

A RESEARCH ON THE EFFECT OF INTERNAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES ON THE SALES FORCE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of internal marketing on sales force performance. In this study, data obtained from 200 pharmaceutical industry employees in Kocaeli was used to examine testing the research of hypothesis. The data were analyzed by factor analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis. According to the results obtained, internal marketing applications have a positive effect on the sales force performance. The research results show that business managers who want to increase the performance of their sales force should give importance to their internal marketing activities.

Keywords: Internal Marketing, Performance Management, Sales Force.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to provide advantage on competition, the companies should create employee and customer satisfaction, create a total positive interaction, and they should manage and direct their policies and strategies with an understanding of leadership appropriate to the employees' resources and processes in order to achieve perfection in business results (Naktiyok and Küçük, 2003: 225-226). In this context, the concept of customer requirements leading businesses also includes employee, in other words internal customer satisfaction as well as competitive advantage in terms of quality, effectiveness and efficiency.

The success of internal marketing activities is possible by providing employee, in other words internal customer satisfaction, and ensuring the employees to have positive attitudes such as organizational commitment, job motivation, and job satisfaction (Ewing and Caruana, 1999). According to this management concept, which is considered as the Internal Marketing concept and sought after by many organizations in recent years; the first market for a business is its employees. As a result of meeting the needs of the employees, ensuring their motivations, and increasing job satisfactions in employees by using Internal Marketing applications, the tendency to leave the organization is reduced and as a result, it is possible to provide customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ahmet and Rafiq, 2003).

Performance Management is a system providing to direct and manage future goals and strategies of the companies, and the executives and other employees working in the company in line with these goals. An efficient performance management ensures success of the company by

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encouraging employees for success. Performance management led by human resources departments enables the company or institution to understand job definitions clearly, determine and develop necessary trainings, and provide communication between employees, feedbacks, employee motivation and evaluations. A performance management which clearly explains to their employees what their jobs are, provides them to be directed consciously, enables their employees to develop their job performances by works such as effective orientation and corporate training, creates awareness of that they have in-house promotion among employees, makes their employees feel themselves as a part of organization, and thereby connects them to their organizations, rewards them when necessary, and constantly evaluates their performances is extremely important in terms of success of the organization. One of the most important functions of human resources management is to determine business successes of the employees, in other words to evaluate their performances (Fındıkçı, 2001). The performance of the employees at all levels, from the top level executive to the bottom level employee, is quite important in terms of the company or institution to be able to maintain its presence, provide to achieve its goals, and be successful. In parallel with structural development of the organizations, the necessity of the employees to be developed in terms of quality and quantity has made the performance evaluation an important field of study.

Sales department is essential for the companies to maintain their existence, and make profit. This department, which we can also define as a window of the organization opening to the customers, is quite important for the customers' needs and requests to be understood correctly and to be answered quickly, and for ensuring their satisfaction and commitment. For this reason, it is also indispensable to carry out right performance management and evaluation of this department for the existence and success of the organization.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Importance of Internal Management

The concept of internal marketing was first used by Berry et al. (1976), then George (1977) and Thompson et al. (1978), and Murray (1979). Even though it is not used directly, the idea of internal marketing was first described in the articles of Sasser and Arbeit (1976). However, the word did not enter in literacy and use until the publication of Berry's article (1981) that he describes the internal marketing as "seeing employees as internal customers and seeing the businesses carried out as internal products satisfying the needs and requests of these internal customers" (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000: 450).

The greatest advantage of the internal marketing approach will be to ensure bringing qualified employees in the organization, developing them, providing their motivation, and ensuring them to stay in the organization. According to Ay and Kartal (2003: 1-2), internal marketing is a philosophy that treats the employees as a customer, and a strategy that shapes the business products to fit human needs.

Çoban (2004: 37) described internal marketing as a marketing approach that attracts employees to the organization, retains, and targets their motivation in order to help the service quality perceived and the entrepreneur to perform effective external marketing as a competition tool.

The concept of internal marketing suggests that the first market of a company is employees of the organization. Primary objective of the internal marketing function is to ensure employees that are customer-oriented, and motivated at every stage. (Candan and Çekmecelioğlu, 2009: 42).

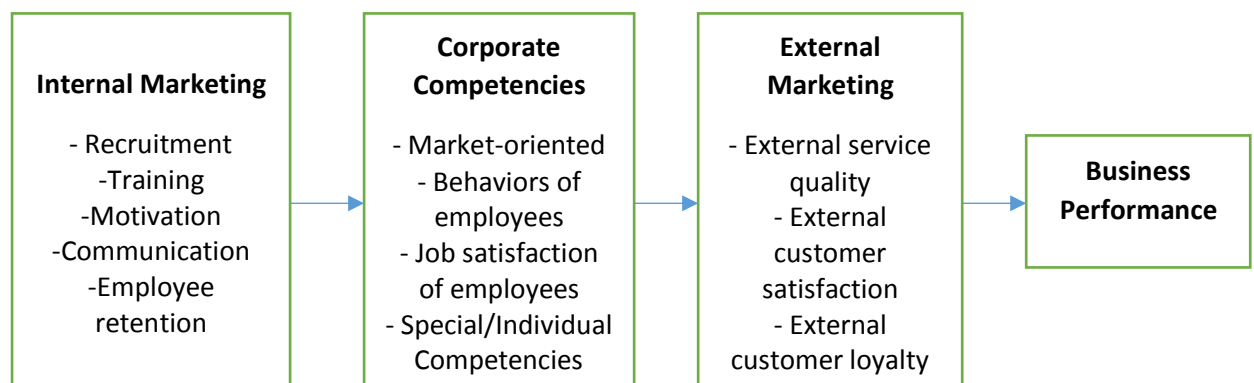
According to another definition, internal marketing is "a planned effort performed to integrate, motivate and unite the employees for the common and functional strategies to be applied effectively in order to overcome organizational resistance to change" (Rafiq and Ahmed,

2000: 222). The implementation of this philosophy, which argues that employees should be included in all processes in order for the business to be more successful, requires an effective work. Implementation of the internal marketing understanding within the business will also bring many advantages along. The greatest advantage of internal marketing understanding will be attracting qualified employees to the organization, developing, motivating, and ensuring them to stay in the organization. According to Ay and Kartal (2003: 1-2), internal marketing is a philosophy that treats the employees as a customer, and a strategy that shapes the business products to fit human needs.

The success of a business institution is greatly influenced by the employees in the business. The elementary idea of internal marketing concept is that the employees in any institution are starting point of the market that communicates with the customer. It should be acted with equal importance to the customers and employees at stages of establishing and fulfilling the enterprise's corporate objectives in the internal marketing concept. Internal marketing ensures the employees in institution to be informed about current and planned marketing activities of the institution, and requires the employees to be informed about how to play a role in order to guarantee a successful application. The success obtained in internal marketing also affects job satisfaction of the employees and external marketing positively (Proctor, 2010: 257). Internal marketing and human resources are interrelated; even it is thought that they are indivisible especially in the service businesses. Internal marketing has a point of view that the employees are perceived as internal customers. If the employees as internal customers are motivated on making sale with a customer-oriented and service-oriented point of view, it will be ensured that external customers can also be satisfied (Keleman and Papasolomou, 2007: 747).

Studies covering the last decade show that “employees as internal customers within the institution” and “the active role that the customers play in determination of the corporate identity and culture” have been the topics examined and researched. Corporate identity is shaped by being deeply influenced by the viewpoints of employees within the institution in order to provide and maintain competitive advantage (Wieseke et al., 2009: 123). Employees who are recruited, educated, motivated and improved communication skills within the concept of internal marketing have increased their institutional competencies and contributed positively to the formation of a common culture. Through the establishment of corporate identity and culture, behaviors of the business employees were shaped, job satisfaction of the employees was established, individual competencies and successes were increased, and employees acting in a market-oriented manner were acquired. In this respect, external marketing activities in terms of service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty were positively affected. It was observed that these positive effects of external marketing activities also have a direct positive effect on the performance of the business (Figure 1) (Ooncharoen and Ussahawanitchakit, 2009: 25).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Relationships Between the Role – Tool of Internal Management, Business Performance, and Corporate Competencies



Source: Selda Ene "The Role of Establishment of Marketing Culture of Employees In Increasing Business Performance for Internal Marketing" International Journal of Economic and Admenistrative Studies, 2013 p. 70

2.2. History of the Internal Marketing

When examining the conceptual development of internal marketing, there are three stages that are intertwined but actually can be considered as separate from each other:

Employee Satisfaction Stage

The fundamental assumption of this stage, which is the first stage of internal marketing, is that the businesses must have satisfied employees in order to have satisfied customers (Ay and Kartal, 2003: 16). It was underlined that the first subject that businesses should pay attention to on the way to customer satisfaction is internal customers. Thus, a new way, which has not been proposed so far, was proposed to the businesses, which seek to achieve their objectives, about what they should do.

Customer Orientation Stage

At this stage, it has become important to have customer-oriented employees who can respond to customer needs. The employees should be motivated firstly with marketing-like actions in order to act in a customer-oriented manner (Ay and Kartal, 2003: 16). In this stage, internal marketing understanding deals with what the efforts required to motivate the implementers, in other words the employees are, in order to implement customer-oriented work, which is the primary duty of businesses according to modern marketing understanding, in the place of business.

Strategy Implementation and Change Management Stage

At this stage, the role of internal marketing is emphasized as "a process in which employees are united, educated, and motivated in line with the corporate objectives, and in which the personnel can understand and realize not only the value of organization, but also its place in its". At this stage, the role of internal marketing as an application tool was made clearer and more understandable.

Internal marketing activities can be applied in any marketing activity within an organization. In internal marketing applications, both external communication and intra-organizational communication have great importance. Especially in service businesses, the advertisements should be shown to employees before showing to external customer. There should also be continuous and direct communication among the employees in the organization, and cooperation should be made between the personnel in different departments in order to ensure that everyone works in line with the same purposes. The main target to be reached in the internal marketing applications as well as in all the activities of an enterprise is to increase profit and market share of the business by raising the external consumer satisfaction. The most important arrangement that needs to be made in line with this purpose is to develop and implement a process in which the employees are satisfied. For this, it is necessary to employ talented personnel, to increase harmony and cooperation among the personnel, to strengthen the intra-organizational communication, and to increase the external customer satisfaction by directing the employees to customer orientation. The internal marketing applications are a management tool that helps to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in the business environment where there is intense competition (Candan and Çekmecelioğlu, 2009: 46).

2.3. Sales Force Performance

Sales force management can be described as analysis, planning, implementation, and control of the sales force activities. Sales force management involves designing of the sales force strategy and structure, selecting the sales force, and recruiting, training, pricing, motivating, and valuation of the sales force.

Performance Evaluation in Sales Management

If a definition of performance evaluation is made according to its usage areas; performance evaluation is one of the primary personnel applications used in determining the places of employees within the organization, in promotions, demotions, dismissals, pay arrangements, or in deciding on training programs (Akalın and Koç, 2014: 228). Performance evaluation is generally a mechanism for inspecting decisions and information in many organizations. At the personal level, it is defined as the evaluation by inspectors in their behaviors and actions. Evaluation of sales force performance is an indispensable method for increasing sales performance and reducing marketing cost. By this means, the management determines successful salespersons and determines which sales techniques they are using, and has the opportunity to adapt less successful salespersons to the techniques that must be used. This opportunity is also a guide for the salespersons working with high cost to lower the selling costs. All salespersons that know what is expected from them and believe the presence of the tools used to measure their success, feel more self-confident. Performance evaluations serve the purpose of ensuring approval, appreciation or criticizing of the salespersons. As a result of the performance evaluation, the points that the business management wants to achieve and the benefits to be provided can be listed as follows:

- To ensure them to make more sales, and consequently become more useful for their companies by increasing performance of the salespersons,
- To make the sales activities more systematic in terms of management and control by determining the strengths and weaknesses of each salesperson individually,
- To decide on the training program to be applied by determining which training program the salespersons need in group and individually for each,
- To determine the position in the group by comparing one person with the other employees in general,
- To facilitate determination of the wages policy by revealing positive points separating the salespersons from each other in the wage increase,
- To motivate the salespersons in order to increase their performance by evaluating their past performance (Merter, 2012: 36)

The first and most important stage in the establishment of performance evaluation systems in the businesses is to determine performance criteria. The success of the performance evaluation process requires employees to adapt the evaluation criteria, and more importantly, to use objective criteria that can measure the success of employees. In this sense, the criterion is the expected level of success or the result that must be achieved. Regardless of the nature of business, employees will want to know according to what and how their success in the business is evaluated. For this reason, there is a need to determine the level of success that must be achieved and how it will be measured by scientific and participative methods that will be widely accepted.

In the determination of performance criteria, the management should know its needs, duties and purposes; and the employees should express their opinions on how best to do a job. When determining performance criteria, the following points should be taken into consideration:

- ✓ What is measured in the performance evaluation process must absolutely be related to the purposes and objectives prepared in parallel with the mission and strategic purposes of the organization,
- ✓ Not only productivity, but also employee behaviors must be considered in choosing criteria;
- ✓ The employee should be involved in determining the criteria. Their views and criticism should be taken into consideration. Otherwise, it cannot be ensured that the employee believes, accepts the necessity of these criteria determined, and commits to meet these criteria;
- ✓ Criteria must be observable and objectively measurable;
- ✓ Performance criteria must be secure. When they are applied to the same personnel or different personnel at different times, consistent information relevant to the performance level must be provided;
- ✓ Criteria must be chosen in accordance with the business feature and the responsibility level;

In the performance evaluation process, we can examine the criteria that the companies use in four main groups. These criteria are:

- Level of Personal Behavior
- Level of Professional Knowledge
- Level of Efficiency at Business
- Level of Managerial Skill

Which of these criteria will be prioritized by the businesses will vary depending on the personnel policies they will pursue (Bakan and Kelleroğlu, 2013: 110).

3. A RESEARCH FOR DETERMINING THE EFFECT OF INTERNAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES ON SALES FORCE PERFORMANCE

3.1. Purpose of the Research

Internal marketing is a planned effort to bring the employees, coordinate them functionally, and to break their resistance to change for applying common and functional strategies effectively in order to create customer satisfaction through the process of creating motivated, customer-oriented employees (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000: 454). Lings (1999: 453) argues that internal marketing is supporting tool for the companies that want to gain profit. Through internal marketing, the internal customer satisfaction will be provided, and customer satisfaction will increase due to increased production and service quality. The main purpose of internal marketing approach is to increase the customer satisfaction by increasing the employee satisfaction. It is thought that this research will provide important results for the relationships between two issues that are important in terms of management and marketing literature. The research was conducted on the employees in business in the pharmaceutical industry in Kocaeli. This business operating in this sector was assumed to apply the internal marketing activities effectively in these companies due to its corporate structure and being large scale enterprises. In this way, it is thought that the effects of internal marketing on sales force performance will be revealed more realistically in these companies.

3.2. Method of the Research

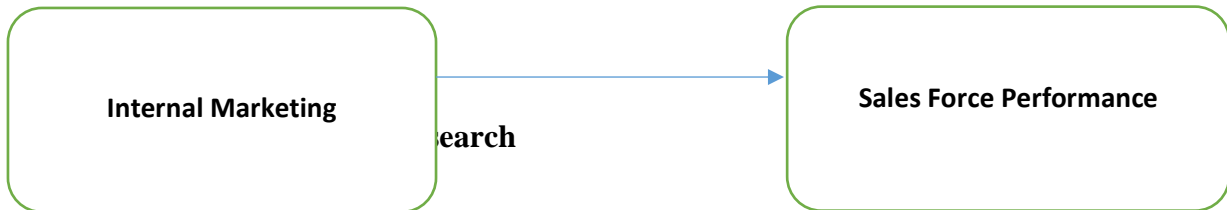
3.2.1. Sampling Process

The research was conducted by survey method. In the research the internal marketing scale developed by Money and Foreman (1996) and the sales force performance scale developed by Winter's et al. (1993) were used. 15 variables related to internal marketing, 10 variables related to sales force and 8 variables related to preliminary preparation were used, and these variables were evaluated with 5 point Likert scale. Demographic features were measured with 10 variables. The main mass of the research was the employees of the industrial enterprises operating in the pharmaceutical sector in Kocaeli. 335 surveys were distributed to this enterprise, and 200 returned and completed surveys were evaluated. The return rate of the surveys is 60%, which is acceptable in the literature.

3.2.2. Model of the Research

The research model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model



The satisfaction of external customers of an enterprise primarily depends on satisfaction of the employees regarded as its internal customers. The satisfaction of the employees depends on the activities of business management for the employees such as training, motivation, performance evaluation, pricing, and creating team spirit (Candan and Çekmecelioğlu, 2009: 50). Such activities within the scope of internal marketing of the business can affect the sales force performance positively. For this reason, hypothesis of the research was determined in line with its purpose and model as follows:

H1: Internal marketing activities have effect on the sales force performance.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Demographic Features of the Research Sample

Majority of the research sample (52.3%) is between the ages of 26-33. According to this, it can be said that the answerers within the scope of the research came from the young. Majority of the sample (50.3%) are highly educated. 66% of the research sample are single, 34% are married; 62.4% are male and 36.5% are female. 46.2% of the sample have income of 1000-3000 TL, 2 persons work in the majority of the households with paid employees (45.6%), and the majority of the individuals living in the house (33.5%) consists of 4 persons. Majority of the sample (27.9%) have worked in the current workplace for more than 5 years, and 35.4% of them had worked for 2 years in the previous workplace. Finally, 41.5% of the answerers work permanently.

4.2. Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Variables

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Internal Marketing Activities

Internal Marketing Scale Variables	Mean Values	Standard Deviation Values
1. This institution provides a vision for their employees to believe.	4,27	0,83
2. This institution conveys its vision appropriately to its employees.	4,25	0,73
3. This institution prepares its employees to show good performance in the workplace.	4,25	0,81
4. This institution sees the development of its employees' knowledge and skills as an investment, not as a cost.	3,92	1,09
5. The knowledge and skills of the employees working in this institution are developed in the organization process.	4,22	0,84
6. This institution teaches its employees how to do the works, not why to do them.	4,03	1,02
7. This institution develops its employees at times out of their training.	3,95	1,07
8. Performance measurement and reward systems of this institution encourage employees to work together.	3,78	1,10
9. This institution mostly measures and rewards performances of the employees who contribute to the vision of the organization.	3,86	0,95
10. This organization collects information from the employees to improve their employees' duties and strategy of the organization.	4,00	0,98
11. This institution teaches its employees the importance of service roles.	4,03	0,92
12. In this institution, the employees who provide excellent service are rewarded for their efforts.	3,95	1,06
13. Employees in this organization are appropriately trained to perform the service roles	3,97	0,98
14. This institution has the necessary flexibility to supply different needs of employees.	4,01	1,11
15. In this institution, communication with employees has great importance and the importance of communication is placed in the organization.	4,25	0,94
Average (χ)	4,05	

As seen from Table 1, the answerers have a strong attitude with a general average of 4.05 according to the statements related to internal marketing applications. In other words, it can be said that they found internal marketing applications of the company where they work very satisfactory. Answerers mostly think that the employees have a vision that the organization believes in their employees. At the same time, answerers believe in that the organization they work in prepares them to show a good performance in workplace. According to answerers, the employees are undecided on that performance measurement and rewards system in their organization encourage working together, and that the institution mostly measures and rewards the performances of the employees who contributes to the vision of the organization. As it is known, one of the most important functions of internal marketing is to measure performances of the employees accurately, and reward those who show high performance. According to the results obtained in the research, the issue which the answerers are troubled with the organization they work in is that the reward system does not work correctly.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Sales Force Performance

Sales Force Performance Scale Variables	Mean Value	Standard Deviation Values
1. Works in order for the company to obtain high market share in the region.	4,21	0,97
2. Tries to exceed its targets and objectives in the region where it operates.	4,07	0,96
3. Tries to make a high level of turnover.	3,94	1,15
4. Knows the most important customers and makes sales accordingly.	4,14	0,99
5. Applies sales activity standards; research, sample etc.	4,06	0,97
6. Defines major accounts.	3,89	1,01
7. Sells products with high profit margins.	4,01	1,07
8. Exceeds sales targets.	3,90	1,11
9. Provides the company to sell the new products quickly.	4,10	0,91
10. Helps the sales chief to achieve his/her targets.	4,12	0,87
Average (\bar{x})	4,04	

As seen from Table 2, answerers have a strong attitude with an average of 4.04 according to the statements on sales force applications. In other words, it can be said that they found sales force applications of the company where they work very satisfactory. Answerers mostly think that the company operates to obtain high market share in the region. At the same time, answerers know the most important customers of the company, and believe in that they make sales accordingly. According to answerers, the employees are undecided on defining major accounts of the enterprise, and exceeding the sales targets. As it is known, one of the most important functions of sales force performance is that sales chief and employees help the company to achieve its targets. According to the result obtained in the research, the issue which the answerers are troubled with the organization they work in is that the company tries to make high level of turnover.

4.3. Factor Analysis Results According to Internal Marketing Variables

To be able to perform factor analysis on a scale, it has to be passed through certain tests. First one of these is the KMO sample adequacy measure. This ratio is requested to be higher than 60%. The second one is the Bartlett test. The result of this test is requested to be lower than 0.05. Only under these circumstances factor analysis can be applied. According to the results in Table 2, quite high values were found as KMO 0.786, and Bartlett test score 0,000. Accordingly, the sample adequacy in our research is suitable for the use of factor analysis. The results of the Bartlett test also show that there is a strong relationship between variables.

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett Test

Kayser-Meyer-Olkin Sample Adequacy Measure		,786
Bartlett Test	Approximate Chi-Square Value	526,249
	df	21
	Sig.	,000

4.4. Factor Analysis Results According to Sales Force Performance Variables

Before performing factor analysis to the sales force performance scale, KMO and Bartlett tests were carried out. Quite high values were found as KMO 0.612, and Bartlett test score 0.000. Accordingly, the sample adequacy in our research is suitable for the use of factor analysis. The results of the Bartlett test also show that there is a strong relationship between variables.

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett Test

Kayser-Meyer-Olkin Sample Adequacy Measure		,612
Bartlett Test	Approximate Chi-Square Value	47,058
	df	3
	Sig.	,000

4.5. Reliability Values and Correlations Between Variables

It is seen that alpha (reliability) coefficients of all variables are over 0.70. The alpha coefficient of the internal marketing activity variable is 0.78, the alpha coefficient of the sales force performance variables is 0.74, and of the preliminary value is 0.76.

Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between internal marketing activities application and sales force performance components. Correlations between variables and alpha (reliability) coefficients are given in Table 4. As a result of the correlation analysis, statistically significant relationships were found between the variables. When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that internal marketing activities have a strong positive relationship with sales force performance and preliminary preparation.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis Results

Variables	Internal marketing	Sales force performance	Preliminary preparation
Internal marketing	1,000		
Sales force performance		1,000	
Preliminary preparation			1,000

4.6. Regression Analyses

Single regression models were established to examine the effect of internal marketing activities on sales force performance. It is seen that the regression model established to examine the effect of internal marketing activities on sales force performance is statistically significant, and, affects strongly ($\beta=458$) and positively at 1% of significance level. These results show that internal marketing activities for ensuring development, motivation and retention of employees of the management try to exceed the objectives and targets of the employees in the region where they work, and help the sales chief to achieve his/her targets.

	B	t	P
Internal Marketing	,458	2,160	,000
Model F	,65		
Model R ²	,397		
**p<01			
*p<05			

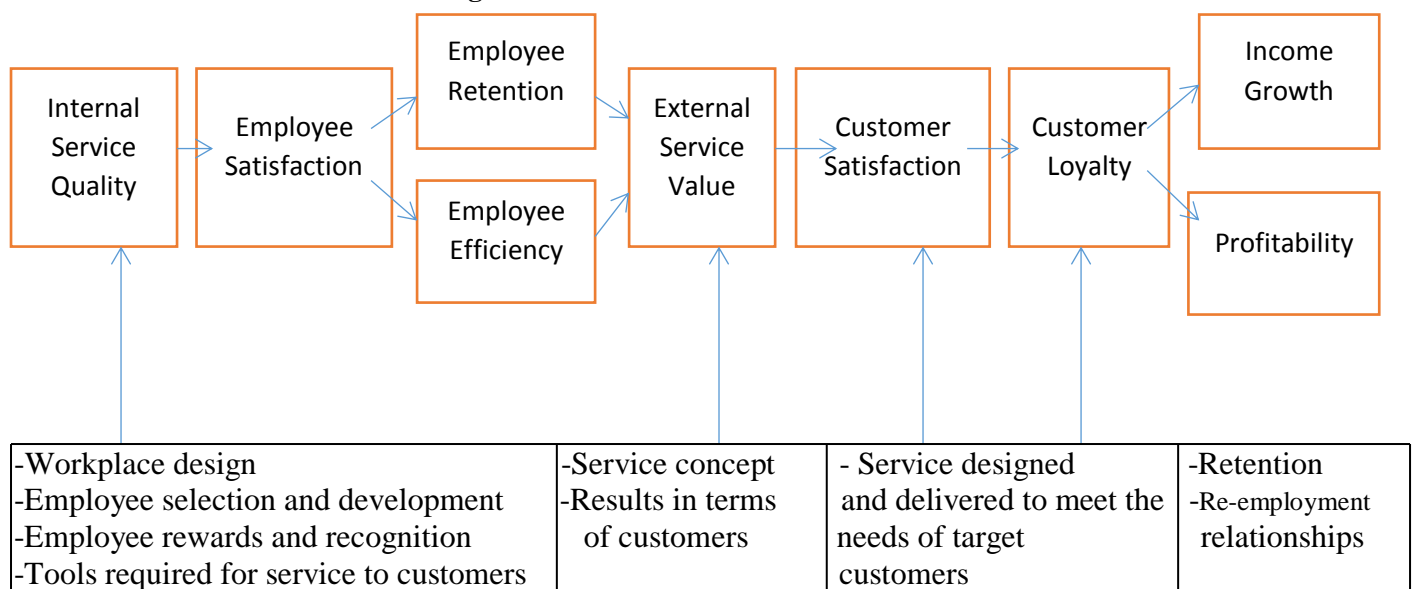
5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although internal marketing activities are a developing issue, and it is emphasized that internal marketing activities for internal customer satisfaction have an important role in success of the company; researches that examine the relationship between internal marketing and sales force performance and job satisfaction are quite a few (Candan, Çekmecelioğlu, 2009: 55). For this reason, the findings obtained in this research, which examines the effect of internal marketing activities in enterprises on sales force performance, are significant.

The results obtained in this research where the effect of internal marketing activities on sales force performance is evaluated increase the elements of internal marketing activities such as that enterprises provide their employees a vision they can believe in, prepare their employees to show a good performance in the workplace, give a great importance to communication with the employees, and help the sales chief and employees to achieve their business targets.

Starting from this we can come to the conclusion that there are valid evidences regarding that the satisfied employees will lead to satisfied customers, and the satisfied customers will empower the employees to feel satisfied with their works. Some even argue that it will be difficult to achieve customer satisfaction unless the service employees are happy. As it is seen in Figure 2, there are relationships between customer loyalty and employee satisfaction, employee loyalty and productivity. This is a supporting tool for the business executives. Today, in which customer satisfaction is an unconditional requirement to achieve business objectives, the way to achieve this is the happiness of the employees.

Figure 2. Connections in the Service-Profit Chain



Source: Öztürk S.A., 2003 Hizmet Pazarlaması, İstanbul

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