There are a lot of tired businesses trapped in a commodity, "sell at all costs" mind-set. The success story at Lafarge shows how much they can benefit from consistently applying the basic tools of marketing.

Even Commodities Have Customers

by Francois M. Jacques

When I became head of marketing at Lafarge's cement division in late 2001, old-timers used to tell me that there were only two types of customers: those who liked golf and those who liked fishing. Welcome to the front lines of your typical cement company - a hardscrabble world peopled by grizzled salesmen whose pitches were aimed at making friends rather than demonstrating that their products were better than the competition's.

And why shouldn't they? After two decades of worldwide deregulation, cement was becoming a commodity. There was virtually no cement product you couldn't easily obtain from some other company. Global production was fragmented. Lafarge, as the world's largest producer, accounted for only 6% of the market, and our customers tended to be large, sometimes global, businesses whose purchasing decisions were becoming increasingly centralized. In this environment, marketing took a backseat to sales. The name of the game was not differentiation and value propositions but protecting market share without triggering a price war that no one could afford.

Still, as Lindsay Owen-Jones once observed, "There is no such thing as a product that cannot be improved by segmentation." The story of Lafarge cement division's marketing initiative, which I had the privilege of leading, exemplifies that sentiment from L'Oreal's CEO, a former Lafarge board member. Our work directly added $6 million to the bottom line in our first year of operation, and today our contribution stands at an accumulated $150 million. That's the equivalent of a 2% price hike.

It isn't easy to establish a marketing function in a company that doesn't think it needs one. From the start, in 2002, we tackled the challenge on a number of fronts. First, I sought to gain allies and neutralize potential foes in the executive ranks by carefully populating an executive steering committee, which set right to work applying marketing's most basic and most powerful tools - segmentation and pricing strategy - to four representative pilot projects. To make the value of those efforts quickly apparent, we measured the effectiveness of those pilots with readily understood metrics. We sought to share our ongoing results as widely as possible by establishing regional networks of marketing and sales executives. We began to weave marketing into Lafarge's mainstream management processes by becoming an integral part of the division's and the units' strategic-planning, performance, and budgeting discussions. Over the next four years, we built on that wide base through a number of techniques aimed at strengthening the advances we made in the first year. (See the exhibit "Introducing Marketing to Lafarge: The Time Line.")

Step by step, we fundamentally transformed Lafarge's commodity mind-set. Segmenting customers allowed us to see that we were selling to different groups that required different products, which in many cases we could sell for higher-than-commodity prices. Customer satisfaction surveys led us to change the way we sell: Now we talk about customers' needs rather than the fish that got away. That led us to improve supply chain execution and ultimately to change what we sell, so that our offerings are now suited to a range of customer requirements, increasing value both for our customers and for us. We've developed a CRM tool that tells us each customer's value to Lafarge. That means we no longer need think of cement as a commodity-we can protect prices without compromising sales volumes.

Like Lafarge in 2001, many companies have a marketing function in name only. For them, as for us, the transformation needed to reap the rewards of genuine marketing savvy will involve a profound cultural and organizational change. That's never easy. This article recounts the seven main lessons we learned as we turned our manufacturing-driven, commodity-minded business into a profitable, marketing-oriented enterprise. I believe these lessons can serve as a model for other companies looking to escape the commodity trap.

RULE 1 Make **Lots** of Friends

Many new initiatives are imposed from the top and dismissed by the bottom as a passing fad. In these situations, you have to make sure both that top management stays committed and that everyone on the front line knows top management will remain committed.

Lafarge's marketing initiative was just such a top-down project. Corporate management had directed the entire company to boost its marketing capabilities back in 1999. A corporate head of marketing was appointed that year, and marketing chiefs were quickly put in place at three of the four divisions - gypsum, roofing, and aggregates and concrete.

But Lafarge struggled to find someone to take charge of marketing for the cement division. That was hardly surprising, given the job description. The senior executives in the cement division, making the mistake of confusing salesmanship with marketing savvy, believed that they already had adequate marketing expertise in the division's business units. All that was required, they reckoned, was an effort to share knowledge and coordinate the marketing efforts of

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the units' current sales managers. As a result, the executives envisioned the division's marketing head as merely an *animateur*- a facilitator -who would operate without a support team, or even a budget. You can imagine what kind of signal about top management's engagement that sent to potential applicants, not to mention the heads of the operating units.

My consulting background at McKinsey & Company made me more comfortable than most Lafarge executives were with this role, and I was attracted by the challenge of creating a marketing function from scratch. But most of the people I knew were incredulous. The division's retired head of manufacturing even took the trouble to come and tell me about his experience 15 years before, when Lafarge had previously experimented with the position. He had found the job very lonely. He was always blamed for failures and never credited with success. The general managers of the business units always scooped the prizes.

Despite all this negative feedback, I felt there would be support within the division for investment in marketing capabilities if I could demonstrate to people on the front lines that top management was really serious. I decided to begin by getting one or two divisional executives to assume some formal sponsorship role for the program. I was looking for a couple of top executives to share responsibility for the program's success or failure and to form, with myself, the core of a top-level steering committee that would meet monthly to review progress.

I began by sounding out members of the cement division's executive committee. I visited each of the nine regional heads who served on the committee and gave a presentation listing the challenges the division faced. I proposed a five-year road map for the marketing effort that defined its objectives in terms of tasks, staffing, and measures of success. The purpose was not so much to sell the road map as to see who would buy in to the kind of things we would need to do if we were to escape a commodity mind-set.

Predictably, most were cautious. They accepted my ideas but said that there was no need to rush. Two people, however, took strong positions. One told me that my plan was far too ambitious to have any hope of succeeding. The other was supportive. Looking at the profiles of each man, I realized that I had found both of my sponsors. The strongly positive executive really understood marketing, having had experience in another industry. The strongly negative regional head, however, was also a potential sponsor. His extreme response indicated that he was engaged with the idea, and through conversations about him with colleagues, I learned that much of his apparent hostility stemmed from past bad experiences with marketing in another division of Lafarge. Leaving him out would guarantee an enemy. Bringing him in might make a convert.

Having engaged top management, I turned to the people who would make or break the project: the general managers of the cement division's 45 business units. I started bombarding them with short (two-page) memos explaining how marketing related to every aspect of their businesses, a practice I continue to this day. At times, I would get the division's CFO or CIO to cosign these memos. This had three benefits. It reassured divisional officers that I was actively on the job. It tied my name, in the eyes of the general managers, to those of two senior executives. And it encouraged the GMs to actually read the memos, which in turn helped educate them about marketing.

The success of the initiative required more than getting the general managers to take me seriously, though. They had to own the initiatives themselves, so as I proceeded I was careful to stay in the background when the actual work being done to further the initiative was presented. *They* had to shine, not me or my marketing colleagues. By late 2005, when Lafarge held the convention of its top 900 cement executives that it convened every five years, marketing took up a third of the agenda, but almost none of the presenters were marketers.

RULE 2 Begin with the Basics

Executives in companies that put sales before marketing need a lot of education. They may think they know about marketing because they have good salespeople, but the reality is that they know very little. One consequence is that they bandy about marketing concepts and terms very loosely. Lafarge was no exception. Some business units, for example, used the phrase "customer segment" to refer to all customers served through a given distribution channel, while others used it to mean a group of customers of similar size or related ownership.

In these situations, you have to start by making sure people understand and agree on the basics. Fortunately in an industrial culture like ours, people do respect careful analysis, and so we began with a classic segmentation analysis, the most basic marketing concept of all.

With the help of a consultant, we reviewed customer data drawn from four selected business units that served as pilots for the initiative. This analysis revealed that the customers of those four units could be segmented according to their purchasing behavior (price driven, relationship driven, or performance driven) and according to the sophistication of their businesses (for example, those with quality control labs to make sure their bridges were safe versus small firms doing house additions). As we rolled out the initiative, we found that we could maintain a common segmentation scheme for all of our units, though obviously we refined and changed the segment definitions as we went along.

Developing a common understanding of what constituted a customer segment made it eventually possible for us to establish common standards for other marketing concepts and tools. Today, we have a largely consistent process for determining prices, which enables us to police them far more effectively and to implement value-based pricing-that is, pricing based on what a product is worth to a customer rather than on what it costs to produce. We have also created a common sales force philosophy that focuses on channels rather than on geography, as well as a common range of products and brands.

The pilot projects have contributed greatly to our tool kit, as well. One computer-savvy UK manager automated some of the analyses we had done painstakingly by hand in the other pilots. Based on his work, we developed a prototype CRM tool that's now been rolled out to all the other units.

Once the new definitions and tools became broadly accepted, we began standardizing the way unit managers approached the marketing-planning process. Previously, any unit that had even attempted to put together a marketing plan had had to reinvent the wheel. No two marketing plans were the same. One unit might have prepared iso-odd PowerPoint slides; another would come up with a one-page outline. Each unit would set its own milestones and metrics. This variety made it difficult for corporate or divisional executives to evaluate the plans or compare one unit's performance in execution with another.

So I decided to create a marketing plan template for all the units. We first looked at plans developed in the other Lafarge divisions and found them either too shallow or too detailed. In the second quarter of 2003,1 decided that the division should develop its own format, and I drew up a straw man template. By that time, we had instituted six annual regional sales and marketing conferences, which afforded the perfect opportunity to present the template to the sales and marketing managers of all the units. Half a day at each conference was devoted to discussing and refining the plan, which was concurrently beta tested in the four pilot business units. Since the end of summer 2003, all 45 business units have been posting three-year marketing plans in a common format on the company intranet. I use the same format for the divisionwide global marketing plan, which I started distributing to general managers in 2005.

RULE 3 Win Early, Win Often

Any important culture-changing initiative needs to prove its value early on. That's particularly true when you're trying to convince managers in a very manufacturing-oriented company about the value of a function they have largely been taught to despise. In our case, this meant showing that our new segmentation could quickly deliver tangible results in a few representative business units.

The obvious place to look for evidence of success was in the way we set and negotiated prices: In a commodity business like cement, a 1% gain in price has twice the impact on NPV of a 1% increase in volume or a 1% reduction in cost and four times the impact of a 1% savings in investment.

We had to show that our new approach would be valid for all units everywhere. At the same time, we wanted to attract as much attention and support as possible in the cement division's executive committee for the marketing effort. That's why we put so much care into the selection of the four pilot units. Chosen to be representative of the division as a whole, they together accounted for a significant 16% of its revenues. We were also going for a geographic mix that would give four members of the executive committee a personal connection with the work. The units we selected were: Northeastern North America (which sold bulk cement for the ready-mix concrete channel in a mature market); the Philippines (which sold bags of cement mainly through the wholesale-to-retail channel to an emerging market); Romania (which sold both in bulk and bags, but also had a large contractor channel, in an emerging, former Soviet market); and the United Kingdom (which sold both bags and in bulk, and had a large presence in the precast-concrete-products channel, in a mature market).

The segmentation analysis quickly confirmed our suspicions: Customers belonging to the same segment in the same geographic area were paying different prices for the same products bought in the same quantities. The first implication of that finding was obvious - we had been giving away far too generous discounts to some customers. Clearly, this meant that other customers were not being dealt with fairly. It also meant that we were leaving a lot of money on the table. Faced with this evidence, the local marketing and sales teams decided to eliminate discrepancies (discounts, rebates, and so on) between quoted and pocketed prices by setting minimum threshold prices in each segment and by formalizing the rules for negotiating prices and discounts with each customer.

The results were impressive. In Romania, more consistent pricing generated an overall rise in profit margins of 0.6% in the very first year (2002). More consistent discount negotiation in the Philippines also produced an immediate margin improvement of 0.4%. Setting a minimum price threshold for each segment in the UK generated a whopping 1% improvement in profit margins over two years. At the same time, the move ensured that similar customers were treated in the same way.

Not only had we been failing to address similar customers in the same way, we had been losing opportunities to treat different customers differently. Segmentation allowed us to identify which customer groups, geographic locations, and distribution channels had the most profit potential, enabling us to be more proactive in setting prices. This was true even

Introducing Marketing to Lafarge: The Time Line

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Make friends	Found sponsors among division executives. Formed steering committee.	Began sending update memos to unit general managers.			
Begin with basics	Conducted first customer segmentation. Began to differentiate pricing.	Standardized marketing plan template. Developed basic CRM system.	Introduced sales force specialization by channel. Started rationalizing product range in response to end-user surveys.	Began to standardize brands from unit to unit. Introduced value propositions.	Initiated value-based pricing.
Win early and often	Selected four units for initial pilot project.	Added five more units to pilot project. 0.1% gain in profit margin.	Added last six units to pilot project. 0.3% gain in profit margin.	0.9% gain in profit margin.	1% gain in profit margin.
Measure	Tracked pricing practices with scatter plots and waterfall charts.	Began tracking margins.	Worked out how to isolate the financial impact of targeting different combinations of geographies, segments, and channels.	Initiated customer satisfaction surveys. Began to measure how often deliveries were made on time, in full, and invoiced correctly. Started tracking revenues from new products.	Began comparing our price premium against competitors'.
Share	Formed six regional Sequoia marketing and sales networks. Held first marketing seminar.	Instituted the six regional conferences.	Began pairing up business unit marketing and sales managers.	Started distributing divisional marketing plan to GMs.	
Stake out territory	Brought in consulting support.	Created temporary marketing task force at divisional level. Began establishing marketing function separate from sales at the unit level.		Central marketing team made permanent. Reached the point where more than 20% of high potentials are in marketing.	
Find your place	Began attending pilot units' strategy review meetings.	Started incorporating marketing resource and revenue projections into divisional performance plans and budgets.	Developed marketing and sales competency profiles.		Implemented training modules for the sales and marketing staff.

for a mature and supposedly well-understood market like the UK, where we estimated the potential margin improvement could be as much as 2.4%.

By the end of 2003, the original four pilot marketing initiatives had improved the division's overall margins by 0.1% of global sales, sending an additional $6.4 million to the bottom line, and another five units had signed on to the project. Today, most business units are engaged in the marketing initiative, and we estimate that our accumulated contribution will rise to $260 million by the end of 2008, the equivalent of a 3.5% price hike.

RULE 4 Measure, Measure, Measure

When executives at Lafarge inspect a plant, they judge what they see according to a whole slew of metrics. Unless we could provide equivalent metrics for marketing, I knew senior executives would not connect our marketing efforts with the financial results they were actually generating. We had to have some measures right from the start, even if they were not perfect; we could always refine them later. We found that we could easily and effectively co-opt two tools that division executives were already using-scatter plots and waterfall charts-to measure the results of the pilot pricing improvements. Demonstrating our margin gains in that familiar way was what enabled us to attribute the financial successes that followed our pricing exercises directly to our marketing efforts. As we continued, however, we knew that we would have to develop more powerful metrics to link what we were doing more precisely to the financial results.

Companies that put sales first tend to equate customer satisfaction with sales volume. But, clearly, once you start treating customers differently, it makes sense to measure the effect of your efforts directly. When we did, we found opportunities to differentiate our business that we had never considered. In 2005, for example, when we sent out our first survey to customers in Romania to see how they felt about our changes, we found that they would be happy with our harder line on prices as long as we improved the ordering and delivery processes.

Following that pilot, we rolled out a standardized customer satisfaction survey to other units. The benefits of this exercise are threefold. First, the survey highlights the areas that require urgent action at the unit level. Second, it helps the central marketing team spot patterns that call for global responses (such as being more aggressive in customer training and support in emerging economies). Last, it lets us calculate an index that can be compared from year to year, thus yielding a quantitative measure of progress.

Results from our Romanian survey led us to develop our next measure, OTIFIC. Adapted from a metric already used in other Lafarge divisions, it tells us how often we make deliveries "on time," "in full," and "invoiced correctly." We piloted the measure in 2005 in our South African business unit and have just rolled it out to the other units. It's a global index that can be broken down to reveal the most frequent and most important sources of execution dysfunction along our value chain. Over time, we think it will help us link customer perceptions of our performance to our own perceptions.

More recently, because our product range has been substantially changed as a result of our understanding of end-user usage, and since we've begun to roll out such innovations as dust-free cement and waterproof packaging in response to customer interest, we have decided to track the percentage of annual revenue coming from three-year-old products at the unit and division levels.

Other metrics we're developing will also link our marketing activities to the top line. One will measure the price premium we enjoy relative to our competitors because of our segment-tailored value propositions and superior execution. Comparing our average prices at year's end to certain competitors in each country is our current first proxy. By this crude measure, Lafarge is lagging its competitors (by $7 per tonne compared with Holcim and $2 per tonne versus Cemex). We believe, however, that their higher prices reflect the different geographic mix of the markets they operate in, and we suspect that the difference would be a lot greater if we had not undertaken our marketing initiatives. Our aim, therefore, is to try to break that difference down into a

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geographic and a marketing component, so that we can quantify how our marketing efforts are helping the division close the built-in price gap against competitors.

RULE 5 Share, Share, Share

It's always important for managers to share their new ideas, good news, and experience. When you're trying to create a new skill base, however, the important becomes essential. In an organization without a marketing culture, we absolutely had to shout out about what we could bring to the party, to get everyone talking about it and make sure that as many people as possible were trying the ideas out.

Our first foray into spreading the word was at a marketing seminar we first held in fall 2002. We brought together managers from eight business units in Paris to hear what the four pilot units were doing and discovering. This was the division's first structured exchange of marketing ideas, and it allowed us to communicate best practices related to both core marketing activities (like our segment and pricing strategy) and support activities (such as the sales-planning process and sales force management tools). The next year, we brought the four units together again to share their continuing experiences, including roadblocks, insights, and lessons learned.

Today, our principal peer-to-peer forums are six regional networks, made up of each unit's senior marketing and sales managers, which hold the six regional conferences each year. A highlight of these two-and-a-half-day meetings is a visit to a problem customer, organized by the local unit. Meeting participants tour the site and interview the customer to understand his or her concerns. Then they go back and together come up with a way to address those concerns. The host unit implements the group's solution, and the next year a joint follow-up is done. Not only is this a great way to learn, but customers like the attention.

From the beginning, some networks worked better than others. Not all regions share a natural sense of identity, and some of the more mature units felt they were above the pack. To foster improvement in the networks, the divisional marketing team runs quantitative and qualitative feedback surveys, which guide constant improvements in the annual conferences. These are formalized in a "network-meeting best practice" document, which the central team updates after each annual session.

To continue to promote direct knowledge transfer between the business units, we started in 2004 to pair marketing and sales executives at units that are further along in their marketing expertise with their counterparts at units that are similar in other respects. Chile mentored Honduras, for instance, working on customer satisfaction surveys, market segmentation, new product launches, and software for tracking customer complaints. Concurrently, we've been promoting relationships between marketing "equals." Poland and Romania, for instance, conduct joint reviews of their marketing plans. Most exchanges involve one face-to-face

meeting, which often includes a plant or customer visit, preceded and followed by mail and phone contacts.

The program encourages managers to think harder; you don't want to look stupid to your colleague in a different unit. And because you have to explain yourself, you put effort into formalizing what you have to say. The program is also efficient: a time commitment of 30 face-to-face exchanges involving two representatives per unit over two-and-a-half days each year. That's the equivalent of a full-time employee at the division level but far more effective in spreading insights throughout the units than any single person might be. At this writing, 25 of the 30 original pairings are still going strong.

As our appetite for marketing knowledge grew, we began creating a Web site to organize and distribute all the processes and tools we were developing. In setting up the service, however, we felt we had to resist being co-opted by the central manufacturing function, which had more than a decade of experience in knowledge management. Indeed, when our project started, four "marketing" best practices were already listed on manufacturing's intranet site. We managed to preserve our independence on a trial basis, and then permanently, by adopting on our site the standard look and feel that was later codeveloped by all functional departments. That had the effect of elevating marketing to a coequal status among the functions.

Another important issue was determining who could use the site. We had requests for access from many sales and marketing representatives worldwide, including trainees. But the site contains a lot of confidential data that cannot be shared with anyone other than the business units' executive committees. We therefore adopted a very crude rule that only those people allowed to attend the network meetings would have access to our site. We call both our knowledge base and executive network "Sequoia." As befits a marketing function, we're the only one with its own brand.

RULE 6 Stake Out Your Territory

As word of our successes spread in late 2003 and early 2004, general managers of units that had not been picked for pilot projects started grumbling that they were being ignored by central marketing, and that as a result their bottom lines were suffering! Until that point, I had gotten around our resource constraints by having the business units hire external marketing consultants to help them, but that was not a long-term solution. Building some sort of central-marketing operation was essential if the company's initiative was to succeed. Unfortunately, initial resistance to the idea of a central function was strong. The nine regional heads all wanted to have their own marketing staffs, just as they already had their own industrial staffs. The division executives, meanwhile, were worried about overhead.

To get around this problem, I asked for approval for a temporary task force made up of three executives who would report to me and focus strictly on introducing marketing tools in only certain business units-specifically, 15 units that made up two-thirds of the division's revenues. The beauty of the temporary task force concept was that it could be extended and renewed into de facto permanence. It remained nominally a temporary task force until 2005, when Lafarge formalized the divisional marketing function, which by then had expanded to six executives, all recruited internally.

A key factor in that concession was the recognition I had won that marketing and sales were two different functions operating over different time horizons and requiring people with different skill sets. Right at the start, I had advocated relieving the sales VPs at the pilot units of marketing responsibilities. Of course, there was resistance. Some units, for example, claimed they were too small to justify the split. One agreed to separate marketing from sales but proposed merging it instead with strategy. To win the units over, I reprised the concept of a temporary arrangement. I proposed that the 15 priority units should accept the split for the two to three years we would be trying out the segmentation and pricing changes and suggested that we could revisit the arrangement again later. As before, this was a good face-saver. Today, the idea of an independent marketing function no longer seems strange; wherever we have split the two, our marketing performance has shot ahead.

As we staked out our organizational territory, we looked for the right people to settle the land. We supported the recruitment drive in the units by providing marketing job descriptions, suggesting candidates from other divisions, and participating in the final-round interviews. I felt strongly about getting involved in this drive because I wanted the new executives to be general-manager material, as this would reinforce the cultural change we were after. By 2005, HR found that about 20% of the division's high potentials were in marketing.

RULE 7 Find Your Place

There's a tension inherent in creating a new function. To obtain recognition, you have to fight to establish independence. But then, to retain independence, you have to fit into the organization's workings as a whole. Otherwise, the new function risks being sidelined, weakened, and ultimately subsumed back into other functions. To avoid that fate, we knew, divisional marketing executives needed to become an integral part of the company's management routines. This was a struggle at first. Most of the major strategy and budget-planning meetings were dominated by operating managers-regional heads and general managers-who were suspicious of the new faces from divisional headquarters. I was

actually asked to leave one important meeting of GMs because the regional head who was in the chair had not been notified by my boss that I would be participating. We've come a long way since then.

Strategic and performance planning. From the start, I insisted on joining the pilot business units' annual strategy review meetings. Market forecasts for these meetings had hitherto been drawn up with an economic lens-where were we in the cycle, and so on. I was there to get people to think about how customer behavior might affect the numbers. I followed up on these meetings by sending detailed memos to the unit heads pointing out just where the strategic plan touched on, or depended on, marketing. By 2005, marketing was the most recurring priority in the three-year rolling performance plan after safety, a fact that we have been careful to publicize internally.

the anticipated extra sales arising from the promotion effort have been incorporated into the numbers.

Executive visits. Visits from regional heads are an important part of the Lafarge management routine, and we make sure that they always talk marketing when they visit a unit. At first, I personally supplied every divisional executive going to a unit with a copy of that unit's marketing plan to read on the plane. Over time, executives have gotten used to talking about marketing on their visits, and now it's standard practice for them not only to take the plan but also to visit at least one customer (if possible, one with problems) before visiting our plant and talking to unit managers.

Career development. Finally, with so many high-potential managers in marketing functions, we realized that we had to put marketing at the heart of Lafarge's career-planning and development efforts. That meant reaching out to people

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The format of the standard marketing plan was also designed expressly to help marketing feed into the strategy process. The final section lays out not only the financial results expected from marketing initiatives but also what resources we need from the division and other functions to achieve those goals. These requests are fed into the business units' performance plans, which means that the units' executive committees assume responsibility for ensuring that marketing goals are supported.

Budgeting. Thanks to our involvement in the planning process, unit budgets began in 2003 to incorporate projections of the revenue marketing would generate. Even so, many Lafarge executives had a tendency to see marketing as a cost input (and potential saving, if cut) but not as a revenue input. Since 2003, my team and I have made sure that the nine regional heads on the executive committee recognize that divisional revenue estimates are affected by our activities; if they want to cut a marketing expense, they now realize that the cut will almost certainly affect future revenues.

We now send each regional head a one-page, bullet point outline of what to look for in the units' performance plans in terms of pricing strategy; market share projections; and the marketing, sales, IT, and technical service resources needed to realize those projections. If a unit is contemplating a new product launch, for instance, we take care that the committee is aware that both the promotion costs and

in HR and training. In 2004, my team finalized with HR and my marketing counterparts at the other Lafarge divisions a marketing competency profile and assessment tool, which we piloted in Greece. We are using the assessment to shape individual career development plans for all marketing personnel. The plans are supported by training modules, which have been tested in South Africa and are currently being rolled out, starting with the 15 priority units. Throughout the process, we've been careful to leverage HR's existing techniques, formats, and tools, in a joint shared effort with the HR and training department.

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When I started this project, I sometimes resented the fact that we had to fight and contrive to get what we wanted. Why wouldn't the company put its checkbook behind its rhetoric? A manufacturing initiative would not have been so shortchanged. Looking back, I now suspect that the privation may actually have helped us because it forced us to work that much harder. Although this is still a work in progress, Lafarge can now count marketing as one of its core competencies, and if my team and I were to be shown the door tomorrow, the practices and processes we have introduced would continue to thrive. 9

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To order, see page 147.

Fonte: Harvard Bussiness Review, v.85, n.5, p. 110-119, May. 2007.