

Why Don't More Companies Practice IMC?

Integrating all marketing communication messages is just common sense. So why don't more agencies and companies practice IMC? If this is what everyone wants, why aren't there more campaigns that are consistent throughout all points of customer contact? Why aren't there more closed feedback loops for continuous improvement?

Here's the answer for most cases:

In larger companies, communications disciplines are often departmentalized – a public relations department, an advertising department, a promotions department, a direct marketing department or an interactive department. Quite often, these marketing-related departments report to different people. (Example: a company where the Web site is controlled by MIS, or where the advertising people report to marketing and public relations reports directly to the president.)

To make it worse, different *outside agencies* and companies are hired to assist with, or drive, each of these disciplines. Personnel in each of these areas are typically compensated in direct proportion to the amount of money that flows

The Case for IMC

through their area. This sets up a natural phenomenon known as “turf wars” or “silos” – the outcome of which are not necessarily aligned with what’s best for the long-term benefit of the client of the company.

To counter this, companies can take active steps to ensure that their marketing communications funds are spent in their best interests by organizing marketing communications personnel around the internal “client” to eliminate – or at the very least, drastically reduce – conflict.

On the company side, the internal “clients” are the corporate brand and the product line brands. Marketing communications specialists who are organized in teams can best support these areas, as opposed to those organized in single-discipline departments. The objectives of the marcom teams will then be aligned with their internal clients’ goals.

On the agency side, you won’t find the proper organization to achieve IMC in a traditional ad agency. They are organized to sell and produce advertising. Advertising may not be what’s best for the job at hand. Maybe the solution is editorial coverage or promotional offers. Most often, it’s a carefully balanced and coordinated mix.

Pyramids Are Tombs

Nor will you find a conflict-free situation in a public relations agency, a sales promotion company, a direct-mail house or a new media firm. They all *sell what they have* – not necessarily what their clients most need.

Truly integrated marketing communications will, most likely, be found only in a company or agency organized for true integration. An organization that fosters alignment of purpose. One that has committed to executing constantly improving, consistent campaigns. One, which is *organized to recommend what's best for the client*.