

**Internal communication at the DCSA (DaimlerChrysler South
Africa) head office in Pretoria: a critical analysis**

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“The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning and the principal and choice part of knowledge...” (Proverbs 1: 7a, AMP)

ABSTRACT

In today's business world, corporate communication is becoming an increasingly essential element to achieving organisational goals and objectives. For this reason, effective organisational internal communication is essential.

This study critically and qualitatively analysed the nature of internal communication at DaimlerChrysler South Africa's (DCSA) head office in Zwartkop, as perceived by its management and staff. This analysis was based on the theoretical points of departure of internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication. In light of these frameworks it was outlined that in an organisational environment, effective internal communication takes place to the benefit of all organisational constituencies, and is based on relationships characterised by openness, trust and mutual respect.

By conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with management and focus groups with staff at DCSA's head office over a period of four weeks, first-hand in-depth information on DCSA's internal communication was obtained. Following an interpretive worldview, the data was qualitatively coded, categorised and analysed. The results showed that the nature of DCSA's internal communication is predominantly authoritarian and top-down in nature.

Although DCSA has many formal internal communication mediums and instruments in place, staff still experience internal communication as ineffective. The conclusion is made that the problem lies with the inefficient implementation of these instruments. Resulting issues include: problems with feedback, information-overload, and communication barriers between departments.

Following the results of this study, the effective implementation and use of two-way symmetrical communication is recommended in order to improve internal communication, motivate and empower staff and improve interdepartmental communication. Ultimately, this will enable DCSA to function more effectively as an organisation.

OPSOMMING

In vandag se besigheidswêreld, word effektiewe korporatiewe kommunikasie 'n al hoe belangriker element vir 'n organisasie om sy doelwitte suksesvol te bereik. Om hierdie rede word effektiewe interne kommunikasie as noodsaaklik beskou.

Hierdie studie het die aard van DaimlerChrysler South Africa (DCSA) se interne kommunikasie krities en kwalitatief ontleed, soos gesien deur die perspektiewe van hul bestuur en werknemers. Interne bemaking en twee-rigting simmetriese kommunikasie het die teoretiese grondslag gevorm. Die gevolgtrekking is gemaak dat (binne 'n korporatiewe omgewing) effektiewe interne kommunikasie plaasvind tot die voordeel van alle belanghebbendes, gebaseer op verhoudinge met eienskappe van oopheid, vertrouwe en respek.

Deur die voer van kwalitatiewe semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude en fokusgroepe met verteenwoordigers van DCSA se hoofkantoor (bestuurders en personeel) oor 'n tydperk van vier weke, is insiggewende inligting van DCSA se interne kommunikasie bekom. Die data is aan hand van kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise gekategoriseer en ontleed. Die resultate het aangetoon dat DCSA se interne kommunikasie 'n outoritêre aard het, waar inligting hoofsaaklik van bo na onder gekommunikeer word.

Alhoewel DCSA 'n wye verskeidenheid formele interne kommunikasiemediums en -instrumente tot hul beskikking het, ervaar werknemers die interne kommunikasie as oneffektief. Die gevolgtrekking word gemaak dat die probleem by die effektiewe implementering van hierdie instrumente lê. Personeel ervaar probleme met terugvoer, oormatige kommunikasie van inligting, en oneffektiewe interdepartementele kommunikasie.

Die studie beveel die gebruik van twee-rigting simmetriese kommunikasie aan om interne kommunikasie te bevorder. Dit behoort ook tot 'n algemeen meer effektiewe funksionering van DCSA as organisasie te lei.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and outline of study

Great organisations give even the lowest workers a good feeling (Kotler, 2003:58).

The most important factor in internal communications begins with the manager who has a responsibility to his or her employees. That responsibility is to listen to what they have to say and to get to know who they really are as human beings... Today's employees want more high-tech and sophisticated communications, but they also want more of management than ever before. Understanding that fact is the key to an effective internal communications program (Argenti, 1998:182).

1.1 Introduction

The above two quotes underline the importance of good internal communication in the 21st century. An important factor in employees' job performance and therefore organisational success is the extent to which workers find communication within the organisation satisfactory (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002:15).

This study takes a closer look at internal communication between management and their subordinates in the marketing and administrative division of DaimlerChrysler South Africa's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion. Two theories are used as theoretical backdrop, namely internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication. These are discussed in detail in chapter 2.

This chapter outlines the operational definitions applicable to this study, the background to DCSA as the company, the problem statement, objectives, methodology and chapter outline.

1.2 Definitions

The following operational definitions apply to this study:

1.2.1 Corporate culture

According to Taylor and Cosenza (1997:3) corporate culture is based on the philosophy, attitudes, beliefs and shared values upon and around which an organisation operates. All organisations have a culture, which is either a positive or negative force in achieving effective performance. Culture is revealed in people's attitudes, feelings and the overall chemistry which emanates from the work environment. Put simply, it is the organisational climate in which employees work.

1.2.2 Feedback

Although feedback can be viewed as a spontaneous oral response from an interpersonal point of view (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002:26), for the purposes of this study it refers to a response on the part of the publics or target audiences to a public relations practitioner's communication messages. Feedback is reactions that are transmitted back to, and actually reach, the organisation (Rensburg & Cant, 2003:71).

1.2.3 Internal communication

Internal communication is the way organisations communicate with their employees (Argenti, 1998:60). There is growing recognition that it is impossible for an organisation to function properly or reach organisational goals without a good internal communication system (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002:15). There are many different mediums and instruments which can be used for internal communication. These include: newsletters to workers, memorandums, meetings, interviews and team-building exercises (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002:22).

1.2.4 Marketing

Marketing, as defined by the American Marketing Association, is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services (products) to create exchange and satisfy individual and organisational objectives (Grönroos, 1997:323).

1.2.5 Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is the strategic management of relationships with all relevant stakeholders. These include the authorities, the public, suppliers, employees as well as current and potential customers (Payne, 2006:22; Van der Walt, Strydom, Marx & Jooste, 1996:29). The whole organisation, all the departments and all employees must work cohesively towards ensuring customer satisfaction, not only with regard to product quality, but also in the service they deliver to the different stakeholder publics (Van der Walt *et al.*, 1996:29).

1.2.6 Internal marketing

The basic foundation of internal marketing is to create satisfied customers by, amongst others, having satisfied employees. This could best be achieved by treating employees as customers, i.e. by applying the principles of marketing to job design and employee motivation (Miller, 2002:1; Varey, 1995:42; also see Rensburg & Cant, 2003:121/129/186-203).

1.2.7 Public relations (PR)

Public relations is a management function that helps achieve organisational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organisational change (Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1997:5). Public relations practitioners communicate and build good relations with all relevant internal and external publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories and events (Armstrong & Kotler, 2005:399).

1.2.8 Normative theory

A normative model explains how public relations is supposed to be practiced. A normative theory can also describe a practice that is positive, thereby supporting the idea that it *can* and *should* be practiced (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002:310).

1.2.9 Positive model

A positive model is a theory that describes and explains how public relations *is* practiced (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:310).

1.2.10 Two-way symmetrical communication

An organisation applying two-way symmetrical communication attempts to balance the interests of the organisation and its publics, and uses research and dialogue to manage conflict with strategic publics (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:15).

1.2.11 Two-way asymmetrical communication

An organisation applying two-way asymmetrical communication attempts to align the views of its publics with those of the organisation. Information is not only disseminated, but also based on research conducted to determine the most appropriate channels and messages to persuade publics to behave as the organisation would like (Puth, 1994:9).

The next section of this chapter outlines DaimlerChrysler as an organisation operating from its South African head office in Centurion.

1.3 DaimlerChrysler South Africa (DCSA) – a profile description

For a critical analysis of internal communication by means of a case study, the author selected DaimlerChrysler South Africa's head office located in Zwartkop, Centurion. This multinational corporation has a progressive corporate communication function, operating within a multi-faceted organisational culture, as described later in this section.

1.3.1 DaimlerChrysler

Since the invention of the automobile a hundred years ago, DaimlerChrysler has grown into one of the leading organisations in the worldwide motor vehicle industry (DCSA, 2005:1). Definitive of the company is its global presence, strong and attractive brands and extensive product range with revolutionary technological innovations. It is one of the world's largest automotive, transportation and services companies with manufacturing operations in 37 countries and distribution operations in more than 200 countries (DCSA, 2005:1).

On 17 November 1998, Daimler-Benz Aktien Gesellschaft (AG)¹ and the Chrysler Corporation merged, thereby becoming the fourth largest motor vehicle manufacturer in the world. On 19 April 1999, Mercedes-Benz South Africa (Pty) Ltd became DaimlerChrysler South Africa (Pty) Ltd (DCSA) – the first country to assemble Mercedes Benz cars outside of Germany and the training ground of many of the brightest technicians and executives in the DaimlerChrysler-group (Schnetler, 2002:151).

On 18 September 2000, after years of careful planning and preparation, DaimlerChrysler AG was ready to give its ultimate vote of confidence in South Africa by unveiling its R1,4-billion plant in East London. This plant was established to manufacture all right-hand drive C-Class Mercedes-Benz models for world markets. According to Jürgen Schrempp, DaimlerChrysler chairman, DaimlerChrysler had come through some very dark days and came close to ending its investment in this country. Instead, he said: "We withstood the pressure and opted to help build a better future for all South Africans" (Schnetler, 2002:151-153).

DaimlerChrysler South Africa (DCSA) became a global player in its own right, playing a significant part in making DaimlerChrysler one of the world's leading automobile manufacturers – an organisation that seeks to "provide long-term value for customers, shareholders and employees alike" (Schnetler, 2002:153).

¹ In German, the words 'Aktien' and 'Gesellschaft' mean 'share(s)' and 'company/corporation', respectively (Altavista, 2006:1; Free translation, 2006:1).

1.3.2 DaimlerChrysler South Africa (DCSA)

DaimlerChrysler South Africa (DCSA) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of DaimlerChrysler Aktien Gesellschaft (DCAG). It is one of the largest foreign investments in South Africa (Bezuidenhout, 2003:2).

DCSA occupies a top position among DCAG manufacturing plants and uses state-of-the art technology identical to its sister plants around the world (DCSA, 2005:1). According to Schnetler (2002:163): “Looking back over the years, the organisation and its products have consistently stood for daring innovation, exemplary quality, caring safety, exhilarating performance, a peerless sense of identity, a presence on the road that is second to none. And South Africa has indeed been fortunate enough to share in this excellence almost from the word go.”

Through their vision – *Siyaphambili*² – they aim to be the number one motor manufacturer for Africa. This is depicted in their “CORE”-values, namely (Bezuidenhout, 2003:1):

- Customer Excellence – to place the customer first in all situations;
- Ownership – to manage and participate in the business as if it is our own;
- Respect – to show real trust in our colleagues, leaders and staff; and
- Example – to show a positive attitude and “walk the talk”.

DCSA has three main plants from where motor vehicles and automotive parts are manufactured, marketed, imported and exported (Schnetler, 2002:2,151). DCSA’s vision is to provide “simply the best” automotive products and services in Southern Africa as profitable, customer-orientated, subsidiaries of DaimlerChrysler. They aim to achieve this through (Bezuidenhout, 2003:3):

- Appropriate products and services;

² *Siyaphambili* – “moving forward together” (Bezuidenhout, 2003:1).

- South African and export business opportunities;
- Profit and return on assets;
- People performance, empowerment and skills; and
- Employment equity and shareholder value.

Their strategy rests on four pillars, namely global presence, strong brands, broad product range and technological leadership (Schnetler, 2002:2).

DCSA has a global alliance with Mitsubishi Motors Corporation and a strategic partnership with Hyundai Motor Organisation. Commitment and consistency have been the hallmarks of DaimlerChrysler's relationship with South Africa. Steady investment had always offered job security to many thousands of employees and ensured the highest quality in its products. But the constant investment in plant upgrading had primarily been aimed at servicing the local market (Schnetler, 2002:2,164).

Particularly in the areas of comfort and safety, DCSA has set new standards with technological innovations and developments, namely Antiblockiersystem (ABS) and Electronic Stability Program (ESP), as well as the electronic stability program, SBC, the electro-hydraulic brake or SBC, and Active Body Control (ABC). Approximately € 6 billion were invested in research and development in 2002 alone, with the focus being on creating the car of the future (DCSA, 2005:1). Their vision of "Accident-Free Driving" is aimed at the most optimal accident avoidance. The organisation also actively pursues the development of emission-free drive systems with fuel-cell powered research vehicles and prototypes (DCSA, 2005:1).

According to Bezuidenhout (2003:8) DCSA's marketing strategy is strongly focused on their excellent brands, customer satisfaction, profitability and diversity. Key success factors include:

- "Customer Relationship Marketing" – using state-of-the-art call centre technology;

- A “Dealer Network Strategy” to provide customers with “Simply the Best” dealer network in South Africa in 2005; and
- Sales and marketing for each brand is handled by a separate division in an effort to protect individual brand value. The Marketing Performance Centre (MPC) is responsible for the marketing, sales, distribution, service and parts supply for both passenger cars and commercial vehicles.

Ever since the local plant of Daimler-Benz had been established in the 1960s, it has subscribed to the beliefs of its parent organisation in Germany. According to Schnetler (2002:158/161) customer focus is what DaimlerChrysler is all about. In the last decade of the previous century Mercedes-Benz of South Africa (MBSA) and later DaimlerChrysler South Africa (DCSA) built up a reputation as a citizen of corporate South Africa that is prepared to get involved with both the country’s and its customers’ needs.

DaimlerChrysler’s workforce consists of 365 000 employees worldwide, described by the organisation as “qualified, motivated and customer-orientated”. The organisation continues to systematically invest in training and the creation of “attractive jobs” and “personal advancement”. DCSA believes in developing its people to be multi-skilled and flexible. Strong emphasis is placed on the training and lifelong education of employees: “We are a learning organisation that wants to improve continuously. Employees are encouraged to develop to their fullest potential” (DCSA, 2005:1).

1.3.3 DaimlerChrysler South Africa (DCSA) – Zwartkop, Centurion

The organisation’s head office in Zwartkop, Centurion houses the marketing and administrative divisions of DCSA, along with DaimlerChrysler Services, debis Fleet Management and the European Aeronautic Defence Space Organisation (EADS) (DCSA, 2005:1).

According to Christoph Köpke³, former chairman of the Management Board DaimlerChrysler South Africa (2003:1):

As in any team, our organisation is made up of people who have different talents and strengths, who play in different positions for different reasons. Like a professional sporting team, our successes depend on how each player performs. The rules of the game are constantly changing, and our opponents are continually revising their game plans. We have to do the same if we want to remain competitive. We're a great team that achieves great results because we've got great players – and each of you (our employees) is one of them... We need to focus on Customer Satisfaction.

1.3.4 Internal communication at DCSA's head office

Through conversing with DCSA staff and analysing relevant organisation literature, the researcher noted some characteristics of the organisation's internal communication. The organisation's functioning and activities showed evidence of a diverse culture – being stationed in South Africa, but with strong German influence and control. It subsequently became evident to the researcher that the organisation's internal communication is dominated by various instruments that are well formulated, very formal, structural and asymmetrical (top-down) in nature.

As such, the researcher not only perceives DCSA's internal communication function as being asymmetrical in nature, but also displaying qualities resulting from an unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing (see section 2.7).

1.4 Orientation to the research problem

According to Roberts (2002:20) and Grunig (1992:532), organisations reach excellence in internal communication when they have an internal communication system that is symmetrical (two-way) and results in increased job satisfaction among employees. In accordance, Van Heerden (1994:96) states that internal communication should encourage frequent, honest, job-related, two-way

³ Christoph Köpke has since been succeeded by Dieter Zetshe.

communication between managers and their subordinates. This is one of four models or ways of practicing communication management.

1.4.1 Four models of communication management

Grunig (1992:18) discusses four different models or ways of conceptualising public relations and therefore internal communication management, namely:

- **The press agency model** applies when a communication program strives for favourable publicity, especially in the mass media; and
- **The public information model** uses 'journalists in residence' to disseminate relatively objective information through the mass media and controlled communication instruments such as newsletters, brochures and direct mail.
- **The two-way asymmetrical model** is a more sophisticated approach in that it uses research to develop messages that are most likely to convey strategic public information.

The final model is considered the most effective for internal communication (Grunig & White, 1992:38). This model is called:

- **The two-way symmetrical model.** Grunig and White (1992:38) argue that excellent public relations is symmetrical, idealistic or critical and managerial. The symmetrical approach attempts to adjust both the organisation to its environments and the environments to the organisation (Lubbe, 1994:9).

According to Grunig and White (1992:38) viewing public relations – and therefore internal communication – as asymmetrical (something that organisations do to publics), contributes to limiting its excellence and effectiveness. Alternatively, organisations with a symmetrical worldview usually presuppose, amongst others, equity in their organisational culture. Mersham, Rensburg and Skinner (1995:39) state that: "People should be given equal opportunity and be respected as fellow

human beings. Anyone, regardless of education or background, may provide valuable input into an organisation”.

1.4.2 Context for this study

Analysing various authors, the asymmetrical model of communication is perceived to be less effective than when an organisation incorporates a two-way symmetrical communication approach (Roberts, 2002:20; Argenti, 1998:182; Mersham *et al.* 1995:39; Grunig & White, 1992:38).

As stated previously, the researcher perceived internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop to be predominantly asymmetrical in nature. This suggests possible deficiencies in DCSA's internal communication that could be addressed by using an approach such as the two-way symmetrical framework outlined above (also see section 2.6). The theoretical points of departure of internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication are therefore discussed briefly (see sections 2.6 and 2.7 for a detailed outline of these aspects).

1.4.2.1 Internal marketing

Internal marketing stems from relationship marketing and was first proposed in the mid-1970s as a way of achieving consistent service quality (Grönroos, 1997:328). The basic foundation of internal marketing is to create satisfied customers by, amongst others, having satisfied employees (Miller, 2002:1, Varey, 1995:42). Employees are treated and marketed to as internal customers with the goal of creating healthy relationships characterised by service, trust and concern (Ballantyne, 2000:275).

1.4.2.2 Two-way symmetrical public relations

Organisations with a symmetrical worldview have an open system where organisations are open to interpenetrate systems and freely exchange information with those systems (Grunig & White, 1992:43). It also supports a moving equilibrium where the organisation as a system strives toward equilibrium with

other systems (Grunig & White, 1992:43). The purpose of this model is to gain mutual understanding and communication (Wilcox, Ault, Agee & Cameron, 1998:50). The symmetrical worldview leads to decentralisation of management, which means coordination rather than dictation. Employees are given equal opportunities, are autonomous and respected as fellow human beings. This maximises employee satisfaction inside the organisation and cooperation outside the organisation (Grunig & White, 1992:44). According to Grunig *et al.* (2002:15): “Symmetrical programs are generally conducted more ethically than are other models and produce effects that balance the interests of organisations and the publics in society”. The same authors also debate that symmetrical communication systems make organisations more effective by building open, trusting and credible relationships with strategic employee constituencies (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:513).

It is against the backdrop of the above two theoretical perspectives that the general research question to be addressed in this study is set: **How can the nature of internal communication at DCSA’s head office in Zwartkop, Centurion be analysed and evaluated in terms of internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication?**

1.5 The research problem

Prior investigation presented DCSA’s internal communication as being asymmetrical – rather than two-way symmetrical (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11; Fill, 1999:399; Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:50).

This study therefore critically and qualitatively analyses the nature of the internal communication at DCSA’s head office, as perceived by its management and non-managerial employees. This is based on the theoretical points of departure of both internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication. Accordingly, this study asks whether the deficiencies of DCSA’s internal communication at Zwartkop, Centurion, can be addressed by using an approach such as two-way symmetrical communication.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in view of the above-mentioned general research question:

- 1.6.1 What are the theoretical points of departure of two-way symmetrical communication compared to the internal marketing approach?
- 1.6.2 In light of these two approaches, what is the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion according to management?
- 1.6.3 In light of these two approaches, what is the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion as perceived by staff?
- 1.6.4 To what extent can two-way symmetrical communication address the possible deficiencies of the unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion?

1.7 Research Objectives

The following research objectives were subsequently formulated:

- 1.7.1 To compare the theoretical points of departure of the two-way symmetrical communication compared to the internal marketing approach.
- 1.7.2 To determine how management perceive internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion in light of these approaches.
- 1.7.3 To determine how staff perceive internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion in light of these two approaches.
- 1.7.4 To determine the extent to which two-way symmetrical communication can address the possible deficiencies of the unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion.

1.8 Central theoretical statement

According to preliminary investigation prior to this study, possible deficiencies of internal communication at DCSA's head office can be attributed to an asymmetrical internal communication framework. This framework can be understood and evaluated in terms of the unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing, i.e. internal product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:28-35; Ferrel, Lucas & Luck, 1994:191). To analyse and address these deficiencies and for the purposes of this study, a different framework such as the two-way symmetrical approach is analysed. Various authors discuss the benefits of using an approach such as two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:329; Roberts, 2002:20; Argenti, 1998:167 Mersham *et al.*, 1995:39). Two-way symmetrical communication is described as "effective", allowing for fluid feedback up and down reporting channels (Roberts, 2002:20). According to Grunig *et al.* (2002:xi) communicators can more effectively develop relationships when they communicate with publics in a symmetrical rather than an asymmetrical manner.

As stated earlier (see section 1.4.2), this study poses that the possible shortfalls of an asymmetrical framework possibly resulting from an unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing used in a multinational corporation such as DaimlerChrysler South Africa could potentially be addressed by using a framework such as two-way symmetrical communication.

1.9 Research Method

1.9.1 Literature study

A preliminary literature study and data review searches were done on Ferdinand Postma Catalogue; SA Cat; Business Periodicals Index, Nexus and EBSCOHost using the key words: asymmetrical communication, internal communication, internal marketing, relationship marketing, two-way symmetrical communication. The search showed that although research has been done on internal communication, no study has specifically focused on DCSA as a case study.

1.9.2 Empirical study

In this study the investigation focused on the approach and dimensions of internal communication at the DCSA head office in Zwartkop, Centurion, as perceived and experienced by management and employees.

1.9.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

To establish the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office from the perspective of management, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with a representative sample of five key role players selected from members of top and senior management. According to Du Plooy (2001:178-180) interviews are used to probe and solve problems in organisational communication (see section 3.2.5.1 for a more detailed discussion of this issue.)

1.9.2.2 Focus group interviews

According to Du Plooy (2001:178-180) focus groups are an effective research instrument to combine with in-depth interviews. Subjects are then sampled in such a manner that they share some common experience. In this way the interview focuses on the effects of the experiences from the subjects' perspective.

To evaluate the perspectives of the non-managerial staff at DCSA, four focus groups were conducted with members of staff chosen by DCSA's human resource department. These groups were compiled in terms of availability and to evenly represent the organisation's different departments and organisational levels. Each focus group consisted of approximately ten to twelve members (see section 3.2.5.2 for a detailed discussion of this issue.)

An extensive theoretical basis formed the foundation for the above analysis.

1.10 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides the Introduction and outline of the study.

Chapter 2 investigates the theoretical points of departure of the two internal communication theories relevant to this study, namely internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication.

Chapter 3 outlines the research procedure of the study in greater detail.

Chapter 4 highlights the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion in light of the two approaches as perceived by the company's management and staff respectively.

Chapter 5 concludes on the nature of DCSA's internal communication based on the results outlined in Chapter 4 and in light of the theory discussed in chapter 2. Recommendations are also made on how DCSA can improve the effectiveness of their internal communication by means of a two-way symmetrical approach to communication.

Chapter 2

Theoretical points of departure: Internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication

Communication is the essence of managerial work and essential to any well-run organisation (Wood, 1999:135).

Internal communication is the “glue” that keeps the various interdependent parts of an organisational system together, and without it there can be no (or very little) organised activity (Puth, 1994:5).

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical premises of internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication in order to apply these theories to internal communication at DCSA’s head office in Zwartkop Centurion.

Internal communication is the force that produces the context in which a public relations department must function (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:480). Excellent public relations is described as strategic, symmetrical communication management (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:306). In 1992, James Grunig, his colleagues and students introduced the concept of four models (four typical ways of conceptualising and conducting the communication function) of public relations and therefore internal communication (also see sections 1.4.1 and 2.5). According to this research excellent departments design their communication programs on the two-way symmetrical rather than the press agency, public information, or two-way asymmetrical models (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:15; Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:50). Two-way symmetrical communication is thus viewed as a normative model for effective public relations.

Theoretically therefore, excellent organisations have a symmetrical system of internal communication that benefits both the organisation *and* its employees (Roberts, 2002:20; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:481; Grunig, 1992:532). Accordingly, Grunig and White (1992:38) argue that excellent public relations – and therefore internal communication - is *symmetrical*, idealistic or critical, and managerial.

But, according to Grunig and White (1992:38) one of the views that have limited the excellence and effectiveness of public relations (and therefore internal communication) is that it is *asymmetrical* (something that organisations do to publics).

As discussed in chapter 1 (see section 1.3.4), the researcher perceived that internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, is of a predominantly two-way *asymmetrical* nature. As stated, this suggests possible deficiencies that could potentially be addressed by using an approach such as the two-way symmetrical framework.

The theoretical points of departure of the two internal communication theories relevant to this study, namely internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication are subsequently outlined within the context of communication and more specifically internal communication.

2.2 Communication

A person's every observed act or interaction is interpreted by other people. This becomes communication when it is perceived, appreciated and others attribute meaning to it (Varey, 2002:88). Communication can be written, spoken or virtual and can occur among individuals or groups (Orsini, 2000:31). It is vital for an organisation to have an effective internal communication function (Wood, 1999:135; Puth, 1994:5).

According to Orsini (2000:33) effective communication requires interaction between parties and is transactional. Communication can therefore take place

effectively if there is an exchange of information with feedback through interaction, i.e. dialogue (Kavali, Tzokas & Saren, 1999:579). In their Excellence Study, Grunig *et al.* (2002:xi) show that communicators also develop relationships more effectively when they communicate symmetrically with publics rather than asymmetrically. In this way, organisations with significant symmetrical interpersonal communication may achieve that various organisational publics define the organisation more accurately and subsequently create a better environment for communication (Cameron & McCollum, 1993:217). The internal communication environment is influenced by, amongst others, its internal culture.

2.3 Internal culture

The norms and values according to which the organisation is managed direct its internal culture. These aspects also form part of the internal product such as job descriptions, tasks and organisational policies (see section 2.7.4.5.1). Organisations must thus determine which values, approaches and culture must exist in the internal domain in order for the organisation to operate effectively (Otto, 2004:74).

A more common view of organisational culture is “the way we do things around here” (Fill, 1999:225). It is the result of a number of factors, ranging through the type and form of business the organisation is in, its customers and other stakeholders, its geographical position and its size, age and facilities. The intangible elements include the assumptions, values and beliefs that are held and shared by members of the organisation. It is an organisation’s culture – its deep-seated, unwritten system of shared values and norms – that has the greatest impact on employees, their behaviour and attitudes (Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne, 2002:12). Classic, conventional organisations are built around “vertical” departments that often become functional “silos” (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:12).

Corporate culture is not a static phenomenon. The stronger the culture, the more likely it is to be transmitted from one generation of organisational members to

another. It is furthermore probable that the culture will be more difficult to change if it is firmly embedded in the organisation (Fill, 1999:227). An organisation's culture provides the context for its internal communication and determines how employees decode the formal messages they receive (Quirke, 2001:32).

2.4 Internal communication

Internal communication is defined as the full range of ways that people within the organisation communicate with each other (Orsini, 2000:31). It is a catalyst for moving the organisation forward (Sonnenberg, 1991:52-53). It is also one of the most important specialities of public relations and without it, organisations would not be able to effectively develop structure and culture (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:480).

Effective internal communication can give meaning to jobs, and make people feel connected and accountable. Thus in turn, will result in higher productivity (Roberts, 2002:20). Employees are in the first instance people and then audiences/publics. They have heads, hearts, hopes and fears (Khan, 2000:1). Therefore, an internal communication policy should encourage frequent, honest, job-related, two-way communication among managers and their subordinates (Van Heerden, 1994:96).

To achieve internal communication and organisational objectives, a variety of both formal and informal internal communication tools can be used (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:308). This may include newsletters, email updates, open meetings and gatherings, video conferencing and phone lines – where employees can pose questions and comments to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and other supervisors (Roberts, 2002:20). Although other media such as the telephone, email and organisation intranet are less intimate, vast numbers of people can connect individually and information can be shared instantaneously (Davis, 2001:124).

Within Grunig *et al.*'s (2002:192) Excellence Framework, excellent communicators are more likely to be team players than independent operators. They are able to

foster relationships with their counterparts inside the organisation. This suggests that ideally, organisations should have a friendly internal environment where open communication is encouraged between management and their subordinates on all levels. Unfortunately, this does not always seem to be the case.

According to Maitland (2002:62) research shows that key workers – essential to an organisation's competitiveness – are unhappy about both the quality and quantity of information they receive. Employees are interested in improving their quality of life. They want to be a part of something that matters and want their work to make a difference (Taylor & Cosenza, 1997:5). The changing values of the workforce indicate that employees want more interaction with management, personal job-satisfaction on the job, more responsibility and more control over the decisions that affect them (Roberts, 2002:20).

But, according to Heil, Parker and Stephens (1999:20/21) many employees do not want responsibility, they do not want to know more, learn more or be accountable for more because of the fear of repercussions. There is a preconceived perception that responsibility usually involves risk taking and sometimes failure. To combat this, the same authors advocate that an environment must be created in which employees are encouraged to see mistakes or failures as opportunities, that failure is temporary and the key to learning. It is clear that for this to happen, open communication between management and their subordinates is needed. According to Roberts (2002:20) honest, frequent communication builds a sense of community and effective internal communication is an essential weapon in the battle to motivate employees.

According to J. Grunig (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:487) their research showed that employees express a preference for open communication with top management, which could be interpreted as a desire for symmetrical and interpersonal communication. Roberts (2002:20) states that corporate strategies have a better chance of succeeding when employees sense an open, interactive exchange of information and management encourages them to share their opinions.

Contrary to this, it seems that some organisations are producing huge volumes of top-down, “toxic information” that consumes time and confuses employees (Oliver, 2000:27). To improve internal communication, communication “pollution” must be reduced: “The challenge lies not in more media, but in disciplining the torrent of information” (Smythe, 1996:41). Moreover, organisations will have to strategically improve and transform their internal communication efforts if they want to differentiate themselves from the competition (Quirke, 2001:32).

2.5 Four models for conducting the internal communication function

James Grunig, his colleagues and students introduced the concept of four models (four typical ways of conceptualising and conducting the internal communication function) of public relations and thereby launched the discussion of asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews in public relations (Grunig & White, 1992:39). These models are subsequently outlined.

2.5.1 The Press Agency / Publicity model

The essence of this approach is that communication is used as a form of propaganda. That is, communication flow is essentially one-way and content is not bound to be strictly truthful, as the objective is to convince the receiver of a new idea or offering. Communication is viewed as telling, not listening, and little (if any) research is undertaken. This can be observed in the growing explosion of media events and press releases (Fill, 1999:398; Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:50). Public relations strives for publicity in the mass media in almost any way possible (Grunig & White, 1992:18).

2.5.2 The Public Information model

Unlike the first model, this approach seeks to disseminate truthful information (Fill, 1999:398). Public relations departments use “journalists in residence” to disseminate objective, but only favourable, information about the organisation through the mass media and controlled media such as newsletters, brochures and

direct mail (Grunig & White, 1992:18). The model basically boils down to the message being passed on from the sender to the receiver. Research is likely to be confined to readability tests or readership studies (Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:50).

2.5.3 The Two-Way Asymmetrical model

Two-way communication is a major element of this model, but with imbalanced effect (Fill, 1999:398; Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:50). Feedback from receivers is important, but the power is not equally distributed between the various stakeholders and the organisation, and the relationship must be regarded as asymmetric (Fill, 1999:398). Asymmetrical communication remains popular among dominant coalitions that strive to increase their power and control others, rather than to empower employees throughout the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:487). The aim remains to influence publics' attitude and behaviour through persuasion (Fill, 1999:398).

Organisations often practice asymmetrical models because members of the dominant coalition perceive public relations as a way of exercising power, especially in organisations which display authoritarian organisational cultures (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:311). In Grunig and White's opinion (1992:43), the asymmetrical worldview is characterised by central authority, where it is believed that power should be concentrated in the hands of a few top managers and employees should have little autonomy. Grunig and White (1992:43) further state that the press agency, public information and two-way asymmetrical models are less effective than two-way symmetrical public relations. These models describe communication programs that are not based on research and strategic planning and attempt to make the organisation look good either through propaganda (press agency) or by disseminating only favourable information (public information).

2.5.4 The Two-Way Symmetrical model

The purpose of this model is to gain mutual understanding and communication is two-way with balanced effects (Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:50). The two-way symmetrical

model uses research and dialogue to manage conflict, improve understanding and build relationships with publics (Grunig & White, 1992:39). This represents the most acceptable and mutually rewarding form of communication (Fill, 1999:399). Wilcox *et al.* (1998:50) state that this model is the “ideal” one that is “increasing in use”. Practitioners have the freedom to advocate the interests of publics to management and to criticise management decisions that affect publics adversely (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:11).

2.6 Theoretical points of departure of two-way symmetrical communication

Kennan and Hazleton (2006:312) debate that in organisations the relationship between those whose roles define them as “management” and those whose roles define them as “workers” (staff) has never been an easy one – despite the fact that each is the other’s most important public. The strain that traditionally marks this relationship has all too often resulted in frustration, hostility, and sometimes violence. Yet, according to these authors, the ability to achieve organisational success (whichever way this term is ultimately defined, i.e. financially or socially) has always been connected directly to the ability to link the efforts of management and workers in useful ways. According to Grunig *et al.* (2002:15) and Walker (1997:37), one way to do just that is through effective communication that, when it works well both ways, has tremendous power to contribute towards organisations achieving business goals.

2.6.1 Definition of two-way symmetrical communication

The basic premise of two-way symmetrical communication is equity in the organisational culture: “People should be given equal opportunity and be respected as fellow human beings. Anyone, regardless of education or background, may provide valuable input into an organisation” (Mersham *et al.*, 1995:39). The two-way symmetrical model uses research and dialogue to manage conflict, improve understanding and build relationships with publics. Both the organisation and the

public (management or subordinates) may be persuaded or change their behaviour (Lubbe, 1994:9; Grunig & White, 1992:39).

According to Holtz (2004:127) communication derives from agreement among both the sender and receiver about the contents and meaning of the message. One river *communicates* with another when they join together to form a new, larger river; they become common, the sender of the message needs to listen as much as talk. To achieve the ideal of two-way symmetrical communication, the outcome thereof is balanced between the sender's desired result and that of the receiver.

2.6.1.1 Systems

The two-way symmetrical model of communication subscribes to the systems theory (Grunig & White, 1992:43). This view describes organisations in society as systems that are open to other interpenetrating systems and freely exchange information with each other. Systems of this type are called open systems, which are composed of various subsystems that give them their identity and purpose. Here, two-way communication flows between organisations and their environments (Baskin *et al.*, 1997:21, Grunig & White, 1992:43).

The systems theory highlights the "structure" that underlies complex situations by seeing wholes rather than individual parts and interrelationships rather than "discrete entities" (Varey, 2002:18). People are seen as active participants in shaping their reality (Varey, 2002:18). What manifests as an organisation losing flexibility and adaptability, is an inability to maintain effective internal public relations (Botan & Hazleton, 2006:317). These authors further discuss that where internal public relations are effectively managed, the organisation remains adaptive, open and viable.

2.6.1.2 Characteristics of two-way symmetrical communication

People establish and maintain relationships with others. According to Rensburg and Cant (2003:34) these relationships require varying degrees of interaction and interdependence and, therefore, different levels of social, political and economic

exchanges. As a result, modern society consists of increasingly “interdependent, complex, and often conflict-laden relationships”. But, as Scholes (1997:110) argue: “The key to communication is understanding another’s needs, and putting yourself in their shoes, so that sender and receiver are literally on the same wave-length.”

In the two-way symmetrical model, according to Fill (1999:399):

- Power is seen to be spread equally between the organisation and its stakeholders;
- The communication flow is intended to be reciprocal;
- The organisation and its respective publics are prepared to adjust their positions (attitudes and behaviours) in light of the information flow; and
- A true dialogue emerges through this interpretation. This differs from the other three models of internal communication, which see an unbalanced flow of information and expectations (see section 2.5).

Effective communication flows two-way, with fluid feedback up and down reporting channels (Roberts, 2002:20). Rensburg and Cant (2003:71) agree, pointing to feedback as a key element in any communication process.

Holtz (2004:127) states that: “Communication that moves only from the top down is not communication; it is informing, instructing, ordering, and reporting. To be communication in the true sense of the word, both parties need to engage actively in the process”. According to Davis (2001:125) impersonal one-way communication is consistent with a “directive controlling” style of influence. Varey (1997:220) states that: “All communication requires the existence of a relationship. It is a two-way process in that the receiver acts on information, attitudes, and ideas by contributing his or her own, and by changing or rejecting what they receive. Ideas are shared, not moved. In contrast, the use of one-way ‘communication’ assumes passivity and reactivity on the part of the receiver.” Rensburg and Cant (2003:9) maintain that a lack of two-way communication will damage an

organisation's affiliation with customers and will ultimately destroy its customer-centricity.

2.6.1.3 Advantages and applications of two-way symmetrical communication

According to Grunig *et al.* (2002:xi) communicators can develop relationships more effectively when they communicate symmetrically with publics rather than asymmetrically. This helps to build a participative culture that increases employee satisfaction with the organisation. Foreman (1997:23) discusses that many organisations resort to employee surveys to provide evidence of two-way communication. Whilst this is a start, and can be useful to understand the needs of employee groups, surveys often highlight grievances and can be difficult to interpret. According to Foreman (1997:23) the future lies in interactive mechanisms that facilitate upward communications, not in the traditional sense, but in terms of mutual or relational communication. Rensburg and Cant (2003:220) argue that a move towards genuine ongoing communication with, and involvement of, an organisation's publics can assist in guiding the organisation on how to manoeuvre in whatever circumstances it may find itself.

With the two-way symmetrical model of internal communication, research is used mainly to learn how publics (employees) perceive the organisation. This is used to determine what consequences the organisation has for this specific public, resulting in management being counselled about organisational policies. Evaluative research is used to measure whether a public relations effort has improved both the understanding publics have of the organisation and that which management has of publics (Wilcox *et al.*, 1998:51).

Scholes (1997:103) says that, as with all forms of face-to-face communication, one-to-one meetings involve maximum exposure for both participants, but also the highest potential for communicating and checking understanding. According to Foreman (1997:23) two-way communication creates bonds through, for instance, social interactions, meetings, question and answer sessions. Rensburg and Cant

(2003:220) assert that two-way communication engenders a positive attitude towards the organisation, which may be a crucial advantage when disaster strikes. For the public relations practitioner, feedback on his/her communication efforts is important, providing a tool to better understand the outcome of these efforts (Rensburg & Cant, 2003:71).

The future is personalising communication, according to Foreman (1997:23). Therefore, communication should tie in with the issues important to different groups of employees – what matters to them in conjunction with what matters to management. Rensburg and Cant (2003:220) warn, however, that this type of intensive interaction must be carefully managed, since it may create expectations that cannot be fulfilled and, once started, can cause frustration and anger if it is not properly carried through.

2.6.2 Management and two-way symmetrical communication

Communication is essential for the well-being of any organisation because it is the primary means by which organisations organise and structure themselves and simultaneously adapt themselves to often turbulent environments (Botan & Hazleton, 2006:317). The mode of communication within an organisation is related to the style of management and to the type of organisation (Gróf, 2001:194). According to Puth (1994:50-55) organisational structure (including cultural differences and degree of centralisation) can be a barrier to effective organisational communication.

According to Grunig *et al.* (2002:323) organisations with authoritarian cultures often practice asymmetrical models because members of the dominant coalition perceive public relations (and internal communication) as a way of exercising power. But as Grunig and White (1992:40) state, it is difficult (if not impossible) to practise public relations in an ethical and socially responsible manner when using an asymmetrical model. The symmetrical concept of power, in contrast, can be described as *empowerment* – if collaboration is aimed at increasing the power of everyone in the organisation to the benefit of everyone in the organisation (Grunig,

et al., 2002:142). Part of the problem in many organisations (with different communication frameworks) is that senior managers simply do not involve other employees in most of the decision-making processes. This tends to make employees feel alienated (Argenti, 1998:168).

Puth (1994:42) discusses that a cyclical process needs to be in place, where management is engaged in receiving feedback and responding to it, so that there can be a real connection between communicating and listening. All levels of management must be involved in making the best possible use of organisational communication, and increase their understanding, commitment and effort. As said by Argenti (1998:177) by giving employees the respect they deserve and listening to and interacting with them frequently, managers have the basis for an effective internal communications program. Employee concerns can sometimes only be resolved effectively by communicating face-to-face (Orsini, 2000:31). Also, more interaction gives management more credibility among employees (Argenti, 1998:168). In these situations, employees are also more likely to be loyal to the organisation and to identify with it (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:329). If leaders and employees communicate and agree on certain behaviours that will achieve the results leaders want and also improve working conditions and job satisfaction, a *win-win* situation and symmetry is achieved. Symmetry rarely occurs in a one-way, top-down environment (Holtz, 2004:127).

According to Sholes (1997:110) “enabling greater personal contact between people of different grades and functions helps to enhance communication skills as well as promote communication across, up and down the organisation. This helps to challenge preconceptions, and give a real picture of the work of different functions”. James (1997:264) discusses that substantial changes in the organisation should be communicated by setting up direct, two-way links between senior managers and supervisors, while traditional communication methods such as briefings, videos and newspapers should be confined to communicating with middle managers. Furthermore, for all other communication purposed, middle managers should be pressured – and measured – to improve their links with supervisors, preferably through face-to face contact.

According to Richard Branson, founder and manager of Virgin Atlantic, the company's philosophy has been to stimulate the individual, to encourage staff to take initiatives and to empower them to do so (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:111):

We aren't interested in having just happy employees. We want employees who feel involved and prepared to express dissatisfaction when necessary. In fact, we think that the constructively dissatisfied employee is an asset we should encourage and we need an organisation that allows us to do this – and that encourages employees to take responsibility, since I don't believe it is enough for us to simply give it.

When Hewlett-Packard was faced with intense competition in the late 1980s, the organisation found itself (for the first time in its history) in a financial bind that could have led to employees being laid off in several different areas. Instead, the organisation went directly to the employees, explained the pressures that it was facing and got them to agree to take leave time without pay rather than having any of its employees go through the experience of losing a job. Such an enlightened approach to a financial problem made the employees more loyal to the organisation than ever before. It also allowed managers to get employees to directly understand the pressures they were facing rather than trying to solve the problems in the more traditional way (Argenti, 1998:169).

2.6.3 Staff and two-way symmetrical communication

According to Walker (1997:37-38) the "internal audience" is a powerful force, and therefore internal communication must adapt to play an effective role in organisations of the future. But, the basic requirements people ask for time after time remain the same. Employees want communication that is timely, relevant, targeted, honest and direct. Argenti (1998:176-177) tells of a nationwide survey of over 5,000 employees in U.S. organisations, conducted by a major consulting firm. It showed that the single biggest criticism employees have of organisations is that they do not encourage upward as well as downward communication.

Intel, a high-technology firm ranked in the top 10 of *Fortune's* most admired corporations, promotes an email policy which states that any employee at any level can send a message to any other employee and expect an answer. Another program called "One-on-One" allows an employee to request a one-on-one meeting with anyone in the corporation. This encourages open communication across different levels of management (Argenti, 1998:170). Symmetrical systems of internal communication typically increase the likelihood that employees will be satisfied with their individual jobs and with the organisation as a whole. They are also more likely to be loyal to the organisation and to identify with it (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:329). Employees can also be motivated to work harder when management honestly and regularly communicates with them. Also, communication that is two-way in nature rather than the traditional downward approach, is the key to getting workers to become more productive (Argenti, 1998:167-168).

USG Corporation, a *Fortune* 250 manufacturing company, has historically been a stable, conservative leader in the building products industry. However, in the span of eight years, they have undergone dramatic changes. \$750 million was sold in businesses and the workforce grew from 9 000 to 25 000, then fell to 12 500. According to their CEO, Eugene B. Connolly (quoted by Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1997:235):

Obviously, these changes traumatized our work force. Our employees were used to a stable, secure environment which essentially offered lifetime employment. Now, faced with a new set of challenges, we must adjust our approach to business, redefine the corporate culture and become even more competitive and cost-conscious. We were historically accustomed to a somewhat authoritarian, hierarchical style of management, with business direction and decisions typically handed down from the top and communications primarily a one-way flow. Now, two-way communication is central to how we conduct business. Accountability is more broadly delegated and managers/supervisors function more as team leaders. We needed our corporate communicators not only to help manage this shift in culture, but internal communications had to operate as an integral component of the corporate strategy. Today, as we emerge from the most challenging and frustrating period in our corporate history, we utilize internal communications to accomplish the following:

- Communicate the corporate goals;
- Facilitate participative management initiatives;
- Continually monitor the internal and external environment;
- Establish an environment of trust and credibility; and
- Provide opportunities to interact with employees.

This section outlined the theoretical premises of two-way symmetrical communication. The following section examines the theoretical backdrop of internal marketing.

2.7 The theoretical points of departure of internal marketing

The concept of internal marketing comes primarily from service organisations. Its purpose was to get the front-line personnel – who have interactive relationships with external customers – to handle the service encounter better and with more independence (Hollensen, 2003:665; Gummesson, 1999:161).

2.7.1 Marketing

Marketing is defined as a social and managerial process of planning, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services (products) to create exchange and satisfy individual and organisational needs and objectives at a profit (Strydom, Cant, Jooste & Van der Walt, 2000:5; Kotler, 1997:9; Grönroos, 1997:323; Van der Walt *et al.*, 1996:12). The traditional marketing concept is the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services. Moreover, the definition implies a list of activities for the marketer to undertake: the planning and execution of these four elements of competition so that individual and organisational objectives are satisfied (Hollensen, 2003:9). As industries have matured, there have been changes in market demand and competitive intensity that have led to a shift from transaction marketing to relationship marketing (Payne, 2006:6). The shift that has taken place within marketing – from transactional marketing to building relationships with people significant to the organisation – reflects that marketers are aware of the importance of customers and customer retention for the long-term survival of the organisation (Brink & Berndt, 2004:iii).

Marketing does not only engage in significant relationships with customer markets, but amongst others also employee and internal markets (Morgan & Hunt, as quoted by Kavali, Tzokas & Saren, 1999:576). Marketing has progressed from a simplistic focus on giving customers what they want to a pan-company orientation in which the specific capabilities of the business are focused around creating and delivering customer value to targeted market segments (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:1).

2.7.2 Marketing strategy

The adoption of the marketing concept calls for a change of focus and emphasis, which has led to the need for a marketing orientated strategy (Baker, 2000:4). A marketing strategy is a “big picture” of what an organisation will do in a specific market. It specifies a target market and a related marketing mix (Perreault & McCarthy, 1999:45).

2.7.2.1 Market research

Over time, marketers increasingly recognised the importance of research for understanding their buyers. Marketing research is considered the first step and the foundation for effective marketing decision-making (Kotler, 2003:115, 118). According to Baker (2000:143), in order to develop a marketing strategy, it is necessary to carry out a wide ranging evaluation and analysis of all those factors which have a bearing upon the courses of action open to the decision-maker (customer).

2.7.2.2 Market segmentation

Defining a market is essential as it identifies the characteristics of both customers and competitors (Baker, 2000:261). Market segmentation is the process of dividing a market into meaningful, relatively similar and identifiable segments or groups. A market segment is a distinct sub-group within the overall marketplace (Fill, 1999:535). Organisations that moved away from mass market thinking started by identifying large market segments and later, from large segments to narrower

niches and ultimately segments of one, namely individual customers (Kotler, 2003:162-163).

Once organisations understand the distinct characteristics of segments, they can adopt a much more targeted approach to developing and implementing marketing strategies (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:31; Fill, 1999:535).

2.7.2.3 Target marketing

A target market is one of the defined segments of a broad market that has been identified and is a fairly homogeneous (similar) group of customers to whom an organisation wishes to appeal (Perreault & McCarthy, 1999:46/72). An organisation designs, implements and maintains a marketing mix intended to meet the needs of that group, resulting in mutually satisfying exchanges (Fill, 1999:540). Baker (2000:321) states that market segmentation, targeting and positioning are examples of how marketing reconciles the economist's assumptions of homogeneous demand with the psychologist's perception of every individual differing from every other in some degree. As a result, it provides a practical solution of creating choice at an affordable cost.

According to Kotler (2003:122) the target market must be defined as carefully as possible, as the mass market is too vague. Kotler states that it is easier to make a product that some will love, than to make a product that everyone will want. Therefore the marketing strategy involves researching the market, dividing it into relevant segments, choosing a target market and targeting it by using the marketing mix.

2.7.2.4 Marketing mix

The marketing mix is the term traditionally used to describe the important ingredients of a marketing program. It describes the controllable variables that management can use to appeal to a specific target market and thereby influence sales (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:9; Perreault & McCarthy, 1999:46). The traditional formulation of the marketing mix is structured around the 4Ps, namely product,

price, place (distribution) and promotion (Kotler, 2003:108; Perreault & McCarthy, 1999:48; Bearden, Ingram & La Forge, 1995:14). The focus of marketing is to effectively distribute or deliver a pre-produced value to customers. The 4P model of the marketing mix is clearly based on this fundamental requirement of the exchange perspective (Grönroos, 2000:24).

The 4P marketing mix proved very successful in the 1950's and 1960's during the era of mass manufacturing and mass marketing of packaged consumer goods, when marketing was often more about attracting than retaining customers (Hollensen, 2003:9). However, authors agree that the 4Ps model is an oversimplification of the original marketing mix concept and is no longer sufficient (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:10-18; Weinstein & Johnson, 1999:131-132; Grönroos, 1994:5, Mercer, 1992:26). According to Kotler (2003:108) the 4P formulation of the marketing mix was criticised from the beginning. Grönroos (1994:5) testifies to the fact that during the last two decades many marketing academics and researchers have found the standard "table of faith" too restrictive and subsequently suggested more categories of marketing variables. For this reason, some authors propose an extended marketing mix consisting of 7Ps, namely product (design and production), price, place, promotion *plus* physical evidence, process and participants (Rensburg & Cant, 2003:5; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:28; Booms & Bitner, quoted by Mercer, 1992:26).

The marketing mix, however, is applied in interaction within networks of relationships (Ballantyne, 2000:284). Relationship marketing emphasises a relationship approach rather than a transactional approach to marketing (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:4).

2.7.3 Relationship marketing

One of the most valuable things to an organisation is its relationships – with customers, employees, suppliers, distributors, dealers and retailers (Kotler, 2003:151). A widely accepted view according to Christopher *et al.* (2002:ix) is that the cement that binds successful relationships is the two-way flow of value – the

customer derives real value from the relationship, which converts into value for the organisation in the form of enhanced profitability.

2.7.3.1 Definition of relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is defined as marketing, seen as relationships, networks and interaction that requires at least two parties who are in contact with each other (Gummesson, 1991:1). According to Van der Walt *et al.* (1996:30) the relationship marketing approach was implemented in reaction to organisations that often only paid lip service to the marketing concept, but where these marketing principles were not always evident in the attitudes of management.

2.7.3.2 Characteristics of relationship marketing

The complete marketing concept can be seen in relationship marketing as it focuses on the establishment of long-term relationships between different constituencies (Van der Walt *et al.*, 1996:29). Relationship marketing marks a significant paradigm shift in marketing, a movement from thinking solely in terms of competition and conflict toward thinking in terms of mutual interdependence and cooperation (Kotler, 2003:152). Kotler further states that relationship marketing recognises the importance of relationships with various stakeholders founded in extended markets, i.e. employees, suppliers, distributors, dealers, retailers – cooperating to deliver the best value to target customers. Relationship marketing is therefore based on managing customer relationships as well as relationships with other parties (Grönroos, 2000:32).

2.7.3.3 Extended markets

Relationship marketing extends the principles of marketing to a range of diverse market domains, not just customer markets (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:4). In 1991, Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne put forward the prototype of their Six Markets model, which addresses relationship marketing at the organisational level (Peck, Payne, Christopher & Clark, 1999:4). The six extended markets of this model are: customer markets; referral markets; supplier markets; employee (recruitment)

markets, 'influencer' markets; customer markets and internal markets. This configuration emphasises the role of internal marketing, which supports the management of relationships with parties within the other 'markets' (Peck *et al.*, 1999:5). Relationship marketing needs internal marketing to reach the internal markets (Hollensen, 2003:66). The objective of internal marketing within relationship marketing is to create relationships between management and employees and between functions (Gummesson, 1999:161).

2.7.4 Definition of internal marketing

Internal marketing is the use of marketing-like techniques to motivate employees (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:25). It is about relationships characterised by concern, trust, commitment and service (Buttle, 1996:4). According to Christopher *et al.* (2002:4) relationship marketing highlights the critical role of internal marketing in achieving external marketing success. The aim of internal marketing is to treat employees as a customer group (Kotler, 2003:58; Gummesson, 1999:25). Internal marketing is concerned with ensuring that all employees buy into the organisation's mission and goals in order for organisational strategies to be successfully developed, executed and achieved (Buttle, 1996:8). The internal marketing concept holds that if employees feel that management cares about them and meet their needs, they will have positive attitudes towards their work and achieve the required organisational outcomes (Ahmed *et al.*, 2003:1227; Tansuhaj, quoted by Caruana & Calleva, 1998:110).

2.7.4.1 Characteristics of internal marketing

According to Grönroos (2000:ix) internal marketing is an umbrella concept for a range of internal activities in an organisation aimed at enhancing a service culture and maintaining a service orientation among its employees. In addition, internal relationships influence the external relationships of an organisation.

The roots of the internal marketing concept lie in efforts to improve service quality (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:4). Employee satisfaction is regarded as an important factor that affects customer satisfaction (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:4). According to Sargeant

and Asif (1998:68) internal marketing is seen as a mechanism to spread the responsibility for marketing across the whole organisation. Secondly, each employee should be encouraged to regard their successor in the service chain as not merely a colleague, but as an internal customer (De Jong, 1995:1).

In this way, internal marketing aims to develop awareness among employees of their external *and* internal customers (Payne, 1995:38). Employees are treated as customers by applying the traditional marketing concept, marketing research and associated marketing mix to the internal market (Miller, 2002:1; Varey, 1995:42; Helman & Payne, quoted by Varey, 1995:40).

2.7.4.2 Internal market research

Internal market research involves identifying the needs and wants of employees and monitoring the impact of human resource management policies on them, through for instance employee attitude surveys (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:36). According to Fill (1999:232) research is an important element in the design of communication plans and communicating with the target audience. To assist in assessing whether or not an organisation effectively communicate with its stakeholders effectively, a communication audit can be conducted. It is important to determine whether the target audiences perceive and understand the messages as they are intended. Ahmed and Rafiq (2002:36) add that employee surveys must be handled with care, even more so than consumer surveys, because of employees' fears of repercussions.

2.7.4.3 Internal market segmentation

Market segmentation is the process of grouping employees with similar characteristics, needs and wants, i.e. according to the roles and functions they perform (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:36). These markets can be regarded as segments (and can be segmented) according to the particular needs and wants that require satisfaction in order for the organisation to accomplish its overall goals (Fill, 1999:220).

An essential aspect of internal market segmentation is to recognise the different marketing and customer contact roles within the business (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:109). In services, for instance, employees may be grouped on the basis of whether they are contact employees or not. Other bases for segmentation might include type of benefits that employees want, and roles and functions that they perform (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:36). Cohesive groups (formed on the basis of some shared commonalities) could then be used to create a specific package of activities to target specific market segments and facilitate implementation (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:39).

2.7.4.4 Internal target marketing

Internal and external marketing are similar in that both are used to inform, educate, persuade, motivate or build relationships. Claims made in internal marketing programs are no different from claims made in advertisements to external customers. If false hopes or unrealistic expectations are created, employees might be as disappointed and angry as customers are when they feel misled (Davis, 2001:126).

According to Richard Branson, founder and manager of the very successful Virgin Atlantic, the customer is indeed *not* the most important individual to the organisation. To Virgin Atlantic the most important individual is the employee. If the organisation looked after the interests of its employees, employees would treat customers likewise, to the ultimate benefit of shareholders (Pitt, 2000:27).

2.7.4.5 The internal marketing mix

In the past, attempts to apply the traditional marketing mix concept to internal marketing have generally been structured around the 4Ps of marketing: product, price, place and promotion (Perreault & McCarthy, 1999:48). Writers seem, almost universally, to have adopted the 4Ps “marketing mix” perspective. Ballantyne (2000:275-276) quotes Piercy and Morgan who recommend that internal marketing strategies use external (4Ps) marketing techniques to handle a broad range of problems and opportunities in the internal (employee) markets. This is the internal

product, price, place (distribution) and promotion. As stated in section 2.7.2.4, the 4Ps is seen as an oversimplification of the marketing mix concept and additional Ps were subsequently added: physical evidence, process and participants. As shown in sections 2.7.4.5.6, 2.7.4.5.7 and 2.7.4.5.8, these added Ps also form part of the internal marketing mix.

2.7.4.5.1 Internal product

A product can be a physical object, service, personality, place, idea or anything that can be experienced through the senses (Van der Walt *et al.*, 1996:180). Inside organisations, the internal product refers to programs, policies or services that need to be introduced (Davis, 2001:124). At the fundamental level, the internal product refers to the job (Greene, Walls & Schrest; 1994:8). More specifically, internal products refer to those employee tasks, behaviours, attitudes, and values necessary to ensure implementation of the marketing strategy (Hollensen, 2003:666).

The organisation's internal environment, management style, training and development, employee support services and remuneration are all part of the internal product (Otto, 2004:67). Furthermore, the organisation's vision, mission and value system are internal product elements that personnel must buy into in order to ensure the success of the organisation.

According to Ahmed and Rafiq (2002:28) treating jobs as products means looking at jobs not only from the perspective of the tasks that need to be performed, but also from the perspective of the employee and the benefits they seek from the job. This includes financial remuneration, training needs, level of responsibility and involvement in decision making, career development opportunities, the working environment and other factors that employee's value.

According to DCSA management, in order to lead the market space, they need to have: "the right people who are empowered – that they are there, happy and

smiling, content and motivated. If they are not, we will probably still sell cars, but maybe not as many as we should” (see section 4.2.4.1.1).

2.7.4.5.2 Internal price

The concepts of customer and exchange are central to the marketing philosophy. Customers receive a product they desire in exchange for payment, which is the price (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:25).

Inside an organisation, the price may refer to the cost of internal programs (both financial and human), or to the psychological cost the employee “pays” to work for the organisation. This may include working over-time, taking work home, adapting to new ways of working, and carrying out new policies (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:28; Davis, 2001:124; Ferrell *et al.*, 1994:191). The internal price may also take the form of uncertainty, loss of status, stress and loss of (hopefully short term) operational efficiency (Drummond & Ensor, 2005:254). Customers have a choice whether they want to buy these products at a certain price, whereas employees either accept the “product” at the price offered or they may be forced into accepting it (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:25).

According to DCSA staff members: “Our business is running away with us, and that puts immense pressure on a company. There’s much room for improvement, especially with pro-active communication. Sometimes you do not even know whom you represent. You get swamped. You just try to keep your head above water” (see section 4.2.4.6.2)

2.7.4.5.3 Internal place (internal distribution)

Distribution refers to the place and the channels (or third parties) that are used to get products to customers (Drummond & Ensor, 2005:255; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:34). Internal distribution refers to all the channels used to communicate internally, i.e. planning sessions, workshops, letters, reports and personal conversations (Davis, 2001:124; Van der Walt *et al.*, 1996:250; Bernstein,

1984:117). Through internal distribution, the marketing strategy is communicated internally to staff members (Hollensen, 2003:2006).

At DCSA, the Corporate Affairs division makes a concerted effort to keep staff informed on broader issues via the internal communication mediums. These include company newspapers, the intranet, magazines, formal company announcements, mass emails, workshops and communication forums and projects. The company is very complex and much of the internal communication goes into explaining what is new, different and how it is going to affect a division (see section 4.2.3.1.2).

2.7.4.5.4 Internal promotion

Promotion in the context of the marketing mix refers to the use of advertising, publicity, personal sales and sales promotions to inform and influence potential customers' attitudes towards a firm's products and/or services (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:30). All material that is used to communicate internally and persuade employees of the organisational strategy form part of the internal promotion (Ferrell *et al.*, 1994:192). For example, a project manager could design a 'promotional campaign', stressing the benefits of a new strategy (Drummond & Ensor, 2005:254-255).

At DCSA, there is no formal framework or policy that guides DCSA staff members on how they are supposed to communicate. The communication "strategy" follows the organisational strategy, which is compiled annually. Each division then decides how the corporate communication instruments are to be used and what their key messages for the next year will be (see section 4.2.3.1).

2.7.4.5.5 Internal physical evidence

According to Ahmed and Rafiq (2002:34-35) physical evidence is the environment in which a product is delivered and where interaction between staff and customers takes place, as well as any tangible goods (e.g. documentation) that support the transaction. In internal marketing situations, the environment in which the product

is delivered is not as important as for services in general, because this will usually be the same as the normal work environment. Ahmed and Rafiq (2002:35) further state that tangible cues (such as documentation and changes of policies) may be even more important in internal marketing than for the marketing of services in general.

At DCSA, managers communicate regulations and legislation in an authoritative top-down manner. However, when personnel issues such as working hours or salary increases are discussed, communication has a more participative nature (see section 4.2.2.1).

2.7.4.5.6 Internal process

The internal process is the way a customer (employee) actually receives a product (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:35). Additionally, it is the way in which value is created for the recipient (Christopher *et al.*, 2002:12). During internal communication, the process can refer to the delivery method: for instance whether circulars, videos or line managers are used to convey changes (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:35).

In DCSA, various internal communication medium are used to communicate to staff. These include company newspapers, the intranet, magazines, formal company announcements, mass-emails, workshops and communication forums and projects (see section 4.2.3.1.2).

2.7.4.5.7 Internal participants/people

People often are the services itself. Judd (2003:1302) proposes that employees should be formally considered as an element of the marketing mix, denoted as people-power. According to Davis (2001:124) and Judd (2003:1302) this is to recognise employees' role in helping an organisation differentiate itself in order to gain a competitive advantage. The participants are both the people involved in delivering the product and those receiving the product who may influence the customer's perceptions (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:35). As stated by Baker (2000:32): "Marketing is something done for people by people".

According to Christopher *et al.* (2002:12) evidence points to a relationship between the way employees and managers feel about their organisation, the values they share, their job satisfaction and their approach to customer service as “satisfied employees make for satisfied customers”.

In DCSA, managers view employees as the means by which the company conducts business. According to management, there is growing recognition within the automotive industry that success in the industry is increasingly about the service (delivered by both managers and staff) a company attaches to its products (see section 4.2.4.1.1).

2.7.4.5.8 Internal marketing and management

Communication is one of the core management processes at any level of an organisation (Davis, 2001:126; Wood, 1999:135). Managers use internal marketing when they sell an idea up the line, try to convince someone in another department to do something, or convince a subordinate to take on a difficult task (Davis, 2001:121).

According to Harrel and Fors (quoted by Varey & Lewis, 1999:939) “all employees are customers of managers who wish to carry out the firm’s objectives”. Managers can demonstrate that they are conscious of their internal customers’ (employees’) needs, by doing the following (Nwankwo, quoted by Freeman & Varey, 1997:80):

- Emphasising employee expectations and avoid dissatisfaction by acting on these expectations;
- Dealing with employee problems in a planned, coordinated manner;
- Develop employee policies through perceptive research;
- Adopting a preventative and anticipative stance in formulating policies that will affect employees; and
- Viewing all employees as marketing resources and as being a part of the marketing process.

According to Gordon (1998:277) managers must give trust, respect and commitment in order to receive it.

2.7.5 Advantages and applications of effectively implemented internal marketing

Miller (2002:1) states that just as service leads to customer satisfaction, internal customer service leads to employee satisfaction. According to Miller (2002:1), having satisfied employees (internal customers) has various spin-offs such as:

- Employee retention;
- Attracting good employees that will become more committed to the organisation; and
- Reducing labour turnover – which in turn will lead to cost reductions in hiring and educating new employees.

Satisfied employees may also spread positive word of mouth to other prospective employees and customers (Hennig-Thurau & Hansen, 2000:184; Cahill, 1995:45; Greene *et al.*, 1994:5).

Davis (2001:126) discusses that one of the most promising uses of internal marketing (if implemented correctly) lies in building and changing relationships across levels and between organisational constituencies. Managers must build supportive relationships with internal stakeholders, including different levels of management, employees and unions.

2.8 Summary

In this chapter the theoretical points of departure of two-way symmetrical and internal marketing communication were discussed. The researcher concluded that both theories, when applied effectively and correctly during the internal communication process, have benefits towards achieving organisational goals. Yet, following the theoretical argument in this chapter, excellent organisations have

a symmetrical system of internal communication that is beneficial to both organisations and their employees (management *and* staff). This form of communication interacts and is transactional. The many benefits that organisations can achieve by applying these principles have also been examined.

As discussed in chapter 1, the researcher perceived the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop as predominantly two-way *asymmetrical* in nature, displaying characteristics of an unsuccessful application of internal marketing. The possible shortfalls resulting from this incorrect application/implementation were analysed alongside the theoretically normative framework of two-way symmetrical communication.

Chapter 3 presents the research procedure used in this study in greater detail.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live and work in it. Qualitative research methods ask questions on how something occurs, how it functions in its context and what it means for participants (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:12-15)

3.1 Introduction

Based on the background and orientation of the research problem as discussed in the first chapter (section 1.5), this chapter presents the research procedure in greater detail.

As discussed in chapter 2, a thorough literature study on the theoretical points of departure of both internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication was needed to establish a trustworthy basis as from which to evaluate the nature of DCSA's internal communication.

This chapter highlights the research design of the study, the use of an interpretive stance and the merits and aims of using qualitative research methods. Furthermore, the research population, sampling procedure, research instruments and data collection processes are discussed. The chapter explains the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups during the study and concludes by clarifying the process of data analysis.

3.2 Research design

The research design is the method(s) and technique(s) used to collect, analyse and interpret data (Durrheim, 2002:48-49; Du Plooy, 2001:49). Furthermore, it is the plan according to which a researcher obtains research participants (subjects) and collects information from them (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:52). The

research design should thus provide an explicit plan for action (Durrheim, 2002:48-49).

In qualitative research, decisions and strategy are ongoing and are grounded in the practice, process and context of the research itself (Mason, 2002:24). A competent researcher is able to respond to the data and to change direction should the need arise (Birley, 1998:28). However, according to Mason (2002:24) a research design should nevertheless be produced at the start of the process. This ensures that the study fulfils a particular purpose, and the research can be completed with available resources (Durrheim, 2002:34).

3.2.1 Worldviews for public relations and marketing communication research

Two worldviews inform most public relations and marketing communication research. These are the realist worldview and the interpretive worldview (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:4/14).

3.2.1.1 Realist

The realist perspective regards reality as an objective, observable entity, which is independent of those involved in it (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:4/14). This approach assumes that the accounts participants produce in interviews bear a direct relationship to their “real” experience in the world beyond the interview situation (King, 2004:12).

3.2.1.2 Interpretive

The interpretive stance focuses on the constructed nature of social reality as seen by those involved in it (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:4/14). If you work from an interpretive stance, you are keen to understand social reality from the point of view of those *in* it (Henning, 2004:19). This is true to the objective of this study, where the researcher’s aim was to capture the (organisational) lives of participants in order to understand and interpret the meaning they attach to events or objects

related to internal organisational communication. The researcher therefore followed an interpretive worldview.

3.2.2 Qualitative Research

The researcher followed a qualitative approach to the research methods. Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to study selected issues in depth, openness, and detail (Durrheim, 2002:47).

Qualitative methods tend to be associated with the *interpretive* worldview, where the research explores the way people “make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound, imagery, personal style and social rituals” (Deacon *et al.*, quoted by Daymon & Holloway, 2002:4). In addition, qualitative research leads to develop our understandings and explanations of the social world (Mason, 2002:1).

For communication researchers, qualitative methodologies offer an in-depth understanding of communication phenomena and how people perceive and accordingly use communication in their everyday lives (Hocking, Stack & McDermott, 2003:212). In order to reach the objectives this study set out (see section 1.8), the researcher needed to understand how managers and their subordinates at DCSA perceive the organisation’s internal communication. The researcher correlated these perceptions with the two chosen internal communication theories (see chapter 2).

3.2.3 Research population

The research population encompasses the total collection of all units of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make conclusions (Welman *et al.*, 2005:52). The context in which people function is very important to qualitative researchers, as they focus on their interconnected activities, experiences, beliefs and values (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:6). Qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses (Maxwell, 1996:17-18). In this way, qualitative researchers

are able to understand how events, actions and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur (Maxwell, 1996:17-18).

For the purposes of this study, the research population included all managers and non-managerial employees of DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, as the aim was to evaluate the nature of DCSA's internal communication. Following the internal hierarchical structure, DCSA has approximately 180 employees on band-levels 1 – 4. These represent the top-, senior- and middle-managers of the organisation. Approximately 650 employees are on band-levels 5 – 9, which represent all non-managerial staff members.

3.2.4 Sampling procedure

Sampling is the selection of research participants from an entire population, and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours, and/or social processes to observe (Durrheim, 2002:49). The interviewees who are selected for a study firstly depend on the specific criteria determined by the purpose of the study, and secondly, the basis of the interviewees' ability to generate adequate and relevant information on the issue(s) under investigation (Henning, 2004:71; Daymon & Holloway, 2002:157/159). Qualitative researchers generally select samples purposefully rather than randomly, as their focus is primarily on the depth or richness of the data (Struwig & Stead, 2001:121).

According to Welman *et al.* (2005:69) purposive sampling is the most important type of non-probability sampling. It is a set of procedures where the research manipulates data generation, analysis, theory and sampling activities interactively during the research process, to a much greater extent than in statistical sampling (Mason, 2002:137). The main aim is to select a sample that will be representative of the population about which the researcher aims to draw conclusions (Durrheim, 2002:49). Previous knowledge of the population and/or the objective of the study can result in a researcher using his/her judgement, experience and ingenuity to deliberately obtain units of analysis in such a manner that the sample he/she obtains may be regarded as being representative of the relevant population

(Welman *et al.*, 2005:69; Du Plooy, 2001:114). The researcher therefore applied purposive known group sampling to obtain respondents to both the interviews and focus group discussions.

In this study, the purposeful sample included senior managers and focus groups of non-managerial staff members. According to Du Plooy (2001:180) depending on the objective of the research study, one would purposefully sample subjects in such a way that they have shared some common experience, so that the interview focuses on the effects of the experience from the subject's perspective.

To establish the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop from the perspective of management, qualitative semi-structured interviews (see section 3.2.5.1) were conducted with a representative sample of five key role players, selected from members of top and senior management according to their expertise and knowledge regarding the research topic. Two of the interviewees held top positions in the Corporate Affairs department. The other three were senior managers of various departments within the organisation. Members of management of DCSA's head office in Zwartkop were assigned and contacted by DCSA's Human Resource department.

To evaluate internal communication at DCSA's head office as perceived by staff, four focus groups (see section 3.2.5.2) were conducted with selected members of staff within the context of their different departments and organisational levels. Each focus group consisted of between ten and twelve participants chosen to represent the many levels and departments present at DCSA and on their availability to participate. Focus groups were assigned and organised by DCSA's Human Resources department.

3.2.5 Research instruments

As discussed by Daymon and Holloway (2002:5) and Durrheim (2002:51) the main "instrument" in qualitative research is the researcher her- or himself who closely engages with the people being studied. Agreeing with this Henning (2004:6/10)

explains that the analytical instrument is largely the researcher, whose knowledge, understanding and expertise will determine what happens to the data. This differs from quantitative research where researchers are remote from their informants, as their research is based on methods such as surveys or structured interviews (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:5; Durrheim, 2002:51). According to Murphy (quoted by Hocking *et al.*, 2003:210) in-depth interviews are held with only a few individuals when and if the researcher can identify “key information”, or people who are both willing and able to shed light on your research concern. Qualitative methods require data to be interpreted through sense-making analyses (West & Turner, 2004:69).

As indicated in section 3.2.4, research instruments for this study were semi-structured interviews and focus-groups to obtain first-hand in-depth information on internal communication at DCSA as experienced by managers and subordinates.

3.2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews with members of management

As stated in section 3.2.4, the researcher conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of five key role-players selected from members of DCSA’s head office management. Unlike a structured interview, a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to interact with the respondent and is characterised by substantial freedom on the part of the interviewer (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:329-330; Du Plooy, 2001:177). According to Hocking *et al.* (2003:209) the in-depth interview is a “one-on-one, you and the interviewee, process”. According to Du Plooy (2001:177) the interview schedule for a partially structured interview also contains standardised questions and/or a list of topics. However, the interviewer is free to deviate and ask follow-up or probing questions based on the respondent’s replies.

Murphy is quoted by Hocking *et al.* (2003:210): “The research questions best answered by in-depth interviewing are value and policy orientated. What you are asking for are personal interpretations, their significance and how they influenced the individual being interviewed”. The interviewer can pose the questions in

whatever order makes greatest sense given the flow of the conversation with the informant (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:329-330).

The researcher compiled a list of questions based on the theoretical backdrop explained in the second chapter. Although these topics were presented in the interview, interviewees had the freedom to direct new related topics the researcher might not have included originally. According to Mason (2002:24) in qualitative research, decisions about design and strategy are ongoing and are grounded in the practice, process and context of the research itself. The researcher used the topics that came forth during interviews with members of management to revise the topics and questions posed to focus groups in the following weeks. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, as this was the time allocated to the researcher.

3.2.5.2 Focus group interviews with members of staff

Focus groups consist of a small number of individuals or interviewees that are drawn together for the purpose of expressing their opinions on a specific set of open questions (Welman *et al.*, 2005:201; Litosseliti, 2003:1). According to Hocking *et al.* (2003:204) focus groups are used in, amongst others, organisational communication research to probe a small group of people about their attitudes, values, and behaviours to identify deep feelings and motivations (Hocking *et al.*, 2003:204). The researcher conducted qualitative semi-structured focus group interviews with members of DCSA's non-managerial staff in order to obtain first-hand in-depth information on their experience of the company's internal communication. This was beneficial to the study in that it provided a broad spectrum of differentiated organisational experiences discussed and compared by the relevant staff members.

The researcher compiled research questions and themes before conducting the focus group interviews. As stated by Wisker (2001:176) the use of some structured and clear questions in a schedule helps the group to stay focused on the specific research topic. According to Litosseliti (2003:2) focus groups should be interactive where participants respond to and build on the views expressed by

others in the group. One of the strengths of qualitative research is its flexibility, in that the answers evoked by the researcher's initial questions shape the subsequent questions (Baxter & Babbie, 2004:326). In some instances, the researcher found that focus group members were delighted to finally have the opportunity to express their opinions and hear the experiences of their fellow employees.

It was also apparent to the researcher that, in terms of the themes discussed, the second, third and fourth focus groups initiated and repeated most of the same issues highlighted by the first focus group. According to Baxter and Babbie (2004:340) a focus group researcher knows he or she has enough groups when the saturation point is reached and no new insights are gained from additional group discussions. Each focus group lasted approximately 50-70 minutes, as this was the time allocated to the researcher.

3.2.6 Data collection / Fieldwork

According to Du Plooy (2001:281) in depth interviews and focus-group interviews are appropriate techniques to collect data about management styles (Du Plooy, 2001:281). Qualitative interviews include one-to-one interactions, larger group interviews or focus groups (Welman *et al.*, 2005:201; Mason, 2002:62).

Firstly, the researcher conducted interviews with members of management, which took place on 27 and 28 September 2004. The researcher then used the data gathered during these interviews to adapt the questions to be posed to the focus groups of non-managerial employees. Two focus groups were conducted two weeks after interviews with management were completed. Two weeks later, another two focus groups were conducted with another group of non-managerial employees. The reason for the space of two weeks in between interviews was due to employees not all being available at the same time. The researcher had to schedule interviews to suit the time constraint of participants. The different times did not have any effect on the themes or the topics discussed by the groups.

For every interview and focus group held, DCSA's Human Resource department assigned the researcher a private office or room on their premises of Zwartkop. The interview or focus group could be privately and effectively conducted without disturbances. In only one instance some focus group members arrived late and the researcher had to repeat the introduction. This, however, did not significantly affect the effectiveness of the particular focus group.

A combination of more than one perspective is often used to substantiate data and provide a more 'complete' picture (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:98). Combining two or more data collection methods and reference to multiple sources of information to obtain data is generally referred to as triangulation, and enhances the validity and reliability of data collection (Du Plooy, 2001:39, 81). For the purposes of this study, three types of triangulation were implemented (Janesick, 1994:214-215):

- **Data triangulation**, using different data sources in the study. In this case management and staff members at DCSA's head office in Pretoria were qualitatively interviewed to obtain the varying perspectives – related to the study topic – of managers and their subordinates;
- **Theoretical triangulation**, using multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data. In this case internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication were used and compared as theoretical backdrop to this study; and
- **Methodological triangulation**, using multiple methods to study a single problem. In this case a literature review, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used.

3.2.7 Data analysis

As mentioned in section 3.2.1.2, the researcher followed an interpretive worldview. Because researchers who follow the interpretive worldview are keen to understand social reality from the point of view of those in it (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:4-5) the "heartbeat" of the research is data analysis. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to a mass of unstructured data (Daymon &

Holloway, 2002:231). Hereby qualitative data is then categorised into themes, and a more general picture of the phenomenon under investigation is built up from particulars (Durrheim, 2002:51).

According to Welman *et al.* (2005:215) the researcher can first collect the data and then divide the field notes into different segments afterwards. Categories or labels are then applied (coding) to the appropriate paragraph or segment of the material. The purpose of coding is to analyse and make sense of the data that has been collected (Welman *et al.*, 2005:214). Coding is done by breaking down a body of data (text domain) into labelled, meaningful pieces, with a view to later cluster the "bits" of coded material together under the code heading and further analyse them both as a cluster and in relation to other clusters (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2002:326). If you are analysing an interview transcript, a code could be linked to a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or larger sections of data. Codes should be interpreted within a certain context and in relation to other codes (Struwig & Stead, 2001:169).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Extensive note taking formed part of the interviewing process. All data was recorded and labelled in a systematic manner as discussed by Daymon and Holloway (2002:234). Based on the concepts and themes discussed during the interviews, the researcher developed information categories in order to organise the mass of data (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:234). Within the interpretive framework, the researcher analysed the resultant text in light of the two theoretical *approaches* discussed in chapter 2.

3.3 Summary

This chapter explained the research methodology that was used to conduct the study. The reasons for using qualitative research were explained. In addition, the elements of the research population, the sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis were discussed. The researcher explained the process and merits of conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The next chapter of the study delineates the results obtained after implementing the methodology set out in this chapter. Chapter 4 explains the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion in light of the two theoretical approaches applicable to this study as perceived by the organisation's management and staff.

Chapter 4

Results

When studying the communication of organisations, it is important to remember that the low status worker' communication patterns are as important, if not more so, than the communication of the higher status staff. In a hierarchical organisation, the bottom part of the pyramid holds many more people than does the top. It has therefore a greater opportunity to affect the relationships with individuals outside the organisation. In addition, the lower status workers tend to establish the norms for external communication behaviour (Hocking *et al.*, 2003:197).

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 2 the theoretical points of departure of the internal marketing approach compared to two-way symmetrical communication were discussed. The current chapter highlights the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion in light of these two approaches as perceived by the company's management and staff.

As outlined in section 3.2.5.1, one-on-one qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with five members of DCSA's senior and middle management over a period of two days (see section 3.2.6). As outlined in section (3.2.5.2), four qualitative semi-structured focus group interviews were also conducted with members of DCSA's non-managerial staff over a period of two weeks. The aim was to understand the nature of the company's internal communication as perceived and practiced by management and staff at its head office.

The views observed in this chapter are that of interviewees and not the researcher. Views expressed by interviewees are offered as representative of managers⁴ and staff at the company's head office. Where interviewees' opinions vary significantly, it is indicated as such.

4.2 Internal communication at DCSA

In light of the two theoretical approaches outlined in chapter 2 (see sections 2.6 and 2.7), this chapter illustrates the nature of internal communication as perceived by management and staff. Derived from the theoretical background (chapter 2), the following aspects of DCSA's internal communication are depicted in order to critically analyse the nature thereof:

- Organisational culture;
- Internal communication;
- Internal communication mediums and instruments;
- Nature of internal communication between managers and staff; and
- Interdepartmental communication.

4.2.1 Organisational culture

The researcher enquired about the company's internal culture, as this provides the context for internal communication and determines how employees decode the formal messages they receive (Quirke, 2001:32; also see sections 2.3 and 2.9.5.1).

4.2.1.1 Organisational culture as perceived by managers

Amongst other things, organisational structure (including cultural differences) can be a barrier to effective organisational communication. Classic conventional organisations are built around vertical departments that often become functional silos (see section 2.3). DCSA's head office in Zwartkop is a conglomerate of many different corporate cultures and systems. It is very divisionally orientated with silos or groupings of people. Management describes the internal culture as

⁴ As agreed upon during the interviews, managers' identities are not revealed for the purposes of this study. Their opinions are therefore presented collectively.

authoritarian, very structured and formal, with planning, controlling and precision being strong organisational characteristics. They credit this to the structures of “a good German company that is known to discipline and document (record) things”. Company notices direct what employees are supposed to do and what not. According to DCSA management, policies and procedures very clearly depict the organisational culture.

Due to the nature of this internal culture, managers experience that there is often an abdication of ownership, with employees at lower levels relying on those at higher levels to make decisions. Often, when employees cannot agree amongst themselves, they wait until the issue reaches board-level for a decision to be taken. Some managers say that they would prefer it if decision-making is pushed as far down the company and as close to the customer as possible. One interviewee illustrated this by using the following example:

An owner of a new S-class Mercedes Benz vehicle arrives at the dealership with a paint blemish on his new car that will cost approximately R10 000 to repair. Staff at the dealership can clearly see that this problem should be rectified, but they may not be (or feel) empowered to make such an expensive decision and restore the car to its original condition. In this instance the customer is inconvenienced and may have to come back to the dealer two or three times until the right person at the right level, says: “Sure, we need to fix this up”.

Management wants employees to be empowered (also see section 4.2.4). But in the same breath they argue that it is impossible to empower employees who are unable to make decisions.

4.2.1.2 Organisational culture as perceived by staff

The non-managerial employees of DCSA's head office perceive the organisational culture almost exactly the same as their managers. These employees describe the internal culture as a confusing mixture between American, Japanese, European and South-African approaches. They moreover describe it as conservative, formal,

serious and authoritarian. In line with managers, employees also highlighted the “silos”; “pockets of different cultures” or “sub-cultures” in the company that are divisionally driven. They perceive every department to function separately.

Due to the various cultures present in the organisation, a mixture of different values is found. This affects communication and ways of conducting business. According to employees, the internal organisational culture and subsequent approach to internal communication depends on or is strongly influenced by individual managers.

Employees also experience that there is a “bumping up” of responsibility to make decisions between middle to senior levels of management (see section 4.2.4.5.2 on employees’ opinion about their responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication).

4.2.2 Internal communication

The researcher investigated the company’s internal communication. As discussed in section 2.4, organisations should ideally have an internal environment that is conducive to open communication between managers and staff.

4.2.2.1 Internal communication as perceived by managers

Managers do not blame the company’s communication mechanisms for their communication problems. They rather attribute these to the value systems and internal culture. In considering this, the researcher questioned management to determine whether the company’s approach to internal communication is more **participative** or more **authoritarian** in nature. As discussed in section 2.4, excellent communicators are more likely to be team players than independent operators.

Managers describe the nature of internal communication as being more authoritarian, as it tends to be more top-down in nature (managers communicating *down* to employees). But, they also indicated that there is a purposeful balance

between authoritative and participative communication in the company, depending on what is being communicated. When it comes to regulations and legislation, there is no debate, and communication is authoritative. However, when personnel issues such as working hours or salary increases are discussed, communication has a more participative nature.

When the company wants to achieve a strategic goal, their approach to internal communication is also more participative in nature. According to management, they will then “go to quite a bit of trouble” to make sure they involve as many relevant employees as possible to obtain the necessary ownership (see table 4.1 and section 4.2.4.1.1 where the importance of staff ownership is discussed as being one of the organisation’s internal communication aims). Managers, however, also feel that they cannot always be fully participative or busy with negotiations, because “there are times when a decision just has to be made and communicated”.

Management style influences the level of participative communication and feedback (see section 2.6.2). As discussed in section 2.4.1 excellent communicators are able to foster relationships with their counterparts inside the organisation. Some managers feel that where a good relationship exists between managers and their staff, communication improves because it is open, frank and honest. In line with this, some members of management experience that it does not always work to their benefit when they apply an authoritarian approach. They experience that the more controlling they are, the more they slow things down. Some of these managers feel that communication should become more bottom-up rather than top down. Some managers also believe that authority should be decentralised and that employees with the needed expertise in their different areas should be empowered. One manager is quoted as that: “The fact that our chairman is our chairman, does not make him a communication, marketing or IT expert. He still relies on people in different fields to determine strategy in that area of the business and to successfully implement it.” Managers propose that a forum should be established where employees can come up with ideas and suggestions that are listened to and acknowledged. This concept is already common in terms

of quality circles found in the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach (see Rau, 1996:477; George & Weimerskirch, 1994:89-90, Tenner, 1992:183).

4.2.2.2 Internal communication as perceived by staff

In line with managers describing the company's internal communication as being more authoritarian, employees describe it as "top-down"; "them-and-us". They also experience a senior-junior division that runs across the company. Staff members complain that many people in the company do not really listen. They also experience that managers tend to focus on the mistakes employees make. However, when things do go right, "people hardly hear about it". According to employees, the company forgets to advance their own people, and just "sit them in the corner by themselves" (i.e. isolate them and the work they do).

4.2.3 Internal communication mediums and instruments

As discussed in section 2.2, internal communication is essential to any well-run organisation and can be written, spoken or virtual. As seen in section 2.4, a variety of both formal and informal communication tools can be used. The researcher therefore investigated the internal communication mediums and instruments as perceived by managers and staff.

4.2.3.1 Internal communication mediums and instruments as perceived by managers

According to management, there is no formal framework or policy that guides DCSA employees on how they are supposed to communicate (see sections 2.6, 2.7.2). An interviewee in the Corporate Affairs division is of the opinion that the communication "strategy" follows the company strategy, which is compiled annually. Hereby each division decides how corporate communication instruments are to be used and what the key messages will be for the company in the following year. But the way in which internal communication is actually handled depends entirely on every divisional manager and individual in the company.

Managers identified and discussed the existing internal communication instruments and processes as follows.

4.2.3.1.1 Monthly board meetings

The monthly board meeting with the board of management is the primary internal communication forum. Office bearers report to the chairman (i.e. Human Resources [HR], Information Technology [IT], program management office and corporate affairs). Each one of these representatives then hold their own forums. In turn, divisional managers cascade important matters down to departmental level and teams.

4.2.3.1.2 Internal communication mediums

The Corporate Affairs division makes a concerted effort to keep staff informed on broader issues via the internal communication mediums. These include company newspapers, the intranet, magazines, formal company announcements, mass-emails, workshops and communication forums and projects. The “Star” is the company newspaper – one newspaper for three sites (Zwartkop, Pinetown and East London) with about seven thousand readers. The “Star” aims to cover a proportional balance of information relevant to the three sites of the company. This information includes company and product news, marketing, launches, employee news, social news, sport and other general organisational news.

The intranet is very popular among staff, and the Corporate Affairs division deliberately strive to increase the interactive nature thereof. It contains an abundance of organisational information, as well as information staff members need to perform their daily tasks. Organisational news is published continuously, in order to keep staff well informed.

If DCSA needs to distribute a company-wide message, a company notice is used. Company notices and information from board meetings are distributed in a format that is company approved and signed off by a management board member.

Managers describe the formal communication structures as “good”, “consistent” and “standardised”. The company is very complex and much of the internal communication goes into explaining what is new, different and how it is going to affect a division. One manager says: “The big challenge for management is to focus less on the formal channels of communication. It is old hat. I think it boils down to the subtleties in organisational culture/climate, and leadership/management style”.

4.2.3.1.3 Informal communication

The majority of communication on operational level takes place through informal conversations. The main problem managers experience with informal communication is that some people are (or occasionally feel) left out unintentionally. This causes resentment to build up.

According to a manager from Corporate Affairs, it is hard to keep internal communication fresh, especially when working with it for a long time. They also experience difficulty in getting the right balance between a selective supply of information. According to her, the company needs more targeted information. Some employees complain that there are too many communication channels. But management are of the opinion that this is perhaps needed in a company as complex as DCSA where employees have many different preferences. According to management, “the trick is to make sure that the same message with the same emphasis gets across through the different channels at the same time”.

4.2.3.1.4 Internal communication aims

Managers listed the internal communication aims at DCSA’s head office as follows:

- **To inform.** Ensuring that all levels of employees understand what is happening in the company; to communicate decisions that have been taken (including those taken at the holding company in Germany); to keep stakeholders informed; to communicate changes; and to communicate general internal information about products, successes etc.

- **To instruct.** Managers “telling” employees what to do.
- **To act as a strategic function.** A main goal is to ensure that everybody is aware of the organisational strategy and where the company is heading. Managers aim to get employees to take ownership of the organisational strategy, particularly on the values of and major issues facing the company. Senior management (a team of approximately fifty people) sets the organisational strategy. Thereafter a broader group of about two-hundred people are involved where they have an opportunity to participate. According to management, this allows more opportunity for ownership as opposed to being told, “This is your strategy, and these are your values”.
- **To act as an upward communication channel to management.** Hereby management is able to get feedback – the thoughts and feelings of non-managerial employees.

One manager noted that in the corporate environment effective communication, *albeit* important, is never fully accomplished. In his opinion employees must be informed annually and their memories refreshed as to why the company does things in a certain way. The rationale behind this is that employees leave the company, while new employees continuously join the company.

However, not all members of management consider corporate communication an important element of the company’s success. Some of their comments include:

- “Corporate communication does not account for the majority of employees being happy and satisfied. It is an important component, but I believe there are other components over and above corporate communication”.
- “I believe corporate communication is one of a number of important components. But it is not the be-all and end-all.”
- “Anybody can produce a newspaper, anyone can have an intranet, anyone can broadcast things over the email. It doesn’t take any particular skill”.

Through the interviews with managers, the researcher observed that, in their opinion, it is especially the newer and younger (management) colleagues who demand better internal communication. The management and communication styles of these colleagues are perceived as being very different to the organisational culture and what the company is used to.

4.2.3.2 Internal communication mediums and instruments as perceived by staff

The mixture of cultures represented in the staff composition of DCSA leads to different communication preferences. Some employees, for instance, prefer personal contact. Others prefer communicating through email.

Email seems to be the most widely used communication medium in the company. Employees discuss that they have often conversed with other staff members over the email without ever meeting them personally. One staff member comments that although his boss sits about three metres away, almost 80% of their communication is done via email. Employees experience the overuse of email as unproductive and impersonal. According to employees the medium is also open to miscommunication: "We go round in circles, over and over again"; and: "People assume that when they send email, the other person will interpret the contents of the message as the sender originally intended it. You might not and then do something completely different from what they want".

Staff members feel that email has replaced the act of picking up the phone. One employee asks whether there should not rather be a focus on building trustworthy relationships with one another, adding: "We can become childish almost, digging up 5000 emails to prove the other one wrong".

Employees agree that email has definitely influenced personal communication. "Now, by sending an email your job is done, where previously you would have picked up the phone, or got up and walked to that person's desk. Email is definitely over-used". According to staff, emailing and using the intranet have

taken away from building personal relationships. They now feel scared of just asking someone to do something for them: "You have to have a record of everything". Employees must follow a company policy that specifies how a person should be approached and how the request should be structured. The request must also be approved and audited. There is a diverse use of language, and it occasionally happens that an employee says something that unintentionally offends someone else.

Staff members are mostly satisfied with the nature of formal internal communication flow. Employees do feel that managers and personnel in the Corporate Affairs division do their best with internal communication (publications), but "somewhere along the line there is a breakdown". Despite staff's negative views in these issues, they do not envy managers their position. Staff want managers to determine where the communication breakdowns are and to improve internal communication structures: "Nine out of ten times when something goes wrong, it is due to miscommunication, even though adequate communication structures are in place. Another staff member comments: "Our company can be defined by our good ideas. But then it dies and nothing happens".

4.2.4 Nature of internal communication between managers and staff

As seen in sections 2.3 and 2.4, employees want more effective interaction (and therefore internal communication) with management. This section shows the nature of internal communication between managers and staff.

4.2.4.1 Communication approaches / styles

The researcher investigated the communication approaches and styles used during internal communication, as perceived by managers and staff.

4.2.4.1.1. Communication approaches / styles as perceived by managers

Members of management agree on the perspective that employees are the means by which the company conducts business. They realise that they cannot do

anything without their employees. As a result they have become more caring in their approach. According to management, there is growing recognition within the automotive industry that success in the industry is increasingly about the service a company attaches to its products. Both management and non-managerial staff deliver these services: "If you really want to lead the market space, you must make sure that you have the right people who are empowered – that they are there, happy and smiling, content and motivated. If they are not, we will probably still sell cars, but maybe not as many as we should".

Managers highlight the importance they attach to treating employees well: "You want to treat your people well, because you realise that employees enable you to achieve your (the company's) results". Another manager states: "We view our internal clients (employees) as external clients, as we have to provide a service, advice and consultancy to them". Internal communication is given as an example of an avenue where employees are being treated as internal customers: "Employees are mostly informed of announcements before they are made known externally. The content of the internal and external messages is also 99% the same" (see section 2.4).

Another manager stated the following when discussing her perspective on employees' role: "We're running a business here, and that sounds like a very hard statement. We will give somebody with personal problems all the assistance possible. But while they are here, they do need to do a job, and it can be disruptive if somebody has unresolved personal issues. The reality is that we are here to make money."

According to theory, honest frequent communication builds a sense of community, and effective internal communication is an essential weapon in the battle to motivate employees (see section 2.5). However according to management, a number of factors determine whether people are happy or unhappy in their jobs. Therefore, unhappy employees cannot be made happy through better communication. Management asserts that business is "not a nanny" and that employees are not there to have a good time, say nice things to each other and be

all “warm and fuzzy”. Managers want employees to understand that DCSA is a business with the aim to serve its customers and shareholders. Within the framework of that responsibility and accountability, however, they agree that there must be mutual respect for people as human beings. They realise that if people do not feel that they matter, they act as if they do not matter.

As a result the company aims to change employee attitudes and loyalty and make them proud to work at DCSA. To achieve this, the company communicates community projects and organisational successes to employees. This strategy corresponds with internal marketing approaches, which use marketing-like techniques to motivate employees (see section 2.7). According to management, DCSA is busy reshaping its vision to ensure that people walk through the gate everyday “knowing they are part of something bigger”. A primary component in this process is that employees should buy into the strategy and vision: “We try to get employees to buy in to the organisational strategy. Particularly on the values and the major issues of the company”. And: “Employees have to buy into the organisation’s strategy, otherwise they will only pay lip service to the board’s values and strategies that they do not feel are their own.”

From data collected among managers it seems as if the occurrence and nature of communication between managers and employees depends on both the organisational backdrop, and (importantly) every individual manager’s personality. Managers’ communication styles vary between autocratic and democratic. Some departmental leaders communicate better than others. Their peers perceive that these managers encourage two-way communication between themselves and others. However, other members of management are described as “poor communicators”. Although not all managers are equally successful in communicating with their teams, their colleagues credit them for trying very hard. Still, managers state that communication between leaders and their own teams is an area that needs to be improved.

4.2.4.1.2 Communication approaches / styles as perceived by staff

According to employees, they want to belong and they want recognition. Some are “just not proud of the company anymore”. Employees believe the company needs an open culture that gives people responsibility: “People are under-empowered in this organisation, (especially) at the lower levels”. Staff believe this is the reason why management does not trust them to communicate or provide feedback: “they think we are not capable”. Furthermore, employees are not given more responsibility because then, “they would be part of the loop. How would you exclude them or half-communicate to them if you have given them additional responsibility to handle things on their own?” Employees state that they are paid a salary, and that means they have to work for it. However, that does not merely mean staff must perform the tasks outlined in their job description. They must also be allowed to grow”. They view the nature of internal communication as “very autocratic” and that they “get told what to do”.

Yet, some employees perceive that in a South-African context the tendency does exist to talk and negotiate more, where the Germany company might be more authoritarian in their approach. Employees state that the South-African influence is dominating over the German influence and that “the company culture is just trying to mix that all together and come up with a workable solution”.

One staff member who experiences very positive communication in her department says that everyone in her department are involved in the process and are so involved that they understand the roles they ought to play and what is expected of them. In this department, employees are exposed to everything and empowered to handle things on their own. Additionally, there is no fear to go to the divisional manager to communicate or discuss a problem.

Most of the focus group employees agree that the nature of internal communication depends on individual managers and is “as good as the manager”. Furthermore, employees agree that internal communication depends on the department and the individual manager’s communication style. Employees thus experience that

internal communication in each department is a product and reflection of that department.

Employees mostly do not perceive management as transparent. Comments about management show some negative feelings towards them:

- “You get shut down and torn to pieces, and you are not really there to defend yourself”;
- “You get this idea that part of management’s bonus is to cramp yours as much as possible”;
- “The person above you might build or destroy you. They hold the key to your success in the company because they are more senior to you”;
- “I really get this idea that they do play with people’s lives”.

However, employees also expressed some positive experiences. Some staff members are of the opinion that they are fortunate to have managers who are extremely transparent, frequently opening the floor for debate. Employees admit that they cannot expect management to be transparent about *everything* with *everybody*, because that would be “impractical”. Staff members repeatedly comment that business is not a democracy. They do however say however, that they appreciate the instances where managers are open and transparent in communicating with them.

4.2.4.2 Open door policy

As shown in section 2.6.2, there needs to be a cyclical process in place where managers are engaged in hearing feedback from staff and responding to it. This section shows the extent to which an open door policy is present in internal communication between managers and staff.

4.2.4.2.1 Open door policy as perceived by managers

Members of management agree that the company has an open door policy and all point to the open office plan as proof thereof. Apart from the chairman, all other

management board members/directors sit in open plan environments with their immediate staff. According to them, the only thing that could block this open door policy or opportunity for dialogue is when an employee does not have a good working relationship with his or her immediate manager. Managers describe that the chairman also firmly believes in practicing an open door policy, often inviting employees to come and speak to him about difficulties with their own managers. Despite this, one manager recalls only two instances where (after numerous invitations) employees did speak with the chairman. Both instances were about quite personal, salary related issues.

Managers maintain that there is adequate opportunity for dialogue: "I've never had the experience where I've wanted to raise an issue and no-one was prepared to listen to me and give me feedback, whether it was in favour of my point of view or not". According to management, there is, however, always room for improvement when it comes to feedback: "You can never communicate enough". Other problem areas specified during interviews include:

- A performance management system, which sometimes fosters, supports or encourages competition and inadvertently the dilution of collaboration required.
- Structural impediments, personal scorecards and remuneration systems.

4.2.4.2.2 *Open door policy as perceived by staff*

Employees fondly describe managers who *are* transparent and who invite dialogue. They experience communication as positive when it is open and consultative. Some employees experience communication as very open, although it largely depends on the issue: "Sensitive issues are still discussed behind closed doors and the open plan office is no guarantee that you will know what is cooking". Employees want to be "heard" and "participate". The experience is that some lower level employees are not listened to and communication from their side is not encouraged.

Time pressures and the nature of DCSA's business activities imply that there is not much time for dialogue or debate: "If you want to have a chat with your divisional manager, go have a chat with him while he smokes. That's when he has time, and these are the opportunities you look for". According to staff, feedback is "personality driven" and it is impossible to generalise. Some employees are of the opinion that it is good manners to follow the organisational levels when communicating with management.

4.2.4.3 Direction of communication flow

The following section shows the direction of communication flow as perceived by managers and staff of the company.

4.2.4.3.1 Direction of communication flow as perceived by managers

From data collected during the interviews it seems as if the direction of communication between managers and non-managerial employees depends on the issue, urgency and time frame. By definition, the domain of policy-making vests with management and therefore communication will be more top-down. Sometimes a strategic decision made at board level is communicated downwards to employees and everyone needs to comply with it. Other forms and means of communication such as departmental and team meetings, are more multi-directional. These provide an opportunity for teams and divisions to air their opinions.

4.2.4.3.2 Direction of communication flow as perceived by staff

Staff members are of the opinion that upward communication channels do exist. However, these depend on the personality and judgement of the managers, and determine whether employees' messages move upwards. Some employees indicate that if they do not get favourable response from management, they have the opportunity to work through the HR division to facilitate solutions.

Employees experience that it is easier to speak up in less formal situations. In formal situations they feel limited, because of “old, perceived, believed ideas of victimisation”. People fear that they may become targeted: “More people who have (given feedback) in the company are not here now – they are gone!” Often in meetings, concerns are not raised and “few people will talk”. According to staff, meetings are a favourite pass-time in the company, but they are not effective. They feel that the time spent is unproductive and that people are not very good at listening actively. They want standardised meetings during which proper minutes are taken.

4.2.4.4 Feedback

As discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.5.4, dialogue (and therefore feedback) helps to manage conflict and improves understanding. This section looks at the use of feedback during communication between managers and staff.

4.2.4.4.1 Feedback as perceived by managers

Some managers expressed their view that the challenge is to create an environment that is conducive to “open, honest and constructive feedback”. They point to the manner in which the existing forums or channels are used and managed. According to managers, employees have a variety of adequate feedback opportunities, as they deal with their managers on a one-on-one basis every day. Despite this, some junior employees may not feel at liberty to communicate with their managers.

Not only the nature of internal communication, but also employees’ ability to give feedback depends on their individual manager’s leadership style. Some managers state that the ideal would be for the company to become participative to the extent that employees are free to voice their opinions openly and not feel threatened when doing so. Managers do believe that the structures that would enable individuals and teams to communicate upwards are present. But, “no matter how open you try to make it, there are times when staff just do not feel that they can make comments. The environment for this must be created” (see section 2.4).

4.2.4.4.2 Feedback as perceived by staff

According to staff the company structure often prevents effective feedback. The person they report to also determines whether their feedback reaches top management or not. If that person does not approve of their viewpoints, suggestions never reach higher management levels: "You can go directly to someone at a higher level, but it just gets given back to the person who was supposed to handle the situation." Employees want to communicate in a more relaxed tone. However, they adhere to the formal structures because going above someone's head is feared a "limiting move". They feel that there should be a better balance between formal and informal communication structures.

Managers do quarterly employee appraisals. However, it happens that for three months an employee might be doing something wrong, but the manager will only address it during the appraisal meeting where the employees' bonus may be cut as a result. According to staff the reason for this situation is a lack of good relationships between managers and staff. Furthermore, they perceive the reason being that all communication must be formalised, documented and impersonal so that there is no prejudice and everyone is treated equally. People have subsequently become more guarded in an attempt not to offend. According to staff, this takes the edge off effective communication.

Employees also experience that they are sometimes asked for feedback but that it seems to fall on deaf ears. As one employee commented: "If you ask me for my opinion with no intention of doing anything with it, don't ask me!" According to employees, whether you are listened to or not largely depends on your personal manager. There are employees in some departments who feel that management does not really listen to them and only pays them lip-service.

Employees experience much of the communication as "forced". A case in point is the compulsory feedback sessions every three months. Departmental feedback sessions with managers are, however, experienced very positively. Some

employees also feel that feedback to management is improving. Overall, managers are available to talk to, although it is up to the employee/staff member to take the initiative.

Many internal communication problems are attributed to the company originally being small and suddenly growing in size. As a result, communication approaches and channels did not have a time to adapt to this expansion over time and employees do not have the time or opportunity to get to know each other anymore. Employees want to break down the “silos” and bring back the “fun element”. During some of the focus groups employees stated that these relaxed experiences of the past led to better understanding and communication between staff. They experience a lack thereof since the company has grown. They also experience that enough time is not spent on building relationships. Employees feel that if they are not sitting at their desks because they are having a conversation with someone, it is seen as “unproductive”. “If you are going to someone face-to-face, they think you are ‘running around’”.

4.2.4.5 Employees' responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication

As discussed in section 2.6.1, two-way symmetrical communication has equity as its basic premise and communication is balanced between the sender and receiver. The researcher therefore enquired about the extent to which employees take responsibility to communicate upward to management.

4.2.4.5.1 Employees' responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication as perceived by managers

One manager particularly points a finger to employees when it comes to this issue. He asks to what extent employees take responsibility for using the existing communication channels: “There are some employees, I’m sorry to say, who will moan about how bad communication is. But if you say to them ‘there’s x, y, z that you need to know, what have you done to find out?’, then the answer is usually: ‘nothing, I’ve sat with my arms folded because it hasn’t dropped from the sky’.”

Another manager says that feedback is employees' responsibility. He feels that it is people who fear taking responsibility who criticise management style: "Some employees complain, but don't take ownership. There is enough formal opportunity for feedback, but it's a 50/50 relationship. Furthermore, there should be reciprocity in the relationship, not dependency. The organisational structure and climate sometimes makes it difficult, but employees are also responsible. When employees keep getting overruled, they stop thinking and acting and wait for the next level to tell them what to do. A climate must be created where employees are empowered to take ownership".

Some managers interviewed are of the opinion that employees feel they are not being treated equally. Some employees also feel that managers look out for themselves more than they look out for employees. Managers believe there are instances where employees have legitimate concern. Mostly complaints are from people who do not have anything better to do or are feeding off negative vibes (gossiping). They feel employees would be surprised to find out "it is not so easy to run a company".

Some managers feel that employees do not *want* more feedback. This contradicts the theory used in this study (see section 2.5) that shows employees increasingly want greater interaction with management. According to the manager from Corporate Affairs, they have tried a letters column; employee newspaper; suggestion boxes and other initiatives, but employees are not "falling over their feet" to give feedback. She says that when employees feel very strongly about something they will walk into a person's office or give them a phone call. But these instances are few and far between.

4.2.4.5.2 Employees' responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication as perceived by staff

Some employees elaborated on their perception that they are not empowered to communicate with management. They feel the responsibility lies both with them

and management. Employees admit to playing the victim, complaining that while higher management levels do not communicate, they themselves do not “push” either. Some members in the group admitted that: “Right now the responsibility is just being pushed up”. Lower level employees who lack confidence and therefore do not communicate effectively, add to the communication problems.

According to staff, the company lacks a culture of forgiveness: “If you can’t make mistakes and be forgiven for them, people will not be courageous.” Many of the employees agree in their statements that there is a “fear factor” – unspoken repercussions that might follow if lower level employees speak their minds. They attribute this to the top-down communication approach. Even from board level to the next, there is an unspoken message of: “Man, just do it!”

4.2.4.6 Availability of information

As seen in section 2.4, some organisations produce large volumes of information that is top-down in nature, time-consuming and confusing to employees.

4.2.4.6.1 Availability of information as perceived by managers

It is management’s opinion that on a formal level, DCSA communicates exceptionally well. There is an abundance of information available to employees and therefore managers believe employees “could not possibly be in want of any form of communication”. Managers believe that if employees had a choice, they would ask for less, but more focused information. In management’s opinion, employees attend monthly board meetings because they have to and not because they want to. But without the monthly board meetings “half the communication will be lost”. One manager believes that employees want more opportunities for informal communication such as informal conversations and social gatherings.

4.2.4.6.2 Availability of information as perceived by staff

Staff members say that information is easily available, but time pressures sometimes prevent vital information to reach the right employees. The business is

doing well and growing fast, and people are finding it hard to keep up with the workload. According to one employee: "I think our business is running away with us, and that puts immense pressure on a company. There's much room for improvement, especially with pro-active communication. Sometimes you do not even know whom you represent. You get swamped. You just try to keep your head above water". Another employee describes that in the South-African company, they have three people responsible for performing a function, compared to the company in Germany where 27 people are responsible for performing the same function. Some complain that they do not even have time to read the internal "Star" newspaper.

Some employees complain that it is time consuming to sort through all the available information in order to find what is relevant to them. They all agree that the intranet is exceptionally good, although at times information-overload remains a big problem. In line with the need expressed by some interviewees on management level, employees stated that they want information that is more relevant to and aimed at their specific jobs. At the moment, regardless of which department, they experience that everyone gets *all* the information. Employees feel they lack knowledge-management. The right information is out there, but they do not know how to get to it.

Staff members find it discouraging when relevant information is not communicated to them personally. This happens more often within some departments than in the wider company structure.

4.2.5 Interdepartmental communication

In assessing the nature of internal communication, the researcher enquired about the nature of internal communication between departments.

4.2.5.1 Interdepartmental communication as perceived by managers

Managers describe the corporate structure at DCSA as matrix-like with many brands that have direct control over certain of their own functions. These brands

are grouped together and have their own divisional managers. These groups function as “silos” and therefore the perspective exists that a “silo”-mentality persists. For this reason, managers say that operational communication must be improved. They explain that it is a big problem in complex companies to break down silos and to facilitate improved communication across departments.

Managers feel that departments are sometimes chasing their own goals and have their own agendas, but not necessarily agendas that contradict the company’s goals: “Sometimes they forget that we are all part of the same company, because we have different reporting lines and all these other structural impediments”. A team consists of individuals, and therefore it is to be expected that there is always potential for conflict and problems. Managers see collaboration as the key in moving the company forward. But according to one manager, the focus at DCSA is often not on the real issues. “I was left out of this communication” becomes the big issue, rather than “Hey, that is a good idea, let’s see how we can support it”. According to this manager, some divisions do, however, collaborate well as teams. In these departments communication takes place in an “open, honest and forthright” manner. As a result, this manager describes interdepartmental communication as being “excellent”.

4.2.5.2 Interdepartmental communication as perceived by staff

The company has a program for selected young employees (referred to as A-cap students). They work in specific departments for short periods of time and then move on to the next. These employees are subsequently able to compare the different company departments from first-hand experience.

As mentioned in section 4.2.1.2, staff members feel that the different departments function separately. This also creates communication barriers. Some just accept the shortfalls and problems of the silos and feel that one should not intrude on other people’s territory. It was emphasised repeatedly during the different focus groups that the nature of culture and communication depends on the specific department. Departments with younger managers tend to have a more open door

policy, but the company as a whole does not function as one global entity. In one particular department, it was said that email might be written in a very relaxed and casual manner. But if this approach is used when communicating with someone in another department, they easily take offence.

Two-way communication is not encouraged in all the departments. But one staff member who experiences more positive communication in her department says that everyone is involved in the process and subsequently understand the activities of the department. They get exposed to everything, and empowered to handle things on their own. There is no fear to go to the divisional manager and communicate a matter.

Employees also expressed the concern that it sometimes feels as if they are competing among departments. This hinders them from sharing information with other departments. Sometimes different departments chase the same tender – they never sit down together and discuss what everyone is doing. Employees suggest that there should be more regular communication sessions. In certain situations a divisional manager may filter a decision down to lower levels. But from there the message gets communicated incorrectly or not at all to the lower levels where the work actually needs to be done.

Some employees indicated that they do not really care what happens in other departments and feel that it does not really affect them. The layout and positioning of the buildings and departments within the buildings also contribute to the level of interactivity between departments. Especially the A-cap students/employees want standardised guidelines in the various departments, as some are very strict and others very relaxed.

Sometimes employees *do* need to work across departments, without having established good lines of communication and understanding. But employees feel that it is the responsibility of that particular group or committee to establish those lines in order to perform the task at hand.

Employees' satisfaction with the company's internal communication depends predominantly on the department they find themselves in. The extent to which employees feel informed, also depends on their individual departments. They explain that in some departments managers are very informative, but in others they do not share information and just tell employees what to do. In the instances where employees are well informed, they comment on a sense of pride about the company's achievements. According to staff, their morale increases when they hear (for instance) by means of internal communication of international awards the company won.

4.3 Summary

In line with the research objectives set out in chapter 1 (see section 1.7) and the theoretical framework discussed in chapter 2, (see sections 2.6 and 2.7) this chapter discussed the results found after examining the internal communication of DCSA's head office in Zwartkop. The company's organisational culture; internal communication; internal communication mediums and tools; the nature of internal communication between managers and staff; and interdepartmental communication were investigated.

The following table summarises how managers and staff perceive internal communication at DCSA, as discussed in this chapter:

	Managers	Staff
Organisational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authoritarian, structured, formal. Leads to an abdication of ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authoritarian, conservative, formal, many pockets of different cultures. • "Bumping up" of responsibilities.
Internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More authoritative / top-down in nature, with a purposeful balance between authoritative and participative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down; "them-and-us". • Senior-junior division across the company. • A lack of proper listening skills.

	<p>communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some want authority to become decentralised and communication more bottom-up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistakes are emphasised more than achievements.
Internal communication mediums and instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal framework or policy that guides internal communication. • Mainly aims to direct and inform. • Formal communication structures seen as "consistent" and "standardised". • Too many communication channels. • Newer and younger managers' communication styles differ from current organisational culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferences for internal communication mediums and instruments vary. • Email is mostly used, negatively influencing personal communication. • Formal communication structures are good, but breakdowns often occur.
Communication approaches / styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See staff as the means by which DCSA conducts business. • Increasingly recognise the importance of service delivery. Staff should be in line with this. • Personalities primarily influence the nature of internal communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to grow, be involved and be given responsibility. • Nature of internal communication depends on managers' communication style and complexity of every department. • Management is not transparent.
Open door policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There <i>is</i> an open-door policy. • Offices are open-plan, except for that of the chairman. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication is open. Yet lower level employees are not listened to and communication is not encouraged. • Time pressures prevent effective dialogue.
Direction of communication flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on the issue, urgency and time frame. Strategic decisions are top-down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel inhibited in formal situations. • Want standardised meetings to prevent unproductive waste of time.

Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures exist for communicating upwards, but the right environment needs to be created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company structure prevents effective feedback. Want to be actively listened to. Informal communication is often seen as unproductive.
Employees' responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is employees' responsibility to give feedback. A climate must be created where employees are empowered to take ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not feel empowered to communicate to management. Company lacks a culture of forgiveness resulting in unspoken "fear factor" among lower level employees.
Availability of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In abundance. Staff would want less, more focused information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information-overload and a lack of knowledge-management. Time pressures sometimes prevent vital information from reaching the right employees.
Interdepartmental communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The corporate structure is matrix-like and a silo-mentality persists. Operational communication must be improved. Collaboration is the key to moving the company forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different departments function separately. Nature of culture and communication varies between departments. Some departments experience open communication.

Table 4.1: Summary of results

In chapter 5, the researcher discusses conclusions on the nature of DCSA's internal communication based on the results outlined in this chapter and in light of the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

An important factor in employees' job performance and therefore organisational success is the extent to which workers find communication within the organisation satisfactory (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002:15).

Communication practitioners should focus attention more on ways to facilitate the two-way communication between management and employees than on creating top-down communication programs. Traditional journalistic methods such as publications should be supplemented by the development of interpersonal channels that actively involve employees (Cameron & McCollum, 1993:248).

5.1 Introduction

As stated in section 1.8, this study set out to investigate whether the possible shortfalls of an asymmetrical framework resulting from an unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing, used in a multinational corporation such as DaimlerChrysler South Africa, could potentially be addressed by using a framework such as two-way symmetrical communication.

In chapter 1, the introduction and outline of the study was provided. Chapter 2 investigated the theoretical points of departure of the two internal communication theories relevant to the study, namely internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication. Chapter 3 outlined the applicable research methodology; and chapter 4 delineated the nature of internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion in light of the two approaches as perceived by DCSA's management and staff.

This chapter concludes on the nature of DCSA's internal communication based on the results outlined in chapter 4 and in light of the theory discussed in chapter 2.

5.2 Research conclusions

The following section outlines the research conclusions based on the research results discussed in chapter 4 and in light of the two theoretical theories (internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication) discussed in chapter 2. The conclusions are discussed along the lines of the research objectives set out in section 1.7.

5.2.1 Research objective 1: To compare the theoretical points of departure of two-way symmetrical communication compared to the internal marketing approach

This research objective was met in chapter 2, which examined the theoretical points of departure of both theories (see sections 2.6 and 2.7). The researcher came to the conclusion that both internal marketing and two-way symmetrical communication has benefits towards achieving organisational goals, if and when applied effectively during the internal communication process (see sections 2.6.1.3 and 2.7.5). However, a theoretically based argument was made that excellent organisations have a symmetrical system of internal communication that is beneficial to both the organisations and their employees (see section 2.6.1.3).

5.2.2 Research objective 2 and 3: To determine how management and staff perceive internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion in light of these two approaches

The second and third research objectives were met in chapter 4, which delineated how management and staff perceive internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop. Their views on the organisational culture, internal communication

(including mediums and instruments), communication approaches and styles, open door policy, direction of communication flow, feedback, employees' responsibility in term of upward organisational communication, availability of information and interdepartmental communication were outlined (see sections 4.2 – 4.6).

5.2.3 Research objective 4: To determine the extent to which two-way symmetrical communication can address the possible deficiencies of the unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion

In the following section, the perceptions of managers and staff are summarised according to the research results discussed in chapter 4. In light of the theoretical arguments outlined in chapter 2, this section provides conclusions and recommendations regarding the different elements of DCSA's internal communication as stated in section 5.2.3. In conclusion, this section aims to reach the research objective stated above by determining the extent to which two-way symmetrical communication can address the possible deficiencies of the unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion.

5.2.3.1 Organisational culture

One of the most promising uses of the **internal marketing approach** lies in building relationships across organisational levels and between organisational constituencies (Davis, 2001:126; see section 2.7.5). Davis (2001:126) further states that managers need to build supportive relationships with internal stakeholders, including different levels of management, employees and unions. According to Payne (2006:354) interdepartmental tension inhibits a positive customer orientated organisational culture. Building positive relationships with internal and external (customer) constituencies requires cross-functional working between departments and a major transition from the classic "silo" mentality to a more "customer-centric" view of the world (Payne, 2006:353).

The two-way *asymmetrical* approach to communication is often present in organisations that display authoritarian organisational cultures (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:311; see section 2.3). Additionally, a “silo” mentality is usually in classic, conventional organisations. However, organisations with significant **symmetrical communication** styles may establish a more conducive environment for communication (Cameron & McCollum, 1993:217; see section 2.2). A smooth flow of horizontal communication between departments will ensure that there is a culture of cooperation and teamwork between departments, which will contribute to the general productivity and success of the organisation (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002:22). The most effective means of two-way interaction is interpersonal communication activities: speeches with question-and-answer sessions, small-group meetings, and one-on-one communication (Hendrix, 2004:40).

Looking at the organisational culture at DCSA, **managers** perceive it as authoritarian, very structured and formal with employees at lower levels relying on those at higher levels to make decisions. This organisation culture leads to an abdication of ownership by employees. Managers want to empower employees, but simultaneously perceive employees as unable to make decisions (see section 4.2.1.1).

Similarly, **staff members** also perceive the organisational culture as authoritarian, conservative, formal and serious. They perceive departments to function separately as “silos”, which leads to differing values between departments. They are also of the opinion that the internal organisational culture and subsequent approach to internal communication is strongly influenced by every individual manager’s approach. Staff experience amongst themselves a “bumping up” of responsibilities (see section 4.2.1.2).

It is clear that these perceptions are not conducive towards an organisational culture that will benefit and promote effective internal communication at DCSA.

Concluding remarks – Organisational culture

The authoritarian nature of the internal culture at DCSA leads to an abdication of ownership and as stated, a “bumping up” of responsibilities and decision-making among lower level employees. The organisational culture seems to prevent non-managerial staff from becoming (or feeling) empowered. In addition, the segmentation caused by organisational departments functioning as “silos” as well as the varying approaches by managers, leads to an inconsistency in the nature and approach to internal communication in and between departments. According to Grunig *et al.*'s Excellence Framework (2002:192; see section 2.4) excellent communicators are able to foster relationships with their counterparts inside the organisation. This suggests that ideally, organisations should have a friendly environment where open communication between management and their subordinates on all levels is encouraged (see section 2.4).

5.2.3.2 Internal communication

According to Ahmed and Rafiq (2002:198; see section 2.74): “One of the most important aspects of **internal marketing** is communication with employees. Internal communication lets employees know what is going on so that they can do their jobs effectively and efficiently”. Internal marketing can be based on personal and interactive relationships as well as on a certain amount of mass marketing (Hollensen, 2003:244). However, Hollensen (2003:244) also states that: “Traditional activities to reach employees have often been routinely performed and have built more on bureaucratic principles and wishful thinking than on professional marketing and communication know-how”. According to Payne (2006:378) employees need the knowledge that allows them to understand and contribute to organisational performance and the power to take decisions that influence organisational direction and performance. Hence the importance of effective internal communication.

Theoretically, communication that only moves from the top down is not communication. It is informing; instructing; ordering and reporting. To be communication in the true sense of the word, both parties need to engage actively in the process (Holtz, 2004:127; see section 2.6.1.2). Supposedly, excellent

organisations have a **symmetrical system of internal communication** that benefits both the organisation *and* its employees (Roberts, 2002:20; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:481; Grunig, 1992:532; see section 2.1). The symmetrical concept of power is described as empowerment, where everyone in the organisation collaborate to the benefit of all (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:142; see section 2.6.2).

Looking at DCSA, results indicate that **managers** blame the internal culture(s) and value system(s) that they perceive as more authoritarian and top-down in nature, for most of the internal communication problems they experience. However, they describe a purposeful balance between their use of authoritative and participative communication, depending on what they wish to communicate. It is most often when the company wants to achieve a strategic goal that management's approach to internal communication is more participative in nature. This is an effort to ensure that as many employees as possible buy into a particular organisational goal. Overall, managers perceive the level of participation and feedback in each department as being influenced by every individual manager's communication style. Where good interpersonal relationships exist, communication improves and is "open". Some managers experience that it does not always work to be authoritative, and that this communication / management style instead slows things down (see section 4.2.2.1).

Staff members describe internal communication as "authoritarian", "top-down" and "them-and-us". Staff subsequently feel isolated, unheard and unappreciated, and experience that managers emphasise mistakes rather than achievements. According to staff: "Our company can be defined by our good ideas. But then it dies and nothing happens" (see section 4.2.2.2).

Concluding remarks – Internal communication

Results indicate that a top-down authoritarian (asymmetrical) character strongly defines the nature of DCSA's internal communication. Participative communication is mostly applied when managers aim to achieve specific organisational goals and is further influenced by the personalities of individual managers. The conclusion can be made that neither the characteristics of a successfully implemented internal marketing approach *nor* two-way symmetrical communication is currently present in DCSA's internal communication. According to Roberts (2002:20; see section 2.4) corporate strategies have a better chance of succeeding if employees sense an open, interactive exchange of information and managers encourage them to share their opinions. Hereby, a true dialogue emerges through two-way symmetrical communication (Fill, 1999:399; see section 2.6.1.2).

5.2.3.3 Internal communication mediums and instruments

According to Ahmed and Rafiq (2002:160): "**Internal marketing**, by creating messages and appealing to the emotions, can provide firms with a rich source of advantage...Internal marketing forces companies to be more empathic in the design of their communications to employees. If companies do not appreciate the existence of different employee segments and their different needs, they will continue to produce messages that hold little meaning for the targeted segments... internal marketing personalises!" This view indicates that the nature of the communicated message, rather than the medium and instruments through which it is communicated determines the effective exchange thereof.

According to the **two-way symmetrical approach**, an internal communication policy should encourage frequent, honest, job-related two-way communication among managers and their subordinates (Van Heerden, 1994:96; see section 2.4). In contradiction, many organisations are producing and distributing huge volumes of top-down, "toxic information" through a variety of mediums and instruments that consumes time and confuse employees (Olivier, 2000:27). Therefore, to improve internal communication, communication "pollution" needs to be reduced: "The challenge lies not in more media, but in disciplining the torrent of information" (Smythe, 1996:41; see section 2.4). According to Walker (1997,37-38; see section 2.6.3) employees want communication that is timely, relevant, targeted, honest and

direct communication, irrespective of the medium/instrument used to convey it. The key to communication is understanding another's needs, and putting yourself in their shoes, so that sender and receiver are literally on the same wave-length (Scholes, 1997:110; see section 2.6.1.2). By interacting, listening and respecting employees, managers have the basis for an effective internal communications program (Argenti, 1998:177; see section 2.6.2).

According to DCSA **manager respondents** the organisation has no formal framework or policy that instructs managers on how to use the internal communication mediums and instruments available to them. Each division and every individual manager decides independently how corporate instruments are to be used and what the key messages for the next year will be. Nonetheless, managers describe formal internal communication structures as "good"; "consistent" and "standardised", and this is mostly due to plentiful and information-rich top-down mass mediums. Managers indicated that due to the complex nature of the organisation, much of the communication goes into explaining what is new, different and how it will affect a division. However, managers expressed the need for more targeted information. A problem they experience with informal communication is that some employees unintentionally always are (or feel) "left out" (see section 4.2.3.1).

According to **staff**: "Nine out of ten times when something goes wrong, it is due to miscommunication, even though adequate communication structures are in place". Staff prefer different mass mediums. In their view, email has taken the place of telephoning, personal communication and building personal relationships. Staff members complain that email is over-used and open to miscommunication (see section 4.2.3.2).

Concluding remarks – Internal communication mediums and instruments

It is evident from the above that formal internal communication structures in DCSA are firmly established and provide information, almost to the point of being excessive. Perhaps due to the fact that no formal policy or framework guides internal communication, the internal communication instruments are not always used effectively. Staff need targeted information that will assist them in conducting their daily tasks. The results also indicated that email has, to a large extent, replaced interpersonal communication, and has thereby contributed to miscommunication. Although many internal communication mediums and instruments are available, staff experience internal communication to a large extent as ineffective. The conclusion is made that the problem lies with effectively implementing the available instruments, rather than introducing additional or different communication mediums/instruments.

5.2.3.4 Nature of internal communication between managers and staff

The conclusions drawn regarding the nature of internal communication between managers and staff are divided into the following categories:

- Communication approaches / styles;
- Open-door policy;
- Direction of communication flow;
- Feedback; employees' responsibility in terms of upward communication; and
- Availability of information.

5.2.3.4.1 Communication approaches / styles

As outlined by the **internal marketing theory**, employees are people first and then audiences/publics (Khan, 2000:1; see section 2.4). The aim of internal marketing is thus treat employees as a customer group (Kotler, 2003:58; Gummesson, 1999:25). Hereby, the aim is to ensure that all employees buy into the organisation's mission and goals in order for organisational strategies to be successfully developed and executed (Buttle, 1996:8; see section 2.7.4). According to Ahmed & Rafiq (2002:160) the internal marketing approach forces companies to be more empathic in the design of their communication messages to

employees. The relationship an organisation builds with its employees, creates an emotional state in which employees respond through feelings, rather than through cold facts (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:160). Internal marketing is concerned with ensuring that all employees buy into the organisation's mission and goals in order for organisational strategies to be successfully developed and executed (Buttle, 1996:8; see section 2.7.4).

According to the **two-way symmetrical approach**, communicators can develop relationships more effectively when they communicate symmetrically with publics rather than asymmetrically (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:xi; see section 2.6.1.3). A true dialogue emerges through two-way symmetrical communication (Fill, 1999:399; see section 2.6.1.2). The basic principle of two-way symmetrical communication is equity in the organisational culture where people are given equal opportunity and respected as fellow human beings (Mersham *et al.*, 1995:39; see section 2.6.1).

Based in the results, one can conclude that **managers** view staff as the means by which the company conducts business. They have realised the importance of treating employees well, and have accordingly become caring in their approach in order to reach organisational goals. According to management, if DCSA wants to lead the market space, they need "the right people who are empowered...happy and smiling, content and motivated". Managers also state: "The reality is that we are here to make money". Managers realise that if staff do not feel as if they matter, they act as if they do not matter. Therefore management aims to change employee attitudes and loyalty and make staff proud to work for DCSA and to buy into the organisational strategy (see section 4.2.4.1.1).

However, based on the results, **staff** do not feel proud of the company either. Moreover, they do not feel empowered. Staff members want to belong, enjoy recognition and be involved in the process without fear to communicate. Staff view the majority of management as uncaring, and not as transparent (with the exception of a few). In addition, staff note that internal communication in each department is a product and reflection of that department.

Concluding remarks – Communication approaches and styles

One can conclude that managers' view of staff (which closely resembles the perspective taken by the internal marketing approach, see section 2.7), is to treat them well, to apply a caring approach and to make them proud to work at DCSA. However, staff experience the exact opposite. Therefore the conclusion is made that although DCSA aims to follow an internal marketing approach, it is not applied effectively. Effective internal communication can give meaning to jobs, and make people feel connected and accountable. This in turn, will result in higher productivity (Roberts, 2002:20; see section 2.4). Effective communication requires interaction between parties and is transactional (Orsini, 2000:33; see section 2.2). It flows two-way with fluid feedback up and down reporting channels (Roberts, 2002:20; see section 2.6.1.2). In addition, the two-way symmetrical concept of power can be described as empowerment – if collaboration is aimed at increasing the power of everyone in the organisation to the benefit of everyone in the organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:142; see section 2.6.2).

5.2.3.4.2 Open-door policy

When applied effectively, **internal marketing** holds that if employees feel management cares about them and meets their needs, they will have positive attitudes towards their work and achieve the required organisational outcomes (Ahmed *et al.*, 2003:1227; see section 2.7.4). Managers must hereafter build supportive relationships with internal stakeholders, including different levels of management, employees and unions (Davis, 2001:126; see section 2.7.5).

According to the **two-way symmetrical approach**, communication can be effective if there is an exchange of information with feedback through interaction, i.e. dialogue (Varey, 1997:119-120; (Kavali *et al.*, 1995:579, Grunig, 1992:39; see section 2.2). However, in practice, senior managers often do not involve other employees in most of the decision-making processes, which tends to make them feel alienated (Argenti, 1998:168; see section 2.6.2).

According to **DCSA management**, an open-door (communication) policy exists at DCSA and they point to their open-plan offices as proof thereof. Although a negative relationship between a manager and staff-member could prevent

dialogue, management believe that adequate opportunities for feedback exist. However, they admit that there is always room for improvement (see section 4.2.4.2.1).

Staff fondly describe the individual managers who are transparent and invite dialogue. They describe these positive communication opportunities as open and consultative. Results on this issue indicate that staff want to be “heard” and have the opportunity to “participate”. They experience, however, that time pressures often prevent effective dialogue (see section 4.2.4.2.2).

Concluding remarks – Open door policy

Hypothetically, an open-plan environment with adequate opportunities for dialogue and feedback exists at DCSA. In spite of this, a manager’s personality and communication style and/or the relationship he/she has with a subordinate (along with the nature of the internal culture – see section 5.2.4.1) is a deciding factor. This greatly contributes to or prevents effective communication. According to Orsini (2000:33; see section 2.2) effective communication requires interaction and dialogue. True dialogue only emerges through two-way symmetrical communication (Fill, 1999:399; see section 2.6.1.2). However, this does not seem to be the case at DCSA, despite all the opportunities and good intentions that exist to achieve this.

5.2.3.4.3 Direction of communication flow

Generally, impersonal one-way communication is consistent with a “directive controlling” style of influence (Davis, 2001:125). To be communication in the true sense of the word, both parties need to actively engage in the process (Holtz, 2004:127; see section 2.6.1.2). Communication may be defined as a two-way process whereby information (the message) is sent from one person (the sender) through a channel to another person (the receiver). This party, in turn, reacts by providing feedback (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002:12).

Internal marketing uses a marketing-like approach directed at motivating employees, for implementing and integrating organisational strategies towards customer orientation (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:11). Through internal marketing,

employees are treated as a customer group (Kotler, 2003:58; Gummesson, 1999:25; see section 2.7.4).

According to the **two-way symmetrical approach**, organisations should ideally have a friendly environment where open communication between managers and subordinates on all levels is encouraged (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:192; see section 2.4).

According to **management** respondents at DCSA, the direction of communication flow at DCSA depends on the issue, urgency and time-frame. Company policies are communicated in a top-down manner, whereas communication during departmental and team meetings is more multi-directional (see section 4.2.4.3.1).

Staff who participated in the study agree that upward communication channels do exist. However, the use/implementation thereof is determined by the personalities and judgements of individual managers. This results in a situation where not all employees' messages move upwards and reach the intended receiver. Staff did, however, indicate that they find it easier to speak up in less formal situations. Despite this, many staff members perceive meetings as unproductive and are fearful to speak up (see section 4.2.4.3.2).

Concluding remarks – Direction of communication flow

Although upward communication channels exist, they are not functioning effectively due to the internal culture and approach of individual managers. According to Ahmed and Rafiq (2002:160; see section 2.7.4) an effective implementation of the internal marketing approach enables an organisation to connect emotionally to its staff. This, in turn, enables them to engage and respond more personally. In DCSA, there is need for communication to be more relaxed and informal, which is possible with the two-way symmetrical approach. By giving employees the respect they deserve and listening and interacting with them frequently, managers have the basis for an effective internal communications program (Argenti, 1998:177; see section 2.6.2).

5.2.3.4.4 Feedback

Generally, staff want more feedback from management (Roberts, 2002:20).

According to the **internal marketing** approach, staff can provide better feedback when an organisation emotionally connects and builds relationships with them (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:160; see section 2.7.4).

According to J. Grunig (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:487; see section 2.4) employees have a desire for open, **symmetrical** and interpersonal **communication** with top management. Corporate strategies have a better chance to succeed when employees sense an open, interactive exchange of information and management encourages them to share their opinions (Roberts, 2002:20; see section 2.4).

Results from this study indicate that **management** are of the opinion that DCSA must create an environment that is conducive to open, honest and constructive feedback. Managers acknowledge that staff's ability to give feedback depends on their individual manager's leadership style, and some junior employees may not feel at liberty to communicate with their managers. The ideal would be for the company to become participative to the extent that employees are free to voice their opinions openly and do not feel threatened when doing so (see section 4.2.4.4.1).

Staff confirms this, indicating that the company structure often prevents them from giving feedback. The person (manager) they report to also determines whether their feedback reaches top management or not. Not adhering to the formal structures is perceived with fear as a "career limiting move". Staff attribute many of the internal communication problems to the fact that the company was originally small and suddenly grew in size. As a result, communication approaches and channels did not have time to adapt. Staff want to communicate in a more relaxed tone and want a better balance between formal and informal communication structures. They are of the opinion that the company structure directs all communication to be formalised, documented and impersonal so that there is no prejudice and everyone is treated equally. Employees have subsequently become more guarded so as not to offend. They subsequently experience that this has taken the edge off effective communication. Staff experience that a lot of the

internal communication is forced. They perceive that managers often do not really listen and only pay lip service. This hampers employees' motivation to give feedback. In contrast, many staff members experience departmental feedback sessions with managers are experienced as positive. In general, staff perceive managers accessible when they wait to discuss an issue. However they still experience that it is up to the staff member to take the initiative (see section 4.2.4.4.2).

Concluding remarks - Feedback

Both managers and staff who participated in this study, expressed a desire for effective communication and feedback. Yet, they experience that the company structure prevents this from happening. As a result lower, level staff often do not feel empowered to give feedback to management. An internal communication policy should encourage frequent, honest, job-related two-way communication among managers and their subordinates (Van Heerden, 1994:96; see section 2.4). A cyclical process needs to be in place where management is engaged in hearing feedback and responding to it (Puth, 1994:42). By giving employees the respect they deserve, listening to and interacting with them on a regular basis, managers have the basis for an effective internal communication program (Argenti, 1998:177; see section 2.6.2). According to Foreman (1997:23) the future lies in interactive mechanisms that facilitate upward communications, in terms of relational communication (see section 2.6.1.3).

5.2.3.4.5 Employees' responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication

Generally, according to the **internal marketing** framework (see Payne, 2006:379), middle managers often feel threatened when must delegate power and authority to subordinates. Equally, some staff are reluctant to take on responsibility and believe that making decisions is a manager's responsibility (Payne, 2006:379). According to organisational literature, employees often do not want responsibility, know more, learn more or be accountable for more because they fear repercussions. Therefore, organisations must create an environment where employees are encouraged to see mistakes or failures as opportunities to improve their skills/behaviour (Heil *et al.*, 1999:20-21).

According to the **two-way symmetrical** framework, organisations should ideally have friendly internal environment where open communication is encouraged between management and their subordinates on all levels (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:192). Effective internal communication is an essential weapon in the battle to motivate employees (Roberts, 2002:20; see section 2.4).

According to **management**, enough formal opportunity exists for feedback in DCSA. It is, however, a 50/50 relationship between management and staff. They view feedback as staff's responsibility, and stated that some employees complain about the communication but do not take ownership or do anything from their side to improve the situation. Management feel that those employees who fear taking responsibility often also criticise management styles. Some managers feel that staff do not want more feedback, as many initiatives such as the letters column and suggestion box have not worked. However, managers want to create a climate where employees are empowered to take ownership (see section 4.2.4.5.1).

Staff agree that effective internal communication is a 50/50 relationship where they need to take responsibility for feedback. Yet, they express that they do not feel empowered to do so. Staff admit to playing victim, complaining that while managers on higher management levels do not communicate, they themselves do not "push" for improved communication either. Lower level employees who lack confidence (and subsequently do not communicate effectively) add to the communication problems. Staff experience an unspoken message of "Man, just do it", a "fear factor", which leads to employees not being courageous (see section 4.2.4.5.2).

Concluding remarks – Employees' responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication

Both managers and staff agree that internal communication and feedback between managers and staff is a 50/50 relationship. However, they need to create the right environment that reduces employees' fear and empower them to communicate. According to Foreman (1997:23; see section 2.6.1.3) the future of effective internal communication lies in interactive mechanisms that facilitate upward communications. This is, however, not in the traditional sense, but in terms of mutual or relational communication. According to Grunig *et al.* (2002:xi; see section 2.6.1.3) communicators can develop relationships more effectively when they communicate symmetrically with publics rather than asymmetrically.

5.2.3.4.6 Availability of information

According to organisational communication theory, the challenge lies not in more media, but in disciplining the torrent of information (Smythe, 1996:41; see section 2.4). Also, employees want communication which is timely, relevant, targeted, honest and direct (Walker, 1997:37-38; see section 2.6.3).

The **internal marketing** approach uses a process of internal market segmentation that groups employees with similar characteristics, needs and wants (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002:36; see section 2.7.4.3). Through internal target marketing, relevant information is effectively distributed to specific employee segments in order to inform, educate, persuade, motivate or build relationships (Davis, 2001:126; see section 2.7.4.4).

According to Roberts (2002:20; see section 2.4) employees want more control over the decisions that affect them. Grunig and White (1992:38; see section 2.1) argue that excellent internal communication is symmetrical, idealistic or critical and managerial. In the **two-way symmetrical** approach, communication does more than inform, instruct, order and report – both parties engage actively in the process (Holtz, 2004:127; see section 2.6.1.2).

According to DCSA **management**, there is an abundance of information available at DCSA. They expect staff to ask for less, but more focused information. They also expect staff would want more opportunities for informal communication such as informal conversations and social gatherings (see section 4.2.4.6.1).

Staff at DCSA agree that information is easily available. However, they are of the opinion that time pressures sometimes prevent vital information from reaching the right employees. Staff find it hard to keep up with the ever-increasing workload and complain of information-overload. Employees also experience a lack of knowledge-management (see section 4.2.3.6.2).

Concluding remarks – Availability of information

Results from this study indicate that information is abundantly available on different levels at DCSA. However, both managers and staff agree that information should be more targeted and focused, as time pressures; increasing workloads and information-overload often prevent staff from receiving vital information, applicable to the tasks they are expected to perform. There is need for more informal interaction between managers and staff. Managers possess much more credibility with staff when they not only provide employees information, but also interact with them. Staff in turn, are more likely to be loyal to the organisation and to identify with it if they receive more relevant and regular information (Argenti, 1998:168; Grunig *et al.*, 2002:329; see section 2.6.2).

5.2.3.5 Interdepartmental communication

From **internal marketing** perspective interdepartmental tension inhibits a positive customer orientated organisational culture (Payne, 2006:354). It is necessary for organisations that operate with a classic “silo” mentality to become more “customer-centric”. Subsequently, positive relationships can be established between internal and external constituencies including cross-functional cooperation between departments (Payne, 2006:354).

According to Cameron and McCollum (1993:217; see section 2.2) organisations with significant **symmetrical communication** may establish a better environment for communication. The two-way symmetrical model of communication subscribes

to the systems theory (Grunig & White, 1992:43). This theory sees wholes rather than individual parts and the interrelationships between them (Varey, 2002:18). According to Botan and Hazleton (2006:317) internal public relations are effectively managed if organisations remain adaptive, open and viable (also see section 2.6.1.1). According to Erasmus-Kritzinger (2002:22) a smooth flow of horizontal communication between departments will ensure that a culture of cooperation and teamwork is established between departments, general productivity increases and the organisation enjoys more success.

From **managers'** point of view, DCSA's corporate structure is described as matrix-like with many brands having direct control over certain of their own functions. In their view, a "silo-mentality" persists where it is easy to forget that they are all part of the same company, due to many different reporting lines. Managers see collaboration as the key to moving forward (see section 4.2.5.1).

As discussed in section 4.2.4.5.2 **staff** experience that different departments function separately, resulting in communication barriers. They experience a competitive nature between departments, which sometimes prevents information-sharing. As a result, they have a need for more regular communication sessions. Employees' satisfaction with internal communication depends predominantly on the department in which they find themselves (see section 4.2.5.2).

Concluding remarks – Interdepartmental communication

The conclusion can be drawn that DCSA's matrix-like corporate structure leads to a "silo-mentality" which creates communication barriers between departments. This is amplified by the many different reporting lines; a competitive nature between departments and a lack of interdepartmental communication. In order to pursue the same organisational goals and in effect also reach individual departmental goals, better collaboration is needed between departments. According to Grunig *et al.*'s Excellence Framework (2002:192; see section 2.4) excellent communicators are able to foster relationships with their counterparts inside the organisation. This suggests that ideally, organisations should have a friendly internal environment where open communication is encouraged between management and their subordinates on all levels (see section 2.4).

5.3 Recommendations

Given the conclusions outlined in section 5.2, the following recommendations are made to address the possible deficiencies of ineffective internal communication at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion and are based on the theoretical premises outlined in section 2.6 and 2.7:

- **Organisational culture**

If DCSA aims to empower staff and have them take on increased responsibility, the authoritarian (asymmetrical) internal culture needs to evolve in to one that is symmetrical in nature. This will support stronger interpersonal relationships between managers and staff, which should also increase unity and collaboration between different organisational departments in the organisation.

- **Internal communication**

Following the theoretical points of departure of the internal marketing and two-way symmetrical approaches, DCSA must take a greater participative approach if it wishes to improve the nature and effectiveness of internal communication. In doing this, managers should actively listen to their staff and set up a safe environment that assists bottom-up communication. This should not only be with a view of reaching organisational goals (i.e. achieving buy-in on corporate strategies), but also of facilitating the empowerment of subordinate staff members and thereby benefiting all constituencies.

- **Internal communication mediums and instruments**

In addition to staff stating their need for more targeted information, the complex, almost fragmented nature of the organisational structure further warrants it (also see section 5.2.4.4.6). To address this, a formal internal communication framework should be established that assists all managers to improve their internal communication skills (especially those who are not

professional communicators or who are more inexperienced). All departmental managers should have access to training and support in their use of internal communication mediums and instruments, facilitated by the Corporate Affairs division, to enable them to improve internal communication in their department in a standardised manner.

- **Nature of internal communication between managers and staff**

In order for management to reach their organisational and internal communication goals, a formal framework that guides the use of internal communication is needed (also see section 5.2.4.3). If DCSA aims to follow an internal marketing approach, the various aspects thereof must be applied effectively (see section 2.7.4). Furthermore, the internal communication needs to focus on building relationships that are open, built on trust, reciprocal and where staff are viewed as people first. This also aligns with the basic premises of the two-way symmetrical approach (see section 2.6).

- **Open-door policy**

In order to facilitate the open-door approach to internal communication, relationships between managers and subordinates should improve. One way to achieve this is to communicate with staff in a symmetrical nature, thereby empowering them to contribute to the conversation. Due to DCSA's internal organisational culture (see section 5.2.4.1) managers may have to take the first step in opening the door towards improved interpersonal communication. Managers who are not professional communicators, should especially be assisted through a formal communication policy (see sections 5.2.4.3 and 5.2.4.4.1), and if necessary also training initiatives.

- **Direction of communication flow**

For internal communication to be interactive, it should be two-way and symmetrical. Managers must consciously create space where informal communication between themselves and subordinates can take place in a more relaxed manner (also see section 5.2.4.4.2).

- **Feedback**

Managers must respect employees and listen to them interactively and on a frequent basis. This should be part of the formal internal communication policy as discussed in sections 5.2.4.3, 5.2.4.4.1 and 5.2.4.4.2. They must create an environment where managers and staff can interact and communicate in an open and relaxed manner. Horizontal communication can be encouraged during interdepartmental meetings, promoting interpersonal relationships between group members with various functions as well as investing in team-building exercises.

- **Employees' responsibility in terms of upward organisational communication**

As the organisational structure that forms the foundation for internal communication is firmly established, managers must initiate the communication process until such interpersonal and symmetrical structures have been established. If internal communication takes place in an environment that encourages staff to see mistakes or failures as opportunities, it will also empower them to give feedback and increase their ability to take ownership of responsibilities designated to them.

- **Availability of information**

There should be a shift to segment information relevant to specific departments in the organisation and which would assist them in performing their tasks. This should ideally be directed by the Corporate Affairs department. Information should be made available timely, be relevant, honest and direct in order to combat the present occurrence of information-overload and miscommunication. Managers could also invest in spending time to communicate with staff informally and communicate vital information to them on this basis.

- **Interdepartmental communication**

An environment that contributes to open, symmetrical communication in and between departments needs to be established. Departments need to be taught that they are parts of a whole. In this process, interdepartmental and organisational goals can be reached more easily. Departments should strive to be adaptive and open to communicate with each other in a symmetrical manner, by establishing cross-functional positive relationships between the various departments and constituencies.

5.4 Summary

This chapter summarised the perceptions of managers and staff as discussed in the fourth chapter and presented the conclusions drawn in light of the two relevant theoretical approaches discussed in the second chapter. It fulfilled the research objectives set out in chapter 1 by determining the extent to which two-way symmetrical communication can address the possible deficiencies of the unsuccessful implementation of internal marketing at DCSA's head office in Zwartkop, Centurion resulting in ineffective internal communication.

Addendum 1

MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Policy. Do you have a formal internal communication policy?
- Culture. Let's discuss the organisational culture. What is your understanding of the internal culture? (*Can you expand on the relationships between employees of different bands?*).
- Culture. Would you say organisational culture is participative or authoritarian? What are your reasons for having this perspective?
- Management. What is the main goal of internal communication in your opinion?
- Power. How would you react to a statement like: "There should be central authority. Power should be concentrated in the hands of a few top managers"?
- Managers. How do you (*management*) view employees?
- Employees. Do you think if employees had a choice, they would run the organisation in much the same way as the current dominant coalition (*the status quo*)? If not, what would they change in your opinion?
- Relationships. Would you say that internal communication strives towards building relationships between individuals and groups in the organisation?
- Satisfaction/ Deficiencies. There is a quote in the company overview that says: "*Happy employees lead to a productive, growing company*". Do you feel that
 - Your internal communication contributes to keeping staff motivated and increase their morale?
 - Do you feel your internal communication helps to improve team-functioning and cohesiveness? If so, how?
- Two-way symmetrical communication. To what extent do you feel frequent two-way communication (*compromise and negotiation – fluid feedback up and down reporting channels, senior management communicates directly with front-line employees and vice versa*) is encouraged between

management and employees? (Would you say there is a sense of interaction in your communication?)

- Collaboration. Would you say that departments display good teamwork?
(What is the role of interdependence between individuals, departments and other social groups within the organisation?)
- To compromise or to inform. What is the nature of internal communication?
(A process of compromise and negotiation, or a way for management to inform, educate, persuade, and motivate employees on different matters?)
- Process. Tell me more about the processes of your internal communication – how does communication take place, for example, what are the mediums that are used?
- Improvements. Are there any aspects of your communication and relationships with employees that (in your opinion) could be improved?
- Do you feel employees are satisfied with the current state of internal communication?

Addendum 2

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the organisational culture at DCSA?
(Participative/Authoritative)
2. Looking broadly, how could one in general describe the purpose of internal communication?
3. In your opinion, how does internal communication function within DCSA?
4. Do you feel well informed?
5. If yes (to Q4), does this help you to do your job better?
6. In your opinion, does internal communication at DCSA contribute to keeping staff motivated and increasing their morale?
7. Looking at the organisation in general, what are your views on the level of feedback/interaction between management and staff?
8. Would you say that structures or channels exist for people who want to communicate up the line to management?
9. To what extent are staff listened to and their inputs valued/acknowledged?
10. How do you think management view staff?
11. How would you react to the following statement: "The communication is as good as the manager?"
12. How would you describe the level of teamwork/collaboration between departments?
13. Discuss the extent to which there is openness and transparency between management and staff.
14. How would you react to the statement: "There should be central authority, power should be concentrated in the hands of a few top managers".
15. If you had a choice, would you run the organisation the same way as the current dominant coalition (*status quo*)?
16. Are there in your opinion any aspects of communication and relationships between staff that could be improved? How?

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