culture.

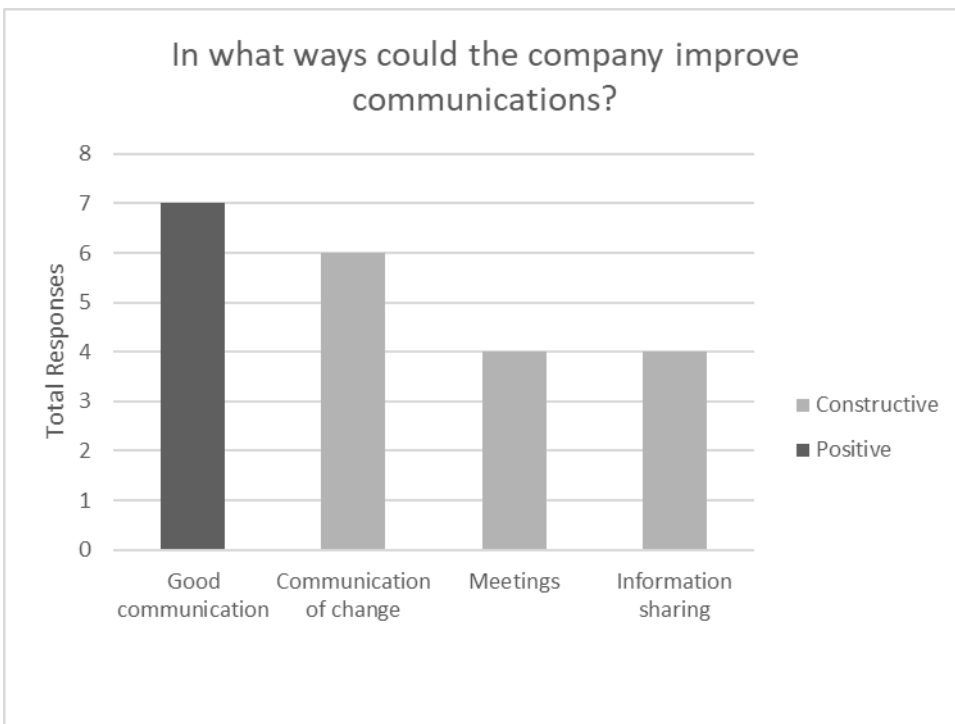
<b>What method of communication do you prefer for the following:*</b>	<b>email</b>	<b>meeting</b>	<b>employee newsletter</b>
<b>For company updates</b>	44	22	26
	48%	24%	28%
<b>For departmental updates</b>	49	42	0
	54%	46%	0%
<b>For policy updates</b>	70	18	4
	76%	20%	4%
<b>For company events and programs</b>	47	4	41
	51%	4%	45%
<b>*Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.</b>			

**Figure 2. Breakdown of CBS employees' preferences to how they receive various communications.**



**Figure 3. Categorized sample of the themes about effective communication.**

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the CBS survey asked for suggestions about how the company can improve communications, knowing these insights would help maintain an already effective work culture. The themes most commonly referenced in the responses included maintaining good communication, communicating around organizational changes, and utilizing meetings as a way to keep each other updated (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Categorized sample of the themes surfaced about how communication can be improved.**

## 5. ADDITIONAL SURVEY FINDINGS

### 5.1 Work Culture Improves when HR and Marketing Team Together to Plan Company Events

While HR teams are often self-sufficient and capable of fully handling company event planning, work culture can be improved when including marketing at the planning table. Marketing can contribute to company event planning in ways such as writing and designing the related materials, utilizing photography and video to enhance an event, providing scripting for important key messages, promoting the event, developing music or other entertaining elements, and sharing photos and summaries through various company communication channels. A stronger event is created when marketing is involved, which results in employees feeling greater satisfaction with their workplace, thus driving a strong work culture. Marketing and HR can unite in other areas to improve work culture, including the on-boarding process for new employees.

### 5.2 Enhancing Work Culture Through the On-Boarding Process

HR typically oversees the on-boarding process for new hires, which is crucial to how new employees first experience a company's work culture. New employees will instinctively contribute to a company's work culture if the on-boarding experience is positive, helpful, and meaningful. Marketing can add value to the on-boarding experience in ways such as including pictures of new hires in company communications, meeting with new hires to explain the marketing function, and spotlighting the new hire in internal communication channels.

The CBS on-boarding process is highly rated by its employees (see Figure 5). Because new employees first observe work culture during the on-boarding process, it is essential that HR involves marketing to maximize opportunities related to on-boarding new hires

Highly effective	Very effective	Not effective	Somewhat effective	Neither effective nor ineffective
26	20	5	10	15
34%	26%	7%	13%	20%

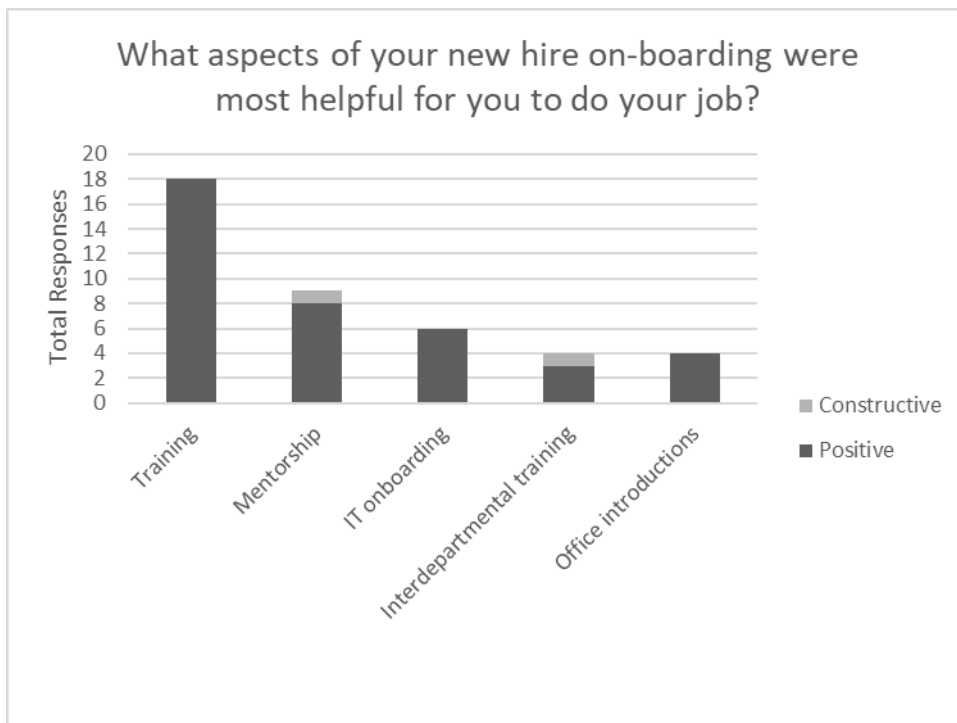
**Figure 5. CBS employees rate the organizational on-boarding experience.**

CBS employees were asked to what extent they feel the training received for their job prepared them for their work (see Figure 6). Because training is an integral part of the on-boarding process, it is crucial that new hires have a top-notch on-boarding experience to best impact work culture. With work culture at stake, HR must collaborate with marketing to create the strongest on-boarding process possible. For example, marketing can assist HR by designing helpful training documents, taking new employee photos to share in employee newsletters, explaining the marketing function to new hires, providing new employees with company materials and promotional items, and helping to create new employee resources. Knowing what employees value about the on-boarding experience is critical to creating an on-boarding process that contributes to a positive work culture.

To what extent do you feel the training you received for your job prepared you for your work?	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
To no extent	9	12%
To some extent	32	41%
To a large extent	37	47%

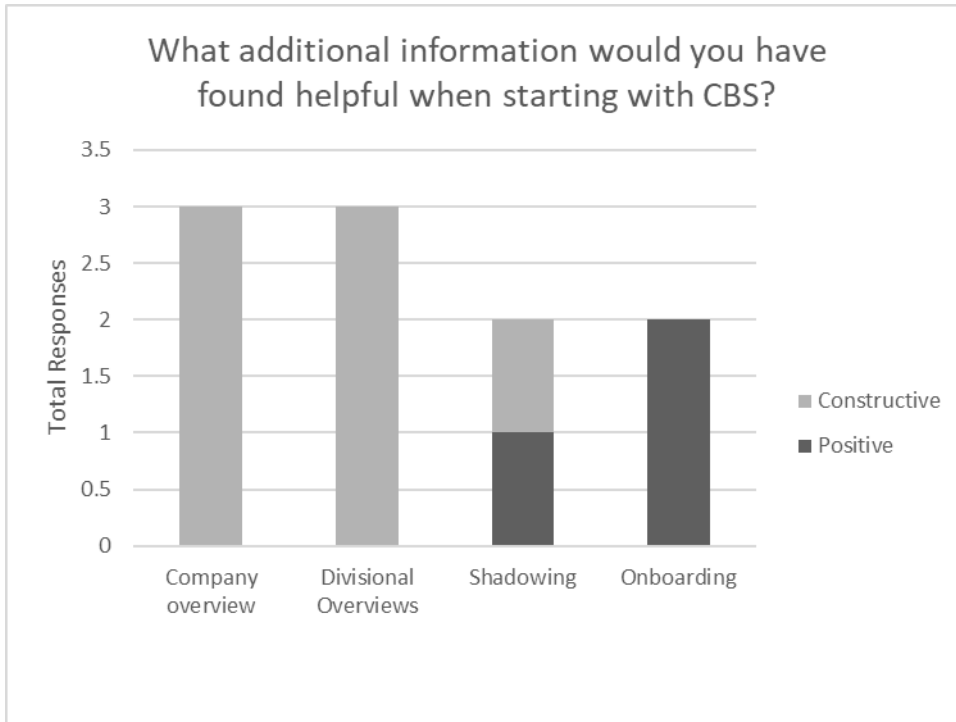
**Figure 6. CBS employees' feedback regarding training preparedness.**

CBS asked employees what aspects of their on-boarding process were helpful for the job they were hired to do (see Figure 7). Training, mentorship, and learning the technology were among the top factors identified as the most helpful aspects of the on-boarding experience. HR and marketing can further build, grow and strengthen the on-boarding process knowing these elements were identified as most helpful, which fuels a positive work culture.



**Figure 7. Categorized sample of the themes about the most helpful onboarding steps.**

When given the chance to comment about what additional information new hires would have found helpful when starting at CBS, employees mentioned wanting more overviews about the company and divisions (see Figure 8). Companies must recognize HR and marketing as excellent thought partners to best bolster work culture.



**Figure 8. Categorized sample of the themes about additional helpful information.**

## 6. IMPLICATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

### 6.1 An Effective Work Culture Requires Alignment Between HR and Marketing

Most organizational charts feature the HR and marketing functions as two distinct and separate areas within an organization. The disciplines function independently and uniquely within most businesses. At a fundamental level, HR involves an inward focus by engaging with internal employees and job candidates. On the other hand, marketing entails working with external stakeholders to promote a company and its products and services.

The related job duties of HR and marketing professionals are different and each requires its own skill set, yet there are overlapping traits often found in both areas. The intersection of skills involves relating well with others, strategic thinking and making sound business decisions. Both HR and marketing personnel work in the spirit of an organization’s mission, vision, and values. Therefore, it makes sense that work culture can be improved when combining HR and marketing talents on company projects and initiatives. Because of this synergy and commonalities of these roles, integrating HR and marketing perspectives also helps promote broad thinking, which guards against the pitfall of working in a vacuum. Multiple perspectives are important with company projects, particularly company messaging, which can be strengthened with input from both HR and marketing, as seen in Table 1.

### 6.2 Marketing and HR Input Needed on Company Messaging

Company messages are often developed in the marketing area of an organization. With input from HR, messages become more impactful. For example, the president and chief executive officer of CBS emails periodic messages to employees, which are intentionally reviewed by the leaders of both HR and marketing, to achieve the best outcome. To illustrate the point, marketing is able to communicate to employees that CBS’ safety measures have increased to help mitigate risk related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, HR can further build the message with details about employee concerns. Table 1 shows how the message is strengthened with input from both HR and marketing.

**Table 1. Examples of how a company message becomes more impactful when there is collaboration between marketing and HR.**

Who is involved in writing a message	The message
Example One:	
Marketing and communications	“The company is taking safety measures to safeguard against the spread of germs.”
The message, with insights from HR	“Thanks to employee input, safety measures are being taken to safeguard employees against the spread of germs. We will be acting on your ideas, including installing touchless water faucets, routinely disinfecting common areas, and keeping disinfecting wipes near copy machines and other high-touch areas.”
Example Two	
Marketing and communications	Employees are to work with their supervisors to determine their remote working schedules.
The message, with insights from HR	Because every division and role is unique with different demands and circumstances, supervisors will be determining what schedule works best for their team(s). Please keep in mind that all divisions operate differently, which prompts our need to flex accordingly. Your understanding of these variances is appreciated as the company remains as nimble as possible during the pandemic.

HR and marketing must consistently and routinely collaborate to grow and sustain an effective organizational work culture. In addition to the actual message, exploring communication channels is an important consideration, which can help build an effective work culture.

### **6.3 Work Culture is Enhanced with Frequent Communications Using Various Channels**

Marketing professionals look at organizational messages through a unique lens with a focus on the message’s ability to drive action. Marketing teams realize messages need to be heard often and through different channels to achieve a desired effect. Messages sent only once are often ineffective because the content can easily be overlooked or forgotten in busy work environments. Work culture can be enhanced if HR taps marketing for an integrated communication strategy, so company messages run in various communication channels such as newsletters, social media, and emails. Frequent communications through multiple channels is a winning combination, which improves work culture. There is a growing need for more fluid information sharing, data analytics and data-informed decision making (Weathers & Aragon, 2019). CBS serves as a best practice when it comes to HR and marketing working together to enhance and maintain a thriving work culture.

## **6.4 The Winning Mindset: HR and Marketing are Critical Thought Partners**

Companies that adopt a mindset of HR and marketing as thought partners will have a winning edge that positively impacts work culture. The HR and marketing pairing does not discount the importance and need for other organizational areas of a company to work together, but rather amplifies what can be achieved when HR and marketing work hand-in-hand. There are clear benefits to how marketing and HR can function together to advance work culture (Berthon, Pitt & Morris, 1996).

At CBS, the leaders in charge of HR and marketing work together on a wide variety of company activities and projects including community service projects, corporate celebrations, award and recognition programs, onboarding initiatives, employee surveys, company videos, employee presentations, sharing internal stories, acknowledging commemorative milestones, and spotlighting employees. With many shared touch-points, HR and marketing must continuously monitor and recalibrate within a changing environment. HR and marketing functions complement each other even though they have different areas of focus within an organization. When HR and marketing work together, there is increased organizational strategic value and a supportive culture (Berthon, Pitt & Morris, 1996). A culture that promotes communication, fair employment practices, and development opportunities creates an environment that is conducive for strategic HR and marketing initiatives.

## **6.5 Planning Work Culture Check Points Between HR and Marketing**

HR and marketing leaders should commit to checking in with each other periodically to continuously foster an effective work culture. Discussing emerging company priorities and reflecting on the current state of work culture is imperative in a thriving work culture (Giannakisa & Harker, 2014). Ideally, HR and marketing leaders should take turns leading check point meetings. Each will lead discussion through their lens, so alternating helps ensure a well-rounded process in surfacing opportunities and monitoring progress. Discussion points can include: How is the current work culture? What is enhancing work culture this quarter? What will impact work culture next quarter? When is the next employee survey warranted? What is working well with work culture? Where is there opportunity for improvement with work culture? The meetings will help avoid the pitfall of complacency. The strategic alignment between HR and marketing impacts work culture and helps achieve company goals and outcomes with focus on service.

## REFERENCES

- Becker, B.E. & Huselid, M.A. (2006). Where do we go from here? *Journal of Management*, 32 (6), 898-925. DOI: 10.1177/0149206306293668
- Berthon, P.R., Pitt, L.F & Morris, M.H. (1996). External and internal customer managers: Differences in perception and decision-making in the marketing and human resource dyad. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 12 (1), 77-88.
- Christian Brothers Services. History. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsservices.org/cbs-history.html>, 2020.
- Christian Brothers Services. *Mission Statement*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsservices.org/mission-statement.html>, 2020.
- Giannakisa, D. & Harker, M.J. (2014). Strategic alignment between relationship marketing and human resource management in financial services organizations. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 22 (5), 396-419. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2013.876082>
- Hall, E. T & Hall, M.R. (1990). *Understanding cultural differences*. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing.
- Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (2002). The dynamics of organizational identity. *Human Relations*, 55 (8), 989-1018.
- Leedy, P.D., Ormrod, J.E. & Johnson, L.R. (2019). *Practical research: Planning and design*. (12<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Leung, A., Luthans, K, Jensen, S. & Xu, H. (2013). Industry peer networks: Constructive collaboration for effective marketing and management practices. *Journal of Business and Management*, 19 (2), 51-65.
- Nahavandi, A. (2015). *The art and science of leadership*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Schein, E. H. (2017). *Organizational culture and leadership*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stokes, P., Smith, S., Wall, T., Moore, N., Rowland, C., Ward, T. & Cronshaw, S. (2019). Resilience and the (micro) dynamics of organizational ambidexterity: Implications for strategic HRM. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30 (8), 1287-1322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1474939>
- Weathers. D. & Aragon, O. (2019). Integrating analytics into marketing curricula: Challenges and effective practices for developing six critical competencies. *Marketing Education Review*, 29 (4), 266-282. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2019.1673664>
- Wei Y., Samiee, S. & Lee, R. P. (2013). The influence of organic organizational cultures, market responsiveness, and product strategy on firm performance in an emerging market. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 42, 49-70. DOI 10.1007/s11747-013-0337-6
- Wren, J.T. (1995). *The leader's companion: Insights on leadership through the ages*. New York, NY: The Free Press.