Best Practices in Employee and Customer Magazines

Promoter: Prof. Dr. G. Jacobs
Stagebegeleider: Lieven Bertier

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First of all, I would like to thank my internship supervisor at Barco, Lieven Bertier. It is largely thanks to him my internship has been a success and a valuable and educational experience to me. Although as a Brand & Communication Manager, he has a heavy workload, he never failed to have time for me. He made it very clear what I was expected to do and encouraged me to ask for further information. He arranged numerous follow-up meetings with me in his already busy schedule in which I could present to him what I had already done, what I was planning to do and what questions I had. He also tried to involve me in some meetings or events which were not directly a part of my internship, but which were nevertheless very interesting to have the opportunity to take part in. He was always very encouraging and at the end of my internship, I felt my work and effort were appreciated.

I am grateful to the complete Corporate Marketing team and to Barco as a whole. It was a very agreeable and interesting environment to work.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Luc De Bie, who made sure our year was perfectly organised. On top of that, by arranging that one team had to do a company presentation about Barco this year, he indirectly helped me getting a trainee post at Barco’s.

Last but not least, my thanks go to my parents for giving me the opportunity to study, which is maybe taken for granted too often, and my entire family for their support and encouraging words.
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During the year of Multilingual Business communication, students always get to visit several companies. Before the visit, the students have to work in team to write a paper and give a company presentation on one of these enterprises to give their fellow-students an overview of this particular company’s activities, products, etc. I chose to work on Barco, for no particular reason even. I think the company appealed to me, even though I did not know very much about it yet. That would change however, while working on the paper and the company presentation. I became genuinely interested in what Barco does which made me present the company to my class with a lot of enthusiasm.

So, when I started to look for a trainee spot and I noticed that Barco was already included in the bundle with available spots we received from Luc De Bie, I did not hesitate. I sent my curriculum vitae and motivation letter and, to my surprise, was contacted by Saskia Vermeiren of Human Resources the next day already. Quickly, a meeting with Jean-Pierre Tanghe, Vice President and President Corporate Communication & Investor Relations, was arranged. When I visited Barco for the interview, I already liked the atmosphere and consequently, I was very excited to receive the news that I could do my internship at Barco.

Shortly afterwards, I was contacted by Lieven Bertier, Brand & Communications Manager, who already gave me a rough outline of what my tasks would be.

With our class, we still had do to the company visit as well, and when that visit turned out to be very interesting and when the people from Barco received us so enthusiastically, I was already expecting so much of my internship.

I dare say those expectations were exceeded in every way: when it comes to the content of my tasks, the atmosphere at Barco’s and the colleagues themselves.

I have written this dissertation about Barco with the same enthusiasm with which I wrote the company paper in the beginning of the year. It gives an overview of the company and what it does, without going too much into technical details.
One my main assignments was to investigate some best practices in corporate magazines, in this case employee and customer magazines. I have read articles by marketing gurus and corporate magazines of enterprises around the world, in every line of business. I also conducted a survey amongst employees about Barco’s employee magazine. The second chapter of this dissertation discusses this task and the theoretical reading I did about employee magazines.

In the third and fourth chapter, I will explain two of my other assignments during my internship: an analysis of Barco’s press coverage in the trade press and press release policy and research about annual reports.

These four chapters make up the first book of my dissertation. I have grouped together the appendices in a second book to make it more user-friendly.

I hope that this dissertation will give you an insight into an innovative and exciting Belgian company and into my internship.

Dorien Heiremans
29th July 2009
1. COMPANY PROFILE

Nowadays, Barco is an international company with headquarters in Kortrijk, Belgium, and active in more than ninety countries. Research and Development and/or Manufacturing sites are located in the United States (California, Georgia, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas), Belgium, France, Germany, China and India. It focuses on professional visualization markets worldwide: medical imaging, media & entertainment, infrastructure & utilities, traffic & transportation, defence & security, education & training and corporate AV. Barco provides hard- and software solutions that “integrate all aspects of the imaging chain, from image acquisition and processing to image display and management” (Company Overview, p. 11).

It is listed on NYSE Euronext Brussels. In 2008, sales amounted to 725 million euro and EBIT (Earnings Before Interest and Tax) came down to 8.9 million euro. Barco currently employs 3,522 people (as on 31 December 2008, source: Annual Report 2008, p. 25). Most employees work in Manufacturing (28%) or in Research & Development (24%). In order to be a real innovator and to continuously focus on the customers’ needs, Barco invests 10% of its sales in research and development. Although Barco’s headquarters are situated in Belgium, only about 2% of the sales are made on the Belgian market. In total, EMEA countries (Europe, the Middle East and Africa) account for 47.2% of 2008 sales, the Americas for 33.9% and Asia-Pacific for 18.9% (Company Overview, p. 10).

2. HISTORY¹

Barco was launched in 1933 by Jules De Puydt and his son Lucien, as a company that produced radios, hence the name Belgian American Radio Corporation. Just a year later, the founding of Cobar, Construction Belge d’Appareils de Radio, with Frank Bowens as the director, followed. Gradually, Cobar became the main company, which provided radios and infrastructure, while Barco was mainly used as a brand name. Until the Second

¹ Unless mentioned otherwise, the part on Barco’s history is entirely based upon the book Niches om te zien: de strategische groei van Barco by Erik Buyst, Kristof Lowyck and Antoon Soete (2004).
World War, Cobar was a relatively successful company, among other reasons thanks to the growing share of own production parts. Shortly after the war broke out, Lucien De Puydt was killed in a car accident and for a while, his father thought about terminating Cobar’s activities, also due to creditors’ pressure. However, Joseph Versavel and Camiel Descamps took over the company. Unfortunately, the company was less prosperous during the war than during the interbellum period. In the early years, radios were still produced clandestinely, despite the supply stop on expendables, but after a while, they switched to the manufacturing of tobacco boxes and flashlights because the trade in radios had completely dried up (De beginjaren 1930-1940, p. 20).

After World War II, Cobar began with two entirely new products: television sets and jukeboxes. This turned out to be a good decision since the company grew to become Belgium’s biggest independent radio and television manufacturer in the sixties. The enterprise also expanded internationally and founded distribution firms and production departments abroad. Cobar was all the time looking for new technologies in order to be less dependent on market fluctuations. The company started, for example, to produce machines for the textile industry and professional broadcast monitors. In the late seventies, Cobar was facing capital issues and eventually, it was forced to borrow with a state guarantee.

The company was restructured as well and split into two divisions: Barco Electronic, which would be focusing mainly on consumer products such as television sets, and Barco Industries, which dedicated itself to the production of professional applications. From the eighties onwards, the product range of Barco Industries included graphical and visual precision displays, screens, studio monitors, monitors for medical diagnoses and integrated production systems for the textile industry.

Barco Electronics was quite lucrative as well and occupied itself mainly with manufacturing projectors, first for airplanes and later on, also for other applications.

Barco Electronics and Barco Industries floated on the Brussels stock exchange in 1986 and 1987. In 1989, Barco Electronics and Barco Industries merged, which almost immediately had a positive influence the company’s success.

In the nineties, there was further internationalization: after the rest of Europe and the United States, Asia was being explored now as well. The products were not only sold
there, they were also produced on the spot. When it saw an opportunity, Barco took over other companies, such as Chromatics Inc, established in Georgia, USA, in 1990.

In 1997, Barco was included in the Bel 20 index. In 1999, profits dropped significantly, partly due to the advanced autonomy of the divisions, which did not turn out to be very lucrative. From the beginning of the 21st century onwards, they switched gradually to a greater centralization and a return to the core business, namely visualization and displays, and they also started to focus more and more on LED technology. Gradually, Barco came to profile itself as a professional player in the visualization market. This also needed to be clear from all communication and branding: Barco had to become an established brand and the slogan “Visibly yours,” was featured in the logo. I will present this re-branding case in the sixth part of this chapter.

In 2008, Barco was hit by the financial crisis, just like many other companies. During the fourth quarter, turnover amounted to 7.7% less than during the same period in 2007. It was decided not to pay a dividend to stock holders and to make 200 employees redundant. CEO Martin De Prycker’s reign was also terminated, and Eric Van Zele, independent director of Barco since 2001, came in charge. Van Zele was consigned with four objectives (“Barco verhaalt rampjaar op toman.” Standaard). First of all Van Zele has to improve the operational efficiency, amongst other things by effectuating a closer cooperation between the different divisions. On top of that, the working capital needs to be decreased dramatically. Secondly, the company’s debt has to be reduced because in times of a financial crisis, it is best to be as independent as possible from your financiers, says Jean-Pierre Tanghe, Communication Director at Barco. Thirdly, the professional market needs to become Barco’s priority again. And finally, the new CEO needs to create trust with the stock holders again, since the company now has to prove that cancelling the dividend was a good decision and since the results of the first quarter of 2009 reported a company loss of 6 million euro. However, Barco is still considered a quite healthy company since it still has a positive cash flow, which is not the case for all Belgian companies. Nevertheless, 2009 promises to be a bad year for Barco, mainly due to the crash of the media sector (“Crash mediasector treft Barco hard.” Standaard). Reasons for the decline in orders from the media sector were cuts in expenses for advertising, prestigious projects and shows by companies around the world. The CEO’s main concern
is now to achieve a break-even at the end of the year. Digital Cinema is expected to counter the downturn in the media sector.

3. CORPORATE IDENTITY AND IMAGE

Barco’s mission statement is “to excel in creating stakeholder value, by offering user-friendly imaging solutions to selected professional markets worldwide” (Company Overview, p. 11). Barco has deviated from the original idea to produce consumer products such as radios and has now dedicated itself to making products for the professional markets. Barco makes products that help people do their job and most often does not sell these products directly to the end-user. To create this stakeholder value, Barco focuses on five company values: Customer focus, Integrity, Creativity, Passion for achievement and Team spirit. The company wants to be a trusted business partner that offers quality and service through creative innovations, passion for its technologies and a healthy team spirit among staff. This is how Barco would like to be perceived by its customers, but of course the customers have a mind of their own and a company’s image may differ greatly from its desired image. Because competitors often offer practically the same standard of technique or service, these factors are sometimes not differentiating enough. That is why it is important as well to have a positive brand image. After an image survey in 2002 it became clear that a lot could be improved when it came to Barco’s image (Kotler, p. 177). The re-branding case illustrates and shows what a company can do to try and improve its image and brand value.

The company likes to stimulate its employees to keep up to speed with the latest trends. For that purpose, Barco recently founded the Barco University. At this university, four training programmes are offered, i.e. Technology, Product and Application, Leadership, and Tools and Processing. Next to these four training programmes, Barco also provides its employees several technically and financially orientated courses.

Barco received the award for “Top Employer Belgium 2008”. This award is a quality label issued by CFR, which is an independent organisation that carries out objective research and publishes reliable data about companies afterwards (www.cfr.com). These data concern terms of employment, opportunities for internal promotion, working
environment and education, etc. The award enables companies to present themselves with this quality label on the job market.

4. PRODUCTS

Barco manufactures a whole assortment of products, ranging from projectors to displays, from single products to complete solutions and software. Due to the technical particularities of the products I will not discuss every single product in detail; instead, I will give an overview per market of the products and solutions Barco has to offer to these markets. However, it is important to note that over the last few decades, there has been more and more overlap between these different markets: a trend that will continue to develop in the future. Displays originally developed for the advertising market, may turn out to be suitable for the education market later on, or vice versa. Consequently, the following division into markets should is not a strict one, although most of these markets consist as a working unit within Barco.

4.1. Media & Entertainment

The Media & Entertainment market is very diverse. A big part is taken up by Events such as concerts, award shows, car shows, etc. Barco offers all kinds of large-format visualization equipment to rental and staging companies, e.g. Stageco, who in turn rent out their equipment to event organizers. The product range consists of LED tiles, digital moving luminaries, LED displays, projects and image processing systems. LEDs or Light-emitting Diodes are small light bulbs which can be put into an electricity circuit. When you put many LEDs together, you can construct many different things, from a digital clock to an advertising screen (“Introduction to how Light Emitting Diodes Work,” www.howstuffworks.com).

All of these products are designed to form complete display solutions for both indoor and outdoor events. Car shows in the US have been lucrative customers in the past, but due to the financial crisis, sales in this market have seriously declined. In fact, the current bad climate in the media market is the main reason for Barco’s current bad results. Another

2 Unless mentioned otherwise, entirely based on the Company Overview and http://www.barco.com/corporate/en/Markets/
important segment is American services of worship. In America, the many different protestant and catholic denominations organize huge worship or church services. Often, these do not take place in a conventional church building due to their limited size, but in gigantic stadiums or convention centres. Other high profile and large-scale events are corporate exhibitions, concerts and fashion shows. Versace, Audi, BMW, Armani are only a few brands and Madonna, George Michael and U2 only a few artists that rely on Barco equipment to take care of the visual aspect of their events. Big annual events that repeatedly have been supported by Barco products are the Eurovision Song Contest and the Olympic Games.

While Advertising & branding has until now remained quite conventional in Belgium, in other parts of the world such as the US and China, the advertising industry has raised the bar. Huge budgets are spent on reaching potential customers whenever and wherever possible. The disadvantage of conventional advertising methods such as posters is that they are quite permanent. Digital advertising brings a whole range of new possibilities to optimize advertising space. Advertising messages can be adapted, live, to the weather conditions or the time of day or the current news. For the advertising industry, Barco mainly provides large-screen displays, for example for shopping malls, and branding media for corporate headquarters. Some of the most prestigious brands use Barco’s LED displays as a way to increase their visibility and improve their image, such as Quicksilver for its flagship store in New York.

Also the Sports industry has been changed by modern technologies; think for example of the Hawk-Eye system used in cricket and tennis. The increasing numbers of people watching sports venues have required new ways of letting them see as much as possible. Stadiums and sports grounds have turned to large video displays to show replays and close-ups of the heroes. Giant LED displays show the scores and perimeter advertising boards have become dynamic since their usefulness can be multiplied by being able to change the messages multiple times during a game. Barco is a supplier of global big names such as the Shanghai Formula 1 track in China, Wembley Stadium in the UK, FC Porto’s stadium in Portugal, while Belgian clients include RSC Anderlecht and Sporting Lokeren. On top of that, moving displays have now increased sports displays’
functionality: turning displays with the front directed towards the outside of a stadium allows for advertising while there are no sport events going on.

Barco’s varying solutions that are able to monitor a large amount of incoming signals from various sources are perfect for the Broadcasting and distribution business. Barco manufactures backdrop walls for Dubai TV and Sky News in the UK and total solutions for the monitoring rooms of German cable operator Kabel Deutschland.

A final segment of the Media & Entertainment market which is tremendously evolving is cinema. Barco has entered this segment with its Digital cinema solutions which allow a whole range of new theatrical, advertising and business opportunities. Theatres all over the world have suffered from declining visitor numbers, mainly because spectators felt they were being charged too much for something they could experience at home as well. So the challenge for theatre operators is now to try and offer the public something they can not experience at home so they will be willing to pay and make the effort of visiting a theatre. Digital imaging makes this possible. Theatres can offer movies in a digital version which assures better imaging quality compared to films on pelicule and lately, some adventure films and animated movies have been released in 3D versions. Fly me to the Moon is a 2008 Belgian animated film, the first to be completely designed and released in 3D. Another way to counteract the falling number in theatre visitors is to expand the functions of such a theatre. Normally, a theatre gets filled in the evenings and is empty during the day. In order to fully make use of a theatre’s capacity this needs to change. Theatres are actually also perfectly suited to host sales meetings, conventions and presentations. Before, this was not possible due to the limited use of film pelicule, but digital technology allows for the displaying of many other things apart from regular movies. In this market segment, Barco does not have the theatre operators themselves as clients, but sells projectors to integrators who sell them in turn to theatre operators such as Kinopolis.

Sales of the Media & Entertainment division amounted to 242.2 million euro in 2008. Events accounted for 57.7% of these sales, Media for 26.3% and Digital Cinema for 16.0% (Annual report 2008, p.68-71).
4.2. Medical imaging

Today, advanced medicine requires advanced technology. There is an evolution taking place in which we are replacing conventional film radiology by digital radiology. Earlier, if you broke your leg, you visited a doctor, who took a photograph of your leg and then you had to take these pictures to a specialist who put them in front of a lamp to check where the fracture was. Now, your leg gets digitally scanned, a picture is sent to a computer and doctors can send exchange them easily. This is not only the case for a leg fracture, but also for cancers, tumours, etc. The importance of making correct diagnoses for all of these problems requires high quality and dependable imaging.

When it comes to displays, there are basically four different types: clinical review displays, diagnostic displays, surgical displays and mammography displays. Clinical review displays are of a better quality than regular computer screens, but they are not suitable for radiology because these demand an even higher quality. Surgical displays are of a higher quality than clinical review displays, but what is even more important is that there is no latency. Operations are performed with cameras: surgeons look at a screen to see what they are doing inside the body of a patient. Needless to say it is of vital importance that images are immediately visible on the screen and not a second later. Diagnostic displays are typically monochromic black and white as were films, but now there is a tendency to have more and more colour radiology displays. An important factor here is the light luminance. Research has proven that the time a radiologist needs to make a diagnosis, decreases as the light luminance is higher. Normally the light luminance of a screen decreases from the moment you start to use it. Barco has developed systems to detect if the luminance reaching a level lower than the fixed requirements. Then, the hospital is warned that the displays need to be replaced. The viewing angle of diagnostic displays is also crucial. Normally, if you look straight at a display, the contrast is the greatest. The contrast worsens as you are positioned at a smaller angle. Another problem is that radiologists sit in dark rooms, but a black screen lets some light through which makes the picture gray instead of black. Barco tries to improve this so that black is really black, under all circumstances. This is called black uniformity.

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3 Based on a presentation by the Medical department to the entire Corporate Marketing team.
In the market of mammography displays, Barco is the market leader. The key technical features here are contrast and resolution, which relates to the number of pixels and the size of each pixel. This is vital in mammography since breast cancer is in the early stages only characterized by small, white dots that indicate calcifications.

4.3. **Defence & Security**

Barco’s applications are very suitable for the defence and security industry. Security mainly refers to the surveillance of public areas. When it comes to defence, Barco can function as a ‘one-stop-shop’: it can provide equipment suitable for all purposes; from the deployed soldier to the headquarters. There are static applications and machines and applications for mobile platforms, which need to be rugged to protect them from getting broken. Land-based mobile applications include applications for armoured vehicles (equipment for the gunner, the commander and the driver), shelter applications and fire control applications. In this area, all screens are LCD screens, as opposed to for example Media & Entertainment where you can find LED screens as well. For LCDs or Liquid Crystal Displays, molecules are used that can exist in a state that is both a bit like a liquid and a bit like a solid. The liquid crystals transmit and change polarized light and electricity is used to change the structure of the liquid crystals (“Introduction to How LCDs Work,” www.howstuffworks.com).

In armoured vehicles, the driver needs to be able to drive completely blind. Barco makes applications that process the different images that come from the different cameras at the outside of the vehicle, so that the driver does not merely get a series of camera shots, but a real view, which makes it easier for him to drive ‘blind.’ Applications for mobile shelters need to be very resistant to all kinds of conditions: -46° C to +71° C, 100% humidity, sand, dust, interference, etc. Naval applications are made for surface and sub-surface ships. For these ships, Barco mainly produces displays, graphical cards and also entire consoles. Then there are the airborne applications which are mostly solutions for the back of the airplane such as equipment to control the oil spillage, but also radar and sonar applications. When it comes to fixed applications, Barco provides displays for

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4 Based on a presentation by the Defence department to the Corporate Marketing team.
battle space centres, software and applications which are especially for joint operational centres, where all land, air and naval activities need to be monitored and coordinated together. What is typical for Defence is that the market consists of a series of projects or programs, for example the US Navy Q-70 program in 2005. Barco is the market leader in Defence, partly because the screens are so reliable. A series of qualification tests are executed, such as squirting water at the screens or hitting the screens very hard with a heavy object to make sure they would not fail during battle.

4.4. **Traffic & Transportation**
Barco makes applications for avionics and for air traffic, public transport, road traffic and port and waterways management. Visualization solutions support air traffic controllers, operators and aircrews. Controllers need to be able to work day and night in Air Traffic Control (ATC) towers. That is why it is important that the displays provide high quality in both sunlight and darkness. The same goes for displays meant for airplane’s cockpits. Ensuring mobility for public transportation and cargo transport has become very important with more and more vehicles on the road and consequently more and more traffic jams every year. Around the world are centres that monitor traffic by watching incoming data from traffic signalling systems, dynamic road information panels, incident detection cameras, vehicle GPS systems, etc. That means a large amount of images need to be processed quickly and high quality is required: streaming video is a key aspect in traffic control. What is more, the visualization solutions need to be user-friendly so that operators can handle them quickly and easily.

4.5. **Infrastructure & Utilities**
The Infrastructure and Utilities market consists of three industries: firstly, the energy, power and water industry, secondly, the oil and gas industry and thirdly, the telecommunication industry. All industries use Barco visualization techniques for their dynamic data. This can be the visualization of topological overviews of the area serviced with electricity, or it can be the visualization of layers of earth beneath the surface so that oil exploration companies can start drilling with the best possible preparation. Visualizing the oil resources underneath the earth’s surface so you can begin to drill when you know
exactly where to drill, saves tremendous amounts of money. Consequently, good visualization solutions are in very high demand in the oil sector. An important aspect of Barco’s control room solutions is direct network connectivity which allows different control centres to share and exchange contents.

4.6. Corporate AV

Barco is able to offer companies projectors as well as software for different audiovisual (AV) purposes: whether it is giving a professional and impressive presentation for potential customers or organizing a high-quality videoconference or training session. The projection systems are also compatible with Windows so that companies do not necessarily need to acquire additional software programs to be able to execute the projections. Barco also offers support in case of any problems or malfunctions. The Corporate AV technology allows for whole new ways of e-learning, cross-continental knowledge sharing and for “students and conference participants to interact with video, photography and animations on screen” (Company Overview, p. 34).

4.7. Education & Training

Some of the Corporate AV applications are also used in the Education & Training market. Projectors and display software are suitable for distance learning and video conferencing. All equipment is compatible with Windows, facilitating professors’ work in university auditoria. The simulation applications which are in high demand in the oil and automotive sector also come in handy when it comes to training pilots or air traffic controllers. Barco offers the possibility to prepare people in these life-risky industries for the worst.

5. Competitors

As became clear earlier on in this dissertation, Barco is active in various markets and its competitors often differ from market to market. Some of the competitors are at the same time customers and/or suppliers. I will briefly discuss the main competitors, regardless the market.
As Barco, Christie Digital offers visualization solutions for the professional markets: entertainment, business and industry. Barco is active in all of the markets in which Christie Digital is active: digital cinema, broadcast, corporate AV, advertising, education, simulation, transport and utilities. The company’s main products are projectors, most importantly LCD and DLP digital cinema projectors. Christie is a privately held company, founded in 1929, with more than 1,000 employees worldwide. Since Christie Digital is not publicly listed, there are few known financial figures, but Christie’s sales that amount to, by estimation, two third of Barco’s sales (interview with Lieven Bertier).

5.2. Daktronics (www.daktronics.com)
Daktronics is an American company that was founded in 1968 by two professors of electrical engineering at South Dakota State University. Since the founding, its headquarters have remained in Brookings, South Dakota, USA. The company is mostly famous for its scoreboards and electronic LED displays. In fact, Daktronics started out as the designer and manufacturer of electronic voting systems for state legislatures. The company employs over 3,200 people and in 2008, its sales came to about 70% of Barco sales or 499.7 million euro.

5.3. Eizo (www.eizo.com)
Like Barco uses the headline “Visibly yours,” Eizo uses “high-end-monitors,” immediately claiming its position as a supplier of high quality products. It has tried to make quality and reliability as its unique selling point. Eizo is a Japanese company that was founded in 1967 and nowadays, its products are offered in 60 countries. It manufactures five different types of displays: widescreen displays, LCD displays, colour graphic displays, touch displays and medical displays. On top of that, Eizo offers accessories for those displays, such as wall mounting arms, and software to complement that hardware as well. Eizo sales in 2008 amounted to 12.9% of Barco sales.
5.4. Planar (www.planar.com)

Planar is active in the same branches as Barco: hospitals, military operations, utility and transportation and business. Unlike Barco however, Planar also provides products for the end-user, namely home theatre displays. The company is also an active player in the 3D market. Planar was founded in 1983 and has its headquarters in Oregon, USA. In 2008, Planar was able to realize a sales number that came to 35.8% of Barco sales.

6. RE-BRANDING THE BRAND

In 2002, Barco’s image was not that positive. People perceived Barco as distant and boring. Words that came to mind were company-centred, technical, technology-driven, factual, no emotional link, no likeability, no promise to the customer, arrogant, etc. While they may have disagreed with these perceptions as a company, Barco’s management realized it would be a mistake to ignore these writings on the wall. Instead, it started a complete re-branding process in 2002. They wanted to make Barco a preferred brand by giving it a human face and by changing from traditional branding to emotional branding.

![Diagram: Traditional Branding vs. Emotional Branding](from: branding presentation Lieven Bertier)
Barco had to re-think its whole image and position itself less distant and boring, more surprising and personal.

From now on, the master brand strategy needed to emphasize “one brand, one image.” In the early days, there was the company Cobar and the brand Barco. Later on there was the company Barco and each product had a brand name. This makes it very hard to create brand awareness since you have to divide your efforts over the company and the different product brand. Barco needed to become both the company and the product brands. This strategy has several advantages: first of all, there is little room for brand dilution since there is only one, unified corporate image. In addition, this way of branding saves costs because you do not have to create sub-brands and you can avoid divisional branding. This strategy also creates “opportunities for cross-divisional and cross-market marketing initiatives.” Different divisional branding teams inevitably work more or less independently, but when a marketing team needs to occupy itself with only one brand,
there are more opportunities to visualize a complete and comprehensive branding strategy. In general, it just improves brand recognition without additional costs.

The re-branding process was of course not executed over night. In the initial phases, Barco focused on the look and feel. A new logo was created, which was supposed to be more appealing and which included the baseline “Visibly yours,” thus incorporating the customer-centred approach. The message needed to be that Barco is everywhere.

Wherever you look, whatever you do, wherever you go… Barco is with you, Barco is much closer than you ever might have thought. Barco’s technology and know-how touch your life and guarantee your safety and well-being, enhance your comfort level or even help to make some dreams come true. In this way, Barco plays a part in virtually every human being’s life. Throughout the day and throughout the night, Barco is noticeable to the eye and noticeable to the mind, be it close or at a distance.

A worldwide leader in most of its key markets, Barco takes on a pioneering role and creates tomorrow’s image processing solutions. Look around and you will be convinced that Barco is “Visibly yours”. *(Corporate Identity Guide)*

A second step was the unification of the website. The company website had to provide customer-oriented information and efficient market portals. The home page has numerous links to information according to market or product category. Reference stories are regularly featured to emphasize Barco’s expertise and give examples of what Barco can mean to its customers. A special header ‘investors’ is included, with that particular information which is important to shareholders. As a third step, all the divisions and business units needed to be aligned in order for them to expire the new, unified look and image. A corporate identity guide was composed and made available in printing and online. This guide included for example instructions on which logo and what font to use, what variety of English to write in (American English), how dates should be written (19 May 2009) and which electronic document templates to use.. Other guidelines were related to stationery, publications such as brochures, leaflets and newsletters, trade
shows, etc. In short, the corporate identity guide is a comprehensive instruction guide that helps employees to carry out the corporate identity in all their communication tools.

Next up was a formulation of the corporate vision, mission and values. I have already quoted Barco’s mission statement. A set of five values was also composed. The values needed to make the company’s spirit more tangible. These five values are *customer focus, integrity, creativity, passion for achievement* and *team spirit* (*Company Overview*, p. 11). The first two values are especially important in the light of the new, customer-centred brand image. Creativity can be found for example in providing innovative business models in order to help customers with financing their projects. The next important phase concerned the product branding and trademarks. I already mentioned Barco needed to become both the company brand and the product brand and that Barco wanted to step down from the previous habit of creating additional product names or family brands. Barco needed to become the master brand and alphanumeric codes came to be used to identify products. This forced communication managers to focus on the product’s USPs. Another advantage was that, because of the use of generic names, product names would get better results on Search engines. A disadvantage was the lack of a *people factor*: The use of codes as product names limits project recognition. However, I believe that by focusing on the USPs and customer benefits (due to the lack of a ‘real’ product brand name) the people factor remained intact.

Next up was a closer look at the internal branding, which is extremely important since “70% of customer brand perception is determined by experiences with people” and “41% of customers are loyal because of good employee attitude” (*Sears case history published by Harvard Business Review in 1998*, quoted by Lieven Bertier during his presentation “Building the Brand in B2B”). The people factor is sometimes simply more important than offering the lowest prices. Consequently, an internal branding survey was conducted in cooperation with Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. Employees were asked via email to participate in an online survey in order to get an insight in how employees perceive the Barco brand. It was hoped that the research would allow to see parallels or differences between the employee and customer perception of the brand and to provide guiding principles for both external and internal branding actions. The survey gauged
several employee brand perception factors: whether the employees agree with and live by the company values, some spontaneous associations employees have when mentioning Barco, what characteristics they think apply to the Barco personality and if they think some brands have a similar image as Barco.

When employees were divided into different groups according to the brand ambassadorship, most employees turned out to be moderate advocates (44.63%). 30.85% were true ambassadors while still 20.8% were brand neutrals and 3.73% brand resisters. In 2007, a follow-up survey was conducted. It became clear that brand personality, company values, spontaneous associations and brands with same image remained more or less stable. However, when it came to ambassadorship, more brand neutrals had moved to being ambassadors. The percentage for ambassadors (moderate advocates and true
ambassadors combined) amounted to 80.9% in 2007 compared to 75.48% two years before.

The next step was all about content marketing for which a session with the marketing board was organized to define the long-term fundamentals of Barco’s approach. It was concluded that Barco’s claim was threefold: the rational promise, which refers to Barco’s user-friendly imaging solutions, the emotional promise, formulated as “smart professionals worldwide choose first class proof Barco solutions” and the communication style, which needed to make clear that Barco is passionate about making the world see better. These three elements were combined under the You’ll see header. The common theme had to be present in all communication coming from all divisions and regions in order to achieve a higher level of brand equity. This You’ll see communication theme allowed avoiding conflicting messages from different divisions and was meant to be used in company-wide publications and tools, e.g. annual report and company brochure, and (cross-)divisional and regional communications, e.g. trade shows. You’ll see is all about “the desire to see more, to learn more, to feel more and ultimately to know more … a desire that Barco answers in all the markets it is active in.” (Corporate Identity Guide)

Finally, the Return on Investment of this new strategy had to be measured. For this purpose, several researches and surveys have been conducted over the years, such as a survey checking the satisfaction of the website visitors (by InSites) in 2005 and a trade show ROI research project in 2007-2008.

This re-branding process was appreciated by renowned marketing gurus and included as a case study in Marketingmanagement, the Dutch version of the quintessential marketing hand book by Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller. The main contributors to its Dutch version were Henry Robben of the Nyenrode Business University and Maggie Geuens of Ghent University and the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School.
### 7. SWOT Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative company</td>
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<td>Perceived by customers as a company with high-quality products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Market leader in mammography and defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>One-stop-shop for some markets, e.g. defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive cash flow</td>
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<tr>
<td>High customer loyalty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong position all over the world, not only in some regions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simulation applications allow companies in different markets (e.g. oil, automotive) to save money by visualizing part of the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barco is nearly free of debts, partly thanks to the sale of Voxar. (De Schamphelaere, “Het ‘nieuwe Barco’ volgens Eric Van Zele.” Tijd).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly dependent on talented R&amp;D staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customers sometimes find that they have to wait too long for technical support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal image is limited to a ‘technological company’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Currently, there is no advertising budget (until further notice)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The fact that Barco is a technological company with many engineers as employees and managers has in the past caused the company to underestimate and neglect the power of advertising and marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the moment, the different division still operate too separately which causes redundancies and higher costs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Partnerships with big players in the Events market. Barco is used by Flemish but world-leading stage developers such as Stageco, which makes sure that Barco applications are used by the most famous artists such as recently U2 in its 360° tour. These partnerships also create free publicity when, for example, the U2 tour was featured in the news on the</td>
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Flemish state channel and Barco was mentioned.

Potential of digital cinema and 3D: potential of 120 000 theatres to be digitized in the next decade and a DC projector needs to be replaced every then years (Briefing Digital Cinema Stinger, 12 June 2009)

Digital Cinema creates an opportunity to enhance brand awareness among the general public, who are not direct customers of Barco.

Tendency to increasingly monitor airplanes not only while flying, landing and taking off, but also while taxiing around the runway.

Larger data sets in all markets, e.g. medical, trigger the need for more and stronger software and hardware.

Evolution to see-through and free-form LED

Several countries start breast cancer screening programs which increase the demand for mammographic displays.

Although the new CEO Eric Van Zele is also an engineer, he holds management degrees from Stanford University and a wind of change may start blowing through Barco. Eric Van Zele is a man with a vision and with the necessary experience to lead Barco through these times of financial crisis.

Barco is typically a company that sells few product but at a high profit margin. However, Barco is such an expensive organization when it comes to production, sales and R&D that the opportunity to sell more products to the lower end of the market could be investigated. Instead of producing just high-end products, for some specific markets such as Advertising and Digital Cinema Barco could also provide products for the mid-segment: with greater volumes and scale advantages (De Schamphelaere, “Het ‘nieuwe Barco’ volgens Eric Van Zele.” Tijd).

Although Barco is quite strong in all regions, contrary to competitor Christie for example, there is still room for geographical expansion in India, China, Russia and South-America (De Schamphelaere, “Het ‘nieuwe Barco’ volgens Eric Van Zele.” Tijd).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tr>
<td>Instability of the exchange markets (e.g. the current weak position of the US dollar) which leaves little margin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of being the first in the market to launch a new product makes it hard to acquire a big market share with a product similar to a product which was first launched by a competitor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due to the importance of being the first in the market to launch a new product, risks are taken and sometimes products are introduced that are not ready enough, resulting in high warranty expenses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Litigation risks: when doing business, there are always risks for claims from third parties for patent infringement or legal actions related to product liability and warranty issues (Annual report).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition risks: acquiring other companies and their technology is a part of Barco’s strategy and a way to gain market share, but this can be risky due to unforeseeable market evolutions. E.g. Barco acquired Voxar, a medical visualization company, but due to the upcoming and unforeseen trend that big system integrators develop the software themselves instead of paying external suppliers to do it for them, Voxar did not do well and the acquisition has not been lucrative.</td>
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II. Best practices in employee and customer magazines

Over the course of time, staff magazines or employee magazines have earned their right to exist in the business world. However, there have and probably always will be sceptics who doubt the value of employee magazines. Since the internet’s importance in all kinds of business communication has increased tremendously, the benefits of employee magazines have come to be questioned once again. Some have argued that printed employee magazines will become redundant as more and more of its purposes will be taken over by online applications. Others though, are convinced of the irreplaceable advantages that employee magazines can offer and the huge readership of, for example, Delta Sky Magazine, which has 5.2 million readers every month (www.deltaskymag.com) proves that magazines like this can have a tremendous reach. Printed magazines have not only proven their success when it comes to internal communication, but they can be advantageous in external communication as well. Customer magazines are a traditional, but effective way to gain your customers’ attention.

In this part of my dissertation, I will thoroughly discuss employee magazines. Directly linked to this theoretical context, I will discuss one of my main assignments during my internship at Barco: I had do to some background research on best practices for business magazines and then benchmark the current Barco employee magazine, InsideOut, and the divisional customer magazine, ControlZone, against these best practices. I will discuss employee and customer magazines’ functions and purposes and I will map out best practices regarding these two types of business communication. All this will be discussed in general as well as relating to Barco in particular.

EMPLOYEE MAGAZINES

The first real employee magazine in Europe and probably in the whole world was launched in 1882 by the Dutch Gist-en Spiritusfabriek and was called Fabrieksboe of Factory Messenger. Around 1920, the Belgian branch of this company started its own
magazine: *Rust Roest*, which was probably only the second employee magazine in Belgium, after *Arbeid en Ontspanning* by Bell Telephone Mfg.\(^5\)

Internal communication is so much more than ‘just’ an employee magazine, but for decades, the two items have been used almost as synonyms. The Belgian association for internal communication (BViC or *Belgische Vereniging voor Interne Communicatie*) has only recently changed its name. It had been known since the 1950s as the Belgian association for business press (BVB or *Belgische Vereniging van de Bedrijfspers*). Only in 2008, the broader scope of this association came to be recognized and consequently, its title was altered. Coincidentally, the BViC organized a master class about how internal communication can boost your business at Barco Kuurne on the 23\(^{rd}\) June 2009. Unfortunately, I had already finished my internship by that time.

1. **FUNCTION**

The employee magazine is very suitable to report news, to give background information and to explain more complicated matters (Smilde, Smits & van Snek, p. 9). In this respect, an employee magazine is an informational tool, but it may as well be regarded as a relational tool (Coninckx, p. 17). This ‘binding function’ has always been there. It is present in small business publications, but especially for big companies with thousands of employees worldwide or employees that do not really have an office and are mostly on the road, it can be an effective means of bringing people together. BASF for example has almost 100,000 employees around the world. This German chemicals producer has field personnel, plant workers, administrative employees, etc. so the printed newsletter is used as a link between all these different kinds of employees who are based in many different countries (Grates). Recently, the employee magazine’s binding function has even gained importance since the informational aspect has increasingly been taken over by digital media. To spread news via the internet is much faster than a printed magazine, so the latter is less suitable for current news more and more used to give background information (Deckers, p.3) or as an emotional binding tool (Coninckx, p.17). The increasing importance of this binding function is probably due to several causes:

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globalization, the growth of multinationals and flexible working conditions which causes (Coninckx, p.18). According to Smilde, Smits and Van Snek (p.20), the purposes of an employee magazine are threefold, all related to a different aspect (Fig.4). The first purpose is related to knowledge: the newsletter should inform about the organization’s policy, social matters and news. Secondly, it should influence employees’ attitude: this is what I referred to as the ‘binding function.’ An employee magazine should create a community, a we-feeling. It should make employees trust in and have a positive attitude towards the organization as a whole. The final purpose is extremely difficult to achieve: influence employees’ behaviour, make them motivated to work harder, decrease sick leave rates, etc. In general, a good employee magazine should boost employee morale by improving internal communication (Brubaker). These are the primary purposes of an employee magazine, but this involves many separate sub-goals which need to be kept in mind. In relation to its informational purpose, a staff magazine should educate about matters that are of immediate importance to employees (such as, collective labour agreements) (Smilde, Smits & Van Snek, p.10), inform them about developments in the organization and keep them up to date with other departments. More abstractly, it should decrease the distance between the organization and its personnel.
As their purpose is to inform and motivate personnel, employee magazines obviously have an organization’s employees as their target group. Some companies do not limit the distribution of their internal magazine to current staff, but try to reach as many readers as possible: retired employees, personnel’s housemates, relatives of deceased employees, employees who are currently on leave (due to temporary unemployment or career break), etc. (Deckers, p. 4). The more likely it is that external people get to read your magazine though, the more careful you need to be about what information you publish in your employee magazine.

2. **Best practices**

So many employee magazines have seen the light of day: successful ones, but also badly-written ones that completely missed the target. Communication professionals have written many articles about how to write a good employee magazines or how to avoid failure. After having read these kinds of articles, I have distilled some of the most
common best practices and gathered some thoughts of my own on what to do best with an employee magazine. My PowerPoint presentation for internal use at Barco was partly a result of this research and can be found in appendix 2. I also conducted a survey on Barco’s employee magazine, partly based on the established set of best practices, and its results are included in this PowerPoint presentation as well, but I will discuss the survey itself in part 5 of this chapter.

One of the most common tips by specialists is about the publishing frequency. As I said before, one of the main purposes of an employee magazine is to bring a company’s staff together, but in order to be able to do that, there should be a minimum frequency. You can not bring people together, by distributing a magazine once a year. “Some companies opt for a quarterly frequency because it allows ample time to gather materials and choose events to highlight,” says Mary Waialeale in “How to Create a More Engaging Newsletter.” Some even claim a successful newsletter has to come out at least monthly (“Bedrijfsbladen houden goed stand,” Standaard). However, what appears to be even more important than the frequency is the fact that a magazine should come out at consistent intervals (Deckers). That means that the magazine should appear not only, for example, every month, but also always around the same time, for example, the last day of the month or the first week every other month (Waialeale). This regularity should be established in a calendar and it is important that a company should adhere to that planning in order to make sure that the employees know beforehand that an issue is coming out and make them, hopefully, even look forward to that issue. The frequency can be related to the length of each issue: if you publish frequently enough, there is no need to make each issue very voluminous. Employees often have little time on their hands and if the newsletter is too lengthy, they may not even start reading it. I believe it better to publish more often a shorter edition, than twice a year a whole book.

While employees ideally read the magazine shortly after they have received it, it may be so that they only get to reading it after a while, maybe even after they have thrown away the hard copy. It is also possible that they want to re-read an article because it has suddenly become very interesting to them due to an internal transfer, or newly hired employees may want to read up on their new employer’s internal affairs. That is why it is vital that all issues of an internal magazine should be digitally available and easy to find
on the intranet. It can be very annoying for an employee if they want to have some more information on the company that required information can not be found.

When it comes to content, variation is a key aspect to hold readers’ attention. The content of employee magazines can be divided into three categories (Smilde, Smits & Van Sneek, p.36): related to company, related to work and related to persons. Information related to the company includes news about newly launched products, financial news or strategic matters. Work-related information covers the working situation inside the organization, for example, the introduction of a new production process or internal vacancies. The ‘personal news’ sheds light on the people within the organization. A perfect example is an interview with a member of the technical staff who tells about his daily tasks and routines, but about his after-hour hobbies as well. This kind of information gives the company a human face. Ideally, these three categories are more or less in balance in each issue. According to a survey conducted by Ghent University and the Lessius Hogeschool Antwerp, the top three of topics that evoke interest with employees consists of the own workplace, changes in the enterprise and the human resource management (“Bedrijfsbladen houden goed stand.” Standaard). These three topics more or less represent those three content categories. Respondents in this survey also found that direct bosses have most credibility. If this is true, a company could exploit this in case of restructuring, for example. Then some direct bosses could be interviewed to explain the changes.

Not only the content itself is important, but the way you write about that content plays a role. Several sources indicate the importance of a critical note (Coninckx, p.61)). Not all interviewees should express themselves in politically correct terms, since that only emphasizes the distance between the organization as a whole and the employees, reports Hell in “Personeelsbladen vergroten betrokkenheid werknemers.” Involvement of the employees is one of the goals of an employee magazine and a critical note is, according to the same article, a condition for such involvement, along with the fact that the interviewed persons are close to the reader. Openness and honesty towards the reader enhances a magazine’s credibility. If a magazine always reports on the organization’s point of view, the risk exists that the magazine will be seen as a ‘means of propaganda.’
A critical note also means that delicate issues are not kept under wraps. In fact, an employee magazine should be seen as an opportunity to explain delicate issues such as down-sizing. Bad financial news about the company should not be left out either, nor should good financial news. Many employee magazines make the mistake of leaving the ‘serious’ financial news out, assuming employees do not find that kind of information interesting, while it seems only natural to me that an employee should have at least some interest in how their employer is doing.

Since information that is of immediate relevance to employees’ interests them the most, global companies may want to consider offering regional variations of their employee magazine. The starting point of these different versions is the same: each version gets the same headers (e.g. current news, news from domestic departments, global news, the personal column, etc.), part of the articles can be the same (such as an interview with the CEO), but some headers differ from one regional variation to another due to the focus on that particular region (e.g. human resource management issues). This is called the COSMO-formula and it is mentioned by Huib Koeleman in his book *Interne communicatie als managementinstrument* (p.234).

Finally, a magazine can not only be original in its content, but also in the way it presents that content. There are different kinds of articles and it is interesting to vary between these. Deckers suggests some ideas for articles. First of all, a *report* can be very appealing: sort of an eyewitness report of an event, with one person at the centre, for example, following a manager during the closing of a deal. A *series* is ideal to make sure readers look forward to the next issue and start reading it right away when they have received it. Finally, Deckers considers a *column* as an almost indispensable element of an internal newsletter. In a column, someone comments explicitly on current news, often in an ironic or personal way. A column can be published anonymously or under a pseudonym because part of the charm is that employees do not know which colleague writes the column.

### 3. AWARDED EMPLOYEE MAGAZINES

Next, I had a quick look at some Belgian awarded employee magazine. Each year, the BViC honours the best employee magazines in Belgium. I had a look at the magazines
that were rewarded in 2008 since at the time of my internship, the 2009 awards had not been presented yet. In 2008, the gold medal was for Joost, the staff magazine of the Flemish radio and television state channel VRT. Sidmarnieuws, published by Arcelor Mittal, was awarded with silver, while the bronze was for Fortis’s magazine, Tribune. The issues of these magazines I read, were the ones referred to on the BVIC web site and all date from 2007.

Joost immediately got my attention because it has a very appealing and dynamic feel about it. It includes news bites: very short facts about other TV channels and production houses (that means: also competitors) or about developments in the market. The magazine also offers practical information such as where to find VRT PowerPoint templates, on which tickets employees currently get a discount or a workshop calendar. Both Joost and Sidmarnieuws have a personal column with newly hired and retired employees. Tribune was remarkable to me because it invites debate. There was an article presenting two opposing opinions: if Fortis employees should keep their savings in a Fortis account or not.

4. **INSIDEOUT**

InsideOut is Barco’s employee magazine. It is distributed to all employees in all Barco establishments worldwide. The mission statement of InsideOut sounds as follows:

> “Inside Out is a newsletter, from and for the employees of the Barco Group. The goal of the newsletter is to inform all associates worldwide on a regular base about the company, strategy, product developments, products, achievements, projects and employees. Inside Out aspires to a mix of news from all divisions, all functional domains and all regions.”

On the 11th of May 2009, I interviewed Ineke Debels, currently working as a Corporate Marketing Executive at Barco. She started out at Barco as a substitute for Helena Verhamme, Internal Communications Specialist at Barco’s Human Resource department and responsible for InsideOut, who was on pregnancy leave. I organised a meeting with Ineke to find out how an issue of InsideOut is realized.

Helena Verhamme is the chief editor of InsideOut and thus, the magazine is in the hands of Human Resources. Several weeks after the previous issue of InsideOut is distributed, Helena Verhamme starts collecting input for the next edition. She sends an email to
several contact persons in different countries; several of them work at HR. She asks them to propose some topics. These are usually success stories: stories about current customers that are used as a reference to attract new customers. Each issue includes a focus on a different country (e.g. India, US, UK). Helena Verhamme chooses this focus country herself. Normally, she tries to include at least one interview. In the last issue, there was for example an interview with Barco’s new CEO, Eric Van Zele. She also tries to find one ‘lighter’ topic. Some elements return every edition: tips about BarcoZone and the trade show calendar.

When Helena Verhamme has collected all the input, she scraps in the list and keeps the most interesting topics. Then, she presents the list to Jan Van Accoleyen (President HR & Corporate Affairs), who gives his approval.

Next, the list of topics and all necessary info gets sent to a communications bureau called Comm & Co. They write all the articles and deliver them to Helena bit by bit. First they compose all the articles in Dutch, afterwards they translate into English. Helena starts contacting people to ask for pictures. When Helena has received all the articles, she reviews them and sends them to the people who first came up with the idea or to the people who are featured in the article. They review the article as well and give their okay. The editorial always needs to be approved by the CEO. Usually, there is a planning, but they do not entirely adhere to it: the last issue of InsideOut carries the date ‘April 2009,’ but all the articles were in fact already ready in March and the hard copy was distributed amongst the staff only in May. It already occurred to me the magazine may suffer from red tape which causes the distribution of each issue to be delayed which in turn decreases the relevance of the information included.

Then, I compared InsideOut to the best practices which I have outlined previously. I mainly based myself upon the last two issues. It is important to note that many of these observations are quite subjective. Evaluating a magazine and its content is not really exact science and some of my conclusions are my personal opinion.

I divided the content of the articles of the last two issues into four categories: company, personal, work and social. The first three categories are the ones which I mentioned earlier, while I added the last one to cover one article about a charity project Barco is involved in. Having divided the articles into these categories, it became clear to me they
are mostly informative and company-related. There is a rather one-sided choice of article content.

When it comes to the top 3 of topics that evoke interest with employees, only one gets regular attention: changes in the enterprise (e.g. in the interview with the new CEO). There are almost no articles about the workplace or human resource management. No financial news is included: company results of 2008 were not incorporated in the first issue of 2009. There is no news on developments or events in the market or competitors, no practical information for employees and no personal column, which is of course also due to Barco’s size. There appears to be no room for a critical note. I got the distinct feeling that all articles serve one purpose only: emphasize how great Barco is. Needless to say this decreases the credibility of the magazine since it gives the readers the impression they are reading an advertising pamphlet. As I said before, a condition for readers’ involvement is that the interviewed people are close to the reader. I believe this is not the case in InsideOut. It may be when you are a Belgian because almost all interviewees are Belgians (this is no doubt due to the fact that the editing of the magazine is completely in Belgian hands), but I think that this definitely decreases the relevance for people working in, for example, the United States. This immediately leads us to the fact
that InsideOut comes in just one, global issue. There are no regional variations. When it comes to the ideas for articles, Barco’s employee magazine does not include a column nor does it have reports. However, there is a series: “Focus on...” in which every time a different country is shed light on, which I found an interesting concept.

I have already indicated that frequency is of the utmost importance, but that for InsideOut, they do not entirely adhere to a planning. That is confirmed by the publishing dates of the previous issues: InsideOut appeared three times in 2008 (in January, June and December) and up until today once in 2009 (in April, distributed in May). These long intervals cause the articles in the issues to contain ‘old news.’ There are some flaws in the availability as well: InsideOut comes also in a digital version, which is a good thing, but it is almost impossible to find it on the intranet.

I believe there is something to be said about the style as well. In my opinion, it is quite boring. All articles are more or less according to the same format: either a regular article, mostly a success story, or either an interview along the basic Q&A principle. On top of that, all articles are quite long. It is difficult to keep readers’ attention that long, especially when they are employees at work. There is also no variation in the length of the articles: most articles take up one or two A4s.

5. Survey

In order to have some insight into what the actual employees of Barco thought of InsideOut and to check some of these best practices against reality, I carried out a survey. Doing a inquiry about InsideOut was a bit of a delicate issue since I did my internship at Corporate Marketing and did the evaluation on the initiative of Lieven Bertier but the editing and responsibility of InsideOut lies with Human Resources. Consequently, the survey remained more or less a basic means of discovering how employees felt about employee magazines in general and about InsideOut a bit in particular.

To make the survey, I used a free internet tool called Survey Pirate. It enables you to create all kinds of questions you want (single choice questions, multiple-choice questions, textbox questions, etc.) and you can export the results to an Excel file. The survey was sent out to 55 employees. My internship supervisor sent out the questionnaire to 55 of his colleagues, both in Belgium and abroad. The survey was completely
anonymous and consisted out of 11 multiple-choice questions. 41 people responded, which brought the response rate to 75 percent. I will now discuss the results one question at a time. The complete questionnaire can be found in appendix 3, as well as the Excel file with the answers both in absolute and relative numbers.

1. Do you think employee magazines should cover the following topics?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents for each topic]

All three topics seem to interest people, although human resource management is in the lead.

2. Do you think employee magazines should also include a critical note or personal opinion?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents for each option]

No opinion
This question appears to confirm the need for a critical note. However, almost 20% of the respondents do not think employee magazines should include a critical note or personal opinion.

I asked this question to check the validity of the idea that direct bosses should have most credibility. These results definitely seem to disprove that. In fact, out of the five options I offered, direct bosses was the alternative that was least chosen as a relevant source of information (63.4%). Both the CEO and colleagues were seen as the most relevant sources of information (both 87.8%), followed by managers (68.3%) and directors (65.9%).
Then I asked some questions about *InsideOut* in particular. To start with, I asked how often they read the magazine. Only 2 respondents said to never read the magazine, 4 to read it often and 14 to read it sometimes. 21 respondents (or just over 50%) answered to read the magazine every time it came out.

**5. How thoroughly do you read InsideOut?**

- 0,0% I flip through the magazine and look at some pictures.
- 50,0% I read some of the articles.
- 20,0% I read most of the articles.
- 5,0% I read every article.
That a magazine can never completely interest the reader, was proven by the fifth question. Just over half of the respondents answered that they read some of the articles. Nearly 30\% said to read most of the articles, while 17\% merely flips through the magazine and looks at some pictures. One respondent claimed to read every single article.

6. Do you discuss InsideOut with your colleagues?

In order to check to what extent employees feel they are involved with the magazine, I asked if they talk about InsideOut with their colleagues. It seems to me that the magazine is not a very widely discussed topic at the shop floor. However, if the magazine comes out only once in a while, as is the case with InsideOut, that is not so surprising.
Next, I probed for their opinion about the magazine’s content. The results were mostly divided between ‘neutral’ (41.5%) and ‘rather interesting’ (46.3%). Only one person found the content very interesting, but no people whatsoever found it not interesting at all. Although these results are not bad, it seems to me these reactions are quite cool and could definitely do with some improvement.

### 8. What kind of articles do you read most?

- **References/installations**: 70.0%
- **Interviews**: 80.0%
- **CEO message/editorial**: 60.0%
- **Product news**: 50.0%
- **Country news**: 40.0%
- **Global news**: 30.0%
I also looked at what kind of articles interest the readers the most. As expected, product news is read the least (31.7%), followed by global news (43.9%) which seems to confirm the disadvantages of one single, global magazine.

9. What do you think of the lay-out of InsideOut?

The feelings towards the lay-out of *InsideOut* are more or less positive. Nobody found the lay-out not appealing at all and 2 respondents found it rather not appealing. 31.7% was neutral towards the lay-out.

10. Have you ever suggested topics for InsideOut?
In my opinion, these results prove again the readers’ limited involvement. 65.9% has never suggested topics for InsideOut, 61.7% has done so sometimes and 1 respondent claimed to often suggest topics. These results are probably due to the fact that for each issue, the same group of people are contacted to make suggestions.

11. Do you think InsideOut is published

Although InsideOut is distributed only three times a year, at the most, 68.3% of the respondents think that this is actually often enough. 29.3% says they find that not often enough and one single respondent said to found that too often.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outlined best practices, what I saw in awarded magazines, the survey and my personal judgment, I made some recommendations in order to hopefully improve InsideOut. For a start, I think it would be a good idea to at least consider offering regional variations according to the COSMO-formula. Over the years, Barco has grown to a company of a considerable size and its employees are spread all over the world. The survey has proven that country news is read more than global news and that articles about the own workplace really interest people. Regional variations would make it possible to focus on Belgian, American or Chinese news, according to the area. Part of the content could remain the same, for example global news and the editorial, which would also limit
the amount of extra work. Other parts could differ as to give room to news from the domestic sites or news from international branches. This makes it possible to report on issues such as human resource management which differs from region to region.

It would be advisable to vary more in the content of the articles. Up until now, most articles are company-related or success stories, but it would certainly increase the appeal and scope of the magazine if financial news, human resource management, country news and overall developments in the market were also included. Practical information which helps employees to do their job would be an asset as well. There should also be room for a critical note, since this is mentioned as a best practice and the survey confirmed that people find this important. Articles which are read the most are interviews, reference stories and the CEO message so there should be paid attention to those. I think it is important that the CEO message really expresses a vision and takes the opportunity to explain some company issues and motivate employees. Since global news and product news are read the least, it is probably wise to limit these topics.

Even though almost 70% of the survey respondents thinks InsideOut is published often enough, I really believe that publishing more frequently could improve involvement. Even more important than frequency, is the mere regularity. If Barco should decide to publish only three times a year, it should be at fixed intervals and these should not be deviated from. To improve the reach of the magazine, a quick link should be put on the intranet. Also previous issues need to be made easily available.

Some aspects of the style and lay-out could be improved as well, especially in the sense that they could be more varied. There should be more variation in the length of the articles; there should definitely be more short articles since that lowers the, what you could call, ‘reading threshold’. There could also be some variation when it comes to the format: interviews do not always need to be presented in a simple question & answer format. I personally feel that it is good to have a consistent look and lay-out, but it is also dangerous to get boring. There should be a better balance between text and images. Since the articles are mostly lengthy, the text is often overplayed and consequently, the power
of the image is not fully exploited while the images should be powerful since Barco is a visualization company. Finally, there is a tiny detail that I would alter: an end mark should be added to the articles. As a reader, I find it quite annoying when you had not noticed an article had ended and turn the page, only to discover another article begins there.

CUSTOMER MAGAZINES
I made more or less the same exercise for customer magazine, but on a smaller scale and without conducting a survey. As I have done for employee magazines, I have outlined some best practices of customer magazines, looked at some awarded magazines as well as some customer magazines from technological companies, compared ControlZone to these best practices and finally, I made some recommendations for the soon to be started new customer magazine, which will not be a divisional magazine anymore, as ControlZone was, but meant for all markets. One of the main sources I drew on for my advice has been Joe Pulizzi. He is a marketing guru and board member for the Custom Publishing Council, which is the leading organization in the United States that focuses on corporate content and custom publishing initiatives. He also has a blog on which he regularly posts entries on these topics. The blog can be found at http://blog.junta42.com. I discovered it during my internship at Barco and came to be really interested in all of his posts as well as the comments by other professionals.

1. BEST PRACTICES
According to Marlene Eichholz, who wrote the article “Make Newsletters Work Harder for You,” a customer magazine should be three things: promotional, informational and educational. “Most company newsletters are free promotional items,” she says, but a company needs to make the most of their promotional newsletter “by ensuring that it is also informational and educational.” Of course, as customer magazines are a marketing tool par excellence, to promote is one of their main purposes, but when the reader feels he is only getting an advertising pamphlet, he will probably lose his interest. While customer magazines can be used to achieve many different things, most professionals advise to focus on one key goal (Pulizzi). This main goal can be: customer retention, increase
sales, build a relationship, inform, offer a service, build a positive image, etc. However, many editors think that a customer magazine is the opportunity to kill many birds with one stone, but professionals warn against this idea. They also warn against the one size fits all idea (Green). They believe it is difficult to create a magazine that is interesting to everyone and that when you try to do so, you will lose the interest of the ones that are reading your magazines more rapidly.

Just as frequency was of primary importance to employee magazines, it is to customer magazines. A company needs to publish often enough in order to be remembered by a potential customer when they need to buy a product that that company, just like many competitors as well, has to offer. On top of that, any kind of company communication sends out a message to customers and if the magazine does not appear regularly, that company will lose customers’ trust. If a company is somewhat casual with its magazine publishing calendar, customers may come to believe the same goes for their accounts, service, delivery, etc. I think sometimes the distribution of magazines such as InsideOut gets delayed because so many people need to approve one issue and because some contributors keep on thinking they still can improve their article. In this respect, I found something Joe Pulizzi said during a radio interview very appropriate: “You’re never gonna get it perfect. Figure out what you’re gonna do and make sure you get it done” (Pulizzi, radio interview). When the magazine is finally finished and printed, customers need to know that a new issue is available. Joe Pulizzi suggests to distribute a press release, but I think there are also other ways to do so. I will return to this in the recommendations part.

Frequency is an important aspect both to employee and to customer magazines and so is availability. For the customers who somehow have missed or lost the printed copy or for people who happen to be visiting the company website, a digital version of the newsletter which is also easy to find on your website has to be made available. An digital archive with all previous issues is also advisable. Because customers often get flooded with all kinds of advertisements and company publications, a magazine should have a consistent format and lay-out. This improves recognisability and user-friendliness: customers immediately recognize a company’s magazine and it is easier for them to find the information they want.
Finally, composing, printing and distributing a customer magazine requires a lot of time and effort. That would all be a waste if nobody reads it and worse, it a company does not know nobody reads it. That is why a company needs to track its magazine’s effectiveness. Joe Pulizzi suggests different manners to do this: a coupon in the magazine, a preview or advance opportunity (this makes the reader feel special and encourages future readership), a special discount or gift, a special phone number for newsletter readers only or a “request for more information” at the end of some articles.

2. **OTHER CUSTOMER MAGAZINES**

The Best of Customer Media is a prize that is each year awarded to the best Dutch-language customer media initiatives. There are several different categories, including business to business customer media, and the professional jury consists of renowned members of successful companies as well as communication specialists. In 2008, *Even* by Centraal Beheer Achmea won the gold medal and the silver was granted to *InTune*, the customer magazine of Getronics, an ICT services company. I had a look at an issue of each of these magazines. I found that *Even* has a broad scope. It is mostly informational and has many short articles, which makes it easy to start reading it. *InTune* contains a load of information. It includes curious facts about the industry and practical information. Also people from outside Getronics are interviewed, e.g. someone from KPN and Transavia or a culture sociologist. *Even* and *InTune* both have a column and on top of that, the latter has quotes, readers’ letters and a chat dictionary. To me, *InTune* felt more like a magazine than a customer magazine, and I mean that in a good way: I never got the feeling that I was reading something that is made to make me buy something.

Afterwards, I read some customer magazines of technological companies because that content is probably more comparable to the content that would appear in Barco’s magazine. JTC is a developer of industrial infrastructure and distributes *Periscope* amongst its customers. Its content includes information about the Workplace Safety and Health Council, charity projects, the board and a quiz. It is a mixture of practical information, articles to improve its image and fun elements. *Interface* is AGFA’s customer magazine. Again, this magazine goes further than the company itself: the 36th issue for example, offered the point of view of a printing workflow and technologies.
consultant. Each Interface issue also includes an interview with the manager of a company that uses Agfa, the so-called “User profile.” I found Interface very entertaining and interesting and what I said about InTune is also applicable to Agfa’s magazine: it does not feel like a mere promotional tool and the reader is not forced to buy anything.

3. **CONTROL ZONE**

*ControlZone* is Barco’s divisional customer magazine and has been terminated. A new customer magazine for all markets will be launched. To have some material for comparison, I based myself upon the last two issues of *ControlZone*. The magazine is primarily a promotional tool: all articles are about Barco’s products and successes. It does not appear frequently or at regular intervals: twice in 2007 (June and December), once in 2008 (August) and once, until now, in 2009 (March). When new issues are released, those are not really announced. *ControlZone* does have a consistent look. A digital version has been made available. To find it, you need to go to Barco’s homepage and click on the relevant market in the menu ‘markets.’ Under the header ‘newsletters,’ you could find previous issues of *ControlZone*. This all seemed a bit time-consuming to me. Finding the customer magazine should be made much easier and quicker to attract as many readers as possible. News about the different markets and company news are mixed throughout the magazine, except in the content table, where articles of these two categories are listed separately.

Compared to *Even* and *InTune*, all of the articles in *ControlZone* are extremely long and the magazine does not have a column either. Unfortunately, effectiveness is not really tracked either.

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I have said already a couple of times, but the number one recommendation remains frequency and regularity: a customer magazine should be published frequently enough and at regular intervals. It is also necessary to be on time every single time.

The content of Barco’s new customer magazine should definitely have a broader scope than *ControlZone*’s content. The content needs to be more useful to the readers who are interested in more information about the market as a whole and not just Barco alone. To
improve recognisability and to make it easier for the reader to find what they are looking for, fixed headers should be put in fixed places.

Not only should it be easy for the reader to find what he wants in the magazine, the magazine itself should also be easy to find. A customer magazine needs to be easily and digitally available. A quick link has to be put on the company’s homepage.

Since Barco is a technological company with an innovative image, it seems only right that it should show to be up to date with the latest trends. Joe Pulizzi suggests making an eBook version of your customer magazine available. An eBook version is both user-friendly (more so than a PDF-version which is more uncomfortable to read on screen) and very trendy. Customers who have a wireless reading device such as an Amazon Kindle can then download the magazine and read it on the device while travelling. While it is doubtful that the number of people who will read the magazine on their Kindle will amount to more than a couple percent of all the readers, I think the message and the image it sends out, is more important than the actual reach.

When a new issue is about to come out, that should be announced in, for example, the newsletter which is sent out to people who have somehow given their e-mail address to Barco.

The customer magazine gains more appeal by varying in the length of the articles. There should be a considerate amount of short articles to attract also those people who are less interested or who have less time on their hands.

The new customer magazine’s effectiveness should be tracked. In the previous part, I have mentioned some ideas to do so by Joe Pulizzi, but for Barco, I suggest other ways: a prize draw could be organized – the number of participants may give an indication of how many readers there are – or a web link at the end of the articles. Via this link, interested readers could find more information or extra features such as a video about that topic.

To make the readers feel special and make sure they look for each new issue, promotions could be used. Offering free tickets for trade shows Barco will be attending seems like a good idea.
All of these are recommendations to adapt Barco magazines to its readers’ needs. As I have said already, this is no exact science and all changes should be evaluated afterwards. It is also important to obtain the readers’ opinion now and then, for example by conducting an annual survey. That way the readers feel their opinion matters and they feel involved in the process. At the same time it is an effective means of evaluating a magazine and discovering possible improvements.
III. ASSIGNMENT PRESS RELEASES

1. BRIEFING
At the beginning of my internship, I received a briefing from my internship coordinator. This was in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, which you can find included in appendix 1. The assignment was as follows: “make a competitive analysis of Barco’s press coverage and make some recommendations to improve Barco coverage based on content analysis.”

To begin with, I had to analyze Barco’s 2007 and 2008 press releases and coverage. In order to be able to do this, I had several sources at my disposal: a list of press releases, which I got from the web team, a list of trade press articles and reports per quarter by Cision, a company that provides media monitoring, research, distribution, and evaluation services for PR professionals.

First, I had to assign topics and markets to the list of press releases, so we could see about which topics and markets Barco communicates the most and about which the least. I also had to divide the press releases depending on if they were intended for the general press or for the trade press. Then, I had to benchmark these figures against the competition. We defined Christie Digital, Daktronics, Planar Systems and Eizo as the main competitors. I also had to include sales numbers for Barco and the competitors in the comparison. For the most important parameters in the Cision reports, I was told to make an overview of the last six quarters, from Q4 2007 until Q1 2009. The objective was that in the end, based on my overviews and charts, we would be able to make some recommendations to improve Barco’s press release policy and press coverage.

Part of this investigation was already conducted by Lieven Bertier himself for the period from 2000 until 2005. For most of the charts, I was able to base myself upon slides and charts from this previous investigation. A difference was that during the first investigation, Barco still worked with different divisions, such as BarcoVision and BarcoView. For my investigation, I had to disregard these divisions, since Barco no longer operates according to these, and instead, look at the different markets, i.e. Digital Cinema, Medical, Avionics, etc.
The Cision reports were the basis for my trend analysis per quarter. I studied some key performance indicators in the reports to establish an overview of the last six quarters for Barco overall and per market.

Finally, I had to look at the last quarters in particular and compare them with the trade press coverage. I was also asked to make a top ten of trade magazines which publish the most articles mentioning Barco.

The result of this project was a PowerPoint presentation which is included in appendix 5. It may be convenient to look at this appendix while reading my discussion of this assignment since some of the elements are quite technical and easier to understand when seeing the charts as well.

2. PROJECT

To begin with, I counted the total number of press releases for 2007, 2008 and 2009. When talking about 2009, I sometimes opted for giving the absolute numbers for the period already passed (e.g. 48 press releases from 1\textsuperscript{st} January until the 28\textsuperscript{th} April). Often, I tried to give an extrapolated number. Whenever possible, I made the extrapolation based on Q1 2008 compared to 2008 overall and then multiplying the numbers for Q1 2009 by the same growing rate since that takes seasonal differences (such as trade shows which often generate more press releases) into account. When this extrapolation was not possible, I simply extrapolated by multiplying the period already passed by the number of times that period fits into a year (e.g. numbers for the first three months were then multiplied by four). I counted the number of general and trade press releases for the three years (with 2009 extrapolated based on 2008). Then, I divided the press releases according to topic. The topic list was more or less the same as the topic list from the previous investigation, but we decided to include some additional topics, thus resulting in a set of eight different topics: appointments (people news), award/certification, contract/reference, financial/corporate, partnership, product, show preview (i.e. trade shows) and a miscellaneous category. I often made two charts for the same parameter: once with absolute figures and once with relative figures to be able to see the proportions. I made a division of the press releases according to the market which they reported on. Barco is active in eleven markets: Aerospace, Broadcasting, Corporate AV, Defence,
Digital Cinema, Events, Media & Sports, Medical, Simulation, Traffic and Utilities. Here, I was not able to extrapolate on the basis of Q1 2008, since some of the numbers here were 0. Instead, I extrapolated to 2009 simply by multiplying the number for the first four months by three. Nevertheless, this should give a realistic view. Here as well, I made charts with absolute and relative figures.

For the comparison with Barco’s competitors, I counted the press releases distributed by these competitors in 2007 and 2008. I also made the division between general and trade releases. For 2008, the number of press releases was also compared to the sales of these competitors. For Barco, Daktronics, Planar and Eizo, I was able to find these sales numbers in the publicly available annual reports. Since Christie is not a publicly listed company, this was not possible for this company. Instead, I counted for the Christie sales two third of Barco sales, on advice of Lieven Bertier who based this on the input of VP digital cinema US.

Next, I made charts collecting the data of the different Cision reports for the last six quarters. It is important to note that for the last three quarters, from Q3 2008 until Q1 2009 web clippings were included while this was not the case for the first three quarters. Then, only printed press was covered. I selected some key performance indicators to be included in these charts: frequency of clippings, a count of the trade press articles about Barco, reach, the potential number of people reached by this article, average impact score, which is an average of the “measure of the likelihood that that someone will read and recall a mention of Barco” (Cision reports), the net effect is calculated for each story separately and is the result of the multiplication of the reach (total potential audience) by the impact score (likelihood of recall) “to give the size of the audience likely to recall the mention of Barco and whether what they recall is positive or negative” (Cision reports).

First, I made charts with these parameters for Barco in general and for the last six quarters. Then, I made charts with these parameters for the different markets. I always made two versions of the same chart: one focusing on the different markets and one focusing on the different quarters. These two versions of the same chart make it easier to draw conclusions since they both offer a different look on the same numbers. When it comes to markets, I need to note the fact that this division in the last Cision reports was not the same anymore as in the previous ones. Broadcast, Surveillance, Traffic and
Utilities are markets which have come into use since the last four quarters, while Control rooms (rear screen) disappeared after Q2 2008.

I also included charts about two prominence factors: extent of mention and dominance. Extent of mention shows if Barco was mentioned significantly, moderately, marginally or minimally in an article. Dominance shows if Barco was treated exclusively, dominantly, balanced or in minority. For these last two factors, I only made charts focusing on the progress between different quarters. Next, I counted the number of articles which appeared in the different trade magazines (web and printed press) and composed a top 10 of magazines which mention Barco the most.

Finally, I composed lists and charts for the clippings of Q4 2008 and Q1 2009 in particular, comparing these to the press releases of Q3 and Q4 2008 and Q1 2009, since there is a certain delay on press coverage of press releases. I counted the press releases that generated several clippings in the trade press and divided them into markets and topics. I also counted the clippings about popular topics and divided them according to the market.

After all this number crunching and composing charts, it was time to try and analyze these figures by sitting together and brainstorming.

I will first discuss the charts and their fluctuations and afterwards, I will come to some of the conclusions and recommendations we made during these interpretation sessions.

3. DISCUSSION

When looking at the total number of press releases distributed by Barco from 2007 until 2009, it is obvious that Barco publishes more and more press releases. If 2009 goes on as it has started, Barco will have distributed 192 press releases by the end of this year. The share of general versus trade releases remains more or less the same, with a small increase in the share of general releases. When it comes to topics, most press releases are about contracts and references and the second most popular topic is products. Relatively speaking though, the share of product-related press releases has dropped, while the share of press releases related to contracts and references continues to rise. Up until the 28th of April, 57% of all press releases distributed to the trade press was related to contracts and
references and 21% to products. When it comes to markets in 2009, Digital Cinema and Broadcasting have been the most popular markets until now. The share of press releases about the Events market has dropped compared to the two previous years. Compared to its competitors, Barco publishes most press releases, even almost ten times as much than Planar Systems. The share of general versus trade releases is for Barco and its competitors more or less the same, except for Planar Systems which distributes almost as much general as trade releases. Benchmarking Barco against it is clear that the percentage of press releases by both Planar Systems and Christie digital amounts to much less than the percentage of sales of both competitors. This means that Planar and Christie do quite well when it comes to sales, although they distribute much less press releases. Now we have come to the charts about the Cision parameters. Overall, it is immediately obvious that the last quarter has not been the most successful one. Frequency of clippings, reach, net effect and average impact have all dropped compared to Q4 2008, sometimes even much lower. The number of articles in the trade press mentioning Barco was 161 (vs. 223 in Q4 2008). Especially the printed press coverage was not good: the number of clippings from printed press was only half of the number in Q4 08. A comparison with the number of press releases distributed by Barco during the first quarter of 2009, shows that the decrease in clippings is not due to a decrease in the amount of press releases since about as many press releases were distributed in the previous quarter. Both the reach and net effect dropped dramatically. Net effect even dropped below the Q4 2007 rate, when web clippings were not even included yet. The average impact score fell only slightly, amounting to 23 %, while from 20% onwards is considered a good result. When looking at frequency, reach, net effect and impact score for the different markets, we can often see a peak in Q3 or Q4 2008. The extents of mention and dominance have evolved quite negatively as well. The passing and extensive mentions have dropped and marginal mentions have remained the same. A positive fact is that the amount of moderated mentions has risen a bit (from 15 to 21). When it comes to dominance, exclusive treatments of Barco in trade press clippings has dropped significantly from 27 during Q4 2008 to 9 during Q1 2009. However, the share of clippings in which Barco is treated in minority has increased up till 68 percent.
The top 10 of trade magazines does not reveal anything shocking, but is useful when it comes down to the one-on-one focus I will discuss in the next part.

Finally, I focused on the last two quarters and analyzed press releases that were more than once picked up by the trade press. I looked at the markets these ‘popular’ press releases were about: most often they were about the Digital Cinema or the Events market. When it came to clippings, these markets accounted for 24% and 56% of all clippings respectively. When looking at the topics of these ‘popular’ press releases, 6 out of 10 were contract/references. Financial/corporate news and product news both got 2 ‘popular’ press releases. Of the 59 clippings about a popular topic (i.e. a topic that was at least twice covered by the trade press), 19 clippings were not generated by a Barco press release and these mainly dealt with the Events market (concerts by Coldplay and Kings of Leon). When the clippings were caused by a Barco press release, the most popular subjects were the contract with AccessIT and the sale of Advanced Visualization.

4. Analysis and Recommendations

After having collected all the data for the last six quarters, from Q4 2007 until Q1 2009, and after having summarized these numbers into different charts, it was time for an analysis of these charts. I arranged some brainstorm meetings with several of my colleagues. First I sat down with Inge Govaerts (Corporate PR Manager), Ineke Debels (Corporate Marketing Executive) and Lieven Bertier (Brand & Communication Manager). Afterwards, I had an interpretation session with Isabelle Van Durme (Corporate Marketing Intelligence Manager) and Lieven Bertier. A few days later, Inge Govaerts, Lieven Bertier and I had a second meeting to do some more brainstorming. During those sessions, we came to the following conclusions about Barco’s press releases and their coverage in the trade press.

Many of the press releases are about contracts and references, but not so much of these get covered by the press. Intranet discusses the criteria for press releases about a contract: 1 million dollar (or euro) is worth writing about. However, we are not sure if these criteria are well known amongst all the employees. Maybe it would be advisable to communicate these once again to make sure they are adhered to. This view, that there appear too many press releases about too minor contracts, is confirmed by the
comparison of Barco’s and its competitors’ number of press releases and sales. Contradictory enough, Barco sells relatively less, but distributes relatively more contract-related press releases. The increase in the amount of press releases is mainly due to the rising amount of contract-related releases. This needs to be limited so that the share of press releases about new products rises. Another confirmation comes from the list of popular topics in trade press clippings for the last two quarters: one is about the contract with AccessIT and one is about the sale of Advanced Visualization to Toshiba; both were huge deals.

Overall, it seems that the criteria for press releases need to be redefined. Barco distributes more and more press releases, but gets less and less covered by the press and what is more, one third of the clippings of the last two quarters is not generated by a Barco press release. On top of that, most of the times Barco gets mentioned, it is only in minority. Only once out of ten times, Barco gets exclusively covered in an article. We can deduct that the press coverage does not depend on the number of press releases, but on something else. One of these reasons can be newsworthiness: the press releases that Barco distributes are not newsworthy enough. There need to be more stringent selection criteria.

In relation to this newsworthiness, it is also vital to keep market particularities in mind. Some issues do not lose their newsworthiness, such as major contract deals. Other topics, such as the participation in a major event such as the Super Bowl, lose their newsworthiness if you do not communicate in due time. When it comes to events, Barco needs to communicate before the event takes place to increase newsworthiness. Speaking of these events, there lays an opportunity in co-marketing with rental partners. Barco needs to turn its cooperation with rental partners into an advantage and make sure that stories and release timings are discussed with these rental partners, such as XL Video and Procon, beforehand.

A comparison with competitor Christie Digital shows that they distribute much fewer press releases, but obtain more coverage in the trade press. We attribute this to several reasons: Christie advertises more and has a bigger advertising budget. While trade journalists are still independent, it is not unthinkable that they are more willing to feature Christie in an article if that company ‘sponsors’ the magazine regularly, while Barco
never spends money on advertising in this magazine. Another reason could be that Christie has better contacts with trade journalists. In the future, it would probably be advisable to work more one-on-one with journalists of Tier 1 magazines. If better contacts are maintained with the journalists of the most important trade magazines, maybe Barco could count on more goodwill amongst these to feature Barco regularly in an article.

It would also be wise to focus the efforts on the markets that need it the most. Many of the clippings of the last two quarters were about events, such as concerts by Coldplay and Kings of Leon, but these articles were often not generated by a press release from Barco. It appears that this market gets its media coverage anyway, so it would be a waste of energy to put much effort into this. Instead, we thought it would be better to focus on the growing markets, such as Digital Cinema, Out of Home Media, Medical Imaging and Broadcast. The number of press releases related to the Events market and the number of clippings we get about this market, confirms that Barco is not wasting too much energy here. What is positive though is that the top 4 of markets with the most press releases consists of three growing markets. Barco already gets the focus right. However, two mature markets hardly get any attention: Defence and Utilities, while these account for a big share of the turnover. Barco needs to pay attention that these markets do not get neglected. On the other hand, when we look at Q1 2009, we see that four press releases have appeared about Aerospace, which is such a minor market (sales in this market amounted to 28.9 million euro in 2008 while for example the Events market accounted for 139.7 million euro). This definitely seems out of proportion.

It is important to remark that frequency of clippings has dropped for all markets. Not one market goes against the trend. We can thus make general conclusions for Barco overall and not only for some markets in particular.

It came to our attention that sometimes, Barco distributes several press releases on the same day, even important ones that are all about a different topic. This is also caused by the fact that many press releases are distributed on occasion of a trade show. Journalists then often take these press releases together, make a kind of summary and publish one single article. As a result, an important contract or a major customer benefit gets only a
few lines, while it may have gotten a whole article if there had not been any other press releases at the same time. When communicating to the trade press, it is important to keep in mind that trade magazines often appear only once a month. It seems advisable to ‘save’ some important press releases until they can be distributed during a period with less other news. In this light, it would be good to set up a planning, so you can time when you will be distributing different press releases, in order to get as much coverage as possible. When it comes to trade shows, some criteria need to be determined: for example, when Barco distributes a press release on occasion of a trade show, it needs to be about a major topic. The number of press releases on occasion of a trade show, needs to be limited as well, for example one product-related press release and one related to a contract.

I have already mentioned that it appears that the amount of press releases does not influence the number of trade press clippings. The chart about dominance gives another view on this: although Barco distributes enough press releases, only one out of ten articles talks exclusively about Barco. Almost seven out of ten times, Barco is talked about in minority compared to someone or something else. We started to ask ourselves what the reasons may be. Four reasons came to mind. First of all, there is no personal touch. Barco needs to work more one-on-one with journalists of Tier 1 magazines. Distributing impersonal press releases as often as possible does not seem to work. Secondly, Barco has no advertising budget. While journalists are expected to write objectively and independently, it is not unlikely that magazines are more willing to publish extensive articles about companies that make a contribution to the magazine now and then. Thirdly, Barco needs strong editorials and spokespersons. Finally, Barco needs to give exclusivity. Too often, Barco is mentioned alongside competitors, almost as by coincidence. To increase visibility, they need to offer journalists an incentive to write extensive articles about Barco. They need to feed some important magazines with exclusive stories so they will definitely write about Barco. It can not be left to coincidence.

To summarize, there are two focal points: Barco needs to increase the frequency of trade press clippings and they need to increase the extent of mention. Barco needs to be mentioned in more articles and when Barco does get mentioned, it needs to be more
extensively and not merely by coincidence. This can be achieved by making sure that Barco’s press releases are newsworthy. When a press release offers real news, there is a bigger chance it will be picked up by journalists. When you load journalists with press releases which do not have any real news value, they will not write about it. To increase the extent of mention, Barco needs to focus on exclusivity: develop a one-on-one relationship with the most important journalists of the most important magazines and now and then provide them with an exclusive story. This will make them more willing to write about Barco. On top of that, Barco needs to position itself as a thought leader in the market with innovative ideas. Barco is a leader in visualization and needs to be associated with great names such as Disney or BM and events.

Finally, I made the assumption that, resulting from all these conclusions and recommendations, the regional approach may not pay off when it comes to press releases and press coverage. Now, different areas are covered by different people, but since most of the recommendations I made are related to a market, it seems more relevant to me to manage PR and press departing from the different markets. I have mentioned that many press releases are often related to a trade show. While this trade show may be in America, the target group of the trade show and the relevance to the market is global and not regional. It seems more useful to coordinate PR and press efforts according to market and not to region, thus also excluding redundancies. However, since the regional approach is present in many different aspects, departments and processes at Barco, it is extremely difficult to try and change this.
1. BRIEFING

With the biggest part of my other assignments completed and still some time left, my internship coordinator found me another project to work on: I was asked to look at annual reports. Barco has already been awarded for its financial communication, amongst others in 2005 by BVFA, the Belgian Association of Financial Analysts. However, Barco’s annual report has not been awarded up till now. While winning an award can of course never be an objective on its own, there is always room for improvement and one way to do this may be by looking at highly appreciated or awarded annual reports of other companies. Lieven Bertier directed me to one main source: enterprise.com (e.com) which “specializes in report input, evaluation, analysis and benchmarking.” Their “core business is to assess and compare corporate & financial communication tools and investor and market information vehicles, mainly annual reports” (e.com). Every year, enterprise.com publishes an Annual Report of Annual Reports, including a ranking of the 500 best annual reports around the world. Since the Annual Report for 2009, covering the companies’ annual reports of 2008, is not available yet, I based myself upon the Annual Report of 2008, thus looking at companies’ 2007 reports. Another source is the BVFA since it also awards companies for its annual reports, but so far, Barco has won only the prize for the best financial information and for the best press releases. I needed to look at highly appreciated annual reports and see what factors contribute to their appreciation. I looked at the top 10 of Annual Report on Annual Reports and, on top of that, BEL20 companies and technological companies in particular. It was not my task to make specific recommendations for Barco’s annual report.

The final output was, again, a PowerPoint presentation that summarized all of my findings. This presentation is included as appendix 6.

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2. Project

The Annual Report on Annual Reports is an independent report survey existing since 1996. Financial analysts and communication professionals split up annual reports into reporting areas and see how the annual reports do in all these different areas. This is actually a paying service (a report of your company’s annual report costs 800 euro): a company can get an “overview of pluses and minuses and a score breakdown for all criteria used for the Annual Reports on Annual Reports ranking.” The reports are confidential and only the ranking and some selected attributes and picks are publicly made available on the website. Annual reports get a rating ranging from A+ to D. Underneath is listed how the annual reports are rated.

- A+ First-rate
- A Excellent
- A- Very good
- B+ Sound
- B Average
- B- Uneven
- C+ Common
- C Substandard
- C- Poor
- D Uncompetitive

Report Watch also selects some attributes which it investigates in particular. On the website, different companies are picked and listed which excel in these specific attributes. The attributes are: Covers, Report title, Design and layout, Style, Business at a glance, Key figures, Executive message, Theme – Thread, Share information, Branding, Read appeal, Visuals, Photography, Financial review, Financial clarity, Strategy, Charts – Graphs, Business/growth drivers, Goals and targets, Performance indicators – Ratios, Historical data, Risks (all industries), Risks (financial sector), Outlook, Governance, Corporate responsibility – Sustainability, Non- or partly-listed company report, Online reporting pluses, Two- or plus-book management and Report availability. For my
assignment, I only looked at some of these attributes, especially the ones we know Barco’s annual report can still improve in.

The top 10 of Annual Report on Annual Reports is lead by Electrolux, a global provider of household appliances and maintenance products for use at home. The top 3 is completed by Potashcorp (producer of plant fertilizers) and Telus (Canadian Telecommunications Company). The places 4 to 10 are taken by, in that particular order, SAS (Scandinavian Airlines), Adidas (German sports brand), Philips (Dutch producer of electronics), Pepsico (maker of Pepsi-Cola, Tropicana and other drinks), CLP (Asian electricity supplier), Sasol (South African Synthetic Oils) and Wienerberger (producer of bricks and roof tiles).

I also looked up all BEL20 companies in the top 500. These are their rankings and ratings:

- UCB (113) B+
- Fortis (121) B+
- Delhaize (150) B+
- Solvay (152) B+
- Bekaert (181) B
- Belgacom (205) B
- Belgacom (205) B
- Inbev (219) B
- Umicore (225) B
- Barco (319) B-
- GBL (420) C+
- Dexia (435) C+

Since there are thousands and thousands of companies around the World and almost as many annual reports, it is safe to say Barco’s annual report does quite well. However, since a good annual report is an effective branding and marketing tool and one of the main sources of information which investors depend on, there is always room for
improvement. So I paid attention to some specific elements which are important in our opinion and in the opinion of the specialists of the *Annual Report on Annual Reports*.

First are the online reading facilities. Shareholders, financial analysts and others receive annual reports in a printed version, but annual reports are most of the times already made available online several weeks before they are printed and delivered by mail. That is why the online reading facilities are extremely important as well: they are the stakeholders’ first contact with the annual report. Up till now, Barco has only offered a PDF-version of their annual report because they believe most people just print out the whole file. However, when looking at the *Annual Report on Annual Reports* top 10, I noticed that eight companies not only offer a downloadable PDF-version, but also an ‘online version.’ That is an online, user-friendly version of the annual report with an interactive menu where you can easily click through to the chapters that interest you and which does not make you download the whole report.

Nowadays, sustainability is ‘the talk of the town’ in the business world. Companies need to be ‘good civilians’ in today’s society and they need to inform properly and honestly about everything they do for the community and the environment. That is why several companies make a separate sustainability report, which includes information on, for example, the companies’ values, employee management, community support and emissions. Until now, Barco has not made such a report, but of the BEL20, at least nine companies do. Inditex, owner of, amongst others, the clothing store chain Zara, has a 15-page long chapter on corporate responsibility and sustainability in its annual report. It includes a detailed account of commitments and steps already taken and the *Strategic Environmental Plan 2007-2010*. On top of that, graphs with the electricity consumption and Greenhouse Effect gases were construed and there is a clarifying overview of different projects including actions already taken in 2007 and objectives for 2008.

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As said, e.com also offers a list of attributes and picks. From the companies mentioned for particular attributes which interested me, I selected some and looked at how they handled these specific attributes in their annual report.

First, I studied the executive messages. The executive message in the beginning of an annual report can be a message from the chairman or from the CEO and is used to look back on the past year and look ahead at challenges to come. It is the perfect tool to carry out the corporate identity and to speak to the stakeholders in a direct way. All too often, the executive message is used to justify bad decisions or make excuses for bad results while most of the times honesty is appreciated and seen as a sign of trustworthiness and a willingness to learn from past mistakes. The executive message must never be merely a summary of the past year and call to invest in the previous year, too obviously written by the first available copy writer. Instead, it should aim to be an inspiring, personal message from the CEO or chairman, expressing his view on the past, the present and the future.

The executive messages awarded by e.com were by Wells Fargo, ABB, Philips and Xerox. All of them, except Wells Fargo which had a very short executive message, are divided into smaller sections which improves readability and clarity. This range of executive messages proves some liberty can be taken, ABB offers a factual message with highlighted numbers, reached targets and expectations for shares, while Philips’ message includes some final thoughts on people news, branding and an employee engagement survey. Wells Fargo completely deviates from trodden paths as it is a very short message from the resigning CEO, Richard Kovacevich.

Goals and targets are an important aspect of annual reports as well. In order for shareholders to make a well-informed decision about their future investments, they need to know where the company is headed for and what it aims to achieve. Targets set in advance make it also possible to check accomplishments afterwards and evaluate the elapsed period. Regarding this aspect, Sappi (South African Pulp & Paper Industry), Danske Bank and Telus perform very well, thanks to graphs which set targets for the coming year or even several years to come. Comparing accomplishments with targets set previously is something all these annual reports do.

Since an annual report is an outstanding branding tool, the overall appeal is important and the design and lay-out certainly contribute to that appeal. When looking at the praised
annual reports in this category, it was obvious that they are all very visual and that they all have a distinctive look. When you see one of the annual reports by, for example, Sodexo, you immediately recognize it as *something else*. Sodexo’s annual report is different from other companies’ reports and that adds value. Most readers of annual reports have limited time on their hands, so it is extremely important that they are not forced to read the whole annual report in order for them to gain an insight into the companies’ activities, successes and losses. That is why annual reports need to be visual: important numbers need to be highlighted, graphs need to be clear and not too much can be crammed into one page.

Professional and high-quality photography are also appreciated and good, speaking pictures do deserve a whole page. That offers the reader a resting point in an often lengthy annual report. Amongst others, Toshiba and Novartis clearly have invested in professional photography.

Next, I looked at some selected technological companies in particular, since writing an annual report for a company such as Pepsico naturally differs a bit from writing one for Barco or, to name one, Sony. The following is an overview of the chosen technological companies, including their ranking and rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philips (6)</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlas Copco (11)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshiba (30)</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sony (34)</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neste Oil (57)</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAE Systems (86)</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nec (414)</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Instruments (445)</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel (446)</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I simply read their 2007 annual reports and summarized some elements which stroke me. That some technological companies do not seem to understand the branding benefits of an annual report and carry out the creation process of the report as if they were developing another chip or electronic appliance, soon came to be clear. Philips was more
or less the odd one out. It does not only offer an user-friendly online version of its annual report, but even a complete annual report website with quick links to all headers and a video of the president’s message which makes it extremely effective and visual. The video shows the President walking around and talking, important numbers appear next to him and moving visuals are included. The website also makes it very easy to jump to whatever information interests you, such as specific charts or tables, and to download complete parts of the report.

Atlas Copco is an example of an annual report which is rated very highly (A), but which was, in my opinion quite dull. The annual report does offer clear share information with graphs about the evolution of the share price and an overview of the share issues from 1973 to 2007. Other than that though, it failed to appeal to me. Toshiba makes a more appealing annual report then, partly thanks to its professional photography, which I have already mentioned. It consistently provides historical data and looks ahead. On top of that, it gives a view on Toshiba’s place in the market with, for example, a comparative graph about the market shares of Toshiba and its competitors. In my opinion, Texas Instruments is another boring report that does not optimize the possibilities of an annual report. One advantage though, is it online reporting pluses: there is quite a considerate amount of additional information on, amongst other things, stocks. Neste Oil performs really well in the important area of goals and targets. It sets targets for each division and the targets of the previous year are repeated and compared to the actions and achievements. Next to that, charts and graphs are very appealing and when there is a remarkably changes in some overviews that is explained by a clear comment. Intel’s annual report is not up to scratch. To be honest, I would have expected better from such a known and successful company. The annual report begins with eight pages, including the CEO message, financial results highlights, letter from the chairman and investor information. The rest of the annual report is merely a Form 10-K, which is a standard annual report form which most public companies hand in with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. While big companies chose to make a separate annual report for their shareholders, this is of course not an obligation and many companies just send their Form 10-K to their shareholders. Needless to say, this is less appealing and less easy to read than an adapted and visual annual report.
To finish, I repeated a couple of don’ts, which Report Watch lists on its website and which, I think, are sometimes sinned against in Barco’s annual report.\(^8\)

- Do not “focus on last year. One of the reasons why annuals are still used – and kept – is to give the longer-term strategic view;”
- Do not “overlook quarterly figures and cyclical analysis;”
- Do not “mix up creative reporting with creative accounting;”
- Do not “forget that reports are most valuable when they give the medium-term perspective. Backward – and forward.”

Finally, I made an overview of the most important assets which contribute to an appreciated and high-quality annual report:

- Appealing and visual;
- Clear and comprehensible charts and graphs;
- Graphs covering several years back;
- Targets for upcoming years
- High quality design and photography;
- Key figures easy to find;
- Multiple reading facilities;
- Original executive message that does not deny bad results.

I do not think that this basic set of assets guarantees an effective annual report, but when you pay attention to these elements, you are certainly getting important things covered. Annual reports are laborious project. Copywriters often have to work with very limited information and I found it quite impressive what the contributors to Barco’s annual report were able to pull of in a short amount of time.

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Conclusion

This dissertation has been a mixture of what I have learned about Barco and about employee and customer magazines. I feel it has been the appropriate ending of a year studying Multilingual Business Communication. Having done the company presentation and paper about Barco obviously gave me a head start for my interview when applying for a trainee spot and helped me to get settled into the place when I had started my training. I wanted to study Multilingual Business Communication most of all to get a more hands-on experience than the things I had learned having obtained my master’s degree in Germanic languages. In this respect, I really feel this additional year has imparted more practical knowledge to me. I also feel the courses taken in the first and second semester and the projects done for the various subjects prepared me for what I had to do for Barco.

The different projects such as the company presentation or the Nielsen case for Market Research taught me a number of things: work efficiently on a tight schedule, plan ahead and adhere to that planning, formulating my concerns and problems to others and getting feedback. For the Nielsen case, I had to work with Excel for the first time in my life. When doing the assignment about Barco’s press releases, I had to work a lot with Excel too, calculating things and then afterwards making charts about these results. Luckily, I already had to do most of these things while working on the Nielsen case. The course in Accountancy made sure I was not at a complete loss when reading about annual reports for my last assignment at Barco’s.

The Ineos project helped me even more directly: for Ineos, my team and I had to compose a questionnaire in order to conduct a survey among the people living in the neighbourhood of some chemical companies in Antwerp and ask their opinion about these companies’ joined magazine. Needless to say this helped me a lot when I had to compose the questionnaire about InsideOut. We were able to compose the questionnaire for Ineos with a team of seven, but for Barco, I was on my own. However, since I had already done this exercise, this did not scare me and I felt confident starting the assignment.
Barco is an international company and all internal documents have to be in (American) English. Having studied English at university and having had additional courses in business English while studying Multilingual Business Communication as well, this did not bother me at all. In fact, I was thankful for getting the additional practice, now in a corporate environment as opposed to writing a paper for academic purposes.

I was also very happy to have done so many presentations for the various courses. Making these numerous presentations in PowerPoint made sure that making PowerPoints for Barco was a piece of cake. Having given the presentations as well, allowed me to be at ease while presenting my results, even though I never had to do that in the formal setting of an actual presentation, but in a more informal meeting with colleagues.

In general, I would say that Multilingual Business Communication gave me the confidence that was necessary to believe that I was able to do all of the assignments which were required of me during my internship at Barco. I believe this is even more important than the mere theoretical knowledge I gained during a theoretical course.

When it comes to the internship itself, I am very content to have had the opportunity to get to know Barco. All credit goes to my supervisor, who made sure my tasks were interesting. At first, I did not really look forward to the assignment about the magazines, because I felt it was too much like the Ineos project and I wanted to do something else. In the end, those two assignments were nothing like each other, but having done the project for Ineos, helped me composing the questionnaire. I like the fact that I had to work in Excel for the assignment about the press releases. Because my tasks here, were clearly outlined, I could see my progress and I always knew what I still had to do. While I mostly had to work with number and make charts, the assignment also gave me an insight into what it means to work for Press and PR. The assignment about the annual reports was only added near the end of my internship, but I found it very interesting. An annual report is something very particular and there is much more to it than I would have thought beforehand. I found it interesting to have to look at annual reports by some global companies and discovered how creative some can be.
I had to do a lot of desk research for my internship. This was nice because it gave me the chance to work independently and at my own pace. My supervisor regularly scheduled follow-up meetings so I never felt at a loss. Sometimes, I could attend some meetings with other colleagues, either about something that was more or less connected with my assignment, either about something totally different. For example, on my last day I went to a meeting about the creation of a advertising spot about Barco for in theatres (Briefing Digital Cinema Stinger, mentioned in SWOT-analysis p. 26 of this dissertation). The meeting was actually a briefing to a creative bureau, who has to design the spot, about what Barco had in mind. While I liked doing the desk research, these kinds of meetings were very interesting and I wish I could have attended more of these.

Other than that, the evaluation of my internship remains very positive. I have learned about what it means to work at a department like Corporate Marketing and having to schedule meetings with very busy colleagues. I had the chance to attend the Oil and Gas trade show, EAGE, in Amsterdam. I learned to work independently and to explain my progress and my obstacles. Most of all, I learned that I can be good in what I do and that really gave me the confidence to enter the job market.
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