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*The role of personal marketing
in forming the image of a science organization*

THE ROLE OF PERSONAL MARKETING IN FORMING THE IMAGE OF A SCIENCE ORGANIZATION

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Introduction

The paper aims to define the role of personal marketing activities in forming the image of a science organization. Based on the critical-cognitive analysis of literature on marketing and management, the paper discusses different interpretations of image and definitions of image related concepts of identity, personality, reputation and brand in the context of science organizations. The work subsequently presents a classification of sub-images of a science organization as an employer, stressing the occurrence of image discrepancy caused by different perceptions of an organization by particular segments of the the personal proposition recipients.

The theoretical deliberations are complemented by an analysis of the original empirical research conducted by means of a survey. Special attention is paid to examining how strongly different elements of personal proposition affect perceptions of a science organization. This is analysed mainly from the perspective of potential employees, who represent one of the most important target groups. As the empirical research has been carried out for several years it was possible to make a comparative analysis, which helped to identify and quantify changes in the significance of the analysed determinants of employer perception. Finally, the paper discusses the effects that the personal marketing orientation (or its lack) has on the image of a science organization. The work points out to a very wide spectrum of these effects embracing in fact all areas of an organization's operations.

Regardless of its character, each organization offers certain values to a range of diverse recipients. Their needs determine subjective evaluation of the utility of the marketing proposition of a given organization, including that of a science institution. A science organization simultaneously plays a number of marketing roles, of which very important is that of an employer who offers personal products to the current and prospective employees. It should be emphasized that roles played by an organization are not separate from one another but in practice often overlap. Because of that, a science organization should strive not only to shape its overall image but also implement complex policies as regards its sub-images including that of an employer as the way it is perceived by its employees directly affects the way it is perceived as an actor on the marketplace.

It needs to be remembered that creating and consolidating the image of an attractive employer has a catalysing effect on employees' work commitment including on research and teaching responsibilities, which enables creating values that better fulfil the expectations of the marketing proposition recipients. At the same time it is easier to find employees of outstanding intellectual and emotional capabilities, who are going to use their potential to achieve the aims of the organization when those are identified as their own goals. In practice, an organization will not develop if its members do not develop as an organization's success supports self-actualization and *vice versa*. But in order to let an organization's members develop, appropriate material and non-material conditions must be created. This requires the employer to adopt and consistently pursue a market orientation based on empathy and an individualized approach to each employee¹. In other words, the increasing competition on the science market poses new challenges for science organizations including the necessity to adopt a market orientation which also embraces employees. This requires implementing the assumptions of personal marketing to enable shaping an organization's image as a quality employer. By using the critical-cognitive analysis, this paper looks into the ways of interpreting the concept of the employer image and aims at defining the role of marketing approach to employees (especially potential employees) by a science organization during the image development process.

The essence of employer image and its types

It is rational to begin the analysis of the role of personal marketing in forming an image of a science organization with defining the essence and scope of the employer image since adopting a marketing approach towards employees directly affects building an image of an organization in this particular role. Employer image can be defined as a perception of an organization formed in the minds of present and future staff based on their personal experience (in the case of people employed by the organization) or information reaching prospective organization members through current employees (informal image building), and on messages transmitted by the organization via all kinds of mass media (formal image building)². According to this definition employer image basically reflects the perceptions of the employer by two groups of recipients: existing employees and people outside the organization who form the organization's external employment market. It must be emphasized that both groups are equally important from the point of view of the employer. This is why both these groups should be taken into account in the image enhancing activities. Besides, this interpretation of the employer image draws attention to the fact that image is built in a twofold manner by means of formal channels (directly controlled by the organization) and informal channels (controlled only indirectly through HR policies focused on current employees). This dichotomy must be taken into account in developing the image enhancing strategy, the more so because of the general tendency to consider all informal opinions as more credible than messages transmitted in a formal manner.

¹ *The assumptions of personal marketing were discussed in detail in A. Baruk's Marketing personalny jako instrument kreowania wizerunku firmy, Difin, Warszawa 2006.*

² *Ibidem, p. 36-37.*

It must be stressed that from the point of view of the effectiveness of image building of utmost importance is the unequivocal interpretation of the concept of image. Activities can be planned, executed and monitored effectively only in the areas which are defined clearly and unambiguously. Unfortunately, significant divergencies between different interpretations of the employer image are visible both in the Polish and foreign literature. First of all, despite conveying completely different meanings, the terms of image, reputation, identity, personality or even brand are used interchangeably by many authors. For example, F. Lievens, G. Van Hoyer & F. Anseel³ write that employer image is equivalent to employer brand or branding, insisting at the same time that the same range of factors affects employer image and employer identity. Also T. Ambler and S. Barrow⁴, use the terms brand and image as synonyms with reference to the employer, defining brand and employer image as a set of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by and identifiable with the employer. J. Bhatnagar and P. Srivastava⁵ describe employer image in terms of personality preferred by employees as compared with other employers. Other authors focus on perceptions of employer brand using the term interchangeably with employer image⁶. Brand image however is a separate category and as such should not be identified with employer image.

The language inconsistencies in the area relating to employer perception may be due to similar ambiguities in using the above terms in the marketing jargon, from which they were borrowed for the purposes of the personal approach. This does not justify the inappropriate use of the terms, which complicates or even makes impossible conducting comparative analysis of the research results presented by different authors, often leading to erroneous conclusions. It would be worthwhile to specify the meaning of the other terms crucial for understanding image issues, unjustly identified with image itself. And thus, personality reflects what an organization (also as an employer) represents in reality⁷. An organization's (employer's) identity can be defined as a set of attributes that differentiate an organization from other employers on the market. Reputation is defined either as dissemination of opinions about an organization (employer) among other entities (the process perspective) or as a collection of information disseminated about an organization (employer) (the object perspective)⁸.

Taking account of all definitions of the terms discussed along with the definition of an employer's image it is possible to point out to some basic interdependencies (Pic.1). An employer's identity and personality influence his external and internal reputation. Internal reputation impacts on internal image. External reputation affects external image. Both internal and external images combine to create an organization's image as an employer. An employer's image in its turn affects other images of an organization

3 F. Lievens, G. Van Hoyer, F. Anseel, *Organizational identity and employer image: towards a unifying framework*, "British Journal of Management" 2007, vol. 18, p. 45-59.

4 T. Ambler, S. Barrow, *The employer brand*, "Journal of Brand Management" 1996, vol. 4, p. 185-206.

5 J. Bhatnagar, P. Srivastava, *Strategy for staffing: Employer branding & person organization fit*, "Indian Journal of Industrial Relations" 2008, vol. 44, no 1, p. 35-48.

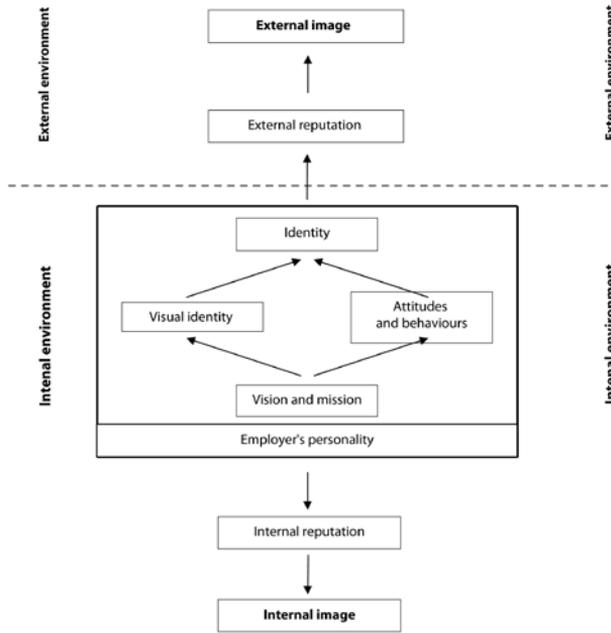
6 S. Ying Gao, *What drives ideal employer image?*, <http://arc.hhs.se/download.aspx>, 14.07.2012.

7 *The psychological perspective of corporate identity was discussed in detail in the article by A. Barabasz, Wykorzystanie wskaźników dojrzałości ego w diagnozie osobowości organizacji*, „Prace i Materiały Wydziału Zarządzania Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego” 2007, nr 1, p. 9-18.

8 A. Baruk, *Marketing personalny jako instrument kreowania wizerunku firmy*, op. cit., p. 33.

when it operates in its other functions as well as an organization's market proposition, thus impacting on the general image, the fact often ignored by today's employers.

Picture 1. Interdependencies between an employer's image, personality, reputation and identity.



Source: Author's own research.

An organization as an employer is evaluated by a number of different subjects, who perceive it from different perspectives thus seeing its different qualities. In consequence, depending on the subject evaluating an organization, it is possible to identify several partial images which contribute to form an organization's image in the employment market. The most important sub-images include:

- **current image including:**
 - *internal image composed of:*
 - self-image reflecting an employer's perception of himself,
 - mirror image reflecting perceptions of an employer from the point of view of employees,
 - *external image composed of:*
 - direct actual image showing how an employer is perceived by potential employees,
 - indirect actual image, showing how an employer is perceived by other entities in its environment.

- **potential image including:**

- real image attainable when certain external and internal conditions are satisfied,
- ideal image desired by an employer but unattainable for reasons both in and beyond an employer's control.

In practice, between the sub-images listed above there are smaller or larger differences, the occurrence of which causes image discrepancy. The less attention an employer pays to building his image, the bigger image discrepancy is. It should be noted, however, that by consistently following comprehensive image strengthening policies an organization will get closer to its ideal image, which, although unattainable, should be treated as a signpost on the road to an improved image. This said, an organization should strive to minimize the disparity between the real and ideal images, in particular when its current image as an employer is neutral or negative.

The essence of personal marketing and its role in image building

Image discrepancy is likely to decrease if an organization adopts the assumptions of personal marketing. Personal marketing can be defined as a system of behaviours aimed at maintaining a business culture oriented to interests and expectations of present and prospective employees. Personal marketing embraces a range of activities in the area of the social system, aimed at creating and maintaining, both in the external and internal employment market, the image of an attractive, responsible and honest employer. Such an employer attracts employees since individual development of every single employee determines the direction of development for the entire organization while the organization development leads to the ongoing self-improvement of its members.

Personal marketing activities should be comprehensive and consistent creating a system comprised of two basic components⁹: internal personal marketing and external personalized marketing. This division results from targeting two key groups of current and prospective employees of a science organization. Because of the disparate character of these two groups, an organization as an employer needs to undertake different activities with regard to each of these groups in order to effectively shape and consolidate its positive image.

This is why, in striving to build a positive image of a science organization as an employer, in relation to current employees a system of internal personal marketing should be developed based for example on the following activities:

- activities in the area of internal communication between managers and their subordinates on the one hand and between individual employees on the other;
- activities in the area of motivation utilising both financial and non-financial motivators (material and non-material);
- activities in the area of personal and professional development including creating opportunities for winning extra qualifications and further education based on the mentoring system;

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 14-15.

- activities in the area of external recruitment and selection policies connected with employees' mobility and possible reassignment to other positions to make a better use of employees' knowledge and skills;
- activities in the area of an effective employee assessment system based on the human capital principles.

In striving to achieve the goal of creating and consolidating a positive image of a science organization as an employer one shouldn't forget to extend personal marketing to the participants of the external labour market, who might join the organization in the future. The system of external personal marketing could be comprised of the following activities:

- activities in the area of external communication between an organization and its potential employees;
- activities in the area of external recruitment, both general and segment-oriented;
- activities in the area of finding allies and ambassadors of the brand.

The effective execution of the above tasks requires changing the approach presently used by science organizations in relation to the recipients of values they offer, including their current and future employees. Reorienting an organization so that it fully embraces a personal marketing approach is possible on the following conditions:

- a diagnosis of the status quo is made to answer the question: "What is the situation?";
- an analysis of the results obtained from the diagnosis is made to answer the question: "Why is it so?";
- necessary organizational changes are planned by answering the question: "How should it be?";
- the proposed organizational transformations are implemented;
- the condition of the organization after the transformations is compared with the earlier prepared plan of changes and the eventual discrepancies are eliminated to pave the way towards effective implementation of personal marketing principles.

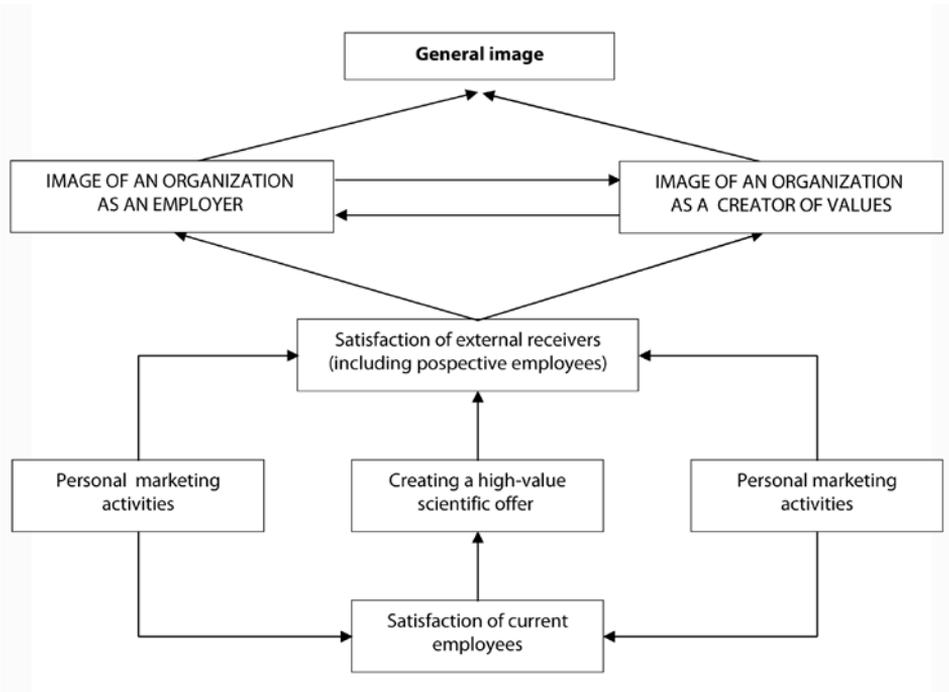
Applying the assumptions of personal marketing leads to achieving not only the narrowly defined goals of image enhancement connected with building a positive image of an organization as an employer but also image goals of a more general nature since perceptions of an organization in the role of an employer directly affect its overall image (Pic. 2).

External personal marketing and its role in image development

A common denominator of all marketing concepts including personal marketing is the best possible fulfilment of the recipients' expectations regardless of their specific character. This also concerns employees as consumers of values created by an organization. Although the marketing approach to employees

is emphasized in partnership¹⁰ or internal marketing¹¹, it exclusively refers to people already employed by an organization excluding potential recruits representing its external labour market. The only theory which takes into consideration prospective employees is personal marketing, whose assumptions clearly state that both current and future employees are equally important addressees of the marketing proposition generated by the employer.

Picture 2. Interdependencies between the image of an organization as an employer and creator of values.



Source: Author's own research.

Unfortunately, the approach limiting the circle of the personal values recipients to the current employees only does not prevail in theory only. In practice, even employers who apply the marketing approach to employees tend to concentrate on the people forming the internal labour market. Undoubtedly, one of

¹⁰ Partnership marketing emphasises the need for building and strengthening close long-term relationships between the service provider and the recipients, including employees. (cf. R. M. Morgan, S. D. Hunt, *The Commitment. Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing* 1994, vol. 58, no. 3, pp 30-38), where there is an exchange of both material and immaterial values such as status, respect, interest, information, time, leading to the satisfaction of employees and external recipients, as pointed among others by L. L. Berry (cf. L. L. Berry, *On Great Service*, The Free Press, New York 1995, p 172).

¹¹ The concept of internal marketing, which focuses on employees as internal customers, assumes that employees want to satisfy their needs through work in a given organization. Many authors believe that the implementation of the internal marketing assumptions is a prerequisite for the market orientation of an organization (cf. B. Gray, G. J. Hooley, *Guest editorial: market orientation and service firm performance – a research agenda*, *European Journal of Marketing* 2002, vol. 36, no. 9/10, pp. 980-88; J. C. Narver, S. F. Slater, *The effect of a market orientation on business profitability*, *Journal of Marketing* 1990, vol. 54, no. 4, pp. 20-35).

the reasons for this situation is the fact that it is considerably more difficult to employ marketing principles in relation to people outside the organization. It seems however that such difficulties should be treated as challenges, which - when met – lead to increasing an organization's market potential and by the same token become growth opportunities in the scientific, educational and research dimension.

Extending marketing orientation to prospective employees brings about tangible benefits in terms of personnel and image. On the one hand it raises the chances of recruiting valuable candidates while simultaneously improving and consolidating the employer image, and on the other hand it contributes to building a positive image of an organization as a value provider, affecting the subjective evaluation of science and education values created by the organization¹².

Obviously, it needs to be remembered that the implementation of the marketing approach to prospective employees requires identifying their opinions and expectations, the awareness of which represents the starting point for building the knowledge base about participants of the external labour market and ways in which the organization is perceived in its market environment. The process of gaining this type of information will be facilitated by setting in place a comprehensive system of managing knowledge about clients¹³, In fact information collection should be an element of such a system so that managing the customer experience¹⁴, could be more effective leading to better customer knowledge management¹⁵.

Creating positive experience for potential employees encourages good feelings towards the organization regardless whether it acts in the role of an employer or that of a product provider.

Nurturing positive attitudes towards an organization in the employer's role is possible by means of creating a consistent and comprehensive system of identifying and monitoring prospective employees' opinions and expectations alongside all changes occurring in this area. Only through constructing such a system will it be possible to fully meet the expectations and needs of prospective employees before

12 When making shopping decisions buyers increasingly pay attention to the social responsibility level of product providers and their attitude to employees in particular. Research shows that this aspect is particularly important for people who do not identify life quality with material security only but perceive it in broader terms. However, such minded customers tend to boycott unethical companies rather than support organizations who observe ethical standards (cf. L. A. Mohr, D. J. Webb, K. E. Harris, Do customers expect companies to be socially responsible? The impact of corporate social responsibility on buying behavior, Journal of Customer Affairs 2001, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 45-72).

13 Customer knowledge management is closely related to relationship management since it is impossible to build and maintain close, mutually beneficial relationships without being aware of customer expectations and mentality (cf. M. Gibbert, M. Leibold, G. Probst, Five Styles of Customer Knowledge Management, http://www.hec.unige.ch/recherches_publications/cahiers/2002/2002.09.pdf, 5 Feb 2012). This applies to traditionally understood customers as well as to the recipients of personal proposition, meaning both the existing and prospective staff.

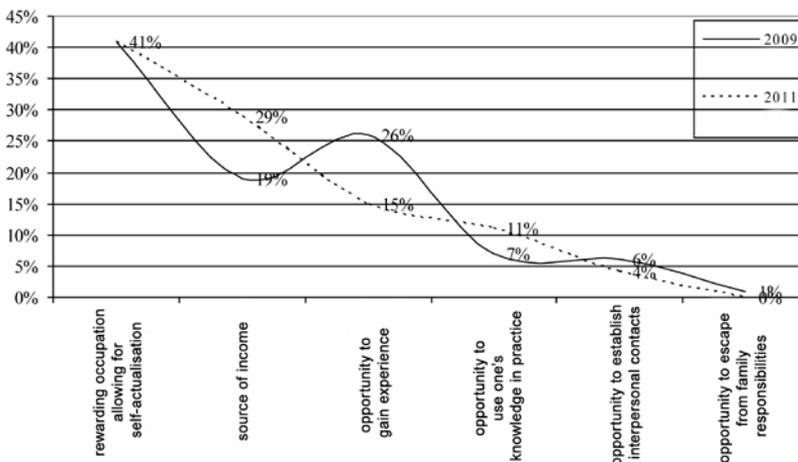
14 Obviously, it is about creating positive experience only, which would not be possible without applying the marketing approach to customers including current and prospective employees. Building positive experience requires access to updated and relatively complete customer knowledge (cf. B. H. Schmitt, Customer Experience Management: A Revolutionary Approach to Connecting Your Customers, John Wiley & Sons, New York 2003). It is evident that the concepts of customer experience management, customer knowledge management and customer relationship management are closely related. Effective customer experience management is in turn conducive to gaining and utilizing customer knowledge.

15 What an organization values more than knowledge about customers is customers' knowledge. Its acquisition requires however building trust among customers including employees, and a willingness to share knowledge, which is possible when an organization is guided by a marketing approach to customers. An example of an approach consistent with marketing orientation is identifying customers with knowledge experts who make up a creative community. M. Sawhney i E. Prandelli, and also S. Wikstrom believe that this approach represents in fact a style of customer knowledge management (cf. M. Sawhney, E. Prandelli, Communities of creation: managing distributed knowledge in turbulent markets, California Management Review 2000, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 24-54; S. Wikstrom, The customer as co-producer, European Journal of Marketing 1996, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 6-19).

they actually join an organization. From the point of view of a market-oriented employer, it is interesting to know how prospective employees understand work. Research showed that a vast majority of respondents¹⁶, identified work with an occupation which brings satisfaction and permits self-actualization (41%). It is true that work as a source of income was second most common interpretation, but a significantly lower number of respondents chose this definition. Given the fact that other interpretations concerned not only non-financial but even non-material perspectives, it is reasonable to conclude that the most crucial aspects of work were those related to professional growth of an individual.

Importantly, in defining work respondents pointed to the personal dimension (work as a form of self-actualization), the intellectual dimension (work as gaining experience and using one's knowledge in practice) and the social dimension (work as interpersonal relations), though the latter aspect was mentioned only by a small number of respondents (4% - the answer ten times less popular than work as self-actualization). Taking into account the specific character of a science organization, interpretations of work important for prospective employees make them a valuable asset for this type of organizations. Organizations need however to create appropriate work conditions to enable meeting these expectations, which in itself strengthens a positive external image and ultimately attracts candidates to a market-oriented science organization.

Picture 3. Interpretations of work given in the survey (in %).



Source: Author's own research.

¹⁶ In 2011, in an attempt to identify beliefs and expectations of prospective employees, a survey was conducted involving 500 full time students of the Lublin voivodeship. A vast majority (87%) were not older than 25 years of age. 75% of respondents were undergraduate studies. Women accounted for 63% of respondents. The group under survey was relatively varied in terms of the size of the place of origin although most students came from small towns or villages of up to 1000 dwellers. The results obtained from the 2011 survey were compared against the results of analogical survey conducted by the author of this paper in 2009, which allowed for defining the scope of change taking place in the beliefs and expectations of prospective employees.

As shown in Pic. 3, since 2009 a vast majority of respondents have continued to identify work with opportunities for self-actualization: the two survey editions revealed that the same percentage of people understood work in this way. The biggest change concerned perceiving work solely as a source of income and as an opportunity to gain professional experience. In 2011 a percentage of respondents for whom work represented merely a source of income went up significantly (the difference amounted to 10%), placing this interpretation as second most important (Tab. 1). This could be pointing to an increasing disparity between employer proposition and employee expectations (sadly, it is especially visible in the science sector). This could be true given that in 2009 work was identified with an opportunity to gain experience by the second largest group of respondents followed by its perception as a source of income only. The year 2011 saw a conspicuous decline in the number of respondents perceiving work as an opportunity to gain experience. In 2011 such definitions of work amounted only to 15% compared to 26% in 2009. Identifying work with an opportunity for making interpersonal contacts also declined, although slightly (by 2%) and so did perceiving work as an opportunity to flee house chores with no one interpreting work in this way in 2011. Interestingly, in 2011 there were more people identifying work with an opportunity to use one's skills and competencies in practice, although this increase was not sufficiently big to cause this interpretation to move up in the ranking. Similarly as in 2009, this definition of work was offered by the fourth largest group of respondents.

Table 1. Changes in the hierarchy of the meanings of work in 2009 – 2011.

Work perceived as:	Rank		Change of rank	Change in %
	2009	2011		
A rewarding occupation offering chances for selfactualization	1	1	0	0
A source of income only	3	2	+1	+10
An opportunity to gain experience	2	3	-1	-11
An opportunity to use one's skills and competencies in practice	4	4	0	+4
An opportunity for interpersonal relations	5	5	0	-2
A chance to escape home chores	6	6	0	-1

Source: Author's own research.

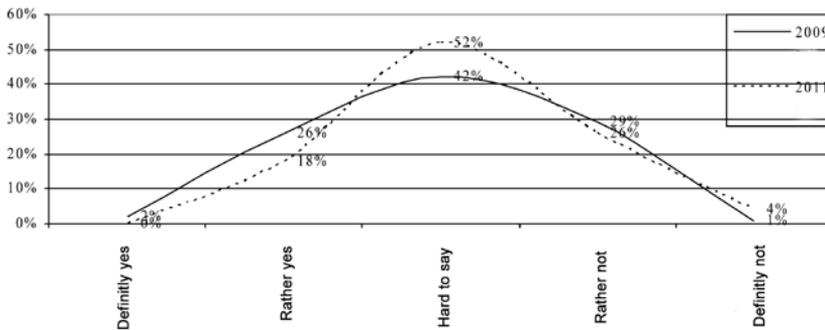
The ways in which prospective employees interpret work should guide employers in tailoring their HR policies as they reflect the significance of various areas of development of future employees while at the same time revealing the hierarchy of their expectations of the employer. What is important in this context is not only the hierarchy of particular work definitions but also the scope of change affecting each of them. With respondents invariably pointing to work as a chance for self-actualization, creating the work conditions that foster professional fulfilment should become a top priority for any employer wishing to apply a market approach to the employees. On the other hand, a significant increase in people identifying work solely with a source of income may be a cause for alarm. This trend may be pointing to

a rising awareness of the lack of a marketing approach to employees on the part of employers. This poses a threat to employers as perceiving work solely in terms of financial income means perceiving no growth opportunities, which undermines or even damages an emotional bond with the employer.

As can be seen from the surveys, in 2001 most respondents could not give a definite, yes' or, no' to the question whether the employment market in Poland was attractive for people of the same educational background. Moreover, almost every third respondent evaluated this market as unattractive, every seventh emphatically denied its attractiveness and no one saw it attractive for the employee. It must be stressed that compared to 2009 the results were more pessimistic (Pic. 4). This not only testifies to certain confusion of future employees but also suggests that employers in general are negatively perceived, which often quite automatically results in negative perception of individual organizations.

In 2009 the total of 28% of respondents considered Polish labour market as attractive with 2% being adamant about it. In 2011, however, already only 18% continued to believe that Polish labour was attractive with no one expressing this opinion decidedly. On the other hand, in 2009 30% of respondents believed that the Polish labour market was unattractive, including 1% adamant about it compared to 2011 when likewise 30% of respondents regarded the Polish labour as unattractive but this opinion was expressed decidedly by four times as many people as in 2009 (Tab. 2).

Picture 4. The attractiveness of the Polish labour market as perceived by respondents (in %).



Source: Author's own research.

It is evident that pessimism on the employment market is growing given the fact that in 2011 the number of respondents declaring the intention to continue looking for a job until they found a position matching their education was twice as low as in 2009 and amounted to 7% compared to 15% in 2009. Moreover, in 2011 there were more people (14%) willing to take a blue-collar job in case they were unsuccessful in their attempts to find a job in their profession, compared to 9% in 2009.

Table 2. Changes in the attractiveness of the Polish labour market as perceived by respondents in 2009 – 2011.

Is the Polish labour market attractive?	Change in 2011 compared to 2009 in %	
Yes, it is	-2	-10
Rather yes	-8	
It is hard to say	+10	+10
Rather not	-3	0
No, it is not	+3	

Source: Author's own research.

The interpretations of work discussed above are consistent with the factors mentioned by respondents as important in choosing an employer. In 2011 a vast majority of respondents would choose a job based on the salary levels (Tab. 3). Although in 2009 the money factor also ranked first, it was mentioned by a lower percentage of respondents. At the same time the significance of professional growth and job security slightly declined, although both factors kept their positions from 2009. It is worth noting that almost twice as many people as in 2011 mentioned friendly atmosphere at work as a factor influencing their decision about which job to choose. Consequently, friendly atmosphere ranked second, on a par with professional growth opportunities. The atmosphere factor has clearly become more important, overriding job security. It seems that respondents are becoming to be more interested in satisfying their social needs rather than needs connected with job security. This conclusion is of utmost importance for employers as creating friendly atmosphere is a factor in control of an organization as opposed to salary levels, which (particularly in the case of state institutions dominating the science sector in Poland) are subject to a number of external constraints practically beyond an organization's control. This is why the awareness of the hierarchy of the prospective employees' needs assumes a special importance for science organizations, allowing them to implement the assumptions of personal marketing orientation through focusing on a range of selected elements they can control.

Table 3. The most important factors deciding in the choice of an employer (in %).

Decision factor	Mentioned by (in %)		Change (w %)	Rank		Change of Rank
	2009	2011		2009 r.	2011 r.	
Salary	74	81	+7	1	1	0
Professional growth opportunities	35	30	-5	2	2	0
Job security	29	26	-3	3	3	0
Friendly atmosphere	16	30	+14	4	2	+2
Opportunities for gaining work experience	14	11	-3	5	5	0
Commuting time	14	19	+5	5	4	+1
Flexible hours	9	0	-9	6	6	-
Opportunities for establishing professional contacts	4	0	-4	7	6	-
Promotion opportunities	3	0	-3	8	6	-
The company size	2	0	-2	9	6	-
word-of-mouth	0	0	0	10	6	-
type of business organization	0	0	0	10	6	-
Social benefit system	0	0	0	10	6	-
Prospect of relocation to a foreign subsidiary	0	0	0	10	6	-
Possibility to work from home	0	0	0	10	6	-

Source: Author's own research.

As can be seen in Tab. 3, another factor of growing, although less markedly, significance is commuting time. This shows the growing importance of comfort, both at the workplace (atmosphere at workplace was the second most important factor) and when travelling to it. In percentage terms, gaining work experience became slightly less important although it still ranked fifth, as in 2009. This coincides with respondents' opinions on the meaning of work as in 2011 work was identified with opportunities for gaining experience by a lower number of respondents than in 2009. It is also significant that the fifth rank mentioned above was the last one out of six factors classified in 2011.

The most dramatic decline in significance in percentage terms, however, concerned in 2011 flexible working hours. In 2009 this factor ranked sixth out of ten factors identified in the survey as deciding the choice of an employer. At the same time, quite unexpectedly, it was mentioned three times as often as promotion opportunities. In 2011, flexible working hours did not feature at all among factors deciding the choice of an employer, nor did the three other factors mentioned in 2009 but ignored two years later. Importantly, the 2011 survey revealed that when choosing an employer respondents took into consideration a significantly lower range of factors than they had done two years earlier. In 2009 only six elements were important compared with ten points in 2009. Moreover, four out of these six factors were mentioned by fewer than 10% of people while in 2011 each of the six factors was pointed to by over 10% of respondents. Organizations should pay special attention to these factors if they wish to attract top talent and thus strengthen their growth potential. It is of special importance for science organizations

in particular because in enticing employees by means of an attractive employer image they compete not only with one another but also with other actors on the marketplace better equipped to control factors that normally remain beyond the control of science organizations.

Conclusion

While considering the role of image in personal marketing it is important to remember that work represents one of the key activities of human life. It is so because by fulfilling a professional role it is possible to satisfy a range of material and spiritual needs¹⁷. For young future employees, the perspective of assuming an employee's role means a chance to satisfy not only professional needs and expectations but also those of societal character¹⁸. These needs and expectations will never be met, however, unless appropriate HR policies target prospective employees as active co-participants in the image building process. Unfortunately, HR policies in practice often ignore prospective employees. One of the reasons for that is underappreciating their role in the functioning of an organization. Meeting the expectations of future employees facilitates or even becomes a prerequisite for drawing in suitable recruits with traits compatible with the attributes of a given organization¹⁹, which increases the likelihood of their authentic engagement in the life of an organization once they have joined the ranks of employees. So even though it is more difficult to identify expectations of external labour market participants and monitor their fluctuations, organizations as employers should make an effort and face this challenge. The ability to do so proves that a science organization truly respects the principles of the holistic marketing orientation²⁰ based on applying a modern marketing approach to all its current and potential market allies²¹, among which current and future employees deserve special attention (Pic. 5).

17 The correlation between the extent to which employee needs are met and employee work satisfaction was discussed among others by A. Baruk (A. Baruk, *Marketing personalny jako instrument kreowania wizerunku firmy*, op. cit.) and So Young Lee (So Young Lee, *Expectations of employees toward the workplace and environmental satisfaction*, *Facilities* 2006, vol. 24, no. 9/10, p. 343 – 353).

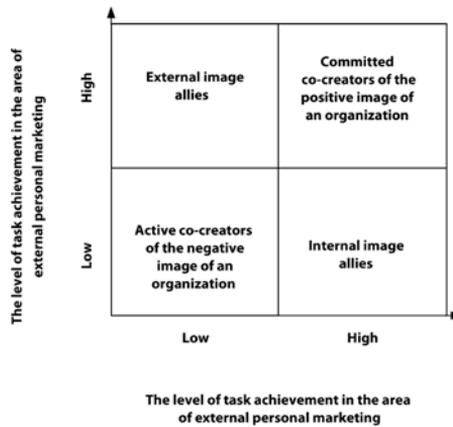
18 International research shows that what graduates find most attractive in a prospective employer is friendly work environment and job security. Out of 16 analysed factors, salary level ranked 9th (cf. R. M. Zaharia, *Employees' expectations from CSR: the case of master students*, 3rd International Conference on Advanced Management Science, IPEDR, vol.19, IACSIT Press, Singapore 2011, p. 51-55).

19 On the other hand, what attracts young prospective recruits to an employer is the fact of sharing some personality traits with an organization, an observation often highlighted in literature on the subject (cf. J. E. Slaughter, S. Zickar, S. Highhouse, D. C. Mohr, *Personality traits inferences about organisations: development of a measure and assessment of construct validity*, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2004, vol. 89, p. 85-103).

20 The concept of a holistic marketing approach was introduced by Kotler and Keller (cf. P. Kotler, K. L. Keller, *Marketing Management*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey 2007).

21 Although literature on the subject often underlines that all employees should be treated as equally important partners (cf. P. K. Ahmed, M. Rafiq, *Internal marketing issues and challenges*, *European Journal of Marketing* 2003, vol. 37, no. 9, p. 1177-1186), practice proves this approach is not satisfactory. Employees should be regarded by an organization as its allies and ambassadors.

Picture 5. The matrix of employee engagement in image development.



Source: Author's own research.

It is important to bear in mind that the external image of an employer is shaped based not only on employer's activities in relation to prospective employees but also on HR activities targeted at current employees, who transmit their opinions to the participants of the external labour market via informal channels of communication. The image of an organization as an employer is thus a resultant of formal activities undertaken by an organization (often removed from the ideal) and informal messages transmitted by current employees to other people. This being the case, each science organization should strive to eliminate irregularities in its HR policies. By doing so an organization may win the crucial backing of its employees and rely on their transmitting positive communications about its operations as an employer. In this way employees turn into the ambassadors not only of the employer image but also of the overall image of the organization.

Obviously, it would be wrong to assume that current employees are going to transmit positive opinions about the employer based on the perceived good lateral relations (research reveals that lateral relations are evaluated as better than vertical relations). This may play a significant role in building an image via informal channels but usually over a short period of time only. Having supportive colleagues does not exhaust all employee expectations, which, if frustrated, may lead to serious consequences for the organization including damage to its image or even incidents of data theft by embittered employees, who were either dismissed from work or decided to leave it²². The survey conducted by the Ponemon Institute²³ revealed that as many as 61% of employees who perceived their employer in the negative light stole the

²² Over a half of dismissed employees misappropriate company data, <http://ceo.cxo.pl/news/338570/Ponad.polowa.zwalnianych.pracownikow.wynosi.dane...>, 14 Oct 2012.

²³ The survey "Jobs at Risk = Data at Risk" conducted in the US in 2009 involved 945 respondents, who in 2008 were dismissed from work (37%), left the current job for a new one (38%) or left for fear of being made redundant (25%).

company's confidential information when leaving the job while only 26% of employees who perceived their employer in the positive light did the same. Information that was most commonly misappropriated included e-mail addresses and personal data of other employees, customer data, mail messages and company documents copied onto electronic devices or forwarded to private e-mail addresses.

The negative employer image is also detrimental to the organization as a service provider and the values it creates. According to research conducted by Andersen Business Consulting in Poland as many as 67% of employees who lost their jobs would not consider working again for the same employer even if they were offered better work conditions, 70% would not recommend the former employer to someone looking for a job, while 50% would never recommend any products offered by the previous employer²⁴. Even though the survey was conducted before the onset of economic crisis, the tendency it revealed is bound to continue.

On the other hand, employees who perceive their employer in a favourable light are definitely more willing (often on their own initiative) to make sacrifices in order to save the organization and their jobs. The survey conducted by GFK Polonia²⁵ showed that a half of Polish employees declared a willingness to suffer salary cuts to save their jobs. And indeed, a number of situations have occurred where employees did act upon such declarations (e.g. a hospital in Lublin). Here the question arises as to the border line between loyalty towards the employer and own interests. As to how big sacrifices employees are willing to make, it seems to depend first of all on their determination, which in itself represents a resultant of the intensity of the emotional bond with the employer and the current personal situation including in particular the financial dimension.

Therefore it is reasonable to claim that, regardless of how an organization is perceived as an employer, the domino effect would always come into play, which means that both undertaking or failing to undertake specific activities in the area of HR policies will bring about palpable consequences for the organization across all areas of its operations. Obviously, these consequences are positive for the organization only when its mirror and external images are at least positive. This can be achieved by implementing the assumptions of personal marketing in relation to all current and prospective employees.

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²⁴ K. Kosicki, *Redukcja personelu. Uważaj jak zwalniasz*, *Businessman Magazine* 2003, no. 8, p. 79.

²⁵ Poles are willing to earn less to save their companies http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,101562,6311577,_Rz___Polacy_gotowi_sa_mniej_zarabiac_by_ratowac.html, 14 Oct 2012.

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