8 Fundamental Developments in the MSF-Triangle

One clear advantage of a qualitative research approach lies in its ability to account for complex developments that have occurred in the course of time and their underlying reasons. To take advantage of this method strength, we asked our interviewees to elaborate on the changes that have occurred in their company with regard to the organization of and the interactions in the MSF-triangle. Analyzing 1400 pages of interview transcripts and additional field data such as organizational charts, we were able to identify fundamental changes in management practice of the MSF-triangle.

Through numerous analysis steps and intense discussions we understood that those changes are essentially manifestations of a more general theme. The overarching theme that emerges from our field experience of the MSF-triangle is an increased finance orientation of marketing and sales and an increased business orientation of finance (see Figure 17). We will subsequently discuss this theme and its underlying manifestations in detail.

8.1 Increased Finance Orientation of Sales

A number of companies reported that marketing and sales look for closer cooperation with finance and have begun to discuss finance-related marketing and sales issues more intensely in the MSF-triangle. For example, a Head of Business Unit/Head of Marketing of a FMCG firm said,

In managing price promotions properly we have done a huge leap forward last year. With finance we have developed some tools to bring in some efficiency here, which was absolutely necessary. Before, sales had basically a free hand and it was not transparent at all what they did there. (…) It was unbelievable to see what rubbish promotions we did.

Generally, with regard to sales we observe that sales becomes more analytical and at the same time more margin and price driven. In a number of companies, sales is increasingly paying attention to margins, prices, and customer profitability.
Figure 17: Fundamental Developments in the MSF-Triangle