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Dear readers and colleagues, I am proud to introduce you to Internal Communication: Proceedings of the 18th International Public Relations Research Symposium BledCom. The papers published in the proceedings represent an overview of the way internal communication is run at corporations, non-governmental organisations and government agencies.

Academics and public relations professionals from around the world have responded to the Call for Papers for 2011, allowing us to collect the best research and theoretical debates. Dealing with communication with employee, human resource management, change management, corporate culture and its influence on employee satisfaction, as well as the evaluation of internal communication processes, the papers offer the latest findings in the field of communication management. The proceedings also represent a major contribution to BledCom’s collection of eight books, proceedings and special edition publications dealing with public relations. The debates at this year’s symposium have also spurred the issue of a special edition of the professional publication Public Relations Review, bringing together expert articles selected by the BledCom program committee.

I can say with great confidence that BledCom is today one of the most recognisable professional symposiums dealing with public relations. Hosting leading experts from around the world, it promotes debate on new topics and contributes to the development of the profession.

Over the past 18 years BledCom has brought together respected experts in communication from around the globe to debate various aspects of public relations. The symposium has prompted the writing of many expert books, articles and studies contributing to the development of theory and practice in public relations around the world and I’m proud that year in and year out BledCom is a place to debate fresh ideas in this field. I therefore gladly accepted the honorary sponsorship of the 2011 BledCom symposium dealing with internal communication.

Communication is a basic need present in all human surroundings. Nothing has shaped the modern world like communication tools, among which the internet has been most influential. It is therefore the task of symposiums such as BledCom to answer questions posed by the development of communication technologies. Internal communication is by all means a specific area of public relations, whose main requirement is mutual understanding. Unfortunately, the growing intensity of communication has also brought about a boom in inconsequential information, which does not contribute to a better understanding of the core issues facing individual organisations. This information overload is something that we all face, which is why I support expert debates on the effects of communication intensity, message recognition and the question of whether internal communication using messages not essential to implementing the goals of an organisation attracts or detracts the attention of the players involved. I’m convinced that one of the biggest challenges today is developing internal communication that will actually promote the implementation of an organisation’s goals rather than hindering it.

As one of the world’s most relevant symposiums in the field of public relations, BledCom can by all means contribute to the development of communication practices, including in the area of internal communication. Distinguished communication experts, I’m convinced that the proceedings before you will bring about a rich collection of new findings in this area spurring future debate about public relations.

Dejan Verčič, PhD
University of Ljubljana & Pristop

Dr. Danilo Türk
President of the Republic of Slovenia
Honorary sponsor of BledCom 2011
Sónia Pedro Sebastião is an Assistant Professor in the Institute of Social and Political Science (ISCSP-UTL), teaching Public Relations, Cultural Studies and Media Studies courses since the year 2001. She has published in Portugal her master thesis about the Swiss Political System (2005), a textbook on Public Relations and her forthcoming PhD thesis about the Portuguese identity and mythology.

Her main interests are related with theoretical and cultural approaches to Public Relations, identities and digital communications. She is a CAPP Senior Research Fellow and Orient Institute Research Fellow, both research centres held by ISCSP-UTL, acknowledged and accredited by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology with Excellence and Very Good classifications, respectively.

She is a member of: the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA); the European Sociological Association (ESA - RN07 Sociology of Culture); the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA - Organisational and Strategic Communication); and of the Sociedade Portuguesa de Ciências da Comunicação (SOPCOM). She participates in these international and Portuguese associations as a speaker.
A highly experienced PR /Communications professional with a proven ability to deliver results based corporate communication, strategic planning, internal communication, crisis management and social media programs. Laoise has won a number of professional awards, notably the Public Relations Institute of Ireland’s Excellence Award and is currently the President of the International Association of Business Communicators’ Irish Chapter, (IABC).

Laoise is currently completing her PhD in Dublin’s Institute of Technology and has analyzed leadership support for communication and communication practices in high profile public and private companies in Ireland. Additionally, she has explored the role of ethics within the communications as rumblings about integrity in the profession persist.

Laoise is Course Director at the Public Relations Institute of Ireland where she developed their Certificate Internal Communication Certificate Course. And has also introduced and facilitated training webinars in developing practitioners’ social media skill set. A graduate of University College Dublin Laoise holds a BA international, Higher Diploma in Education and H Dip PR. She is a frequent public speaker and former radio presenter and teacher.

Roxana Maiorescu is currently a Doctoral Student in the Department of Communication at Purdue University in the United States. Her research interests include: crisis management, public diplomacy, corporate social responsibility, and the use of new media in PR campaigns. Prior to her doctoral studies, she earned an MA degree in Communication from Virginia Tech and a BA in Journalism and German from Babes Bolyai University in Transylvania.

Her work has focused primarily on the ways in which corporations and governments communicate during times of crisis. Thus, she has explored the crises faced by corporations such as Deutsche Telekom, Daimler, and France Telecom along with the ethical dilemmas they gave rise to. Additionally, she analyzed the PR strategies employed by governments of newly formed states such as Kosovo.

Her work has been presented at conferences among which: the International Public Relations Research Conference, the National Communication Association and the International Academy of Business Disciplines. Her forthcoming publications include a book chapter on the ethical dilemmas corporations face under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act as well as a peer-reviewed article on the use of social media in crisis management.
Krunoslav Borovec is Spokesperson of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia. He graduated in defectology - social educator and he is candidate for a doctor’s degree on the studies of Prevention science on the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Zagreb. Mr. Borovec is an employee of the Ministry of the Interior since 1992. He has been working there as police officer, deputy of the Head of the police station, Head of the police station, Head of the Office of the Head of police administration and as a Head of Director General Office.

He specialized himself to the scope of crime prevention, urban prevention, to the protection the victims of criminal offences and women and children as victims of violence. In the field of Public Relations it is important to mention that he is the author of strategy: “Public Relations of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia,” and he is the initiator of many changes and researches in the field of internal communication in the Ministry of the Interior. For crisis communications during killing of Pukanić-Franjić, the Croatian Public Relations Association has awarded him with the complimentary title Communicator of the Year for the year 2009.

Iva Balgač has graduated from Police College in Zagreb in 2001 and 2010. In 2010 she graduated with high honors and awarded for high performance with Magna cum laude. Balgač is employee of Ministry of the Interior since 2006 and currently working as Police Officer for International Police Cooperation within Office of General Police Director. Until now, she has published as author or co-author, several scientific or professional papers and handbooks. Currently she is working, as a co-author, on handbook “Situational Crime Prevention – theory and practice”. Balgač is interested in crime prevention, public relations, internal communication and protocol.

Mats Heide (PhD) is an Associate Professor of Strategic Communication, and the Study Director of the Master’s Program in Strategic Communication at Campus Helsingborg, Lund University. Heide’s primary research interests include strategic communication, organizational communication, crisis communication and change communication.

He received his PhD in Media and Communication Studies in 2002 at Lund University. The thesis focuses on organizational learning and intranet. He is author and co-author of several books and book chapters. Heide’s research is published in Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management och International Journal of Strategic Communication.

Ruža Karlović, M.Sc. earned her master’s degree at the Faculty of humanities and social sciences, University of Zagreb. She graduated from the Police college in Zagreb and is currently writing a doctoral thesis under the title “Public perception of public security. Police contribution”. She is a lecturer at the Police College in Zagreb and interested in crime prevention, sociology of police and police issues.
Charlotte Simonsson (Ph. D.) has been teaching within the field of organizational communication and strategic communication since 1995. She earned her PhD from Lund University in 2002, with a dissertation on leadership communication in increasingly complex organizations. After finishing her Ph.D., Charlotte worked as a senior consultant – specialized within internal communication – for several years. Currently she is an Assistant Professor in Strategic Communication at Lund University, and also director for the Bachelor’s programme in Strategic Communication. Since January 2011, she works with a research project about internal crisis communication – funded by The Swedish Agency for Contingency Management. Charlotte has also participated in a research project focused on communication in change processes. Her main research interests include leadership communication, co-workership, internal communication, change and crisis communication.

Ana Tkalac Verčič is an Associate Professor, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Zagreb. In 2001 she was a Fulbright scholar working under the mentorship of James E. Grunig, one of the leading world academics in the area of public relations. In 2003 she received a PhD at the University of Zagreb and became the first public relations academic with a PhD in Croatia, introducing undergraduate and graduate courses in the area of public relations. She is the first Croatian academic to publish papers in top public relations journals and present at top public relations conferences. She co-edited “Public Relations Metrics; Research and Evaluation” with Betteke van Ruler and Dejan Verčič. She is a visiting lecturer at the Universita della Svizzera Italiana, one of the leading international institutions in the area of communications. She is also a recipient of the CIPR Diploma and a qualified CIPR lecturer, as well as the director for the CIPR program in Croatia.

Stefania Romenti, PhD, is currently Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics and Marketing at IULM University (Milan, Italy) where she teaches both at BA and Master levels courses in public relations and communication. Her research is on a range of topics in public relations, with a particular focus on evaluation and measurement of results of communication. She is author and co-author of several books and articles in Italian and international communication journals. She is an active member of Federazione Relazioni Pubbliche Italiana (FERPI) and European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA).

Laura Smith, After graduating university with an English degree, Laura Smith started work as a trainee journalist on local newspapers. After working as a chief reporter and news editor, she left to join UK government department Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Along with journalism qualifications, she has also gained a certificate and diploma in internal communications. As part of HMRC’s internal media team, she heads the print and online news service for the department’s 73,000 staff.
Dr. Sherry Devereaux Ferguson (Ph.D., Indiana U; M.A., U of Houston; B.A., L.S.U.) is a senior professor and former Chair and Director of Graduate Studies for the Communication Department, University of Ottawa, Canada.

She has acted on the editorial boards of numerous journals, including the Journal of Communication, the Communication Yearbook, the Communication Studies Journal, the International Journal of Strategic Communication, and the Communication, Culture and Critique Journal. She chaired the PR Division of the ICA and held the position of Executive Board Member-at-Large for the Americas. Publications include three books on organizational communication, two on public opinion and strategic planning in communication, two on public speaking, and a book on civic discourse and cultural politics in Canada. She is currently working on a book on interpersonal communication for Oxford Canada. She has published 27 articles in refereed journals and made 43 conference presentations.

Clients in an extensive consulting career have included the Department of Foreign Affairs (Canada), the Department of Justice, Transport Canada, Health Canada, the Canadian Space Agency, the National Research Council, Office of the Auditor General, CIDA, the Canadian Management Institute, Petro Canada, and others. She served on two major federal advisory boards, which oversaw the writing of a vision statement and defining of curriculum needs for government communicators. She trained more than a thousand government communication officers in public opinion analysis and strategic planning techniques, initially at the request of the Assistant Secretary of Communications to Cabinet. She also did professional speech writing for a former Prime Minister, government ministers, and top level bureaucrats.

Tamara Vlastelica Bakić, MSc, is the lecturer at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Organizational Sciences, at the Department for Marketing and Public Relations.

She was a Corporate Affairs Manager at Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia and Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at Deloitte Serbia. Tamara is the author of the book “Media Campaign – publicity and advertising” published in 2007. She participated as a consultant in many marketing and PR projects with scientific institutions, NGOs and PR agencies and she was a lecturer and trainer at numerous educational programs in the field of communication management and skills.

Tamara is a member of the professional jury for annual PR awards and she was a member of the Managing board of the Public Relations Society of Serbia. She is the chairman of the Working group for education and development of CSR in the United Nations Global Compact Serbia. Tamara is the PhD candidate with the dissertation “Reputation Management by Socially Responsible Approach in Marketing and Public Relations” She started her career working for foreign media WDR/ARD, Spiegel, Televisione Swizzera - Italiana, Deutche Welle, etc.
Danijela Lalić, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, Department of Industrial Engineering and Management, University of Novi Sad, Serbia. She teaches courses Public Relations Management, Leadership and Business Communication.

Danijela is a partner in consulting agency ProMethod Network Solution System where she is involved in numerous communication management projects. She has experience in cooperation with scientific institutions, public relations agencies and international organizations. She was a lecturer and trainer at numerous educational programs in the field of communication and public relations management. She is also actively involved in numerous international projects.

Danijela has immense interest in Internet and Intranet systems, internal relationships and internal communication and new technologies. She spreads the idea of internet communication, social media strategy, community management and internal communication to companies such as Cisco Entrepreneur Institute, Gazprom Neft, Opel Dealer, and many other private and public organizations.

Lavinia Cinca spent the early years of her career in the Romanian Association of Public Relations Professionals where, as Secretary General, she interacted with the PR market and learned directly from top practitioners. Until 2009, she experienced the different facets of communication like media relations, rebranding, CSR campaigns or event management thanks to her positions at Enel and in other consultancies. Later on, she moved to Belgium for an internship in the press Unit of the Committee of the Regions and at the moment she is working at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Brussels.

She is passionate about Internet communications and she has co-presented in Austria an academic article on Belgium’s country image in the online media. In her spare time, she is writing touristic articles on Travel Moments in Time. She holds a Masters’ Degree in Management and Business Communication (NSPAS, Romania) and a postgraduate degree in European Studies (CIFE, Belgium). She is proficient in English, French, Spanish and Italian.

Dejan Verčič, Ph.D., is a founder of Pristop, a leading communication management consultancy based in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Associate Professor for Public Relations at the University of Ljubljana. He holds a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He has published over 200 articles, books, chapters, papers, and reports. His recent books are The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research, and Practice (with K. Sriramesh, 2nd ed. 2009 by Routledge) and Public Relations Metrics: Research and Evaluation (with B. van Ruler and A. Tkalac Verčič; Routledge 2008).

Prof. Verčič is an active consultant serving major Slovenian and international corporations, government agencies and international organizations. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the Special Achievement Award for developing the Public Relations sector in Slovenia, both in theory and in practice, and the Alan Campbell-Johnson Medal for Special Achievement in the area of International Public Relations. Prof. Verčič served, inter alia, as the chairman of the Research Committee of the IABC Research Foundation and as the President of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA). Since 1993, he organizes an annual International Public Relations Research Symposium – BledCom.
Dušan Tomič has over 18 years of experience in business development, consulting, pre-sales and sales for renowned international companies (Capgemini, Hutchison, Siemens) in leading strategic and operational positions, including several years of experience in managing organizational units and teams in complex integration projects of the private and public sector companies. He is an IT and telecommunications professional with a PhD in Computer Science from the Vienna University of Technology. In 2010 he completed a General Management Executive MBA program of the Management Center Innsbruck (MCI). Dusan is interested in process and project management, business requirements analysis and integrated corporate communications.

Julia Jahansoozi has been teaching within the field of public relations and public communication since 2001. Currently, she is the Director of the MSc in Public Communications Management at Stirling Media Research Institute, University of Stirling where she has been working since 2008. Previously Julia managed the Division of Applied Communication at the University of Central Lancashire, in Preston, UK. Main teaching areas include public relations and tourism, conflict resolution and negotiation skills, public affairs and advocacy, public relations in context, social influence theories, public diplomacy and strategic communication.

Julia received both her PhD and MSc in Public Relations from the University of Stirling and completed her BSc in Psychology and Political Science at the University of Victoria, Canada. In 2009 she was awarded the Günter-Thiele-Award for Excellent Doctoral & Postdoctoral Theses. Her areas of research include organization-public relationships and international public relations. She sits on the editorial boards of Journal of Communication Management and is the book review editor for the new journal Public Relations Inquiry.

Before moving into academia, Julia worked in public relations practice in both Canada and the UK in a variety of consultancy and in-house roles within the private and non-profit sectors.

Liz Bridgen is Senior Lecturer in Public Relations at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, and leads the University’s MA in Public Relations. She has an MA in Mass Communications from the University of Leicester and previously worked in public relations practice in the UK and Iceland where she specialized in corporate communications and internal communications working for clients including Visa, Bosch and the British Post Office.

Her recent paper on the emotional implications of social media use by public relations practitioners will shortly be published by the Journal of Media Practice and she has delivered refereed papers at conferences run by EUPRERA (the European Public Relations Education and Research Association) and MeCCSA (the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association) as well as at the 11th International Public Relations Research Conference in Miami, Florida.

Her research focuses on gender, social change and the implications of new technologies in the workplace, viewing these areas from the perspective of public relations practice.
Silvia Biraghi

Silvia Biraghi is a PhD student in Corporate Communication at the Department of Economics & Marketing at IULM University in Italy. She received her degree at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan (Italy) with a dissertation on On-line consumer branded entertainment. Her current research interests are internal communication and consumer brand engagement. In her PhD research she is trying to investigate the strategic role of internal communication in sustaining organizational management and success.

Andrea Balduzzi

Andrea has undertaken editorial activities for some publishing companies, and has collaborated with the Domus Academy Research Centre for the development of some multimedia editorial projects, he has collaborated with Trivioquadrivio (study of Milan of training and communication) for the digital support of cultural and communication projects, and with the publicity and communication agency Publicis in the Milan offices. In Methodos since 2001 he is in charge of communication, web design, web tools to support specific business activities, intranet projects and internal communication plans, technologies and implementation of digital communication tools. He collaborates as a professor in the IULM Master in Milan of Company Public Relations and with of the Masters of specialization of IlSole24Ore. He has taken care of the design and implementation of Avanti e Veloci, the Fiat Group Automobiles portal that has been inserted in the change program as a tool of support and promotion of the new principles and personal development, through both the exploration of the individual and the group collaboration. In Avanti e Veloci a community has been constructed of approximately 1200 managers that has found continuous stimuli in the portal, resources and moments of comfort in order to reflect on their own leadership. The portal has received the Platinum Intranet Innovation Award 2007, the global awards that celebrate new ideas and innovative approaches to the enhancement and delivery of intranets, and recognize individual intranet improvements, by increasing the pace of innovation across the whole of the intranet community. Today he coordinates the development of social media applied to internal communication and to projects of cultural change.

Emanuele Invernizzi

Emanuele Invernizzi is professor of Public Relations and Corporate Communication at IULM University, Milan, where he is director of the Institute of Economics and Marketing.
He is director of the Executive Master Program in Corporate Public Relations and director of the PhD programme in Corporate Communication; he is responsible for the Research Centre on Corporate Communication and Public Relations, where he conducts research on the institutionalization of public relations, on the assessment of results of communication activities and on the development of the public relations industry and its professional role in Italy.
He is President of Euprera (European Public Relations Education and Research Association) since January 2010 and member of the Executive Board of Ferpi (Italian Federation of Public Relations).
Matteo Barone

With classical training, graduated in Philosophy and specialized in Social Communication with a thesis on the contribute of epistemology to social research. After the degree, he has collaborated with the Institute of Social Communication and with the Sociological Department of the University Cattolica of Milan, publishing essays on the magazine “Comunicazioni Sociali” (Vita e Pensiero), subsequently collaborating in the Business Communicative Theory and Techniques discipline. In Methodos since 1995, direction consulting firm, he deals with socio-cultural researches inside public and private organizations, change management plans for the managerial and work cultural dimension and stakeholder engagement integrated programs and sustainable welfare. He undertakes training activities on themes of managerial culture inside organizations and at some specialization Masters (Sole24Ore, IULM, Ferpi). From 2005 he is close to Fiat Auto in the turnaround project of Marchionne’s management, and to its deployment in the managerial structure and plant of Mirafiori (2006), Pomigliano D’Arco (2008), Termini Imerese (2009). In these areas and in other national and international business contexts (including Kraft, Pastificio Rana, Pirelli Polo Industriale of Settimo Torinese) he has conducted research and consulting activities linked with the relationship between company culture, architectonic spaces and ecology of work, and the relationship between well-being, space planning and work-life balance. He is the author of various articles on magazines of the sector and co-author of “Prospettive per la comunicazione interna e il benessere organizzativo: appartenere, integrarsi e comunicare nell’organizzazione che cambia” by Giorgio Del Mare (Milan, Franco Angeli, 2005). Today, in Methodos, he is Senior Manager with the responsibility of the Internal Communication/social research of the Business Unit and of Knowledge Management.

Sara Secomandi

Sara has graduated in Philosophy and specialized in Social Communication at the University Cattolica of Milan with a thesis on cultural programming of Swiss Television in Italian. She has undertaken journalistic activities for different newspapers and from 1998 she is part of the Lombardy Journalistic Order. From approximately 15 years she works in the field of multimedia communication and she is interested in themes linked to the use of computer interfaces for communication, internal and external. She has worked for the development and design of internet websites, intranet and Cd-roms and has managed projects of complex web presence for public administration, developing citizen portals and platforms of e-governments. In Methodos she is dealing with projects regarding intranet platforms and internal multichannel communication for important clients. Including, Fiat Group Automobile, for which she has coordinated the editorial activities of the portal Avanti e Veloci, an auto-training and development platform dedicated to all the managerial population at a European level. The portal, in 2005, has received the Platinum Intranet Innovation Award, the highest prize for intranet innovation expected by an international network of company and specialized study groups in the assessment of the intranet and the environment based on web technologies for the growth of the business, the change, the development of the leadership and organizational communication. For Enel, the largest electronic operator in Italy and the second largest utility quoted in Europe, she has undertaken the internal communication plan for two years, integrated on web channels, newspapers, TV and visual for the program of operative excellence and continuous improvement that has involved all the countries of the Group. At the same time she is finalizing her studies in Psychology, graduating in Science and Psychological Techniques with specialization in Work Psychology at the University Bicocca of Milan.
Jeong-Nam Kim is an assistant professor of public relations in the Department of Communication at Purdue University. He searches and researches phenomena related to human communication and problem solving. He has developed the situational theory of problem solving (STOPS) and the communicative action in problems solving (CAPS) with Dr. James E. Grunig and Dr. Ni Lan. He is working on the research projects applying CAPS and STOPS in the areas of public relations, digitalization and cybercoping among members of publics, risk and health communication, and sociological public diplomacy. He studied communication and public relations at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Soo hyun Park studies public relations at the Indiana University at IUPUI. She has been working as a public relations manager in Korea. Her specific interests and areas of expertise are employee communication, fundraising, and public segmentation. She is currently working on the research projects with Jeong-Nam Kim on employ communication applying CAPS and STOPS in the areas of public relations.

Ronél Rensburg is the former Head of the Department of Marketing and Communication Management at the University of Pretoria (2000-2008). She is currently senior professor in the same department. She is a board member of the Ron Brown Institute (RBI) for the enhancement of small business incubation and development in Africa. She is a member of EUPRERA (the European Public Relations Education and Research Association), President of PRISA (Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa), a board member of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GA), a member of the North American and Russian Communication Association (NARCA) and the ICA (International Communication Association). Ronél Rensburg is coordinator of international exchange activities and collaboration initiatives for the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. She is a founding-member of the recently-established Centre for Communication and Reputation Management at the University of Pretoria. She is a speechwriter and -trainer for politicians and captains of industry on a continual basis.

Li Ying

Her work mainly focuses on strategic public communication to promote social and cultural changes. She is especially interested in grassroots and participatory media and communication practice for the purpose of civic engagement, community organizing, and public diplomacy. She approaches this line of inquiry through blending research traditions from strategic issues management, public relations, and international relations. Her recent research projects include investigating public diplomacy efforts by Chinese networked activists overseas in 2008, cultural re-branding of Macau as a tourist destination, and research and design of public communication campaigns and crisis management on the light rail project in Macau.
Carl Brønn is Associate Professor of Decision Science in the School of Economics and Business at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. He also holds an adjunct position at the Norwegian Business School. He teaches courses in business simulation methods, strategic decision making, problem structuring, and corporate environmental management. His research interests are centered on understanding the challenges of corporate environmental management from the perspective of organizational learning and knowledge management. This requires an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological approach that offers considerable room for exploring a broad range of seemingly unrelated topics. He has published in a number of books as well as in journals such as Strategic Management Journal, Journal of Communication Management, Corporate Reputation Review, Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management and the Journal of Public Policy. He holds a degree in mechanical engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology, a master in applied statistics from Georgia State University, and a PhD in decision sciences, also from Georgia State University.

Pascal Lorenzini is the director of corporate publishing and head of internal communications at Swiss Post. He is responsible for all internal and external communication activities across the group. These include traditional media – such as the client magazine, the annual report, the staff newspaper for all employees in Switzerland and a printed newsletter for all staff abroad – as well as various online channels.

Pascal is a strong believer in true two-way symmetrical communication. Three years ago, he introduced a commentary function that accompanies all intranet news, blogs and wikis, at Swiss Post. This has lead to the FEIEA (Federation of European Business Communicators Associations) award for best intranet site in 2009.

Pascal started as an editor for a leading newspaper and as a radio sportscaster. Then he moved into Public Relations. He edited Swisscom’s staff magazine and was in charge of all online news channels before taking on overall responsibility for the intranet. In 2000, he founded his own Public Relations and consulting agency, coteq ltd., which he ran successfully for seven years. Pascal holds a bachelor of business administration degree from the University of Applied Sciences in Berne, Switzerland, and is presently pursuing a master’s degree in communications management at Syracuse University’s Newhouse School.

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Involved in the past in the development of university programmes aimed at building knowledge of communication management in Canada (Mount Saint Vincent University) and the United Kingdom (Cranfield University School of Management), he is now a visiting professor at the University of Central Lancashire at Preston (department of communication), in the north west of England and Cardiff University in Wales (school of journalism, media and cultural studies). He is also a visiting professor at the German Graduate School of Management and Law, Heilbronn, Germany, teaching there on the School’s MBA programme.

He has written articles and books on public affairs, public relations and corporate communications practice, including *How to Understand and Manage Public Relations* (Business Books, 1991) and *Strategic Communications Management: Making Public Relations Work*, with Laura Mazur (Addison-Wesley, 1995). He contributed to *Excellence in Public Relations and Communications Management* (Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1992) as part of a research team with James Grunig from the University of Maryland and others. He has also written a number of management case studies for teaching purposes on organisations such as Dunhill, Lloyds of London, AEA Technology, Diageo and the South African company, Barloworld.

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She has also undertaken various studies on the concepts of user-generated content in its relation to trust in the Media and in journalism. She has also carried out a number of researches on internal communication and trust during crises, notably the financial crisis and on the importance of internal communication during situations of change.

She is a member of Lasco (Laboratoire d’Analyse des Systèmes de Communication des Organisations), of ABCI (Association Belge de la Communication Interne) and is a member of the scientific committee of OIC (Observatoire International des Crises).
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Before joining the Department of Marketing and Communication Management at the University of Pretoria in January 2003 as a lecturer, she worked in the communication management field for more than 17 years, among others as communication manager at the University of Pretoria. Other organisations for which she worked, include the Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism, the Department of Health and Population Development, the City Council of Pretoria and Telkom.

She is past-president of SACOMM (the South African Communication Association) and represents this association on the Council for Communication Management (the body that represents communication related professional associations in South Africa).

Estelle was also part of the research team for the King III Report on Governance for South Africa 2009, and currently still serves on the Compliance and Stakeholder Relationships Committee of the King Committee for the writing of the King Report Practice Notes. This Committee was responsible for writing Chapter 6 (Compliance with laws, codes, rules and standards) and Chapter 8 (Governing stakeholder relationships) of King III. Although the ‘stakeholder inclusive’ model of corporate governance was recognised in King 1 (1992) and in King II (2002), it is addressed for the first time in detail in King III (2009).

She has facilitated the Governance Working Group for the Stockholm Accords for the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, an umbrella body representing professional associations for communication management across the globe. It is foreseen that the Accords will guide the communication management profession on a theoretical and pragmatic level for the next few years.

She is also a founding member of the Centre for Communication and Reputation Management at the University of Pretoria.

Her research interest lies in strategic communication management, stakeholder relationship management, corporate strategy, corporate governance and corporate reputation.

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She is currently working on the mutual and public recognition of communication professionals and more largely she is working on the function of internal communication in the public sector. The subject of her PhD is the professional identity of the French speaking responsible of internal communication and the implication of the management and Director of Human Resources in the construction of identity. For this research, she is working under the supervision of François Lambotte (UCL-Mons).

She is also a member of Lasco (Laboratoire d’Analyse des Systèmes de Communication des Organisations) and of ABCI (Association Belge de la Communication Interne).
ABSTRACT
In dynamic organizational systems, the presence of gaps, defined as the difference between an actual state of affairs and a desired state, drives organizational behavior. Without gaps there is no reason to take action, although the complexity of business organizations assures that this static condition never exists. Gaps take place in all aspects of organizational life and a logical assumption is that the more worrisome ones are those associated with the external environment that the firm faces. However, this is not necessarily the case; the internal environment, which in principle organizational managers can exert some degree of control over, can in fact be an incubator for allowing gaps to grow. Thus management must concentrate on addressing those issues within the organization that allow gaps to arise. This is necessary if the organization is to have any hope of dealing with the less controllable challenges from the external environment. It is also necessary from a reputation viewpoint as the organization puts itself at risk when organizational behavior and thinking does not match what is expected by stakeholders.

The PZB service quality model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985), as adapted by Brønn (forthcoming) and also by Gelders and Ihlen (2010) to the area of government policy communications, illustrates gaps that can occur when organizations fail to set behavior standards based on stakeholder expectations. The test for the organization is how well it listens to its stakeholders and how it interprets their desires and wishes. The problem is: “Who is listening to what stakeholders, how are they interpreting what they hear and what are they doing with the information?” This is a classic co-orientation situation (McLeod and Chaffee 1973).
INTRODUCTION

Communication has been characterized as an enabling process that acts much like a lubricant in an engine. Organizations are groups of people that come together for a common purpose. They form the engine that accomplishes the goals of the organization, and communication is the ‘oil’ that allows the engine to function properly over time. However, too little or too much oil can be damaging to the engine, but for different reasons. Also, the correct type of oil (viscosity and chemical consistency) must be employed given the operating conditions. Organizational communications is also subject to the too little/too much danger and also to the problem of correct type. Essentially, this is a ‘systems issue’ in both cases. The mechanical case is relatively easy to deal with since the operation of an engine is thoroughly understood. The organizational situation is far more complex even though the mechanical metaphor (Morgan 1986) can be used to convey partial images of how they function.

An increasingly complex world characterized by uncertainty, multiple stakeholders, conflicts among goals, and unclear causal relationships with time delayed consequences places significant demands on organizational agents in the execution of their responsibilities. Communications becomes important in this context as the firm seeks to gather information about its context, both internal and external, and also in its efforts to explain itself to a skeptical and potentially hostile audience of stakeholders.

The role of organizational communication must expand to respond to these challenges, and a number of interesting models, frameworks and methodologies that provide insight and guidance have been developed. Chief among these are the co-orientation model and the stakeholder perspective. But the field of communication can also benefit from other disciplines, such as marketing and insights from the systems thinking tradition. In the following we present the co-orientation model but argue that while it predominantly has an external focus it also has an internal orientation model but argue that while it predominantly has an external focus it also has an internal perspective. But the field of communication can also benefit from other disciplines, such as marketing and insights from the systems thinking tradition.

The communication challenge – the problem of co-orientation

The co-orientation model from McLeod and Chaffee (1973) illustrates the underlying basis for organizations trying to understand stakeholder expectations. In this model there are four critical types of associations that define and influence the interactions between an organization and a stakeholder on a particular issue: understanding, agreement, congruency and accuracy. At the heart of the co-orientation framework is the notion of mental models (Senge 1990) and the recognition that in order for any interaction to be effective, these models must be ‘oriented’ properly. The relevance of mental models to the communications function is clear. The ability to communicate with others who share similar mental models and understandings of the world, having cognitive coordination, is easier than communicating with someone who does not share a common conceptual structure. Mental models are, by definition, wrong in that they are only an incomplete representation of the parties’ interests with regard to expectations. However, as with all models, they can still be useful if they contain the elements that are important in the issue context. In the absence of very close communication between an organization and its stakeholders, the organization’s managers (both communications and operations) will rely on historical mental models of the stakeholder’s interests that may be out of date.

Dozier and Ehling (1992) suggest four co-orientation states: a state of true consensus, a state of dissension, a state of false consensus and a state of false conflict. True consensus exists when both parties know that they share an agreement on their view or evaluation of an issue. Dissensus occurs when the parties hold conflicting views and they are aware of their differences. While the latter state raises its own managerial issues, from a communication perspective this situation is not as fraught with uncertainty and the potential for missteps as are the states of false consensus and false conflict. A false consensus exists when the organisation believes that the stakeholder agrees with them on a particular policy, action or issue when, in fact, they do not. The same is true if the stakeholder group mistakenly believes that the organisation holds the same view that they do. Similarly, this state also exists if both groups mistakenly believe that they agree on an issue when in fact they do not. A state of false conflict exists when the parties, the organisation and the stakeholder(s), believe that they disagree on an issue, policy or action, when in fact they agree. It becomes quite easy to see how crises arise and opportunities are missed on the basis of holding on to false assumptions about the other part in the communication process. This points out the important role that simplifying assumptions have on shaping mental models.

False consensus and false conflict are a result of significant and important gaps between what the organization thinks or perceives and what the stakeholders think or perceive. While these two co-orientation states may appear to be negative, the presence and awareness of a “gap” can be positive in that it is central to change. In an organizational context, the existence of gaps is central to change. A gap is defined as the difference between an ‘actual state’ and a ‘desired state.’ For example, a firm may have the goal of achieving a 25% market share with its product (the ‘desired
state’ or target) while the reality is that it is only 17%. The difference of 8% represents a gap that causes actions to be taken to reduce or eliminate it. There are two general types of organizational responses to this condition. One is to increase marketing and advertising budgets, keeping the target fixed. The other response may be to lower the ambition for the market share while maintaining the current budgets. In reality, some combination of the two may also be possible. Over time, the selected responses will have an effect on the market share, which will again be compared to the desired value. In this way, responding to gaps in a system is simply a feedback process that is revisited in the future with the intention to meeting the desired level of performance by closing the relevant gap. Figure 1, below, illustrates this notion in the form of a causal loop diagram.

**Figure 1 in here (manjka)**
The time element is implicit in causal loop models of organizational systems. The double slash between the ‘Action to Change Actual Condition’ and ‘Actual Condition’ represents a time delay between cause and effect. The plus and minus signs at the heads of the arrows indicate the general direction of change. Plus means that cause and effect move in the same direction, the minus sign means they move in opposite directions. For example, ‘Actual Condition’ influences ‘Gap’ with a minus sign. The interpretation is that as the actual condition increases (actual market share increases) then the ‘Gap’ will decrease, all else held constant. Also, as the gap increases, then there will be increased actions to change the actual state, which feed back to determining the size of the gap at a point in the future.

**The PZB model**
The co-orientation model performs commendably at identifying the possible states that may occur by not listening to stakeholders or by misinterpreting their perceptions or expectations. However, it does not address the systemic consequences that arise from the co-orientation states. What occurs further in the firm/organization if there are gaps in stakeholder expectations and management perceptions of these expectations? The ramifications of the co-orientation state are illustrated by the PZB service quality model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) (see also Zeithaml et al. 1988). The PZB Model was an attempt to define and model service quality at a time when there was little focus on this construct. As part of their exploration the researchers concluded that quality involves a comparison of expectations with performance, and thus satisfaction with services is related to fulfilling expectations. They cite several studies that conclude, for example, that satisfaction is related to confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations, and that consumers compare the service they expect with perceptions of the service they receive (Gronroos 1982). The assumption is that behavior quality is achieved if the gap between expectations and subsequent perceptions is large and positive; stakeholders receive more than expect. This thinking is manifested in the concept service orientation, which basically states that ‘in order for an organization to be successful . . . it is important that all departments, respective of the degree of their direct contact with the customer, understand that they affect the keeping of promises to customers and the quality of service delivered’ (Landman and Angelopulo, 2006, p. 70).

**Figure 2 in here (manjka)**
The key driver in this model is the existence of a number of gaps. The five gaps (shown in figure 1) are:
- **Gap 1: Knowledge gap:** The difference between customer expectations and management perceptions of their expectations.
- **Gap 2: Standards gap:** The difference between management perceptions of customer expectations and service specifications.
- **Gap 3: Behavior gap:** The difference between service specifications and the service actually delivered.
- **Gap 4: Communication gap:** The difference between service delivered and what is communicated about the service quality to customers.
- **Gap 5: Gap between service and expectations:** The discrepancy between customers’ expectations of the service and perceptions of the actual service quality.

Gap 1, the knowledge gap, occurs because the organization does not know what customers expect. The organization is ignorant of customer expectations or has erroneous perceptions of their expectations. The standards gap, gap 2, is a result of not specifying service standards that satisfy customers’ expectations. The organization does not deliver the expected service quality or it may have standards of service performance that are well below that expected of them by customers. This can be compounded by the absence of service quality that is actively demanded of organizations by their customers.

Gap 3 represents the mismatch between actual delivered service and service specifications. Performance that does not deliver on promises made leads to gap 4, the communications gap, the difference between delivered service and what is communicated. Gap 5 occurs when the organization's actual behavior does not match the behavior that is expected of the organization. Customers expect a certain level of quality from an organization, often because they are promised this through the organization's communication. They also have a perception (image) of how the organization performs when it comes to quality. The organization, for its part, delivers on quality based on, at the worst, no knowledge of what their customers expect or how they perceive the organization.

Gaps 1 and 5 exist between the consumer and the marketer and thus have an internal-external orientation. Gap 1 implies some interaction between the customer and the organization, and Gap 5 is where customers meet the organization through actual experience with service. Gaps 2
to 4 on the other hand exist internally. In Gap 2, the organization is setting their service delivery standards, and in Gap 3 they carry out these standards through actual service delivery. Gap 4 comprises the controlled communication in the form of marketing or public relations about the level of service customers can expect.

Gap 5 is arguably the ‘ultimate’ test for the organization as this gap depends on the size and direction of the other four gaps, i.e. on how well the organization listens to its customers, how it interprets their desires and wishes, how well it delivers what it promises and lastly how credible its communications are. It represents the culmination of the transactions and relationships between the firm and the customer. From a communications viewpoint, however, Gaps 1 and 4 are of primary importance. From the co-orientation perspective, it is Gap 1, the variance between the customer’s level of expected service and the firm’s perception of that level of service expectation that is the most important. This is because in the PZB model, it is managerial perceptions of customer expectations that is the initial step in the service production process. Misreading the customers’ level of expected behavior has an impact on all other service production and service quality actions.

In an organizational setting there is never just a single gap that must be attended to. The PZB model identifies five important areas where there is a potential for differences to occur. The balanced scorecard model (Kaplan and Norton 1992) is a well-known managerial tool for highlighting the necessity to adopt a systems perspective on strategy. This mindset is relevant for communicators as well, as the PZB model shows. Efforts to manage a gap situation in one area of the organization can affect the ability of decision makers in other functional areas to manage discrepancies for which they have responsibility. Figure 3 combines these notions. Often, problems are seen as a linear sequence of problem-action-resolution links with no thought to the ‘systemic’ consequences of their actions. A feedback perspective recognizes the closed loop, dynamic nature of organizational life and points to the interconnectedness of organizational decision making consequences.

**Figure 3 in here (manjka)**

**From Customers to Stakeholders**

The PZB model is relatively easy to understand and apply. It has been used extensively through its operationalization in the SERVQUAL instrument for measuring customers’ perceptions of service quality, with expectations providing the reference point for standards against which perceptions of actual service are measured. However, service quality is one of many types of behavior we expect or are promised by an organization, and customers are only one stakeholder of the organization. Thus it is reasonable to assume that the logic behind the model can be applied to all stakeholders. Vidaver-Cohen (2008) refers to the reputation variables identified by Reputation Institute’s RepTrak as quality dimensions that stakeholders expect from an organization. In other words, different stakeholders expect quality in different behaviors of the organization: products, services, management, financial performance, working environment, social responsibility and innovation. In the revised model presented here (figure x) the word ‘behavior’ is substituted for ‘service quality’ and ‘stakeholders’ is substituted for ‘customers.’

**Figure 4 in here (manjka)**

The gaps then become:

- **Gap 1: Knowledge gap:** The difference between stakeholder expectations and management perceptions of their expectations.
- **Gap 2: Standards gap:** The difference between management perceptions of stakeholder expectations and behavior specifications.
- **Gap 3: Behavior gap:** The difference between behavior specifications and the behavior actually delivered.
- **Gap 4: Communication gap:** The difference between behavior delivered and what is communicated about the behavior quality to stakeholders.
- **Gap 5: Gap between behavior and expectations:** The discrepancy between stakeholders’ expectations of the behavior and perceptions of the actual behavior quality.

The PZB model identifies a number of areas where misinterpretations can occur, all of which are dependent on the initial discrepancy identified in Gap 1. This discrepancy starts a domino effect that plays out through the entire organization, creating problems in its path. However, the word ‘problem’ is a commonly used term that has some problematic aspects. A ‘problem’ is a subjective determination that is based on an agent’s perception of a discrepancy between a desired state of affairs and the experienced state. To the extent that this discrepancy is significant, a problem is defined. This definition of a ‘problem’ as the difference between desired and actual states is agent-specific. Other agents observing the same experience may not see the situation as a problem at all. Consequently, whether a condition is a problem or not depends on the underlying mental models that are employed by the agents at that time.

Mental models play a central role in the definition and interpretation of an issue that involves many different dimensions. Thus, depending on the agents’ mental models, a situation may be interpreted as a classical problem, while other agents may be wondering what the fuss is all about. The danger in complex situations is that people have the natural tendency to assume that others see the situation in the same way as they do. This phenomenon is why the co-orientation model is useful in studying the PZB model. It clearly identifies the various states of misinformation that can arise between two or more agents (stakeholders) who do not clarify their interpretations of a complex situation of common interest, resulting in the situation defined in the PZB model’s Gap 1.
A simple example illustrates how the two models complement each other. Today’s organizations are expected to have some type of environmental initiatives. This issue gained significance with Al Gore’s film ‘An Inconvenient Truth,’ and social expectations for all organizations to be ‘Green’ has never been greater. But what does being green mean and does it connote the same thing for everyone? This is illustrated in the area above the dotted line in the co-orientation model below. Both the organization and its stakeholders have an idea of what being green means. They each understand that this is an important issue in today’s society that must be dealt with. The question is if the organization and its stakeholders agree on the definition of being green. An organization may feel it is sufficient to recycle paper while a stakeholder may want more visible action. The degree of similarity between “organization’s definition” and the “stakeholders’ definition” is called agreement.

The next step for the ‘green’ firm is to set their environment standards according to their perception of stakeholder expectations. The organization takes their knowledge (or lack of knowledge) into the organization and begins to set its environmental standards. Institutional factors will provide a minimum level of environmental performance through the legal system, but this level is taken as a given by both the firm and the stakeholders. At issue is the additional effort above and beyond the legally imposed lower limit. In this case, it is natural to see the firm as wanting to keep their extra efforts at a minimum due to, among other things, economic factors. External stakeholders, however, may expect and demand considerably greater emphasis on the greening of the firm, regardless of the cost. Communications between business and environmentalist stakeholders have frequently collapsed due to each carrying respectively incomplete mental models. Managers may have ignored the effects of their firms’ activities on the natural environment; environmentalists may have neglected the consequences of finance and prices on the environment. The firm then enacts these standards and communicate through their green advertising how green they are. Proof is in ‘walking the talk’, which is experienced by the stakeholders who form a perception of the extent to which one participant's estimation of what the other is thinking matches what the other participant really does think. There is congruency when the stakeholder’s perception of the organization’s position matches their own interpretation of the issue.

In another example, Gelders and Ihlen (2009) applied the PZB model to government policy communications, arguing that satisfaction with the public sector is increased more by communication on potential policies than by results. The researchers thus used communication quality as what citizens expect. They employed the PZB model on data collected from previous research, ultimately suggesting that the government should: in gap 1 listen to citizen needs; in gap 2 set criteria for good communication and discuss this with relevant actors; in gap 3 meet the communication standards; and in gap 4 clearly communicate how they will communicate. It is important to recognize that these assessments are not objective. The stakeholders’ evaluation of the organization’s activities is filtered by their mental models. If the mental model is complete in the sense that it encompasses elements that represent the organization’s concerns, then the assessment and reactions may be more appropriate.

A communication perspective

If we look at the gaps and their measurement, we see that communication is important at every step in the model. For example, according to Zeithaml et al. (1988), the size of the knowledge gap is related to a) the extent of marketing research orientation, b) extent and quality of upward communication and c) levels of management. There may exist inadequate research on the stakeholders, a lack of upward communication in the organization, not having a relationship focus on stakeholders, and excess levels of management that inhibit communication and understanding. Gap 2 is related to management commitment to quality, goal setting, task standardization and perception of feasibility. These constructs can be influenced by resources committed to quality, defining quality in ways that people can understand, translating management’s perceptions into tasks that can be routinized, and the belief that the goals are realistic (feasible). The quality specification and delivery gap (gap 3) is dependent on teamwork, employee-job fit, technology-job fit, perceived control, role conflict, role ambiguity, and supervisory control systems. Nearly all of these factors involve human resources and internal communication challenges. Zeithaml et al. (1988) describe role ambiguity as impacted by frequency and quality of downward communication and constructive feedback. Role ambiguity (March and Olsen 1975) is a significant barrier to organizational learning. Teamwork is dependent on instilling a cooperative atmosphere and a feeling of involvement and commitment in addition to a feeling that upper management genuinely cares about employees.

Similarly, the size of the communication gap is related to a) extent of horizontal communication and b) a propensity to overpromise. There may be a lack of integration of communication within the organization – not knowing what one element or unit is saying to whom externally. Organizations may exaggerate promises or perhaps not even provide information in their external communications. The organization basically makes promises they can’t keep thus setting themselves up for failure by communicating a too rosy picture of what they can deliver.

The direct application of the model to gap 5 is somewhat more challenging. Parasuraman et al. (1985) initially generated a list of 10 criteria for evaluating service quality, defined as the difference between expected service and perceived service. The ten criteria include:
• Reliability – consistency of performance and dependability
• Responsiveness – willingness or readiness of employees to provide service
• Competence – possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service
• Access – approachability and ease of contact
• Courtesy – politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness
• Communication – keeping customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them
• Credibility – trustworthiness, believability, honesty
• Security – freedom from danger, risk or doubt
• Understanding/knowing the customer – make an effort to understand needs
• Tangibles – physical evidence of service

Ultimately the criteria were narrowed to comprise five generic dimensions to measure gap 5; perceptions of service delivered and expected service: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. A summary of the five generic dimensions is given below:

- Reliability: consistency of performance and dependability of behavior;
- Responsiveness: willingness or readiness of the organization to provide quality behavior;
- Assurance: employees instilling confidence and providing consistent performance;
- Empathy: caring, demonstrating interest, and understanding;
- Tangibles: observable evidence of quality behavior.

We have shown that the PZB model comprises a number of communication challenges that must be dealt with if expectations are to be met in a satisfactory manner. These include promoting upward communication, translating management’s perceptions, helping employees buy in to organizational goals, increasing frequency and quality of downward communication, instilling a feeling of ‘we’ within the organization, and finally having some sort of control of who is saying what to whom. Additionally, the generic dimensions such as empathy and responsiveness are communication dimensions. Landman and Angelopulo (2006) make the case that internal communication is critical in creating a service orientation; employees are seen as relationship builders and communication is the vehicle for building those relationships. In their study of the role of internal communication in service delivery, also using the PZB model, the researchers define three primary functions of internal communication: 1) strategic alignment, 2) a combination of organizational learning, knowledge management and information dissemination, and 3) motivation. Interestingly it was knowledge management that was cited by Landman and Angelopulo in at least three of the gaps, while we propose that it is organizational learning that is the most important. While knowledge and information are key in the process, it is the shared insights, knowledge and mental models that allows learning to occur. This further enables organizations to respond differently to similar challenges through increasing its degrees of freedom by drawing on a broader set of experiences.

We have argued that it is the mindset of managers and processes inside the organization that determine if the right standards are set and the right behavior carried out. Every step involves agents’ perceptions of other agents. This implies that the co-orientation model is not just an externally-oriented model, but rather is equally relevant at each gap of the PZB model. As gap 1 is influenced by management’s mental model of what external stakeholders expect, so too can these mental models strongly affect the mode of interaction and the signals received and acted on internally in the organization. Weick (1976) humorously summarized this act of sensemaking as, ‘…I’ll see it when I believe it.’ This points to the general tendency to overlook data if the mental model is not sensitive to it. Combining the PZB and co-orientation models illustrates this relationship as we can now see dynamic consequences of the gaps that result from either false consensus or false conflict throughout the system (as Figure 3 also indicates).

**Coordination**

Gaps can arise in the course of an organization’s engagement with its internal and external stakeholders. To the extent that the organization and its stakeholders have the ability and willingness to engage (read communicate) with each other in order to understand their expectations and interpretation on various issues, the gaps can remain manageable. In our case quality standards for behavior were used to illustrate a complex issue upon which there may be significant barriers to a free exchange of ideas. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the communication function to communicate externally the behavior standards and performance of the organization. The issue is if the communication manager merely delivers messages or if they are involved in the process of setting the standards they end up talking about. Effective gap management from the perspective of the communication function requires expertise that is not commonly associated with the role of internal communications. Regardless of the nature of the firm, setting organizational behavior standards is a process that involves many different people within the organization. There must be alignment within the organization at all levels. This requires the establishment of a common language and coordination of activities.

Coordination implies that there are dependencies within a system and in order for the system to function properly, the dependencies must somehow be harmonized. Organizations obviously require a great deal of coordination in order to accomplish their objectives. Mintzberg (1979) identified six methods for coordinating organizational activities: mutual adjustment, direct supervision, and four types of standardization (of outputs, of skills, of work, and of norms). The role of communications in this view of coordination is not emphasized. It appears to fall under the set of managerial skills that are used to lead the activities of the firm. One can argue that this relatively simple perspective may be appropriate for a one-product manufacturing firm that relies heavily on technology, but it is insufficient to capture the complexities of a modern service firm. An alternative view on coordination distinguishes between three dimensions: cognitive, epistemic, and semantic. Cognitive coordination relates to the extent to which the stakeholders share a
common world view of the business context. Epistemic coordination refers to the questions of who knows what and of who needs to know in order to function in the given business context. Finally, semantic coordination refers to the extent that there is a common language among the stakeholders.

The implications of these forms of coordination for communications are important for several reasons. The greatest challenge for the communication professional comes from working to achieve cognitive coordination. This form of coordination is closely associated with stakeholder mental models that are relied upon when engaging with the organization. As we have discussed, mental models tend to be based on deeply seated assumptions (that are rarely tested for veracity) and beliefs that may be ideologically fixed. In other words, they are stable and resistant to change. While actually changing these mental models may not be possible in a way that is lasting from the firm’s perspective, they can be uncovered through careful use of communication skills. This by itself can improve co-orientation accuracy, which reduces the likelihood of false consensus or false conflict.

Epistemic and semantic coordination, while offering a unique set of challenges in their own right, do not engage other stakeholders to the same extent as cognitive coordination. Epistemic coordination can be achieved by providing information in new and/or different formats (which is also a function of cognitive coordination). Similarly, semantic coordination can be enhanced through the use of clearer language. Inside the organization epistemic coordination and semantic coordination can be seen as the basis for Mintzberg’s standardization coordination approaches. From the communication practitioner’s view, these become more like technical functions. Interestingly, the question of “who needs to know what” is being increasingly addressed through the use of in-house social media such as intranets and has shown potential for stimulating internal innovation processes. The conclusion is that low coordination across these three dimensions contributes significantly to the formation of gaps within the PZB model.

Conclusion: Communication Orientation

In their efforts to understand the marketing concept and its application, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) developed a definition of market orientation that provides the underlying basis of the PZB model. Kohli and Jaworski define market orientation as: “... the organization-wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organization-wide responsiveness to it” (ibid, p. 6).

Market orientation captures the elements of knowledge management and information dissemination and the need for them to be applied organization-wide. While market orientation concedes the organization-wide responsiveness to knowledge and information, it does not take into account how it is interpreted or perceived. Therefore, we propose that organizations rather need a communication orientation. By this we mean an institutionalization of organizational learning dialogue skills into the daily activity pattern of the organization (Brønn & Brønn, 2003).

Three specific communication skills that enable communication managers to engage stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue, and thereby enhance the effectiveness of the organization’s communication efforts are reflection, inquiry and advocacy (Brønn & Brønn 2003). Reflection is an internally focused skill whose objective is to make the practitioner more aware of his or her own thinking and reasoning processes. Inquiry engages the two parties of the communication process in a joint learning process where the objective is to understand the thinking and reasoning processes of the other party. Advocacy is the process of communicating one’s own thinking and reasoning in a manner that makes them visible for others. The reflective communicator seeks to find a balance between inquiry and advocacy. Too much advocacy results in one-way communication with little feedback, too much inquiry means getting bogged down.

Brønn and Brønn attributed these skills to the communication manager in their role as boundary spanner and builder of relationships with organizational stakeholders. However, it is obvious that the stakeholder behavior quality model incorporating the principles of co-orientation model developed in this paper requires an organization-wide approach that considers the role of all individuals within the organization, particularly managers. It is their interpretation of issues, their ability to be reflective, etc. that determines the success of organizational efforts. It is thus not the communication manager’s role to engage all stakeholders but rather everyone in the organization is communicating, with each other and with the outside world. Therefore, communication managers need to help people in their organizations develop these skills. As noted by Brønn and Brønn (2003):

The role of the corporate communicator becomes, through this process, far more than simply the mouthpiece for the firm. He or she becomes a communication facilitator working to establish the basis for understanding among stakeholders. This represents considerable challenges for the corporate communication professional.

This way of thinking is echoed by Brønn, van Ruler and Verčič (2005) in their description of the reflective model of communication management, which they say is about “maximizing, optimizing or satisfying processes of meaning creation to help solve managerial problems” (p. 78) using all communication models simultaneously. Public relations practitioners who carry out their role in this manner are referred to by Sison (2006) as agents of critical conscience. As such they are expected to, among other things, engage and lead the group/organization in reflective thought, encourage discussions and inquiry by various stakeholders, including marginal ones, provide the voice for stakeholders who are marginal or who do not have a voice in the organization, and ensure breadth and depth of knowledge about business and organizational environments in which they operate.
ABSTRACT
Business leaders and internal communication managers inherently understand that effective internal communication is a business imperative. It builds staff morale, motivation and engagement. It also builds a healthy organisational culture and helps facilitate change, all of which deliver bottom line results for the organisation.

However, if you ask for proof of the value of internal communication you may be provided with an anecdote or two, presented with a good article in a major publication or shown the results of an employee satisfaction survey, but most organisations still fail to consistently prove the positive causal relationship between internal communication efforts and business success. The failure to prove the benefits of internal communication is due in part to a failure to measure communications activity. However, a lack of measurement is not the sole reason. There are a number of contributing factors such as a lack of a clear communications strategy and a lack of clear and measurable objectives for communication activities, poor leadership support and a weak guiding coalition supporting communication within the organisation. All these elements contribute to making evaluation of the value added by internal communication problematic.

This paper aims to establish whether the case study organisations directly tie internal communication results to strategic management and tangible bottom line results. It also aimed to establish if internal communication is seen as a strategic management function or is it a technical function to be managed by others. It also aims to identify the criteria necessary for excellence in internal communication. The study uses the generic benchmark of the critical success factors and best practice in communication management, as outlined in Grunig et al’s Excellence Study, as a framework for investigating the internal communication practices in public and private sector organisations in Ireland.
The findings presented are the result of a three stage process involving: (i) international review of best practice in communication and internal communication, and research into effective communication practices in individual organisations; (ii) in-depth interviews with CEOs (or their representatives), internal communication managers and individual staff members in public and private sector organisations in the profit and non-profit sector in Ireland (iii) analysing results finalising and publishing conclusions.

The findings reveal that the hard work of the internal communicators is not leading to demonstrable success. This is because the implementation of the communication tools often takes priority over other important communication activities such as strategy development, clear objective setting, building a guiding coalition and measurement. The findings suggest that internal communication remains mainly focussed on the technical journalistic-type activities. In this paper, and the researcher discusses the findings and suggests the use of the ‘O’Murchú Internal Communication Matrix’ to ensure that internal communicators organise and execute their work in a manner that will lead to success and the development of tangible bottom line results.

INTRODUCTION

Internal communication is a relatively new and developing strategic business tool (Scholes, 1997) and there are signs of its emergence as a distinct management discipline (Clutterbuck, 1997). Internal communication has advanced a long way from the management-sponsored journals of the past to well-organised systems of internal communications (Baines, Egan & Jefkins, 2004) There is also a great deal of evidence to show that high quality communication is a crucial indicator of organisational health (Tourish and Hargie, 2000).

The above research could lead one to believe that internal communication is being embraced as an essential element of an organisation’s development but Morrison (2004: 120) points out that ‘internal communications is an after-thought to external communication priorities such as advertising, media relations, sponsorship and government and investor relations’. And according to Marchington et al. (1992) ‘communication skills are still seen as “soft management” by practising managers, particularly in manufacturing, and they are not given sufficient attention in programmes of management education and development’.

The divergence of opinions outlined above is of central importance to this paper as this research aims to establish how internal communication is practised in public and private sector organisations in Ireland.

The definition of internal communication used and developed by the researcher is that internal communication is the strategic development of mutually beneficial relationships with multiple employee stakeholders, at all levels in the organisation, on whom the organisation’s success depends by the use of measurable methods of communication.

Effective internal communication has been linked with improved bottom line results for many organisations. Harrison (2000) maintains that good internal communication results in effective employee performance and Clutterback (2001) highlights the links between organisational success and communication competence. Watson Wyatt Worldwide (1999) outlines a definite correlation between high performing organisations and strong communications programmes and Collins and Porras (1995) demonstrate that companies that are consistently clear in their communications… outperform the US stock market average by 15 times.

This paper outlines how the case study organisations practise their internal communication and how they measure the effectiveness of their communication. It will also establish if criteria set out in Grunig et al’s Excellence Study impact on the quality of internal communication in the case study organisations.

Method

To help understand the process of internal communication in the case study organisations, the following research objectives were developed.

Research Objectives

Objective one: To examine existing theories and opinions regarding internal communication.

Objective two: To establish and define the internal communication practices of four organisations across the public and private sector in Ireland.

Objective three: To establish whether internal communications is developing equally in both the public and private sector in Ireland and if applicable, to highlight areas where improvements can help the case study organisations meet best international standards.

Objective four: To highlight the best practice tools used in the various case study organisations which may be transferable to other organisations.

Research Methods

The method of primary data collection to establish and define the communication practices taking place in Irish organisations was qualitative. It was chosen over quantitative methods of data collection as it suits small-scale projects and provides in-depth analysis. To make the research as representative as possible four case studies (two public organisations and two private organisations), were examined. The research was also triangulated from within by gathering data from multiple sources within each organisation. These sources were:

1. The internal communications manager
2. CEO or CEO representative
3. Employees
The methodology chosen was a case study as these are an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). The data source chosen was semi-structured interviews as these are flexible and allow for deeper probing of issues of interest that arise during the course of the interview, something which cannot be done in a survey or structured interview.

The research entailed undertaking 24 interviews in total over two time periods three years apart. This enabled the researcher to monitor the progress in the development of internal communication within the case study organisations. Great care was taken to ensure that there was a difference in the levels of personnel interviewed within each organisation. These individual insights were critical to the study as they provided useful comparisons and contrasting opinions.

The generic benchmark of critical success factors and best practices in communication management as outlined in the Excellence Study were used as the framework for developing questions for the interview. Constructing the questions based on Excellence Study criteria enabled the researcher to gather the empirical evidence required to compare the communications programmes in the four case study organisations with a programme that is considered the best and most effective.

Where possible the individuals were interviewed in their own work environments as their natural setting is the place where the researcher is most likely to discover or uncover what is to be known about the phenomenon of interest. A face-to-face interview setting was chosen as it allowed the interviewer to build a rapport with the interviewee. This enabled a more natural conversation and more realistic discourse by the interviewee.

The semi-structured interviews began with the Internal Communication Managers in each organisation. They were followed by interviews with senior management. The employees were interviewed in the final phase of the research.

Three sets of questions were developed as each participant interviewed answered the questions from a different perspective and this had to be reflected in the questions.

Each interview lasted between 40 minutes and 90 minutes and was audio-taped to include all data. Transcripts of interviews were completed immediately after the interviews to ensure accuracy and the resulting data was analysed using comparative pattern analysis.

Results
To aid the interpretation of the results they are grouped under four main headings.

1 Strategy Development
In all the organisations the internal communication managers are more technical expert than strategic managers. All respondents in the study indicate that they do not have a developed internal communications strategy. Equally, none of the organisations are able to specify the unique measurable contribution that internal communication makes in their company. Many of the communicators explain that while they do not have a written strategy their communication activities are aligned with the organisation’s business strategy. However, further examination reveals that the objectives for the communication activities are not SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic or timed). Instead objectives are vague and ambiguous such as, ‘increase employees’ understanding of their role’ and ‘improve employee engagement’. Given that providing tangible results is the quickest route to the decision-maker’s table, these findings suggest that the internal communicator managers would find it difficult if not impossible to take a seat at the decision-making table.

The results also indicate that the majority of internal communication remains dominated by technical journalistic-like skills such as producing slick employee newsletters instead of concentrating on developing relationships with employees and strategically planning the objectives of internal communication.

The onus for effective communication also resides predominantly with the internal communication managers as opposed to being seen as a strategic activity in which all managers have an important role to play. Only one organisation has a cascade structure for internal communications where managers are responsible for communication activities. This works extremely effectively as a method of communication as each manager is aware that effective communication is part of their role. However, this cascade system is weakened by the fact that there is no measurement to monitor the functioning of the system on an on-going basis. This shortcoming is recognised by the organisation and they have plans to address it.

2 Leadership Support
The findings demonstrate that CEOs are supportive of communication. In all organisations the CEO’s support for communication rates very highly scoring eight, nine and 10 out of 10. This suggests that they wish to capitalise on the documented benefits of internal communication such as significantly increased productivity and improved morale, motivation and engagement. However, on the whole internal communication was not practised strategically in the organisations and this indicates a lack of knowledge from the CEOs about how to implement successful internal communication.
A majority of the organisations rate lower levels and mixed levels of commitment from other senior managers and middle managers.

None of the internal communication managers sit at the dominant coalition’s decision-making table. Only one organisation considers the internal communication implications of strategic organisational decisions as they are being made.

All the internal communication managers explain that they have access to the dominant coalition when necessary but this access is specifically for operational issues and is not used as an opportunity to present internal communication as a strategic management function.

It is worth noting that all the organisations explain that there are people throughout the organisation charged with internal communication but none of the internal communications managers have a list of these staff. For the researcher, this highlights a very large gap in the communication capabilities of the internal communication departments.

3 Tools
Analysis reveals that internal communication is falling prey to using communication tools to deliver outputs rather than outcomes. It is more focused on the communication tools rather than answering the questions:

1. How can we demonstrate that the communication tools are contributing to the organisation’s strategic objectives?
2. How can we quantify the value of the communication tools?
3. What impact are our communication activities having on the organisation’s bottom line?

A lack of focus on the above questions results in the dominance of one-way communication tools. The findings reveal that a majority of the communication tools are one-way, such as newsletters and email messages. In its true form communication is a two-way process in which the participants exchange (encode-decode) information with the aim of reaching mutual understanding, by creating and sharing meaning. Communication is a two-way dialogue. Two-way symmetrical forms of communication tools with feedback loops built in are best practice. Two-way communication tools are the least practised in the case study organisations.

Of further concern is the fact that only one organisation conducts a comprehensive communication audit. This in effect means that a majority of communicators are operating in the dark when choosing which communication tools to use. They have no substantial information on the communication needs of staff, which tools staff will be prepared to use and what information they want to learn about.

Another interesting finding is that employees want to be heard and involved in the companies’ business. Topics employees express a wish to learn more about include overall business strategy and the future of the organisation. Interestingly, the company that has a new two-way communication forum with staff receives much higher scores from their employees with comments such as, ‘I think if I had a good suggestion it would be taken on board.’

4 Measurement and Evaluation
The lack of a strategic plan for communication hindered the evaluation process in most of the organisations. With no key performance indicators set the communicators were unable to prove the effective performance of their communications.

Measurement and evaluation in the case study organisations is weak. The majority of communication activities are not measured. On occasion when feedback is provided by staff there is no co-ordinated method of capturing and acting on that feedback. The findings also demonstrate that due to a lack of evaluation the ineffectiveness of some of the communication activities is not noticed and therefore improvements cannot be made. For example, one organisation is unaware of how the set-up of the staff briefings is inhibiting staff contributions. This difficulty is easily rectified but the organisation needs to first identify the problem.

A lack of measurement of staff communication preferences also leads to difficulties. The findings show that one organisation employs five people to update their intranet a number of times a day, but conversations with staff reveal they do not use the intranet on a regular basis. Another organisation is undertaking staff briefings and considers them to be an effective two-way communication tool. However, conversations with employees reveal that the set-up of the briefings inhibit staff contributions. Another company expends a lot of effort in rolling out their annual employee engagement survey but conversations with employees reveals they have no faith in the survey as nothing ever changes on foot of the findings.

A lack of measurement and evaluation of the individual tools means that potentially valuable and beneficial communication tools were not being maximised and it leads staff to make comments such as ‘Management see communication as a tick box exercise’ or ‘they don’t really have any interest in what we have to say’. This employee feedback is a concern as it does not depict a positive culture within the organisation. In order for employees to contribute productively in an organisation they need to feel that the organisation cares for them, that their opinions matter, that their involvement is respected and that the company takes action on the input they give.

Discussion
This study focused on the practices of internal communication in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. Perhaps the most important finding is that there is a long way to go. For
a profession mindful of establishing credibility with decision makers, the findings suggest that excellence in internal communication does not occur when the internal communication is not strategic.

All the organisations emphasise the importance of internal communication and while there is knowledge of what needs to be achieved most of the organisations are struggling to deliver effective internal communication that is capable of producing tangible results. In response to these findings the researcher developed a practical tool entitled the ‘O’Murchu Internal Communication Matrix’ that provides a practical tool to help communicators prioritise and execute their communication activities to ensure maximum results. Internal communicators must realise that they can’t do everything when it comes to internal communication but they can organise and execute around key priorities. Excellent internal communication requires putting the same emphasis on each of the following four quadrants of communication excellence:

| Quadrant 1 | Strategy Development |
| Quadrant 2 | Leadership support |
| Quadrant 3 | Communication tools |
| Quadrant 4 | Measurement and evaluation |

1. **Strategy Development**
   - **Strategy**
   - **Clear vision**
   - **SMART objectives**

2. **Leadership support**
   - Committed CEO
   - Committed middle management
   - Communication as management KPI

3. **Communication tools**
   - Communication audit
   - Two-way communication
   - On-going evaluation

4. **Measurement and evaluation**
   - Link to strategy
   - Link to KPT
   - Tangible results

The unique contribution must be captured in the communications strategy and must be reflected in all the SMART objectives of the strategy. The strategy must also build on the four quadrants of effective internal communication as outlined above. Effective internal communication requires putting time and effort into each of the four quadrants. Effective internal communication is a management discipline. Too often internal communication managers are pressured to put the operational tools of communication first and they allow the other three quadrants to take second place. There is no doubt that the tools are the most seductive part of communication, they are often the reason that communicators chose their career path. However, the reality the case studies demonstrate is that if internal communication is not strategic, if it doesn’t speak the facts and figures language of the corporate suite, if it fails to align itself with the business of the business it will remain a technical function to be managed by others.

**Quadrant 1: Strategy Development**

In the ‘O’Murchu Organisational Communication Matrix’ the first quadrant is Strategy development. This is at the heart of effective internal communication. It deals with things like writing the contribution statement for the internal communication function and ensuring that the communication activities align with the business of the business. Spending time in this quadrant enables the internal communication manager to ensure that their precious resource, time, is being used on the activities that will provide the greatest results and benefits. Quadrant one is the key to effective internal communication as it discerns which activities are important – which activities are really worth acting upon. These are the things communication programmes need if they aim to delivery real tangible, measurable benefits for the organisation.

Table 1.1: ‘O’Murchu Organisational Communication Matrix’

| Quadrant 1 | Strategy Development |
| Quadrant 2 | Leadership support |
| Quadrant 3 | Communication tools |
| Quadrant 4 | Measurement and evaluation |

It is difficult to deliver excellent internal communications without identifying the unique contribution internal communication intends to make in the organisation, i.e. what is the tangible benefit it will bring to the organisation? It is important to have a clear picture of what internal communication is to achieve. This will drive the decision-making process on what communication activities are worthwhile and what activities should be set aside.

The unique contribution must be captured in the communications strategy and must be reflected in all the SMART objectives of the strategy. The strategy must also build on the four quadrants of effective internal communication as outlined above. Effective internal communication requires putting time and effort into each of the four quadrants. Effective internal communication is a management discipline. Too often internal communication managers are pressured to put the operational tools of communication first and they allow the other three quadrants to take second place. There is no doubt that the tools are the most seductive part of communication, they are often the reason that communicators chose their career path. However, the reality the case studies demonstrate is that if internal communication is not strategic, if it doesn’t speak the facts and figures language of the corporate suite, if it fails to align itself with the business of the business it will remain a technical function to be managed by others.

**Quadrant 2 Leadership**

This quadrant deals with building relationships and the slow steady, incremental development of a culture of open communication throughout the organisation. It uses the strategy developed in quadrant one as a key reference point to demonstrate the important role that the CEO and all senior managers play in developing communication excellence.

It is one of the roles of the internal communicator to outline for senior management how to translate effective internal communication from an idealistic abstraction to a business reality. While many management books outline the benefits of effective internal communication within organisations, on the whole CEOs are not taught the specific tools they need to use and how to actually bring about the benefits of effective internal communication.
As 55% of the power of internal communication comes from senior management and given the fact that front line managers are the most trusted source of information in an organisation (Larkin and Larkin, 1994) it is imperative that they understand the important role they play in delivering effective internal communication. Effective communication should be a KPI (key performance indicator) for all managers. It is the responsibility of the internal communicator to develop this understanding and to provide management with the skills and methods by which they can build a culture of effective communication with their own staff. Such skills do not develop accidentally; they must be nurtured and deliberately practised.

It is time that internal communicators stopped wishing that organisations would recognise the importance of effective communication, and instead learned how to encourage and foster greater responsibility and commitment by senior management to communication. This strategic activity will have greater long-term benefits for the organisation than focusing all the communicator’s time on delivering the communication tools themselves.

Quadrant 3: Communication tools.
All communicators spend time in this quadrant and without making a conscious effort it is easy to get stuck here. All communicators have some quadrant three activities but too many communicators get consumed by this and are unable to break free of the endless treadmill of communication activities. The key to effective internal communication is not being busy, it is being busy on the right activities that deliver results.

This paper highlights that the communicators in the case study organisations are spending a majority of their time in this quadrant. While very positive work is being undertaken in this quadrant, a lack of time spent in the other quadrants impacts on the effectiveness of the communication tools. For example: not undertaking a communications audit means that time is being allocated to update communication tools which staff do not use on a regular basis.

A lack of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed) communication objectives (a quadrant one activity) means that many communication tools lack a direction and do not have a clear vision for what they want to achieve.

Quadrant 4: Measurement and Evaluation
This quadrant is vital in order to produce tangible results. Objective rigorous evaluation methods are required in order to deliver credible proof of results and Return on Investment (ROI) to management. As producing tangible results is the quickest and most effective method of influencing the top leadership and ensuring that internal communication is seen as a strategic management function it is imperative that communicators focus on quadrant four. If internal communication fail to measure its activities and fail to speak the facts and figures language of the c-suite it is doom the function to a low level technical support function that must be managed by others.

All the case study organisations are weak on measurement and evaluation. The communicators in the case studies have plenty of reasons for avoiding quadrant four; they are too busy, they don’t have enough staff, it isn’t necessary and communication results are intangible. Quadrant three (the tools) consume their time. However, saying you don’t have time to measure is the same as saying you don’t have time to be a strategic manager. The ‘O Murchu Organisational Communication Matrix’ has been developed to ensure that communicators are aware of all the elements that facilitate measurement and evaluation. All the other three quadrants build towards this final quadrant. The questionnaire outline in Table 1.2 provides a simple tool to enable communicators to identify how well they are performing in each of the quadrants. Working effectively in quadrant four is not possible unless the other quadrants have been successfully completed.

Measurement and evaluation provides tangible results and additionally it also helps to focus on efficiency (i.e. what tools are working effectively). Measurement can actually free up valuable time for the communicator. For example, if a particular activity is consuming a large amount of time but not delivering the results it can be altered to ensure maximum benefit.

Effective measurement and audit of staff needs and the organisations needs also ensure that communicators are working with clear objectives. Without measurement communicators have no SMART objectives, no map, no compass and limited vision. This means there is limited scope for success and the function is not being managed strategically. Without measurement internal communication is not focusing on the business of the business and it is missing an opportunity to make a profound difference to the quality and effectiveness of internal communication.

Measurement and evaluation is akin to the woodcutter sharpening his saw. The woodcutter can become even more productive by taking time out to sharpen the blade. Not taking time out to measure and evaluate communication can lead to a feeling of burnout, where internal communication managers feel they are running to stand still. They can be undertaking many communication activities but not seeing the benefits of this work. In the case study organisations the communicators are working hard, but they don’t feel as productive as you think they should be. It they took time out for measurement they would find that they could re-prioritise around key strategic objectives and could work effectively and productively.
Circle your response to all the questions. Select only one answer per row. Add your responses for each quadrant (see diagram below). For example: In quadrant one you score 4 + 3 + 5 = 12. You have scored 12 out of a possible 18. Shade in the portion of the quadrant that reflects this score. Effective internal communication means full scores in each quadrant resulting in a complete cycle as outlined below. Once you have shaded in your matrix you will have a very clear vision representation of the areas that need to be focused on in order to achieve excellence.

### Table 1.2: ‘O’Murchu Organisational Communication Matrix’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  I have an internal communications strategy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  I have a clear picture/vision of how internal communication will contribute to the organisation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  The objectives of all my communication activities are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  My CEO is committed to and playing his/her role ineffective internal communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  My senior management are committed to and playing their role in effective internal communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Communication is a KPI for all management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  The communication tools used reflect the documented needs and preferences of staff.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Most of the internal communication activities are two way- symmetrical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  I have feedback loops built into all communication activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 I can produce tangible results in respect of my communication work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 I can establish if Managers are meeting their communication KPIs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12 I can link all communication activity to the organisation's strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quadrant 1**  
**Strategy Development**  
Total for questions 1, 2 & 3

**Quadrant 2**  
**Leadership support**  
Total for questions 4, 5 & 6

**Quadrant 3**  
**Communication tools**  
Total for questions 7, 8 & 9

**Quadrant 4**  
**Measurement and evaluation**  
Total for questions 10, 11 & 12

### Conclusion

This paper aims to establish if the results of internal communication practice in public and private sector organisations in Ireland is directly linked to tangible results for the organisation. Is internal communication seen as a strategic management function or is it a technical function to be managed by others? Do internal communicators speak the facts and figures language of the c-suite and highlight the links between organisational success and communication competence? It also aims to identify the criteria necessary for excellence in internal communication. The study uses the generic benchmark of the critical success factors and best practice in communication management, as outlined in Grunig et al’s *Excellence Study*, as a framework for investigating the internal communication practices.

Perhaps the most important finding is that there is a long way to go. For a profession mindful of establishing credibility with decision makers the findings suggest that excellence in internal communication does not occur when internal communication is not strategic.

While communicators are aware that internal communication is the strategic development of mutually beneficial relationships with multiple employee stakeholders, at all levels in the organisation, on whom the organisation’s success depends by the use of measurable methods of communication, many of the elements of excellence are absent or not sufficiently embedded in the communication practices of the case study organisations.
The function is dominated by technical journalistic-like skills rather than focusing on the strategic planning, objective setting and measurement. Furthermore, a majority of the tools in use are one-way rather than two-way symmetrical forms of communication. Effective two-way communication is key to establishing a positive organisational culture where employees feel they are a respected and feel they are a valued member of the team.

The ‘O Murchu Organisational Communication Matrix’ is a tool developed to enable communicators to organise and execute around key priorities. It will enable communicators to lead the communications process, by allocating valuable time to strategic planning, developing a strong guiding coalition with senior management, judiciously selecting the most effective communication tools and measuring the performance of everyone’s participation in developing a positive communication culture in the organisation. The effective use of the matrix can ensure that the influence that internal communicators seek will grow as they align their activities with the business objectives of the organisation, producing tangible bottom line results and speaking the facts and figures language of the c-suite.

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ABSTRACT
The paper presents theoretical framework and practical approach to employee engagement management, by analyzing the case study of the Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia, member of the Coca-Cola Hellenic Group, one of the largest bottlers of The Coca-Cola Company’s brands in the world, with 1300 employees.

We analyzed the ontology, definitions and measurement of the employee engagement, discussed by the researchers in this field as well as its practical implementation in the large multinational company operating in Serbia. Research had three primary objectives. First, to frame the concept based on sources from theory, second to define the gap between theory and practice in the scope of given case and third to offer practical contribution to managerial implications for success in bridging the mentioned gap.

The case study describes the Coca-Cola Hellenic approach to employee engagement concept, as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization. Each group of employees is engaged to a greater or lesser extent by a set of three “key drivers”: retention (will continue working for the company), give extra effort and advocacy (will recommend company as an employer for positive business results). The role of internal communication campaigns in the process has also been presented.

The purpose of this case study is to demonstrate how employee engagement works in practice and to solicit theoretical sources.

KEY WORDS: Employee Engagement, Internal Communication, Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia, Case Study
INTRODUCTION
The introduction of the new age economy and technology intensive business environment affects both the way employees work and how they are engaged with their companies. Before 1980s companies offered lifetime employment in return for a high degree of loyalty (Baker, 2006). Years that came after brought turbulent environment characterized with closing pension funds and massive layoffs. New working environment, as a result of globalization and international competition, is dramatically changing on the highest organizational level introducing mergers, acquisitions and downsizing followed with highest level of uncertainty. All this cause negative impact on employees in terms of job losses, job uncertainty, ambiguity and heightened anxiety. According to Herriot and Pemberton (1995), as a consequence new deals brought trends where „employees are expected to work longer hours, take on greater responsibility, be more flexible and to tolerate continual change and ambiguity” which further caused increased stress, poor health (Barling, Kelloway, & Frone, 2005) and work-family conflict (Bellavia & Frone, 2005). On the other hand, with the diminishing role of neighborhoods, churches, civic groups and extended families in developed societies, the workplace became a primary source of community and a place to feel connected (Conger, 1994). At the same time the expectations regarding the individual productivity and company’s profitability are higher than ever. As a consequence, the concept of employee engagement became the focus of business and management strategy development. Importance and therefore, popularity of employee engagement grows from the fact that company can not simply “buy” human capital and dedication, but it is a complex and long-term process of creating and maintaining engaged employees.

Problem
Recruiting talents and retaining the best performers among the employees is specially important in transition economies, such as Serbia, where the privatization of the state-owned companies and introduction of the market economy that began in 1990’s, has brought new business models and new demands to the new owners, management and employees. After a new production or services technology and business procedures were applied, the crucial factors for the business success turned out to be the human resources skills, motivation and commitment. An illustrative example presents the case of Coca-Cola Hellenic, which in 1997 acquired a state-owned bottling company “IBP Beograd” in Serbia. Today, Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia employs over 1.300 people and represents one of the most successful business systems in Serbia. Considering the heterogeneity of the workforce (staff inherited from the state owned company, local experts, management and employees hired in last 13 years, as well as some of the ex-pat top managers) and following the mission and the values of the company that put people in focus, human resources and communication programs have extremely important role in maintaining the leading position at the market and achieving the business goals. From the organizational redesign and optimization, through employees training and development, achieving high employee engagement became the crucial part of the key business indicators of both HR and Public Relations department. In 2002 Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia started to measure and systematically manage the employee engagement facing the challenge to become the employer number one in its industry in the country, the first choice for the most sought after talents.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to managerial implications for success in the field of employee engagement, by reviewing the up-to-date theoretical definitions and frameworks for the concept and the Coca-Cola approach to employee engagement management, with special emphasis on the internal communication campaigns, which are a part of extensive employee engagement program.

Theoretical background
Origin of the term and definition of employee engagement
The roots of the concept of engagement can be found in Kahn’s work (1990) published in an Academy of Management Journal article, “Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work” (Kahn, 1990). Kahn defines personal engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles” (1990, p. 694). In addition to mentioned definition he emphasizes that, “in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (1900, p. 694). Psychological presence of the employees means that they feel and in fact are attentive, connected, integrated, and focused in their role performances (Kahn, 1990). Although Kahn described a conceptual basis for job engagement, he didn’t develop an operational definition of introduced academic term. In the following years, Maslach and Leiter (1997) expanded Kahn’s (1990) conceptual work. Maslach further more described employee’s engagement as „a persistent, positive and affective-motivational state of employee’s fulfillment, characterized with the high level of activation and pleasure” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 417). Gebauer (2006) quotes Towers Watson who defined employee engagement as “workers’ willingness and ability to contribute to a company’s success, the extent to which employees put discretionary effort into their work.” According to Czarnowsky (2008, p. 6) “engaged employees are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer’s success”. Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) claim that employees who are engaged are energetically and effectively connected and dedicated to their work.

Significant contribution to obtain definition of employee engagement came from Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) who defined job engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind” (p. 295). In their work engagement has been defined as a positive affective-cognitive state, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Leiter and Maslach (1998) define engagement as “an energetic experience of involvement with personally fulfilling activities that enhance a staff member’s sense of professional efficacy” (Leiter & Maslach, 1998, p. 351) and recognize there comprised energy, involvement and efficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).
Hundley, Jacobs, and Drizin (2005) state that engagement of workforce represent a complex ongoing process of recruiting, retaining and rewarding productive effective employee by enhancing understanding of organizational practices and employee perspectives.

As it can be seen from referred sources, definition of employee engagement is not completely clear and there is a certain need for academic rigor. Roots of this phenomena comes from business, psychology, and human resource consulting literatures (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006). Being engaged is a personal attitude and it concerns employees as humans, not the organization, for some researchers. Significant number of definitions (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006) are clearly confirming above mentioned; however, Maslach et al. (2001) and Czarnowsky (2008) are generally speaking about engagement, as an organizational-level variable. This common, but not correct attitude is confusing some scholars, researchers, and practitioners who have trouble developing specific strategies, just because they are seeking for engagement as the organizational issue instead personal attitude. We can assume that it concerns the individual, not the organizational aspect, and is a personal decision that cannot be mandated or forced. Engagement in work is a personal experience inseparable from the individualistic nature of human being.

**Employee engagement and related concepts**

Looking at the wider picture of employee engagement it is possible to connect it with four lines of research that characterize this topic and include personal engagement, burnout/engagement, work engagement, and employee engagement.

As mentioned above Kahn in 1990 gave the concepts of personal engagement and personal disengagement. Previous concepts like job involvement, organizational commitment, and intrinsic motivation, became unfamiliar and far away from employees’ day-to-day experiences within their work role. One of the dominant fields, connected with employee engagement is psychology, which deals with interpersonal relationships, groups and intergroup dynamics, management styles and organizational norms. Continuing research activities in 1992, Kahn offered a theoretical “upgrade” of his work, which delineating the concept of psychological presence, its dimensions (attentiveness, connectedness, integration, and focus), and their impact on personal engagement. Therefore, he made a smooth transition from psychologically supported to personal engagement. He explained that when an individual finds meaning, feels safe, and has the necessary external and internal resources in their work, personal engagement will exist and that individual will be “fully present” (Kahn, 1992, p. 322).

Continual issue of competitive advantage is strongly connected with employee engagement and its essential role as Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) claim for contemporary organizations given the many challenges they face (p. 156) up to Macey et al. (2009) who argue that organizations can gain a competitive advantage through employee engagement.

It is interesting to explain the relationship between engagement and employees burnout, where Leiter and Maslach (1998) are talking about engagement as the opposite pole of burnout. They saw it as a lack of engagement in one’s work as they described it in their work in 1997 where they extended the conceptualization of burnout. Engagement is understood to be the direct opposite of burnout. Exhaustion (low energy), cynicism (low involvement), and inefficacy (low efficacy) are characteristics of burnout, while, high energy, high involvement, and high efficacy are characteristic of engagement. A number of studies have examined the distinction between work engagement and burnout in the recent period (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006; Duran et al., 2004; Gonzalez- Roma et al., 2006). A common conclusion that can be extracted from these studies is the importance of the work environment context and the mediating impact of burnout/engagement on organizational outcomes.

**Employee engagement measurement**

One of the spinning moments for rapid expansion of interest in the employee engagement concept was connected with Harter et al.’s (2002) article, who for the first time widely spread idea about an employee engagement–profit linkage. According to the majority of researchers employee engagement is a key driver of individual attitudes, behavior, and performance as well as organizational performance, productivity, retention, financial performance, and even shareholder return (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Richman, 2006.) Only 31% of employees are actively engaged in their jobs and these employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company and can help move the organization forward (BlessingWhite, December 2010, Employee Engagement Report 2011. Retrieved 2010-12-12).

Clearly people who are not engaged in their jobs miss more workdays and produce lower quality products (Roche, 2005) so it is obvious that the level of loyalty, dedication and involvement with the employees’ jobs should be measured. Company should put a lot of efforts in order to learn how to develop employee engagement, how to measure it, how to increase productivity and finally, how to retain it. On the other hand a company can hire an employee who is monetarily compensated, but this financial satisfaction can not guarantee whether this worker will show high level of engagement at any given point in time. The problem appears with the fact that “most companies don’t really measure why people are leaving and why people stay” (Baker, 2006). “Keeping critical employees motivated and dedicated is one of the most important demands on management today. Sometimes it’s not who you hire that counts; it’s who you keep (Cutler, 2001)”. New age economy and fluctuation of employees proved that it is a lot cheaper to keep current employees than to hire new ones, and the “real issues for corporations become the continuous, ongoing effort to identify and keep all their top performers, whether they are old, middle aged or young” as Baker (2006) stresses in his work.
There exists a permanent issue born with the fact that employee engagement has also been criticized for lacking a consistent definition and measurement (Masson, Royal, Agnew, & Fine, 2008). Mone and London (2010) gave a contribution to this issue by defining and measuring employee engagement using an amalgam of six distinct constructs. Papers that are published recently define and measure employee engagement as satisfaction, commitment and discretionary effort (Fine, Horowitz, Weigler, & Basis, 2010).

A more recent approach to enhance employee engagement is the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. Here the question is if employee engagement should be observed as the matter of one individual employee rather the aggregate impacts of various working conditions.

Surveys about engagement are best suited to measure employee engagement feelings or state engagement.

One of the strategic issues focuses on what and how organizations measure engagement as well as what organizations with engagement-enhancing strategies should choose to develop and invest in. Looking at different concepts and using emerging conceptual space, it seems unwise for an organization to start developing behavioral engagement when cognitive and emotional engagement may precede such an overt state of employee behavior.

At least in one almost all scholars agree. Employee engagement has no physical properties but is manifested and often measured behaviorally (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008). They also agree that employee engagement is about adaptive behaviors purposefully focused on meeting or exceeding organizational outcomes. The definition of employee engagement should be just barely a starting point for a crucial and long-overdue conversation.

Cognitive engagement assessment means measuring how employees think about and understand their job, their company, their culture, and their intellectual commitment to the organization. Emotional engagement would look at the feelings and beliefs held by those who are engaged, perhaps determining how these feelings and beliefs are formed and influenced. In the end behavioral engagement research might look beyond the obvious surveying of employees, to the development of objective measurement devices by using different sophisticated HRM tools and techniques.

Thornham and Chamorro-Premuzic explained that employee engagement should be measured through reflection of the key actions taken by the organization in order to find out if those actions are (a) understood; and (b) effective and relevant in the eyes in which they are experienced (Thornham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2006). Negative answers in the proposed survey tell leaders about things that will have a direct impact on performance.

Nowadays organizations are demonstrating the impact that employees have on the business by measuring employee engagement and business wins. As a result, there is a boosting in both engagement and business results (Feather, 2008). Casison-Tansiri (2004) references the survey conducted by the New York-based research company Gallup Organization. Results indicated that 22 million, or 17%, of all U.S. workers are “actively disengaged,” costing the U.S. economy about $300 billion a year because of their lower productivity. The American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) completed an online survey (October 2007) relating to measuring, facilitating, and supporting engagement among their workers (Paradise, 2008). Sample framed more than 750 people (executives) with results indicating that roughly one-third of their employees meet the criteria for high engagement, but nearly one-fourth are minimally engaged or disengaged.

Methodology
Case study method was used to explore the approach to employee engagement management and measurement and the role of internal communication in the process. After reviewing the literature about the issue, data necessary for the case study were defined. The data were collected in 2010 and the beginning of 2011 by observation of human resources and communication processes in the company, reading internal documents and interviewing the representatives of the Human Resources department and the Public Affairs and Communication department of the Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia. The interviewees were selected according to the level of their involvement in the employee engagement programs. In series of unstructured personal interviews, these employees were asked about the employee engagement program in the company, the main challenges they face in its implementation and their approach in addressing this issue.

The Coca-Cola Hellenic Approach to Employee Engagement
Coca-Cola Hellenic is second largest bottler of The Coca-Cola Company products in the world in terms of volume, with sales of more than two billion unit cases and 560 million customers buying its products annually. According to the Company fact sheet (www.thecoca-colacompany.com), The Coca-Cola Company is the world’s largest beverage company, offering consumers more than 500 sparkling and still brands and 3,500 products. Led by Coca-Cola, the world’s most valuable brand, the Company’s portfolio features 14 billion dollar brands including Diet Coke, Fanta and Sprite (4 of the world’s top 5 nonalcoholic sparkling beverage brands). Coca-Cola Hellenic was formed in 2000 as a result of the merger of the Athens-based Hellenic Bottling Company and the London-based Coca-Cola Beverages. Since then, its operations have expanded by acquiring companies throughout Europe. Today, Coca-Cola Hellenic employs 44,130 employees across 28 countries. Coca-Cola Hellenic provides guidance, support and supervision to each operation while placing day-to-day management and operation in the hands of local employees with a deep familiarity of their own country, its business practices and community aspirations (Coca-Cola Hellenic, 2011, Retrieved from www.coca-colahellenic.com).
Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia is the leading producer and distributor of alcohol-free beverages in the country. Along with more than 5,000 partners, it represents one of the most successful business systems in Serbia. The company is a direct supplier to more than 4,000 customers and cooperates with approximately 230 distributors, which, through their partners’ retail stores networks cover 95% of the market (Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia, 2011, Retrieved from www.coca-colahec.sl). Coca-Cola Hellenic has been operating in Serbia since 1997, when the acquisition of “IBP Beograd” stood for the biggest foreign investment in the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Through the increase in production capacities, business expansion, constant investing in quality, care for the consumer, environment protection and its employees, over 150 million Euros have been invested in local market up to date. In order to respond to the increasing and diverse consumers’ demands, Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia has, since 1997, increased its production by four times and introduced 130 new products and packaging. The Coca-Cola System in Serbia (Coca-Cola Hellenic and The Coca-Cola Company) has acquired Rosa water bottling plant Vlasinka, a leader in the natural spring water market, in 2005 and Fresh&Co, one of the leading producers of juices, located in Subotica, in 2006. These investments are in line with the Coca-Cola strategy to keep broadening selection of alcohol-free beverages for its consumers, but they are also a confirmation of the significant and long-term commitment of the company to doing business in Serbia.

Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia employs over 1,300 people directly. According to the company research, one position in its system opens up possibilities for ten other across the country. In order to accomplish its business strategy through the implementation of human rights and equal opportunities policy, Coca-Cola Hellenic strives to attract, motivate and keep talented employees and in return engage, train and award them in adequate manners, at the same time ensuring a safe, healthy, positive, diverse and discrimination-free workplace.

With the aim of helping its employees acquire necessary skills and experience, Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia constantly invests in education and development. In order to provide professional education and development to its employees, the company invests more than 60,000 hours in training activities in Serbia every year and creates environment where all employees are motivated to develop their potentials to the maximum.

Out of 1,300 employees in Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia, more than 150 of them occupy various managerial positions. The company is committed to fostering capabilities of local management and makes use of sophisticated evaluation and development mechanism in order to identify, keep and develop talents at all levels of supervision and management. Coca-Cola Hellenic is devoted to international know-how exchange and training of the local staff. In this way, the company opens diverse professional opportunities within the Coca-Cola Hellenic group in all countries where it operates. In 2002 Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia started to measure and manage the employee engagement with the goal to become the employer number one in its industry in the country. In this part, the authors present “The Coca-Cola Hellenic Approach” to employee engagement management, with special emphasis on the role of internal communication campaigns, which were a part of extensive employee engagement program.

**Employee engagement management and measuring**

In Coca-Cola Hellenic, the employee engagement is defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the workplace and the company. The employee engagement model that is being used for the measurement since 2002, comprises set of “key drivers” that belong to six emotional and two functional dimensions. “Purpose”, “Career opportunities”, “Trust in senior management”, “Customer focus”, “Fun” and “Immediate manager” are considered emotional, while “Resources” and “Rewards” are functional dimensions. For example, level of agreement with the following statements is used to measure the dimension “Career Opportunities”: There are clearly defined career paths for me; I am given ample opportunity to grow professionally, There is fair competition for jobs at my company, There are excellent job opportunities available for me at my company, The performance feedback process at my company helps me to improve my performance.

These elements influence, in a greater or lesser extent, the overall engagement, measured by the Engagement index (EI). EI represents the percentage of employees who “agree” or “strongly agree” with all three engagement questions:

1. Retention – “It would take a lot to get me to leave CC Hellenic”
2. Effort – “Being a part of CC Hellenic motivates me to go beyond what is expected”
3. Advocacy- “I recommend CC Hellenic as great place to work”

The Employee engagement survey is being conducted annually and the results are carefully analyzed by board of directors, function heads and middle management. This allows them to track and compare the level of employee engagement over the time and according to: country, plant or distribution center; function: supply-chain, sales and marketing, services (HR, PAC, IT, legal, Finance, etc.); hierarchy level: managers and non-managers; gender and years in company. The survey also provides managers with the insight into the key drivers of engagement and possible disengagement and enables them to develop well targeted Country Engagement Action Plan, driven by the HR department.
The employee engagement model presented in the Figure 1, can be summarized in the following Coca-Cola Hellenic statement: “We understood that the engagement is not an activity. It is not even a number of activities. It’s the unified heartbeat. It’s the way to do business. Starting from the point which perceptions the potential candidate has (Employer branding), continuing with the decisions which attitude will persons joining the team have (Recruitment), continuing with that same person walking through the gate for the first time feeling accepted (“First day on the job” program), to enabling that person to excel in what he or she does (Targeted development), if we care to deliver on our promises by taking action on each and every concerned (Employee care) and if we take an extra step for the benefit of our employees and their families (Family friendly non-financial benefits), if we design the structures to avoid unnecessary effort (Organizational design) and enable employees to cross organizational boundaries and reinforce alignments (COBRA), if I feel well about my peer being promoted it means it’s based on merit (Promotion transparency), because I know that my commitment will guide me onwards to my career path (Clear career paths). If the business goals of the company and my contribution to achieving them are communicated clearly to me (Communicating vision and Ongoing feedback), I will enjoy the celebration of everybody’s success (Regular success celebration). If my dedication is recognized and rewarded (Rewards and Recognition programs) and if I am free to utilize the multiple channels of communication to share and to contribute (Internal communication), then I will do my best (Effort), stay (Retention) and even if I decide to leave I will continue to advocate the company (Advocacy), where I have achieved my greatest successes.”

The HR department’s employee engagement Action plan is being developed and strongly supported in execution by the Public Affairs and Communication (PA&C) department. HR is conducting the employee engagement study analysis, comparing the results across the countries and across the each department and job position, and, finally, defining the corporate and individual objectives for the action plan. They also provide inputs for the PA&C department necessary for the internal campaigns design: the timeline, target employees or departments, the message and the expected outcome of the internal campaigns. The PA&C department then develops the strategy, tactics, tone and creative solutions for the campaign, that would be the most effective and in the same time in line with the external communication plans.

The role of internal communication campaigns in employee engagement

The Public Affairs and Communication department (PAC) in Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia was formed in 2003 and today the team consists of five communication experts in charge for: corporate reputation management, media relations, internal communication, corporate social responsibility programs, government and NGO relations, IMCR (Incident management and Crisis Resolution) and communication with the key accounts. The director of the PAC department is a member of the board of directors, directly involved in the strategy and decision making process in the company. One of the key pillars of the PAC business plan is internal communication and communication support to employee engagement programs. After reviewing several internal campaigns that directly contributed to the employee engagement program in last three years, the authors have chosen and will hereby present the “Vision, mission and the values” campaign, which was designed and executed to address the key drivers of employee engagement: “Purpose”, “Trust in senior management” and “Fun”.

“Vision, mission and values” campaign

Ever since the very beginning of its business activities in Serbia, Coca-Cola Hellenic established its vision, mission and values. In 2005 a new direction was introduced – a new vision, together with new values in 2007, which constitute the basis of the company. To determine are the employees clear of the direction that the company is taking, an anonymous survey was carried out in 2009 – to reveal that 45% of the employees were unaware or unfamiliar with the company values and 38% with its mission and vision.

With the objective to remind the employees of these corporate culture essentials, to boost the spirit of belonging to a single Coca-Cola Hellenic team and to improve the work environment by promoting a company as a fun place to work, a “Vision, Mission and Values” campaign was designed and successfully conducted, by the Public Affairs & Communication department.

The strategy of the campaign was to focus on the company core values, since management
believed that if the employees behaved in accordance with them, the company would achieve its mission and vision. The tactic was combining numerous communication channels and involving all the employees in an entertaining competition.

The campaign was implemented as follows:

- The campaign bearer, a song, was composed and recorded in studio. It became an anthem of the campaign with a simple rhythm supported by rattling of Coca-Cola bottles against each other. It sounded like a catchy sports song that everybody is capable of singing and the lyrics reflected the key Coca-Cola Hellenic values. A video for the song was filmed featuring 15 employees of different levels of responsibilities, different age and both genders.

- The competition for employees for the best poem on company values was organized. An employee, the author of the best poem, would win a prize and a public recognition – the poem, together with the author’s name and photo to be framed and put on several walls in the plant and offices.

- Direct communication techniques: The local Serbian celebrity, a comedian dressed as Super Coca-Cola Hellenic Man, tours around and visits all employees, while singing the company anthem together with the promo team. They personally delivered the form for writing lyrics for the poem on the company values to each employee. The employees were supposed to fill in that form and put in employees’ suggestion boxes.

- Indirect communication techniques: The PAC department designed and printed visuals: posters, pen holders and mouse pads that communicate the company vision, mission and values. An e-mail with the invitation for the competition was designed and distributed to all employees. It was agreed with the IT department to set the unique desktop background for all the company’s computers, so that during the whole campaign, each time users turn on their computer, they would be able to see a new visual with a new value appearing on their desktop during the course of a workweek. Internal TV was also used as a tool in the campaign. First it broadcasted a countdown clock before the beginning of the campaign, then the video was broadcasted throughout the whole campaign and afterwards a film about what the campaign looked like was aired. All employees were sent an MMS on their mobile phones containing the sound of rattling of bottles against each other, as an announcement of the campaign.

Finally, the author of the best lyrics for the song was presented an award and an interview with him was published in the internal magazine “Spajamo”. There was even a consolation prize for the employee who composed the song that did not win the competition – performance of the song at an internal party and filming a video for it.

The results of the campaign were as follows: More than 1,200 employees were included in the campaign; Employees had an excellent response to the campaign and 38 song lyrics were received and one of them was composed. The survey conducted after the campaign proved that the campaign was successful since the results of the familiarity with the core values and mission and vision improved for 10%.

Discussion

According to the staff record and internal surveys, increased employee engagement in Coca-Cola Hellenic led to: decrease of turnover over the time with zero turnover of high performers for the fourth year in a row, optimized organizational structure and the awards for the best employer in the industry in Serbia, according to the independent study of GfK in 2008 and Synovate in 2008, 2009, 2010.

There are several limitations to our research that need to be considered. First, the employee engagement model we presented is being used in the multinational company which has the well developed organizational structure and procedures and is the market leader in its industry. The application of the model should be tested and compared in the similar companies, as well as in the large domestic companies and small and medium enterprises. Secondly, the complete methodology and results of the employee engagement survey in the Coca-Cola Hellenic Serbia, as well as detailed recruitment and retention processes are confidential and could not be presented in this paper. Further study of the approach to employee engagement management and measurement in different business environments is needed.

Conclusion

In this paper we highlighted application of employee engagement in practice. Based on the case of employee engagement management in the multinational company operating in the developing market and the literature review of the employee engagement concept, we demonstrated that there is a certain gap between the theoretical framework and business applications of the employee engagement construct. First, there is obvious lack of empirical research around the topic of employee engagement in the academic literature. At the same time, the corporate practice has recognized the importance of the employee engagement and its connection to the solid business results. It is obvious that there is a need for the standardized management model and measurement system and tools. In most of the cases, consulting companies and agencies offer a range of measurement models and tools, but they are still too heterogeneous, which does not allow the comparison between the industries and companies. We believe that there is a need for the scientifically based empirical research to rigorously test the assumptions and implications of employee engagement, and to differentiate it from related concepts. Secondly, employee engagement has often been looked at from the organizational level but it is clear that employee engagement is an individual-level construct. And thirdly, although the literature mostly indicates Human Resources as dominantly in charge for the employee engagement management,
according to the presented case study of the successful approach to employee engagement, we may conclude that employee engagement is fundamentally HR process, but that the long-term effectiveness largely depends on the internal communication and the support of the Public relations department, regarding the internal communication strategy, tactics, creative solutions and alignment with the overall business processes and communication. Organizations need professionals who have well-researched, effective and meaningful approaches to creating, building, and maintaining employee engagement, and practitioners are looking to scholars and researchers for tools and techniques that are well grounded.

References


Employer branding, internal alignment and engagement using Web 2.0 technology: the Boston Scientific Case study

Sara Secomandi, Matteo Barone, Andrea Balduzzi

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE

The necessity to continuously renew a trustworthy relationship

The organizations have been recently involved in the crisis scenario, characterized by a general situation of uncertainty and continuous change. Facing instability as a permanent activity condition, these have the need to constantly reinvent themselves and their proposal (external and internal) to the constant search of competitive advantage. In the meantime, these have the need to constantly renew the trust of the people that are part of it with every title: employers, institutional audiences, stakeholders, shareholders, consumers, social movements, network of interest and so on.

This context, in particular, is characterized by an interdependent global relationship that does not even spare the communication area. The emergence of the 2.0 as not just an instrumental dimension but also sociological and relational, has determined a clear guidance, in communication in general and in internal communication in particular, to the reflection and adoption of communicative practices typically of social networks. Trust is always more built inside the practices of conversation, that are always more consistent, and not any more outside of these.

The new general orientation: from “controlled” to “shared” communication

From the most relevant aspects that can be highlighted in this new context we definitely point out the end of “controlled” communication, which is typical of organizational communication: the story telling that the organization does for itself is not the only and exclusively authoritative source in regards of the same organization. Multiple voices and interventions contribute in a decisive way to build the image, identity, vision, public and market perception, the attraction that the same organization exercises in regards of its current and future members.

The same dynamics of involvement and effort that often determine the success of an organization cannot be just carried out by initiatives guided by functions and institutional choices of content and style, adopted to communicate internal identity.

In particular, we can see emerging as a new prospective the one of knowing how to have a more profound intelligence of the internal stakeholders, to really understand their needs, profound values, the cultural dimensions that create an actual context for an effective and satisfying relationship between all the involved audiences.

From change to the new communicative approach

Continuous change needs the constant revision of strategic orientations, the capability to react with great speed to the stimuli of the context, the need to build solid competences at high level, the ability to dialogue with multiple audiences. All of this has clear reflections of what is communicated and, most of all, on how it is communicated, but today even more on with whom we communicate, and who is that communicates. It is evident that the task of communication, in a similar context, principally becomes the one to support and favor every dynamic that can be in line with the strategic behavior at all levels.

If we assume that change can be faced through the learning of the capabilities to change and the consequent adoption of new organizational behavior, as well as with the simple and sometimes excessive organizational restructuring (often promoted with solid incentive interventions), we can say that the job of communication becomes the one to motivate the strategic necessity of change and to generate strong motivation and effort of the people and challenges that change imposes. Consequently one of the new essential tasks of internal communication becomes the one to favor the convinced participation of the construction of a new culture. From now onwards, therefore, when we speak about stakeholders, we should really start to consider the fact that we are talking about protagonists.

Internal communication and change management

Multiple researches show a recurrent data of extreme interest: most of the people express the necessity to fully comprehend the reasons of change, in order to concretely face the challenge. In other words, the necessary effort to the implementation of change has to be strongly motivated by a clear comprehension of the strategic context. For internal communication, therefore, very precise tasks are outlined with this in mind.

First of all, internal communication has to “acquire” a profound comprehension of the organizational context. This happens through the adoption of multiple modes of listening and interpretation of reality, explicit or implicit. The comprehension of opinions and of the sediment of those that are called to participate in first person to the change, is for sure of impact for the definition of more suitable activities to the activation of the new culture.
Secondly, internal communication is called to play an active role for the generation of the effort and of the involvement of the stakeholders of reference. This can happen, in particular, giving to all the population the opportunity to develop a serious confrontation of opinions through the activation of open spaces for discussion and debate: there are no effective changes that do not contemplate bottom-up dynamics, even in a picture of strategic rule of the entire involvement process.

Lastly, internal communication, as before but more and better than before, is called to design and implement a masterly articulation of instruments and channels that allow the diffusion of the made general strategic plans as well as the possibility to elaborate them at all levels, as to guarantee the full internalization and therefore the full efficiency.

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION, ENGAGEMENT**

**The importance of engagement**

All of the communication experiences for change witness the importance of engagement in employees and, in general, of all internal audiences of the organization, for the simple fact that engagement has demonstrated to have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the business: the increase of performance in people is in fact a guarantee, and also of the enforcement of the culture and internalization of values that are the foundation of the organization and its way of acting, that legitimate it in regards of all its audiences. The good disposition of people in regards of the changes imposed by the business is therefore one of the principal objectives for a good internal communication.

**The correct approach for engagement achievement**

Engagement is not just a simple question of process management, the internal communication activities that intend to generate it will have to be set starting from a correct (masterly) mapping of audiences and themes in play. Therefore, internal communication will have to, first of all, recognize all the internal audiences, tracing the relevant characteristics, on the basis of the map of the internal stakeholders following the identification of the adequate messages to the audiences and to the implementation of the more suitable tools and channels to make these messages effective. Last but not least, will define the correct conditions to make the same audiences become actively participant to the construction of contents and organizational orientation.

The simple transmission of messages is not, in fact, sufficient to generate engagement. The demonstration of a good listening capability from the organizer is the first relevant aspect in order to obtain positive listening from the audiences. On this basis it is possible to share a new strategy, creating the necessary assumption for its success. The construction of engagement has to be, therefore, involving and effective. Moreover, the work situations always more recurrent and structural, of territorial and temporal dispersion make mechanisms of activation and reporting necessary on behalf of the same audiences, in order to guarantee not only the cultural alignment but even the simple informative one: in order to follow diversified contexts and markets, it is always more necessary that the operative agents on the territory are the ones to give precious information for who will have to guide the change. It is for this reason that, both for methodological and operative reasons, the instrumentations and active participation environments result to be always more efficient for a practice of successful involvement.

**The organizations, communication and 2.0 web**

In the recent researches on organizational communication, conducted by leading institutes (source: European Communication Monitor 2010), a constant growth emerges, real and foreseen, in terms of relevance, of corporate communication and internal communication, facing a decrease of activities and of resources dedicated to external communication and marketing. In the tools with more significance, online communication in general and social media in particular, are always gaining more importance.

Whilst online communication (generally meaning public websites, email, intranet and so on) presents a constant and consolidated growth rate, the most highlighted and of impact growth rate results to be the one relative to the adoption of social media.

It was detected that the growth expectations of social media is in many cases excessive in regards to the actual trends revealed; this probably means that the pressure that social medias have been exercising at a public level and, therefore, also on organizations, is in any way of high impact and the people responsible for communication feel the need to build a middle and long term communicative strategy that takes this in consideration. Naturally, these processes do not just have effects of communicative type, but also typically of organizational type. To manage the new channels and make them coherent with the organization’s purpose, acquiring new competences is necessary, as well as determine new functional structures, change the culture of management so that it becomes a relevant interlocutor for diffused conversation, measure the actual impacts on the business, being able to value and promote the people through not well codified mechanisms (Source: Melcrum – How to use social media to solve critical internal communication issues).

Management, in particular, is involved in the discussion of these new dynamics since themes of its direct competence are being put a stake: control, governance, activation of people, change management, listening, measuring criteria, engagement…

Facing this sensibility, the comprehension of the terms of the relationship between social media and business is, however, still to be proved, and is still now a theme of discussion in regards of the results and to their measuring meter. In any case, the data of the researches allow us to say that now in many cases organizations believe to be mature (right or wrong is then to verify case
by case: we can better say that they believe themselves to be persuaded) to consider that the
value that they can express can be better found, amplifying the basis of participation; the strategic
definition does not just have to be communicated and diffused, but also transferred in terms of
participation.

2.0 supporting engagement: the building of cross-functional sponsorship
But what are the actual advantages for the organizations? On what does the actual reflection
principally concentrates on? The researches and the first implementation activities of success
principally suggest three areas: innovation and creative exchange, collaborative management
of knowledge, and lastly, what really interests us, engagement. The first rationalizations of the
experiences conducted also consent to underline, inside these areas, which are the concrete
organizational advantages derived from processes of innovation, sharing and involvement.

In the first place, we recognize that such processes are of great support to the competitive
construction of productions and therefore, to the continuity of presence and the growth on the
markets. The informative diffusion constitutes the basis for a strong speeding of the decision
process, therefore to organizational acceleration and agility, other than the collection of ideas,
to the construction of an organizational intelligence. All of this, not only constitutes a series of
advantages of great value, but is also understandable of an extremely favorable condition for
the generation and support to engagement. Engagement is not the fruit of specific activities of
participative communication; engagement is, always more, generated by the diffusion at all levels
of methods of participation, where the 2.0 web plays the role of the protagonist.

THE B-BOOK NETWORK
The roots to the Boston Scientific project
The scene portrayed until now is significant because it witnesses the rooting of new sensibility
and because it starts to determine the new modes in which we can generate value starting
from the inside. The enhancement of the human resources can have a significant economical
impact, because it consents the individualization of efficient solutions. The involvement of internal
stakeholders consents to abide to the brand ambassador dimension in which each employee is
invested in: the one that better communicates in the organization is the one that participates to
his own operative definition of product and strategy. The organizational basis, with its people,
constitutes a listening platform of enormous richness and significance, of which the attentive
analysis consents a governance of the organization, better than how the methods of investigation
used until now, consents it. The innovation dynamics are transformed, not just to the amplifying of
the field of collection of possible ideas, but also in terms of major efficiency of the entire chain of
introduction of the added value: when we speak of innovation, therefore to the major intelligence
of reality is added a more effective reach of results. The advantages are many, new dynamics of
engagement often constitute the heart of the change: the participative communication generates
engagement, and engagement generates itself a wider availability to change, that in an adapting
context generates satisfactory results.

This is the virtuous cycle that has induced a complex reality like Boston Scientific to give start to
an activation program of participative communication through a series of initiatives that we will
now go to explore with more details.

Boston Scientific EMEA
Boston Scientific is a market leader in the business of medical solutions. Their strategy is to lead
global markets for less-invasive medical devices by developing and marketing innovative products,
services and therapies that address unmet patient needs, provide superior clinical outcomes and
demonstrate proven economic value. The following are five elements of their strategy:
1. Prepare people and place them in strategic positions to inspire others and deliver results
2. Optimize the Company for greater efficiency and effectiveness by restructuring our business
   model
3. Win global market share by developing and acquiring high-impact growth products
4. Expand our global sales and marketing focus with critical new capabilities and people so we
   can better execute our sales activities
5. Realign our business portfolio to improve leverage and accelerate profitable growth

In October 2010, the Boston Scientific Marketing Communications Team of the EMEA decided to
embark in a strategic growth of its marketing communications by introducing a social media plan
based on the launch of a ‘closed’ network, dedicated to professionals around the EMEA region
to build a network culture, strengthen the identity of the EMEA community, experiment a blended
approach to communication and engagement, manage strategic alignment across countries,
divisions and hierarchy levels, involve and motivate people through participation and rewarding

The Boston B-Book Network
The Boston Scientific Network (B-Book) is an open, new empowerment, communication tool
integrated with the existing corporate intranet.

It was strategically positioned and launched to give energy and vibe to the Corporate Marrakech
appointment in February 2011. It was used before and during the event as a driver to keep
participants informed, focused and involved in the Boston Scientific “Emeawide” real world and
business objectives for the coming year.

After the Marrakech appointment, it merged within the overall communication strategy as a
medium to engage in a new wave of sharing and communicating, informing and exchanging all
the elements of the BS strategy, life and culture. Its main goal is to aid the growing community
feeling already part of the BS culture at an EMEA level, leveraging on technology, passion for social media, the need and feeling to stay in contact after the vis-à-vis meeting in Morocco. The goals agreed with the communication team were four drivers that animated the growth of the community in its first phase:

1. the community name was chosen by the people: a collaborative process was activated, members could propose ‘brands’ and through a voting system, the most ‘clicked’ name became the official community brand: B-Book
2. rich profiles allowed for social relationships to be nurtured and brought to the next level: photos, hobbies, friends networks, messages etc. are the platform on which the engagement found its fuel to become reality
3. content areas developed in line with expectations and needs: core content areas where given, representing strategy, products, objectives and top management vision, new content areas have been included in the editorial plan through a continuous analysis of proposals, requests and desires of participants
4. functionalities and tools allowed cross-interaction as all social networks, voting, alerts, tags, scoring, send to, add a, and similar functionalities are the base on which all contents have been developed.

Such a positioning allowed the Network to become part of employees life, merged quickly with the company culture and reflected values, ideas and wishes of people.

Snapshot of the B-Book Home page (see next page)

Navigatio

The navigation map looks like this (see Appendix for contents detailed description):
Content generation strategy
The inclusive participation of professionals is at the base of the content generation strategy. To induce a collective growth and involvement, a mixed content strategy was built: parts of contents were uploaded by the HQ to generate awareness and first levels of interest. Other areas were set up in terms of guidelines, but were left empty for professionals to develop them in line with their needs and expectations. A specific members area as built as a platform on which to generate engagement. The idea was to stimulate people by giving them a first glance and taste of what the B-Book could look like, but leave to the end users the job to ‘fill in’ content areas based on fixed guidelines which linked to the organizational strategy.

In practice, a hybrid plan was devised: Area A was developed in terms of functionalities and first communication elements were launched to induce participation and word of mouth. Area F (Marrakech) was structured and filled with content for participants to read and get information from, area B contained a few elements (first post on blog, pictures of the management team, etc.). Areas C, D and E were only built in terms of architecture, the content and the development roadmap were subject to interests and wishes. In particular, area C was left empty for the first phase, where objectives were to engage, and is about to be launched in phase 2 where objectives are directed towards interests and wishes. In particular, area C was left empty for the first phase, where objectives where to engage, and is about to be launched in phase 2 where objectives are directed to the supporting of the business.

Functionalities to generate engagement and activate virtuous collaboration circles
Contents are made available in a diverse range of “social functionalities”:

- Forum: discussion board on different subjects, all managed through the grouping into categories
- Blog: online diary open to any member, where single threads can be posted on any subject
- Comment: text form to add comments on published content by another user
- Scoring form: content evaluation tool
- Wiki: “collaborative encyclopedia” that allows the easy creation and editing of definitions regarding corporate content
- Survey: extended questionnaire or quick polls managed centrally
- Photogallery: photo album
- Videogallery: video album

All “social functionalities” are enriched with “dynamic tools”:
- Tags: all the contents of the website are tagged
- Alerts: it is possible to submit to the e-mail alerts connected to the different areas
- Search: all the contents of the website are “indexed” and reachable through the search window
- Scoring: all the contents can be voted through a specific icon and form
- E-mail to a colleague: all the contents can be posted by e-mail through a specific form

Tools for community management
The BSNws, is at a good extent “self-managed” by members, however, light moderation mechanisms have been implemented.

Subscription System used by the members to get real time updates on some sections, also used by the moderator (Internal Communication EMEA) as an Alert System, to be informed real time every time a new comment or thread appears on the pages they are monitoring.

Some specific sections of the B-Book (forum for example) has an Invitations System that allows who is posting comments or new threads to send an automatic e-mail to his/her groups of network/division/country colleagues, representing a form of self-promotion and “viral” marketing.

Internal marketing plan
In parallel with the launch of BSNws a strong internal marketing plan has been put in place. Main objectives were to generate awareness for those who were not informed and understanding on what it aims to achieve. A fundamental tool in the internal marketing plan has been the direct involvement of sponsors who, through the powerful tool of word of mouth ‘brought in’ members from the relative country/division. Here follows a list of actions developed in the internal marketing plan:

- Teaser campaign: DEM (direct e-mail marketing) animated to create curiosity around the community
- Launch campaign: DEM and Fred’s video to announce the opening of the community
- “How do we call it?” campaign: DEM to invite everyone to post or vote a name for the community
- Name announcement campaign: DEM with video for the new community name/brand
- Base enlargement campaign: DEM to inform the new members they joined the community
- Periodical E-letter: monthly e-letter to inform the members about all the new features and novelties
- Invitations by members: every member invites colleagues to participate to the community informing them of new threads and comments.
- The two banners in the home page also work as promotional vehicles for specific themes, events, news, and need to be considered in the editorial plan of the home.

Governance model
The model chosen to manage and nurture the community is based on the philosophy that the B-Book is owned by the professionals, as such, professionals have an active role in its development roadmap. The Marketing Communications EMEA Team forms the link between strategy stakeholders (EMEA Top Management) and users (professionals).
Governance is based on quarterly meetings held by the Marketing Communications Team with Top Management, where results, usage numbers, preferred contents, people networks, etc. are shown. At these meetings strategy is updated and action plans are devised accordingly. The Marketing Communications Team implements actions decided involving participants directly.

**Communication Management dashboard**
A dashboard forms the ‘compass’ through which Marketing Communications manages the social media plan. Accessible with username / password visualizes all access and use statistics. Update in real time, shows (per day/per week/per month):

- Page views
- Unique visitors
- Visit time
- Visit per section
- Actions per section/division/country
- Other significant figures

**Performance ratios as of today**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Total users</th>
<th>Updated profiles</th>
<th>Active users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Actions that explain involvement and engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION TYPE</th>
<th>Tot</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Comm.</th>
<th>Blog</th>
<th>QP prop.</th>
<th>Album</th>
<th>Discuss</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>actions</td>
<td>1581</td>
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<td>627</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% on tot</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
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<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most used objects**

Results achieved from phase 1: February 2011 – April 2011
The strategic direction chosen for the initial launch was based around 2 main initiatives:
1. Focus on social contents vs. business contents
2. Focus on top-down promotion vs. bottom-up involvement

In the first 3 months, results show 20% of members as active users. These form the ‘core team’ of evangelists or ambassadors that understand the tool, find value in it and use it in their everyday activities. First analyses highlight the extensive use of the two areas: *Members area* and *My Profile area*. A first conclusion to this reflects the need of people who work in global companies to maintain contact with their colleagues that go beyond conference calls and emails. Building up their own networks of friends, adding pictures to their profiles, completing profile areas such as hobbies and interests confirms that social media tools and 2.0 communications proves to be effective as a means for engagement where face-to-face activities are too costly. Members, since the launch of the B-Book, associate an email address and a name to a face, a lifestyle, a character and a personality. First engagement results show a more open environment where issues are managed by members acting as leaders, going beyond their mere job description and role, a more distributed knowledge of ‘who knows what’, ‘who can help on which issues’, ‘who can recommend valid sources, information’. On the Strategy and Vision side, the *Home* area and the *Rooms* areas have proven effective in disseminating messages straight from the Leadership Team to professionals. Such actions, in synchrony with cascading initiatives and management communication improved significantly levels of internal alignment regarding strategic orientation. The area that has been heavily affected is communication codes and key message alignment. The B-Book has been extensively used by the president, giving employees two specific benefits:

1. Showing a concrete sign that the area was sponsored by Top Management
2. Employees can speak with each other and him based on the same communication frame and could therefore feel being part of the same community
B-Book members understand the value of 2.0 technology for internal topics as a means to keep generate engagement, build and foster a sense of belonging through the ‘links’ and ‘networks’ that can be created and managed between people living in different geographical areas.

Activities planned for phase 2: May 2011
The second phase of the project is about to be deployed. Focus now is shifted:
1. Business Contents vs. Social Contents (leveraging the results obtained in phase 1)
2. Bottom Involvement vs. Top down Promotion (leveraging on the evidence that Top Management is a key player in the process)

In the following months, a wiki on products/services is one of the main focus. Top management wants to assess how much their inside-out view on satisfaction, degree of response to problems, customer service levels etc. are in line with what the market feels. This area will be generated by frontline staff with a quarterly supervision by the Marketing Communications Team that will periodically assess market research projects with the ‘voice of customers’ and check how well BS is doing in responding to ever-changing customer needs.

Below, the new editorial plan shows how content areas are going to be re-directed towards the business. All proposals come from the direct involvement of participants, therefore results reflect their desires and wishes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content elements</th>
<th>New direction for phase 2: how contents will reflect the business/how contents will show bottom-up focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Main banner          | • Some new products or marketing tools to be promoted and discussed  
|                      | • Photos of the community users as testimonials                                                    |
| Second banner        | • Instant poll on business themes                                                                  |
| Highlights           | • Interview to “active users”  
|                      | • Tutorial on the B-Book functionalities                                                            |
| Top right shortcut   | • Marrakech photo section                                                                         |
| Managers Room        |                                                                                                    |
| Fred’s Blog          | • Posts on some strategic issues to be discussed ONLY IN the community                              |
| Managers Room        | • Cross-comments on managers                                                                       |

President’s Club Room

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Photos of the ceremony in Marrakech and Bali journey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Blog

| Posts from the winners |

MyNetwork

| Groups of interest |
| Developed description of the functionalities and potentials of Groups of interest |

Help! BSC Answers

| Developed description of the functionalities and potentials of Help! BSC Answers |

BSC World

| Main page |
| Documents and materials presented during Marrakech sessions |

Discussions

| New discussions on Marrakech sessions themes |

Marrakech

| Main page |
| Link to the photo albums and blogs of the event’s reporters |

All about the event

| Selections of interesting results and info |

Planned activities for the following months include:

Through the B-Book community

- Contests: innovations, ideas, photos…
- Surveys: on the community, on business themes…
- Quick polls: on specific business tools, events…

Through other BS web tools/sites

- Weekly/Monthly e-letter
- Fred’s messages
- Intranet promotions: banners, articles…

Through off line initiatives

- Workshop with all the country representatives for an internal selling on the project bringing a strong involvement of the countries

The integration of all engagement activities into one masterplan is the overall goal the Marketing Communication Team wants to achieve over the next 6 months. Integrating B-Book with other online platforms and all other offline initiatives will allow the definition of SMART objectives that link all activities into one framework. The major benefit and value BS is aiming to achieve is to
measure the degree of impact 2.0 actions have in generating engagement comparing them with other initiatives that are in place against a set of common clear and agreed guidelines.

Appendix 1: contents description

A) Home

A.1) Highlights

Format and functionalities: News with text and pictures, and the “read more” link. It is possible to get comments and votes on every news. Central area of many homepage is dedicated to news and updates, written by the central editorial unit, in order to inform the community and promote some specific contents.

Periodicity: every week a new “highlight”

A.2) Latest updates

Format and functionalities: Excerpt from the latest comments and discussion contributions, photos and personal data from the latest profile updates, all viewed in dedicated portions of the homepage.

Periodicity: real time and automatic updates

A.3) Banners

Format and functionalities: Pictures or video linked to specific sections/pages to be promoted, in the head of the homepage.

Periodicity: every month at least one new central banner and one right-side banner

First versions of the banners:
- Central: Fred’s video for the new web community
- Right-side: Marrakech event

President BS Network launching video:
- the president communicates his wishes about the nature of the network
- the president announces how he will use this new communication tool in the future
- the president speaks of the Marrakech event as a great opportunity to start together the new sharing and communicating practice, in the same logic explained about the new web network community

A.4) Instant poll/Survey

Format and functionalities: A question with instant vote or a banner linked to a page with survey

Periodicity: every time is useful to launch audit initiatives in the community

First survey:
“How do we call it?”, internal competition for finding the BSNws name. Everyone can propose a name or vote one of the name posted by the colleagues. The ranking order is updated in real time. The most voted name become the official name of the community network.

A.5) Tag cloud

Format and functionalities: real time tag cloud

Description: This box show in home page the most frequent tag associated with content. The dimension of the word correspond to the frequency of the tag. Clicking on one tag, it opens a page with all the links to the relative contents tagged.

B) Rooms

B.1) Fred’s Blog

Format and functionalities: Blog with open comments

Periodicity: every 15 day a new post from Fred. Comments continuatively.

Description: This area is the CEO blog, where he posts relevant themes on which the community is invited to reflect and discuss. This area is the unique location where the important announcements are promoted and released (products, organizational issues, events and all others top interventions).

Guideline for the first post:
The president in his first intervention will post the very first questions to all BS involved people:
- What is the very important thing for the February event?
- And what do you hope to bring home from Marrakech?

B.2) Managers Room

Format and functionalities: Blog + Static section with descriptions of managers

Periodicity: every month a new post by different managers
Description: The Managers Room contains Top Management profiles, each presented (self-presentation and parts of description “by the others”) as members of a strongly integrated team, and offer the possibility to intervene in the flow of the blog communications.

B.3) President’s Club

Format and functionalities: blog, photogallery, special content section of presentation of the best performers. It is possible to add exclusive documents of create “private appointment”, like blog chatting with Fred.

Periodicity: in every occasion/initiative of the club; continuative by the members

C) BS World

C.1) Products

Format and functionalities: Static section with text, pictures, videos

Description: This area is the most related to BS business and knowledge/practice. At the beginning it focuses on products, after on other aspects like culture, organization and strategy, commercial themes…

Periodicity: at the opening of the community, all the managers insert 2 product to be presented. Every month managers insert a new discussion theme and check constantly the comments.

Guidelines for managers to describe the products:
Every product manager is invited to describe with a brief text:

- product concept / essence: the most important key points and messages for the product communication
- how to use at best the Boston Network space to improve the product knowledge, sharing of best practices, enhance the commercial behaviours

Each product area proposes two questions/themes to involve people in:

- which aspects of the product do you want to explore better during the Marrakech event?
- share your most recent experiences about the product, in terms of: stakeholders opinions and feedbacks, the voice of medical system, frequent asked questions, promotional efficacy of the marketing materials, ways and instruments of presentation…

D) MyNetwork

D.1) Who's who

Format and functionalities: Members profiles with personal and professional information, pictures, latest comments and profile updates.
Everyone can search the other community members filtering the “who’s who” files, and add them to his/her network as office colleague, past colleague, team colleague, friend…

D.2) Groups of interest

Format and functionalities: Forum with open discussion, organized in thread categories, like professional experience, market and competitors, “followers” (based on personal interest like sports, hobbies, …), moderated by owners of the thread.

D.3) Help! BS Answers

Format and functionalities: “Yahoo! Answers” format, in which everyone can post a question and ask to the colleague to help him/her with an answer. Both questions and answers can be voted and commented. Questions are organized in thread categories.

Description: Questions can regard professional situation, tips & tricks, and in general everything that cannot be found in BS internet but is part of the “social knowledge”.

E) MyProfile

E.1) Personal Profile

Format and functionalities: Personal profile with rich information and picture (upload form)

Fields:
- Name
- Surname
- Country
- Division
- Job Title
- Birthday (month, day)
- Professional biography
- Professional profile in BS
- Personal interest: Sports
- Personal interest: Hobbies
- Personal interest: Groups and Associations
Empowerment and exploitation: Intra-agency communications

Liz Bridgen, Senior Lecturer, Public Relations, Department of Film, Media and Journalism, De Montfort University, Leicester

ABSTRACT

The potential of social media to alter models and modes of intra-organizational communications has attracted the attention of both academics and organizations (e.g. Hacker (1996), Gorman (2003), Jo and Shim (2005), Friedl and Verčič (2010)). Public relations-related research effort in this area tends to focus on organizational issues and opportunities and employee acceptance of, or resistance to, computer mediated communication (CMC). However, qualitative studies entailing the basic principles of the phenomenological approach are less common and consequently little attention has been given to practitioner experience of using social media for intra-agency communication. Consequently, this paper sets out to explore some of the issues occurring as a result of formal or informal use of social media for communication within public relations organizations.

Many public relations agencies operate a relatively flat hierarchical structure, with practitioners grouped into small and flexible teams working for a number of separate clients. Despite a ‘soft’ approach to human resource management, consultants within a public relations agency are working for a service which is “intensely competitive” (Pieczka 2006:304) in terms of the need to win and retain new clients. Thus it is an environment which can lead to a contradiction between management claims of flexibility and the reality of working in a culture where failure, and deviation from a set of norms, is not tolerated.

Drawing on interviews with public relations practitioners, this paper looks how social media is used for intra-organizational communications within UK public relations agencies. It examines the effects of formal and informal use of social media on effective working relationships across teams and between managers and consultants.

The interviews revealed a number of themes which suggest that the use of social media for internal communications has mixed effects on employee motivation and enjoyment of work, in part linked to the way that social media crosses and transcends formal and informal internal communication...
practitioner experience of internal communications as either a practitioner or employee.

approach are even less frequently seen and consequently little attention has been given to largely quantitative while qualitative studies entailing the basic principles of the phenomenological performance (e.g. Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Verčič & Moreno (2010)). Studies in these areas as part of a larger study into, for instance, general communication themes and public relations in the area of internal communications within public relations organizations, it is usually found public relations agencies and departments tend to be overlooked. Where research does exist although there is a large body of literature on internal communications within organizations, public relations agency practice, social media and the intersection between them.

INTRODUCTION

The potential of social media and computer-mediated technologies to alter and improve models and modes of intra-organizational communications has attracted the attention of both academics and organizations (e.g. Friedl and Verčič (2010), Gorman (2003), Hacker (1996), Jo and Shim (2005), Warisse Turner, Thomas and Reinsch (2004)).

Warisse Turner et al (2004:7) observed seven years ago that typical research in the area of technology and its application in terms of internal communications tended to describe how organizations used “information technologies to change business processes, enable[e] new kinds of joint ventures, alliances, outsourcing arrangements, and problem solving.” Despite the growth in use of computer mediated communication (CMC) within organizations, research in the field of internal communications and technology still follows a similar pattern largely focusing on organizational issues and opportunities arising from technologies, and employee acceptance of, or resistance to new methods of communication. As an example of this we can cite Friedl and Verčič’s (2011: 85) examination of the internal communication preferences of digital natives who found that “(f)or the transmission of general organizational information, employees prefer email newsletters and intranet news to social media.”

There is little qualitative research into the employee views of the use of CMC for internal communications or indeed into to the feelings and emotions of public relations practitioners on any aspect their working practice. Although Yeomans (2008) and Pieczka (2006) are two of the notable exceptions in this area, this deficit has led Kang (2009:152) to comment that “public relations scholarship has given intermittent attention to job satisfaction.” Consequently, the area is under-theorised.

Although there is a large body of literature on internal communications within organizations, public relations agencies and departments tend to be overlooked. Where research does exist in the area of internal communications within public relations organizations, it is usually found as part of a larger study into, for instance, general communication themes and public relations performance (e.g. Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Verčič & Moreno (2010)). Studies in these areas are largely quantitative while qualitative studies entailing the basic principles of the phenomenological approach are even less frequently seen and consequently little attention has been given to practitioner experience of internal communications as either a practitioner or employee.

To begin to redress this issue, and to continue research by writers such as Kent & Taylor (1998), Hallahan (2003) et al, all of whom looked at online media as a relationship-building tool (albeit for external communications), this paper sets out to explore some of the issues occurring as a result of formal or informal use of social media for communication within public relations agencies.

There are a number of definitions of social media and are all dependent on the context of the article and experience of the author. However, for the purpose of this paper, we draw from Phillips and Young’s (2010:6) discussion of social media within an organizational context:

(5)Social media allow (or have the potential to allow) organizations an effective environment in which to create dialogues and communicate directly with publics and stakeholders (without the mediation of traditional gatekeepers), so they allow users, clients, opponents and competitors to communicate freely with each other, with the potential to create a discourse that is largely out of control of the subject.

Thus, this is “in contrast to traditional website content that is created, selected and filtered by organizational or media gatekeeper” (Henderson and Bowley, 2010: 239).

This article is organized as follows. First, it will give an overview of the internal communications strategies and practice used in public relations agencies in the United Kingdom before looking at the role played by social media in both formal and informal internal communications in such organizations. After a discussion of methodology it will then explore how social media is used both to communicate across public relations agencies and the issues arising from this.

Internal communication: Strategy and practice

Any theoretical framework for research in internal communications and in particular the use of social media within these contexts will need to examine the themes that arise from the published literature on internal communications, public relations agency practice, social media and the intersection between them.

It should be remembered communication takes place within and across organizations regardless of the systems which are formally in place. For instance, employees may share information which helps them do their work via informal discussions without realising that they are taking part in internal communication activities. Both formal and informal systems are required within organizations to impart information, engage staff or, if the organization is using internal communications in a more strategic role, build relationships with internal publics and use these relationships to support the organization’s aims or guide it through a period of major change.
While Anspan & Dell (2000) claimed that favourable employee communication could increase job satisfaction (with employee performance and organizational success following), authors such as Clutterbuck, Hirst and Vage (2002) observed that such success depends on all communication activities being successful and accepted. Thus, an unplanned piecemeal approach to internal communication was usually doomed to failure. Therefore, they reasoned, organizations whose internal communications are well organized and who take a strategic and managed approach tend to also be successful.

Clutterbuck et al (2002) found that “for most business leaders, communication within the business is not an area of activity they enjoy – far from it.” However, public relations practitioners and leaders rely on communicative skills to succeed which means that my research suggested that social media (both on an open network and within an intranet) has often been embraced as a method of intra-agency communication, particularly within larger agencies. However, it should be remembered that communications within a public relations agency doesn’t just take place between communication professionals – in larger agencies communication will involve administration, finance, human resource and IT teams.

Wakefield (2001) observed that any form of internal communication – whether formal or informal - was complicated by a number of factors which included employees having different perspectives on, for instance, work hours and the differing managerial styles within an organization. Although Wakefield was discussing a multinational operation, many of his comments have relevance for public relations agencies, where individualism and creativity is valued, consultant hours are fluid and working in the evenings (for instance, checking a client Twitter feed or carrying out blogger relations activities) is not seen to be an exceptional activity. Hence, internal communication is more than just imparting information during working hours and allowing and acting on feedback; it needs to be sufficiently fluid to reach them at all times that they are ‘working’ but without being intrusive. Cornelissen (2011:163) observed that “organizations must find ways to meet their employees’ individual needs and stimulate their creativity while persuading them to act in ways that meet the organization’s overall objectives” which points to the idea that internal communication should not be seen by those who carry it out as a task (or ‘necessary evil’) but an enjoyable activity in which the individual not only participates but wants to participate.

Turner et al (2004) noted that technologies have the advantage within the workplace of being able to “deliver[…] services that seem to require physical collocation” and the structure and praxis of public relations agencies, characterised by consultants frequently being away from the office on client business, or working in the evenings, means that communication via electronic means, as well as one which offers an asynchronous way of communicating, is attractive.

### Social media in the workplace

Jo and Shim (2005: 279) observe that “interpersonal interaction between management and employees might be more important than formal mediated channels in bringing organizational information to employees,” thus pointing to the relationship building aspect of facilitating dialogue. In this sense, empowering and enabling consultants to use social media – forbidden in some workplaces - could be seen to facilitate effective internal communications. Holtz (2010:online) observes that preventing the use of such platforms simply “impede[s] the ability of employees to do their work, leading them to circumvent blocks and use their own equipment” and it is interesting to note that as long ago as 1995, Wright observed that : “American business would be wise to start treating employees differently. This includes “treating them like customers” and “treating them like responsible adults instead of treating them like irresponsible children” (1995:192). Thus, giving employees the freedom to use social networking sites in the workplace puts the onus on employees to use the sites responsibly – and as my research shows, social networking sites end up being used for work rather than instead of doing work.

Social media, by definition, is for shared consumption, and while some organizations, as Breakenridge (2008) observes, use social media-type a tools behind an intranet, the contradiction here is that when using social media for internal communications all information can be seen, whether by people inside or outside an organization.

The subtleties of sharing organizational information online are such that conversations are often hidden to most in the outside world since unless connected to person a within an organization (for instance, being friends on Facebook with an employee) and some Twitter tools filter out conversations between people even though the ‘tweets’ are in the public domain. However, those determined to know what goes on inside an organization can circumnavigate these restrictions which means that social media can only ever run alongside other internal communications activities and cannot (or should not be) used for company confidential conversations. As a result, confidential material needs to be shared and responded to via meetings, intranets or in paper form. However, Phillips and Young (2009) observe that people always talked about work outside work and that he porous nature of the Internet is not a new phenomena; it has always been the case that some material for internal consumption has needed to be treated with confidentiality and internal material can and does leak out, regardless of controls in place.

Indeed, this paper would argue that it is no longer possible to differentiate clearly between internal and external communication since a consultant’s private thoughts and emotions (for instance, shared on social networking sites and in blogs) are used to build relationships with journalists and clients (Bridgen, 2011); indeed they are often seen as a legitimate means of employee communication and part of the internal communications ‘toolkit’, albeit with certain caveats.
Although the idea that there is a divide between ‘digital natives’ and ‘digital immigrants’ has been strongly refuted by writers such as Bayne and Ross (2007) and was not demonstrated by my research (senior managers were often seen as the ‘drivers’ of technological innovation in the workplace) it is clear that employers need to embrace or at least tolerate social media as a method of employee communication and one that allows employees to do their job.

Consideration of past research on adoption of technology in the workplace is frequently problematic and needs to be considered in the context in which it was written. Firstly, social media technologies, and the preferences therein, change rapidly, so any research in this area should be seen as a ‘snapshot’ of use at that time and not a permanent state. Secondly, adoption takes place at different rates in different countries and regions. This can be shown clearly when comparing two recent pieces of research. Zerfass et al (2010:online) noted that “almost every second European professional (45 per cent) thinks online communities are an important channel for public relations today,” with the European study showing a slowing in the perceived importance of RSS-type communication, whereas Friedl and Verčič’s (2011) research showed a preference for RSS-type communications. However, there are some important factors which may explain these apparent contradictions: While Zerfass et al’s research was carried out among communication professionals in Europe, Friedl and Verčič’s surveyed a predominantly Asian group of IT professionals and while the two groups are not mutually exclusive, there are differences in communication needs between the two.

Tracking social media use for internal communications against organizational success is outside the scope of this project, which looks at practitioner experience of internal communications but would be a valid topic for further exploration. However, given the acknowledged problems with PR measurement (Watson and Noble (2007), L’Etang (2008) etc.) and the fact that PR agencies operate in fluid teams and often with large numbers of clients with different demands and strategies, ‘success’ would need to be clearly and rigorously defined.

The context of consultancy life

Many public relations agencies operate a relatively flat hierarchical structure, with consultants grouped into small and flexible teams working for a number of clients. Consultancy life is characterised by a high degrees of both internal competition (for status, ‘popular’ clients, external recognition, promotion and even popularity amongst peers) but also by co-operation (e.g. staying late to help a colleague prepare for a media launch, alerting colleagues to potential PR opportunities for their clients). Thus it is an environment which is at once highly flexible and supportive but also one where failure, poor performance and a lack of ‘team spirit’ is not tolerated. It is also an environment which can only work with a high degree of effective informal communication. As Clutterbuck et al (2002) noted, communication is essentially a contract between individuals, enabling them to do their job well and ultimately ensure the competitive advantage of a business. Without this, an organization cannot operate effectively. Interestingly, Clutterbuck et al demonstrated that it was indirect rather than direct internal communication that seemed to influence business success; the authors found that when internal communication was indirect, it was because the team had a clarity of purpose and there was trust between people at all levels (although ‘trust’ here is not defined, and as Welch (2006:151) observes, “trust and distrust are present in relationships at the same time”). This was borne out by my research which demonstrated that social media was used between teams for information sharing and support but in addition, the sharing nature of it meant that teams could bond more quickly with new members, thus bringing new colleagues into the ‘sharing circle’ more quickly.

Methodology

My paper draws on interviews with public relations consultants, looking how social media is used for intra-organizational communications within public relations agencies in the UK. It examines the effects of formal and informal use of social media on across teams and between managers and technicians.

To explore consultant experiences and understanding of using technology for intra-agency communication with peers, management and subordinates, a qualitative approach was chosen. As Grunig (2002:2-3) observes:

Relationships cannot always be reduced to a few fixed-response items on a questionnaire [...] The researcher also can develop a better relationship with the research participant with qualitative methods, which usually means the participant will provide a more candid assessment of the organization-public relationship.

Thus, since I wanted to discover what consultants felt about technology and communication, an approach which relied on semi-structured in-depth interviews was favoured.

A phenomenological approach was taken in this study to examine how public relations agency consultants dealt with and understood the use of social media for internal communications, and in particular, what they felt about this. As Yeomans (2008:4) explains:

Key concepts of social phenomenology (Schutz, 1970) are that society and social life are seen as ‘intersubjective’ phenomena that comprise the ‘lifeworld’ (Husserl, 1983; 1913). Within occupations such as public relations, shared knowledge and procedures of the ‘lifeworld’ of public relations practitioners may differ from everyday ‘commonsense knowledge’ (Layder, 1994).

Thus, how a public relations practitioner allows their personal life to be viewed may be different from an individual who does not have to rely on a promoted ‘self’ to build and maintain contacts with journalists, clients, bloggers and contacts. The interviews aimed to capture the ‘lifeworld’ of the consultants and my background in public relations enabled me to talk about public
relations problems and practice without having to interrupt the interview to ask the meaning of an industry term. It also allowed me to build a swifter rapport with the interviewees; essentially I was ‘one of them.’

Phenomenological research is characterised by small samples between five and 25 (Creswell (2007) in Yeomans, 2008)) and while the small sample size means that it is not possible to generalise from this research, it does allow me to compare the views of consultants both to each other and to current literature and enables the establishment of themes and ways of thinking which may be applicable to future research. Above all, it enables us to start to theorise about the relevance of the topic and consider it within the contexts of public relations, internal communications and social media research.

My research aimed to discover how and when consultants engaged with colleagues and management via social media. Although multiple data sources were viewed (e.g. agency Facebook pages, company blogs and practitioner Tweets), the principal means of data collection was semi-structured recorded interviews with seven public relations agency consultants (three men and four women) selected via stratified purposeful sampling strategies at public relations agencies in London and Birmingham in summer/autumn 2010, plus two follow-up interviews in spring 2011.

Interviewees were all employees (not company directors or owners) of agencies – an important point as I wanted to establish the views of those either receiving management messages or setting their own team messages and who did not have an organizational policy to communicate. All were active users of social media, for instance used microblogging site Twitter, and/or had profiles on at least one other social network (such as Facebook or LinkedIn).

Findings

The interviews revealed a number of themes which suggest that the use of social media for internal communications works well for employees because it is not formalised and exists outside formal structures. However, there are caveats. Due to the way that social media crosses and transcends formal and informal internal communication praxis it can be seen as empowering the consultant and facilitating good dialogic communications; however, it can also be potentially destructive to effective working relationships, paradoxically as a result of the drive for transparency; “one of the core elements that drives online public relations” (Phillips and Young, 2009:38). It appears that the interviewees were all very aware that they had to modify their behaviour online, leading one interviewee to comment that ‘editing’ her life for the consumption of work colleagues had become “second nature.”

Social media gives employees freedom to manage when and where they communicate and who they choose to communicate with. Employees can communicate asynchronously with colleagues and management, allowing communication to take place at a time which suits both parties. The acceptance of Facebook within the workplace has aided this transformation within workplace communication.

[Using social media has] taken over from the cigarette break . If you have five minutes you think ‘I’ll check Facebook’ or ‘I’ll look at a video on YouTube” and it is totally acceptable. (PR manager, medium-sized PR agency)

Among my interviewees, Facebook was the most popular to share information at work. It was used to ‘let off steam’, to brainstorm ideas, to ask for advice or even as a quick way to get to know people, although Twitter was also popular, especially when requests were of a professional nature – such as asking for supplier suggestions.

However, who to ‘friend’ at work on Facebook led to dilemmas:

I think I am quite conscious that I am friends with management on Facebook and it would be considered quite odd if you weren’t friends with everyone – a new girl started so we all looked her up on Facebook. It would be considered anti-social if you weren’t friends with everyone on Facebook. (Account director, small PR agency)

I am friends with people on the same level as me – account execs and account managers and people who are essentially friends - but not directors or senior people; you have to know when to cross the line. (Senior account manager, large PR agency)

Due to the phenomenological nature of the research, I was anxious not to influence the interviewees through planting ideas of subjects such as ageism. Indeed, this issue was rarely mentioned. One senior account executive in a medium sized agency noted that “My account manager isn’t on
Facebook or Twitter – he’s only 30” but on the whole senior management were assumed to be competent users of technology and the (disputed) digital native/digital immigrant divide (Bayne and Ross (2010)) was barely present.

While in researching this paper I came across anecdotal references to companies who compelled their staff to use FourSquare or Facebook Places ‘check ins’; however I found no direct evidence of this. One interviewee said that they had been encouraged to use FourSquare at one stage, but this was to develop familiarisation with the application and was only used in fun during lunch breaks to ‘check into’ local stores and restaurants.

Nonetheless, a level of compulsion and competition did not exist as employees were encouraged to be active on external social networks such as Twitter since it was used widely within the media industries, leading one Senior Account Manager at a large public relations agency to comment that she could see having a profile on Twitter being written into contracts in the future.

I get the feeling now that you should to be on Twitter … if you go to an interview or rock up at a team and aren’t on Twitter it would look hideously bad … People didn’t expect Twitter to get this big – now people realise how powerful it is.” (Senior account manager, large PR agency)

Ultimately, although social media was seen as invaluable for sharing ideas and opinions, the issues involved in the morphing of work and leisure as colleagues and management become ‘friends’ and have access to the social and personal lives of each other, has led consultants to modify how they present their own lives.

[I don’t modify what I put onto Facebook] for my colleagues but my bosses yes – for instance I wouldn’t say I was really hung over or anything which would put me in a bad light. (Account director, small public relations agency)

Meanwhile, another consultant developed a solution to this problem:

I’ve got two Facebook accounts. One of my clients tried to add me and I didn’t want them to see my party pictures so I set up a separate account so use two names. (Senior account executive, medium-sized PR agency)

Conclusion and discussion

This research contributes to the body of knowledge of public relations in two ways. Firstly, it demonstrates the value of social media for allowing effective working relationships between teams and in a sense ‘speeding up’ the socialisation process of new consultants by allowing their personal details to become known more quickly. Thus, it allows individuals to become part of a workplace community quickly via communication which leads to a shared understanding of a situation rather than by, for instance, a person having to prove their value through achievement or time in an organization. Social media effectively provides the channel which allows consultants to “form communities that liberate individuals through mutually beneficial interests and shared meanings” (Heath (2001:50)).

The structure and use of social media within organizations means that employees can choose who gives them information and who they give information to. In this sense, organizational messages cannot easily be controlled and discussion may take place without the knowledge of management, but such a process does allow consultants to communicate informally in order to get work done and develop a sense of belonging within an organization – what Smith and Mounter refer to as ‘social glue’ (2005:82). In this sense, we start to see the value of social media – not just for chat and socialising but to increase motivation and ‘team spirit’ between employees. Thus, when Wright (1995:191) identifies that employees are “going through a significant change in values reflecting a greater importance on quality of life than on financial rewards” we can see that freedom to use social media in a way that spans both the personal and professional is vital for employee motivation and enjoyment of work.

However, while empowering consultants to use social media and accepting that it may be used at once for personal and professional reasons, there is a negative side to this freedom. Consultants felt that they were being forced to modify their own behaviour online because of the scrutiny it would receive from colleagues and therefore the channels in which they could represent their true self were becoming increasingly limited. Thus, the value of using social media in the workplace – in forming strong teams and allowing teams to work together to get a job done – was also forcing consultants to keep their true feelings hidden. Such a development was considered unwelcome but also seen as inevitable; the rapid pace of social media development was such that consultants seemed to accept the changes that social media brought.

Interestingly those interviewed, while accepting of the enforced censorship of their emotions and activities via social media, were rigorous in their belief that they would not use location-based services such as FourSquare and Facebook Places for either work or leisure; they simply did not want ‘people’ to know where they were all the time. It seems as though consultants, however public their activities, still want to keep some secrets.
Bibliography


Internal communication is of great importance for the Ministry of the Interior because unlike other organizations or companies, the Ministry of the Interior, as a government agency, does not have a product which promises success or recognition. The ‘product’ of the Ministry of the Interior is a ‘human individual’, that is, every police officer or state official, and therefore the service and success of the Ministry of the Interior depends on the achievements of their officials. For that reason, it is essential that all key information and facts are communicated to the officials consistently and in due time.

The purpose of this paper is to show the overall level of satisfaction at work and the level of satisfaction with the use of internal communication within the Ministry of the Interior. Moreover, the paper goes to show the degree of significance the employees assign to different factors which influence the level of satisfaction with internal communication. Apart from that, the paper aims to identify those aspects of communication which demand the greatest effort, as well as determining whether there are statistically significant differences in work satisfaction and satisfaction with internal communication among the employees of the Ministry of the Interior considering their individual socio-demographic characteristics (managerial status, sex and age).

The research is based on a survey conducted on a stratified sample of examinees (criterion: managerial/nonmanagerial status) that included 1300 employees of the Ministry of the Interior, which makes a total of 5% of all employees of the Ministry of the Interior. 91% of population sample were non executives and 9% of population sample were executive. The researchers formed a questionnaire that aims at scientific investigation of the elements that make up the satisfaction with internal communication at the place of work. The questionnaire measures eight dimensions of satisfaction with internal communication.

The results of the survey show that the managerial status has the greatest importance when it comes to satisfaction with internal communication, while the other two socio-demographic variables, age and sex, have no significant influence on the satisfaction with internal communication among the employees of the Ministry of the Interior. The most significant differences among examinees were found during the estimation of importance of each of the eight dimensions of satisfaction with internal communication according to the sex of the examinees. Employees with managerial statuses, unlike those with nonmanagerial statuses, give more importance to the satisfaction with communication at meetings, as well as to the satisfaction with the quality of the medium of communication and also to the satisfactory level of atmosphere created by communication. As far as the estimation of the importance of each individual dimension of internal communication is concerned, no significant differences were found among four different age groups.

This is the first research that the Ministry of the Interior has conducted on the subject of internal communication and therefore the results of the survey shall be used to plan a communication strategy and educational campaign with the purpose of improving the quality of internal communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are a number of different definitions of internal communication. Skoko (2006) states that internal communication implies all PR activities aimed to inform, motivate and train staff of an organization, and Dowle, Taylor (2008) says that the internal communication is a process of creating and exchanging messages within the network of interdependent relationships in order to help resolve the uncertainty in the environment. In addition, internal communication is defined as “planned use of communication actions in order to systematically influence the knowledge, attitudes and behavior of current employees” (Stauss, Hoffmann, 2000, to Tenc, Yeomans, 2009). Communication in an organization means a transfer of information, ideas, attitudes or emotions from one person or a group to another person or a group, usually with the intent to influence behavior (Bahtijarević-Siber, Sikavica, 2001 according to Tkalac Verčić, Pološki Vokić Sinčić Coric, 2007). That what is common throughout the range of different definitions is emphasizing the importance of internal communication for any organization and special emphasis is made that the most important relationship of an organization is actually the relationship with employees at all levels (Broom, 2010). Also, they share the conclusion that successful internal communication leads to success of an organization. Therefore, we argue that internal communication is one of the fundamental disciplines that enhance the success of an organization.

In this sense we can say that when information leaks, gossips and rumors replace organized communication, as the main source of information within the system, it is a sure sign that there is a problem. Such a situation leads many companies and organizations to disaster. Internal communication is therefore of great importance for the Ministry of the Interior.
communication has a strategic purpose, because through it a two-way trust relationship with employees is built in order to improve our effectiveness. Better informed employees will be more motivated and will contribute to higher productivity (Tench and Yeomans, 2009).

Internal communication for the Ministry of Interior is of great importance due to the fact that unlike other organizations or companies Ministry of Interior does not have a product that promises success or recognition. The ‘product’ of the Ministry of the Interior is a ‘human individual’, that is, every police officer or state official, and therefore the service and success of the Ministry of the Interior depends on the achievements of their officials. For that reason, it is essential that all key information and facts are communicated consistently and in due time to the officials – holders of Ministries success and reputation.

Role and purpose of internal communication can be summarized as a concern for the construction of two-way relationship of their employees, including relationships with internal audiences - with the task of improving organizational effectiveness. Employee relations and communication with them always aims to communicate the right thing in the right way. Taking this statement into consideration the management is due to create an environment where communication is effective because the communication that exists by itself rarely achieves measurable and significant results (Holtz, 2007). No organizational relationship is as important as the one with employees at all levels (Cutlip and others, 1985 by Theaker, 2003).

Understanding the internal communication of any organization or institution requires the analysis of the culture of the organization. Namely, in order to understand the character of internal communications within the Ministry of Interior, that is the police we also have to understand the character of its organizational culture because communication is its integral part. It is not possible even to imagine that the spirit of internal communication within the police could be significantly different from the character of the dominant organizational culture. The Ministry of Interior is still dominated by authoritarian organizational culture, although through many processes, primarily through a Strategy of action community policing, the police wants to promote more participatory organizational culture. The consequence is a paradox, and it is that the communication with police officers is mainly in the spirit of the authoritarian culture in a way that they are given orders and instructions, while the same officers when performing their jobs are expected to make decisions and solve concrete problems in cooperation with citizens or other services which is a characteristic of participatory organizational culture. However, because of the nature of the culture they come from, a police officer in communication with the citizens generally occurs from a position of authority and is rarely willing to involve citizens in decision-making, and is not ready to resign from his position of power and therefore will not solve problems in unison with the citizens. This discussion is particularly important to warn that objectively the police officers cannot be expected to when in contact with citizens, behave differently from the established standards of conduct which apply to typical police organization. If we want to achieve the change, first of all, we need to change the internal affairs and internal communication style of our own employees.

2. METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The goal of this research was to investigate the level of satisfaction at work and employee satisfaction with internal communication of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia and differences in satisfaction with internal communication between employees with managerial and non-managerial status and to determine the degree of importance that employees attach to various factors of satisfaction with internal communication.

Sample description, methodology, questionnaire

Ministry of Interior has a total of 26,352 employees, out of which 91% are non-managerial, and 9% are executives, 42% refers to the base police, 17% makes the criminal police, special forces 1%, 6% is riot police, 4% of contact police officers and 30% other employees. They operate in 20 police departments, the Police Directorate and the headquarters of the Ministry of Interior. For purposes of this research, a sample of 1325 examinees was used, which makes a total of 5% of the population of employees of the Ministry of Interior. The sample was stratified and during sampling proportional representation of examinees from all organizational units (20 Police, Police Directorate, police headquarters) was taken into consideration. The research was conducted by a poll method on a stratified sample of employees of the Ministry of Interior on 22 locations, the headquarters of the Ministry, the Police Directorate and 20 police departments. After determining the sample that corresponds to a proportional representation of examinees in all organizational units of the Ministry of Interior, trained interviewers conducted the research in the period from September 20th to October 10th 2010 on the selected sample. The study used a questionnaire drawn up for the purpose of scientific research of elements that construct an internal communication satisfaction at the workplace, by the authors Anne Tkalac Varočić, Nine Pološki Vokić and Dubravka Sinčić from the Faculty of Economics in Zagreb, who have given the permission to use the questionnaire for this survey. The questionnaire consisted of eight dimensions of communication satisfaction at the workplace (feedback satisfaction, superiors communication satisfaction, horizontal communication, informal communication, corporate knowledge, communication climate satisfaction, satisfaction with the quality of media of communication and satisfaction with communication at meetings), and socio-demographic characteristics of examinees. Each dimension communication satisfaction at the workplace consisted of four particles. Examinees were urged to anonymously circle their level of satisfaction on the Likert-type scale (1 = very dissatisfied to 7 = very satisfied) with every individual particle in the questionnaire.
Besides the 32 questions included in the above mentioned 8 dimensions of internal communication, examinees were asked questions about satisfaction at the workplace, changes in the level of satisfaction with the work and the issue of assessing the importance of each of the 8 dimensions of internal communication. The questionnaire also collected socio-demographic data of the examinees (gender, age in years, years of service in the police force, position, managerial or non-managerial status, marital status, etc.)

Table 1 The reliability coefficients of the Cronbach alpha questionnaire in the original and in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Cronbach alpha in the original survey</th>
<th>Cronbach alpha in this survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback satisfaction</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superiors communication satisfaction</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horizontal communication satisfaction</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal communication satisfaction</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporate communication satisfaction</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication climate satisfaction</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media communication satisfaction</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication at meetings satisfaction</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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</table>

According to the authors Tkalac, Verčić, Sinčić Ćorić (2007) a measuring instrument for assessing satisfaction with internal communication has a good internal consistency as reflected in the table above, and in this study Cronbach alpha coefficient has been calculated once again and the values are also seen in the table and are more than desirable, because according to the literature, known desirable values are over 0.8.

Results

To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the managerial (M) and non-managerial employees (NM) in the study, we used the nonparametric test (Mann-Whitney test) used for testing differences between two independent groups. Table 2 presents the results of comparing responses on the satisfaction with the internal communication between M / NM in the Ministry of Interior, and those answers that are statistically different will be given in the text.

For example, the first question, how satisfied are you with your job according to the criterion manager / non-manager (M / NM) revealed a statistically significant difference because managers were satisfied with the job, (Z = -4.57, p <0.05). On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 5 = somewhat satisfied, 6 = satisfied and 7 = very satisfied, in terms of scale, managers circled higher numbers to the question on their satisfaction with their jobs.

When they were asked about satisfaction with superiors communication or the availability of immediate superior, the extent of knowledge my superior has concerning the problems encountered at work, extent of superiors understanding of my problems, recognition of my problem by the immediate superior, managers have also circled higher numbers. Manager's superiors are more available to them then they are to their subordinates.

In answers to questions about satisfaction with horizontal communication in this questionnaire there was no statistical difference.

When asked about satisfaction with informal communication, in this questionnaire there was statistical difference but on the question about the satisfaction of number of decisions made on the basis of informal communication. In terms of scale, managers circled higher numbers.

When they were asked about satisfaction with corporate knowledge on all 4 particles of this dimension there was statistical difference. In terms of scale, managers circled higher numbers.

When they were asked about satisfaction with communication climate on all 4 particles in terms of scale managers circles higher numbers.

When they were asked about satisfaction with communication at meetings, to two questions (how well the meetings they participate in are organized, do they receive information relevant to do the job on time) responses were statistically different and in the terms of the scale managers again circled higher numbers, but all were satisfied.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Mann – Whitney Test</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Non-managers</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with feedback</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on consequences from bad performance at work</td>
<td>674.7</td>
<td>629.5</td>
<td>1.999</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on how much they contribute to the mutual success</td>
<td>665.1</td>
<td>629.7</td>
<td>1.567</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on how much is my work appreciated within the organization</td>
<td>659.2</td>
<td>631.3</td>
<td>1.231</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on how am I doing my job</td>
<td>649.4</td>
<td>630.8</td>
<td>0.827</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with the communication with superiors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of the immediate superior</td>
<td>689.1</td>
<td>623.4</td>
<td>2.973</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The extent of my superior’s knowledge of the problems I face at work</td>
<td>700.3</td>
<td>617.6</td>
<td>3.672</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much does my superior understand my problems</td>
<td>692.5</td>
<td>619.2</td>
<td>3.246</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of my potential by my immediate superior</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>610.9</td>
<td>4.442</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with horizontal communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague availability</td>
<td>646.3</td>
<td>639.7</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How successful is my communication with the members of my team</td>
<td>663.5</td>
<td>632.4</td>
<td>1.425</td>
<td>0.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague communication results</td>
<td>559.8</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>1.321</td>
<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness of my colleagues to accept criticism</td>
<td>655.3</td>
<td>632.7</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td>0.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with informal communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of decisions made based on informal communication</td>
<td>697.3</td>
<td>617.3</td>
<td>3.577</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of gossip in the organization</td>
<td>652.7</td>
<td>630.9</td>
<td>0.962</td>
<td>0.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of time I spend engaged in informal communication</td>
<td>645.5</td>
<td>632.2</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>0.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of information transferred through informal communication</td>
<td>657.1</td>
<td>629.9</td>
<td>1.217</td>
<td>0.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with corporate knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on Rulebook</td>
<td>701.5</td>
<td>618.6</td>
<td>3.679</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information on work results and the success of the organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on changes within the organization</td>
<td>678.6</td>
<td>623.2</td>
<td>2.446</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on legal regulations that affect the business of my organization</td>
<td>708.9</td>
<td>612.2</td>
<td>4.299</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with communication climate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much does the communication in the organization help me feel as its vital part</td>
<td>697.2</td>
<td>618.8</td>
<td>3.505</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much does the communication in the organization help me to identify myself with it</td>
<td>702.9</td>
<td>613.1</td>
<td>4.030</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much does the communication within the organization promote organizational values</td>
<td>709.7</td>
<td>608.3</td>
<td>4.535</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent am I encouraged to achieve organizational aims by communication within the organization</td>
<td>696.9</td>
<td>611.2</td>
<td>3.838</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with media communication quality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media of communication (written notices, intranet, verbal communication, etc)</td>
<td>694.7</td>
<td>619.9</td>
<td>3.319</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of communication via modern media</td>
<td>710.8</td>
<td>614.2</td>
<td>4.237</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of communication via modern media</td>
<td>701.8</td>
<td>626.2</td>
<td>3.889</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way the others choose to communicate with me</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>626.2</td>
<td>2.221</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with communication at meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well are the meetings I participate in organized</td>
<td>682.9</td>
<td>652.6</td>
<td>2.534</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the information given at meetings</td>
<td>665.9</td>
<td>631.5</td>
<td>1.522</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I receive information relevant to my work on time</td>
<td>675.7</td>
<td>626.9</td>
<td>2.152</td>
<td>0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting duration</td>
<td>656.05</td>
<td>633.8</td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td>0.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback satisfaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior’s communication satisfaction</td>
<td>654.5</td>
<td>637.2</td>
<td>0.830</td>
<td>0.407</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research has determined what importance employees give to various factors of satisfaction with internal communication. The results have shown that the vast majority of examinees find all eight dimensions of internal communication important or very important. It is of particular interest that the examinees state that the most important components of internal communication are satisfaction with horizontal communication (90% of them stated that this component is important or very important) satisfaction with communication with colleagues and the satisfaction with superior communication, which is important or very important to 88.6% of examinees. This confirms the importance of “face to face” communication in the immediate work environment of each examinee, whether it relates to communication with colleagues or with immediate superior managers. According to the results of the research examinees give the least importance to the satisfaction with the quality of communication media, 72.6% states that it is important or very important, as well as satisfaction with informal communication (75% of them stated that it is important or very important). The remaining four components are considered equally important by the examinees and 81.5% of them states that satisfaction with corporate knowledge is important or very important, satisfaction with communication climate, 81.1%, satisfaction with feedback 79% and satisfaction with communication at the meetings 78%.

When they were asked to assess the importance of each of the eight dimensions of internal communication, managers have on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = very unimportant 2 = unimportant, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = important, 5 = very important) circled statistically higher numbers to the questions about: the feedback satisfaction, satisfaction with corporate knowledge, communication climate, and satisfaction with communication at meetings.

Importance of individual components of internal communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of Components</th>
<th>Communication Climate</th>
<th>Feedback Satisfaction</th>
<th>Media Communication Satisfaction</th>
<th>Superior’s Communication Satisfaction</th>
<th>Horizontal Communication Satisfaction</th>
<th>Informal Communication Satisfaction</th>
<th>Corporate Knowledge Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Important nor Unimportant</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unimportant</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Z – approximation; p<0.05 significance level

Discussion

The results provide insights into job satisfaction and satisfaction with internal communication in the Ministry of Interior and identify those components of internal communication to which employees attach the highest importance. Generally speaking, we can conclude that the level of job satisfaction among employees of the Ministry of Interior is higher that the level of satisfaction with internal communication. Namely, when it comes to job satisfaction of 78.6% of examinees states that they are “mostly” to “very satisfied” while, when it comes to satisfaction with internal communication, such answers are given by an average of 62% of examinees. This result is understandable because job satisfaction is not affected solely and only by the quality of internal communication, but by a number of other elements as well. Responses to the question what are the elements which affect job satisfaction are identified in the qualitative research focus group of 45 subjects, employees of the Ministry of Interior. An interview was conducted in which examinees were asked to indicate, in their opinion, the most important five factors of job satisfaction. The answers were then grouped into categories of higher level according to the significance and thus 11 factors that influence job satisfaction were obtained and they are: salary, funding for work, relationships with colleagues and their competence, relationships with managers and their competence, communication climate, success in work, stimulation and rewarding, possibility of further training, education and promotion, work dynamics, contribution to the community, other.

Of all these answers the examinees (N = 45) most commonly cited answers that fall into the category of relationships with colleagues and their competence 75.5%, then the contribution to the community 60%, 53% communication climate, relationship with managers and their competence 48.9% and the possibility of further training, education and promotion 42%. We can also notice that among the five most common answers related to factors of job satisfaction are three responses that fall in satisfaction with internal communication, a satisfaction with relationship with colleagues, managers and communication climate.
The results pertaining to the assessment of satisfaction with different components of internal communication have given us a clear picture because they show which actually the weakest points of internal communication are, on the other hand they showed us the importance that employees attach to each of the eight dimensions of internal communication. In the average, minimum level of satisfaction with internal communication examinees show within the component of feedback satisfaction, where an average of 25.9% examinees is dissatisfied. Of the four variables measured by this component the worst results (32.3% negative responses) were obtained in the assessment of satisfaction with information on how much is my work appreciated within the organization. We can therefore argue that it is important that employees know how much is their work appreciated and that they are not satisfied with the amount of information they are given in this regard. Regardless of the fact that there often are clear rules and instructions about the work, it is very important to employees to get the information from the managers about their work. Such information will help them to make certain corrections, if they are needed, or to continue to work just as well. When there is no feedback employees are deprived of an opportunity to adapt their work to the expectations of managers.

Informal communication includes the amount of time spent in informal communication, the usefulness of the information transferred through informal channels, the number of decisions made on the basis of this communication and the amount of gossip in the organization. Average of 22.3% examinees states responses from “very dissatisfied” to “somewhat dissatisfied” compared to 49.3% of positive responses. It should be noted that the high number of negative responses is mainly due to negative responses related to the amount of gossip in the organization and it is precisely this question in the questionnaire that most examinees gave negative responses to. In fact, even 42.1% of examinees stated that they are extremely dissatisfied with the amount of gossip in the organization. We believe that in situations where employees do not receive enough formal information on important aspects of living and working within the police, especially the information related to organizational changes, increase the number of informal information or gossip and rumor. Although rumors may convey positive news, as well as in gossip, negative untested and untrue ones dominate. Precisely in this lies the danger of destructive and demotivating influence and gossip and rumor. Given the high percentage of negative answers this question should be given special attention.

The next component in which employees express the greatest dissatisfaction is communication at meetings. On average of 22% employees answered from “very dissatisfied” to “somewhat dissatisfied”. The examinees were equally dissatisfied with the information received at the meetings, the duration of meetings and with the information they receive during the meeting that are important to get the work done in time. However, the highest level of dissatisfaction is with the quality of organization of meetings they participate in, (23.6% of examinees answered from “very dissatisfied” to “somewhat dissatisfied”). Specifically, the meetings that are poorly organized, regardless to the usefulness and quality of content, do not give the expected effects for the participants on these meetings, leaving the impression of poor organization, and they not impressed by the importance of decisions and conclusions that were adopted.

Satisfaction with the quality of communication media reflects the satisfaction of electronic mail usage as a medium of communication, ability and quality of communication through modern media and other methods that are selected for communication with me. Average of 20.9% examinees states negative, while 60.3% cited positive responses. At this point the fact that availability of the new media, primarily the Internet and the e-mail are not equally represented among all employees, should be taken into consideration. Specifically, although each employee of the Ministry of Interior has an e-mail account created, 10,000 user accounts per day are active on the Internet. This is understandable because a major part of employees, primarily service patrols, and most of the uniformed police in their daily work, especially when working in the field, do not use PCs.

By ranking the components of internal communication to the average proportion of negative responses corporate knowledge satisfaction is in the fifth place with an average of 18.7% examinees giving negative and 60.3% giving positive responses. The average proportion of negative responses is largely increased by negative responses which the examinees mention when it comes to satisfaction with information about changes in the organization (25.2% of examinees answered from “very dissatisfied” to “somewhat dissatisfied”). This data also indicates that employees of the Ministry of Interior find the information about important changes in the organization important, and we can argue that the lack of formal information in this regard is compensated through informal information or gossip and rumors. Corporate knowledge, especially information about changes in the organization has a great importance for employees. Especially as organizational changes, almost always, also affect the employees themselves because they lead to changes in job positions, changes in job descriptions, changes of working conditions and other. For example, reducing or increasing employees has a direct impact on the workload of employees in one department.

Communication with superiors is not satisfactory for an average of 16.4% examinees. It is interesting that the negative responses that examinees cite about the individual variables within these four dimensions are in the range from only 9.1% of negative responses when it comes to access to the immediate superior to the 20.9% negative answers when it comes to superior’s understanding of the employee’s problem. This means that employees are the least satisfied with the level of understanding they face with their superiors when it comes to their problems, that is that they expect the managers to put more effort and time into hearing and understanding their problems. These findings, among others, suggest that managers other than professional competence must poses adequate social skills for leadership and management because social competence will be the basis to develop empathy and understanding for their employees and
for the problems that their employees face, and that will ultimately affect and motivate the employee.

Communication climate, which implies satisfaction by promoting organizational values and goals and that should help each individual within the Ministry of Interior to feel as an important part of the organization and to identify himself with the organization which he works for and to promote its values is not satisfactory for an average of 16.1% of examinees. It has already been mentioned that it is extremely important that all employees of the Ministry of Interior promote the same values and that it is of paramount importance for the image and reputation of the Ministry of Interior. These results suggest how to mediate the vision, mission and goals of the Ministry of Interior, as well as the key values in a more effective and direct way to all employees. It is of particular importance to emphasize the scope of certain key information, which are created and directed by those who manage the system, and to which employees and to what levels they are coming. If such information is blocked or come to all employees in a distorted content, or do not come at all, that represents a serious problem of the functioning of the system. What happens then is that priorities and objectives which are discussed by senior management are only declarative messages that do not lead to real changes in the work.

By far the best results of all tested components of satisfaction with internal communication have been obtained in satisfaction with horizontal communication, that is communication with colleagues. It speaks to the fact that within the Ministry of Interior there is a well developed team approach and community spirit in the performance of jobs and tasks. We can even argue that this is the greatest strength of internal relations and internal communications in the Ministry of Interior on which a number of positive changes can be based. Specifically, only 9.2% of examinees gave negative versus 79.2% who gave positive responses. Although in all the variables a small percentage of the examinees cited negative responses from 5 to 8%, with the variable that refers to the willingness of my colleagues to accept the criticism the number of negative responses was 18%, which indicates that we have to prepare our employees to accept criticism of their colleagues in a larger extend, especially if they are constructive.

Another goal of this research was to establish the significance that employees give to certain factors of satisfaction with internal communication. The results have shown that a large majority of examinees attaches importance to all dimensions of internal communication. However, it is shown that the most important components are those that refer to satisfaction with colleague communication (horizontal communication) because 90% of examinees states that this component is “important” or “very important”. The second most important component is, according to the results of this research, communication with superiors (vertical communication) that is stated by 88.6% examinees to be “important” or “very important”. These results confirm that examinees consider “face to face” communication as the most important whether it refers to communicating with colleagues in the working environment or directly to the superiors. Or, as it had been concluded by Tench and Yeomans (2009), the key component of communication is conversation “face to face” especially in the situation where there is a possibility of an upward communication. Employees prefer direct communication by their superiors in relation to other forms of communication. (Broom, 2010).

This suggests that managers are more satisfied that non-managers in relation to the work which is understandable since they have direct affect on planning and creating of work activities and conditions. Also, managers have favorable employment status in relation to non-managers. Further, for the conducted research it was of utmost importance to determine are there any statistic differences in work and communication satisfaction among the employees of Ministry of Interior considering the three socio-demographic characteristics: managerial status, gender and age. Obtained results show that when considering work satisfaction, statistically significant difference exists only in relation to managerial status of examinees.

When it comes to internal communication satisfaction the results show that the managerial status is the one socio-demographic characteristic that significantly creates the differences amongst the examinees. Namely, out of 32 tested variables in 20 a statistically significant difference related to managerial status was determined and in all cases in favor of managers over non-managers. In all variables in which differences have been determined they speak in favor of greater level of satisfaction amongst the managers. When taking into consideration components of internal communication satisfaction the greatest differences among the examinees are present in relation to managerial status in senior communication satisfaction, corporate knowledge satisfaction, communication climate satisfaction and communication media quality satisfaction because a statistically significant difference has been determined in all variables within these components.

As a conclusion we can state that managerial status has a more significant predictor of satisfaction with internal communication of Ministry of Interior employees.

Literature

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Insight into Daimler’s Internal Communication

Roxana Maiorescu, Purdue University

ABSTRACT

This study makes use of Goffman’s (1947) framing theory to determine the way in which Daimler’s internal communication reflects the employees’ identification with the company. The study employs the grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Stauss, 1967) to analyze 149 articles published by employees on Daimler’s blog. The results reveal that the company’s core values such as innovation, sustainability, and safety are framed by employees predominantly from the perspective of the astounding complex and the cosmological interest, a fact that reflects the company’s avowed identity and ensures the latter a solid reputation.

KEY WORDS: Daimler, internal communication, Erving Goffman, primary frames, corporate identity

INTRODUCTION

Johansson (2007) recommends that studies in public relations explore theories from the realm of sociology such as those developed by Erving Goffman that would allow for a deeper understanding of an organization’s internal communication. Goffman’s (1974) theories, which deal with the way in which individuals co-construct meaning and define a situation can shed light on how the organizational culture and identity are experienced and reproduced by its employees. While studies in public relations have tackled some of Goffman’s concepts such as impression management, sometimes referred to as image or reputation management, (Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Coombs, 2001; Johansson, 2007; Sallot, 2002,) framing has been seldom used in PR (Hallahan, 1999, 2005; Johansson, 2007). However, the concept of framing has been mostly developed in mass media theories and in connection to notions like priming and agenda setting (Entman, 1993; Johansson, 2007; Scheufele, 1999). From this perspective to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993).

Despite the fact that the importance of studying the framing theory in public relations as well as its implications were laid out approximately a decade ago, (Hallahan, 1999) scholarship could still
benefit from interpretative studies and analyses conducted to determine what shapes the views of the stakeholders of an organization. In this respect, “if public relations is defined as the process of establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relations between an organization and its publics on whom it depends, the establishment of common frames of reference about topics or issues of mutual concern is a necessary condition for effective relations to be established (Hallahan, 1999& Johansson, 2007).

Therefore, studies that engage the framing theory to determine the ways in which employees make sense of their organization and create meaning out of various situations can help shed light the degree to which they identify themselves with the company and how they go about to do it. Literature on identity shows that the latter is a socially constructed aggregate of perceptions (Fombrun, 1996) and recent studies have analyzed for example the way in which perceptions on corporate identity and image differ in internal and external stakeholders (Thalak-Verčič & Verčič, 2007). Since “organizational identity provides a cognitive and emotional foundation on which members of organizations build attachments and with which they create meaningful relationships with their organization,” (Hatch et al., 2000; Thalak-Verčič & Verčič, 2007) interpretative studies based on the framing theory can add on the existing literature and on empirical studies to determine the context that shapes the social view of the stakeholders. Since interpretative studies are characterized by an inductive/deductive approach and therefore, by subjectivity, such studies should be coupled with quantitative research methods in order to reveal the complete background that determines and shapes the perceptions of the stakeholders with respect to identity.

This study makes use of Goffman’s framing theory to analyze the way in which Daimler’s employees co-construct and give meaning to the company and attempts to determine the degree to which the perceptions of the employees are consistent with the company’s values and mission statement. More precisely, the study aims to determine whether there is congruence between the avowed identity of the corporation (how the corporation wants to be perceived) and the ascribed identity (how the employees view the corporation).

**Daimler**

Daimler, mostly known for its core brand Mercedes-Benz, has a history of 125 years and is ranked the second largest manufacturer of luxury cars in the world after BMW. The beginnings of Daimler are related to the first inventors of the automobile namely, Carl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler. The company was established in 1886 when the two decided to collaborate in order to produce vehicles that would be “either the best or nothing”.

The story of Mercedes-Benz is the narrative of the 10-year old Adriana Jellinek, an Austrian whose endearing name, Mercedes, was given by her father to the first Daimler car he ordered for his races. Initially a car whose speed didn’t exceed 15 mph, the vehicle drew the attention of Emil Jellinek’s many connections and Daimler started to sell more vehicles of the same model. By 1902, when Emil Jellinek had already been appointed member of the executive board, Mercedes officially became a trademark. Mercedes is a Hispanic word whose meaning is “grace” and Emil Jellinek named his first Daimler car after his daughter convinced that it would bring him good luck in racing. Later, the name was kept by the company which expanded on the significance of the trademark. One of these connotations revolves around the idea that, being a stylish and refined model, the car should bear a woman’s name. Little is known about Adriana Jellinek except for her soprano voice and for the fact that, unlike her father, she did not share a passion for cars. Her life was cut short prematurely by bone cancer.

Throughout its history Daimler remained loyal to its founders’ ambition and aspiration for innovation. “The love of inventing never dies” is one of Carl Benz’ famous remarks that has been undergirding the company’s culture since its establishment. Thus, Daimler is known for setting the standards for the car industry worldwide by introducing revolutionary technologies that were later imposed on the rest of the automobile manufacturers. Some examples are the wheel suspension introduced by Daimler in 1933 as well as the development of a center that allowed for safety tests by imitating real-life collisions, nowadays a must for the entire automobile industry. Today, Daimler’s latest technological achievements include the Active Blind Spot Assist, a system that alerts the driver of collisions when changing lanes and the Attention Assist Drowsiness system that activates the brake in the risk of a crash.

According to international studies published on Daimler’s website, Mercedes was named in 2010 one of the world’s most powerful brands, and gained top positions in three categories: “the most valuable global luxury car,” “the most valuable German brand,” and “the most valuable global premium car brand.” Additionally, Daimler employs over a quarter million people worldwide.

**Goffman’s concept of framing**

A concept initially developed by Bateson (1972), framing refers to the context or background through which individuals make sense of a certain situation (Goffman, 1974; Johansson, 2007). In other words, individuals perceive and understand circumstances based on rules and values that are more or less implicitly rooted in a larger structure, i.e. in a frame (Goffman, 1974, p. xiii). It is within this frame that, during the process of interaction, individuals try to answer question of “What is going on here?” Goffman asserts that “we can hardly glance at anything without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now (Goffman, 1974, p. 38).

Thus, the concept of a frame deals with the way in which individuals create meaning out of a situation which, in turn influences their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. In this respect Goffman contends that “the definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of...
Frames of references that individuals project on a situation they attempt to give meaning to oftentimes fail to be noticed because the events themselves confirm those projections. Thus, frames vanish into the interaction that takes place in a particular situation (Goffman, 1974, pag. 39). Additionally, frames are hard to detect when they become vague, unclear, and invisible. Moreover, the fact that individuals have different interests with regard to hiding or blurring frames, may make it difficult for the observer to determine a frame with accuracy (Goffman, 1974, p.xiv).

The employment of frames can take place consciously or unconsciously. Yet, regardless of the way in which frames are employed, their enactment is highly influenced by power structures within the society and the rules and expectations that the latter impose. For example, Goffman’s (1974) work on framing touched on the idea that institutional structures have the power to unequally distribute interaction resources such as prestige, power, or social skills and thus influence the emergence of frames and exert authority over meaning-making (Goffman, 1974, p.xvi). In an organizational setting, the inadvertent or intentional enactment of frames could be influenced by the top management which, as an upper level structure has the resources to exert dominance over the process of meaning making.

The concept of framing, as developed by Goffman (1974) allows for the determination of the central elements of interpretation and meaning that a group shares. These elements constitute the basis of a group’s culture, its belief system and its “cosmology” (Goffman, 1974, p. 27). Thus, in the context of organizations, the framing concept helps to determine the culture that prevails in multifarious stakeholder groups by first shedding light on the frameworks that the groups enact in the process of meaning-making. Group members are known to share the same types of frames and may only have divergent opinions with regard to issues outside the realm of the palpable such as the existence of the Afterlife or the existence of G-d.

Primary frameworks

Thus, individuals have the penchant for creating meaning out of a situation by employing certain frames, a process that may occur subconsciously or consciously and which determines the type and degree of interaction that observers would engage in. These frames are enacted instantly and form the basis of the process through which individuals confer meaning to an event or a situation. Although individuals may not be aware of the way in which they employ various frames and neither may they be able to describe them if asked to, they make use of them with tremendous ease and almost instantly. Goffman (1947) calls these frames primary frameworks because they offer the basis for all the forthcoming interpretations. Additionally, primary frameworks “allow the user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences” (Goffman, 1947, p.21). Based on the way in which they lead to interpretation and creation of meaning, the primary frameworks can be classified as natural and social.

Natural frameworks.

Natural frameworks classify occurrences that lack intentionality, agency, orientation, or guidance. This type of occurrences are predetermined and, therefore, no intervention could change the status quo. There are no rewards or punishments applicable, no positive or negative criteria from which to judge an event or a situation. In short, the meaning conferred from the enactment of a natural framework is, in a philosophical sense, deterministic: the current status of affairs has already been decided and there is no alternative to it.

In studying internal communication, the examination of the natural frames can trigger events or states of affairs in the macrosystem in which the organization operates. Such are the situations that are beyond the corporation in terms of decision making and that cannot be solved by either the stakeholders of the organization or the organization’s activity. In this sense, an example is the political system in which an organization operates. A corporation needs to adapt to the political system in which it functions yet, it cannot change the system through its activity. The situation has already been determined by forces outside the organization and the daily activity of the latter needs to develop according to the rules imposed by the macrosystem in which is functions.

Social frameworks.

Unlike the natural frameworks, the social ones interpret situations that revolve around agency, intention, motivation, and will. More specifically, in this case there is an agent that has power to change or avert events and whose performance can be sanctioned, punished, or rewarded. The agent’s doings are subject to appraisals and guided by rules. Thus, he or she can be “coaxed, flattered, affronted, and threatened” (Goffman, 1947, p. 22). Therefore, social framing is more concerned with deeds than it is with mere events.

However, despite the agent’s aim to change or alter the status quo, his or her power is limited by the natural extant conditions. More precisely, the agent’s deeds are restricted by the realm of the natural and his or her success can be measured by the degree to which he or she will seek to exploit these conditions (Goffman, 1947, p. 23). Thus, interpretation involves a frame within a frame since the social frame can be view from a larger perspective determined by the realm of the natural.

If applied to internal communication, the employees’ assessment of the top management will be influenced by the way they perceive that the latter exploited the conditions imposed by the macrosystem to the benefit of the company and its stakeholders. In addition, the social framework can help to determine the level of self-efficacy among the employees and the degree to which they view themselves as having power or voice to bring about changes within their organization.
In this respect, the natural framework should be studied together with the issues that triggered the decreased self-efficacy among the internal stakeholders, i.e. the policies and the rules enacted by the top management. In this case determinism is correlated with unbalanced power relations since the top management can take action and restrict the access of the employees to the decision making process.

Both the natural and the social frameworks lead to an understanding of experience that falls under interpretative criteria such as: the astounding complex, cosmological interests (stunts), muffings, fortuitousness, and the segregation issue of tension and joking (Goffman, 1947, p. 35). For the purpose of this study I will consider the first four categories of interpretation, since the issue of tension and joking bears less significance for the study of organizational communication in general and internal communication in particular.

The astounding complex.
When an event that is out of the ordinary occurs, observers are experiencing an astounding complex which is triggered by the fact that the new order of things requires a change in the individuals’ primary frameworks. Since individuals are reluctant to changing the frames they enact, they are prone to searching and expecting an ordinary explanation for the new event in the belief that, whatever happened is far from the realm of the extraordinary but, rather, falls under the umbrella of the mundane (Goffman, 1947, p. 28). Since the new event requires the acceptance of new agents along with new aims, motivations, and appraisals the frameworks should undergo a thorough shift. This is a radical change in the interpretation that individuals are seldom inclined to make.

At the internal level of an organization the astounding complex takes place when there are sudden and major changes within the company or when the activity is shaken and disrupted by an extraordinary event, whether positive or neutral in connotation. Thus, employees would expect an explanation that would not run contrary to their earlier views, beliefs, and attitudes. Thus, they would be seeking out information that falls under their earlier frameworks. An explanation that fails to appear might compel employees to willingly or inadvertently enact new frames in order to make sense of the situation. This, in turn can lead to a shift from their earlier identification with the organization, depending on the type of change and the involvement of the agents.

Cosmological interests (stunts).
Cosmological interests or stunts are actions that involve “the maintenance of guidance and control by some agency under what are seen as nearly impossible conditions”(Goffman, 1947, p. 30). An example of a stunt is the exhibition of the latest technologies in the eyes of a neophyte. Until he or she becomes acquainted with a certain device or gadget his or her amazement is framed from the perspective of something that is more or less attainable and that can be handled, even if only for now, by a few selected individuals.

Within an organization that takes pride in developing the latest technology in the market, employees from departments that are involved either directly or indirectly in the production of the technology are framed with the amazement, admiration, and pride for their positions within the company. Much of this admiration leads to their identification with the brand even outside the workplace. The ultimate purpose of such an identification is to gain social acceptance and recognition by taking from the reputation of the company. The admiration, amazement, and pride aforementioned are frames that employees use on a regular basis to make sense of their workplace. Much of these frames are determined by the corporate culture that emphasizes innovation.

Muffings.
Events within a company that occur unexpectedly, disrupt the regular activity and are deviant from the corporate culture and mission fall under the category of what Goffman (1947, p.31) calls “muffings.” Muffings occur when something gets out of the control of the agent and becomes totally subject to natural forces to the extent to which they determine the future course of things. An example of a muffing is a crisis that strikes a company and whose investigation indicates that, there is no agency to bear the responsibility since the event was an unfortunate accident. The accident changes the locus of control toward a deterministic entity. Since nothing could be done by a person who is usually responsible for these types of act, the crisis was a disruptive event, atypical for the organizational culture and mission.

Unlike events that fall under the astounding complex, muffings have a negative connotation. Another difference between the two consists in the shift of agency. In the case of the astounding complexes the agency is preserved after the event has occurred. However, the agency shifts in the case of the muffings and it is precisely this shift that causes the unfortunate event. Additionally, the shift is not deflectable.

Fortuitousness.
Unlike the concept of muffings, or astounding complexes, fortuitousness does not bear agency altogether. Rather, it revolves around happenstance, good or bad luck, and coincidence (Goffman, 1947, p. 33). The event is seen as produced by external forces and no initial responsibility is attributed to any individuals. What happens is the result of chance.

Fortuitousness can be enacted by employees at times when sudden changes take place in the macrosystem in which the company functions. For example, a multinational corporation that operates in a developing country where legislation tends to be unstable may be directly affected by a newly enacted law. In this regard, the locus of control is outside and no one within the company could have deflected it.

Table 1. represents the distinctive matters of the primary frameworks.
Methodology
The study made use of the grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss’, 1967) to analyze 159 articles posted on Daimler’s official blog between March 2010 and March 2011. The blog, entitled “Insights into a corporation” (“Einblicke in einen Konzern”) was created in 2007 and contains posts that were written by various internal stakeholders among which interns and employees who share their experiences while in the company.

First, the methodology involved the identification of emergent values from Daimler’s mission statement that were at a later stage juxtaposed with the emergent themes of the posts. Second, an analytic step was taken through which judgments were made about how to relate the themes and codes to one another. The articles were coded in the native language, German, and the results were translated into English afterwards. A second coder, a native speaker of German was trained into the procedures for the purpose of testing inter-coder reliability. Ten posts were later dropped as both of the coders agreed on their irrelevance to the study. Thus, the total units of analysis remained 149. The inter-rated reliability was reached on a number of 83 posts (62.3%). Since the grounded theory methodology is an inductive/deductive research tool that requires multiple exposures to the same units of analysis, the posts were coded twice by each coder.

Analysis
The analysis aimed to determine the frequency of presence of the company’s values in the frames employed by its internal stakeholders. Table 3. shows the degree to which Daimler’s core values such as innovation, sustainability, safety, diversity, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and commitment to its employees were framed by the company’s employees.

Innovation (n=42) had the highest presence in the astounding complex frame (n=27, 64.28%) and posts stated that the latest technology provided by Daimler was exceptional, rendering the company a magical slant. This value was also framed from the perspective of the cosmological interests (n=9, 21.42 %) in posts that mentioned amazement and wonder toward what was perceived by employees outside the technical department as unattainable.

Additionally, there was a presence of 26.19 % of the value of innovation in the muffing frames. More precisely, 11 posts mentioned the fact that innovation is driven from the environment in which Daimler operates. For example, a post from November 2010 mentions the new Mercedes car key with Swarowski crystals, an extravagant innovation meant to meet the requirements of the customers from Japan. Thus, the new car key is meant to “appeal to those customers who are not particularly interested in the functions of the car but rather into its design. The new car keys are a fashion accessory.”

As expected, the second value analyzed, sustainability (n=12), had the highest presence in the muffing frame (n=6, 41%) and appeared in connection with major changes that took place in the company’s products as a result of the external concern toward environment. Not surprisingly, this presence was followed closely by the astounding interest (n=5, 41%) as employees regarded the company’s efforts toward sustainability as supported by its unmatched technical achievements. Similarly, the third valued toward study, safety (n=16), appeared in the astounding complex frames in 7 articles (43.75%) and the company was perceived by far as the best automobile maker in terms of reliability in case of an accident. The fact that Daimler was considered “magically” unique was undergirded by a 25% presence of the safety value in the cosmological interest frames with the employees’ perception that Daimler is the only company to reach the unattainable. In this respect, one of the posts reads:

“We are now coming closer to realizing our vision of accident-free driving – and whenever an accident is unavoidable, innovative safety systems minimize injury and damage to road users, both within and outside the vehicle."

Further on, the value of diversity (n=21) was in most of the posts strongly connected to social corporate responsibility (n=14) . Thus, Daimler was regarded as a company whose goal is to unite people around the world despite their differences. For example, a 22-year-old Arab student from Morocco, who was an intern at the Power Train Information Technology (ITP) in the Mercedes-Benz plant in Berlin states:

“My colleagues and friends warmly allowed me to see closer into their lives and culture. At work or privately, I was pleased that people were helpful, friendly and open-minded. I admired that they talked with me about many aspects of the German culture and history very openly. I believe it allowed us to build a strong network altogether, to see beyond our cultural differences and to embrace and understand one another.”

Additionally, the company’s CSR is related to promoting the country and its culture outside Germany’s boundaries. For example, before leaving Daimler’s headquarters in Germany, the same student writes: “I still however cannot realize that, next week I will not be able to speak a word of German or walk along the nice quarters of Berlin.” This perception of the CSR is also present in the company’s mission statements that reads: “Our presence in many countries around the world gives us the chance to play a role in shaping the social environment and promoting dialogue between cultures.”

In the posts that entail diversity, the corporate value is present most of the times in the astounding complex frames (n=7, 33.3%) and is related to the promotion of the women to high levels within the company, Daimler’s commitment to inclusion, as well as the company’s vision that it is a leading company due to the innovation of the employees coming from different cultural backgrounds. Similarly, corporate social responsibility has the highest presence in the astounding complex frames (n=6, 42.85%).
Daimler’s commitment to its employees is predominant in muffings (n=14, 33.3%), a result which reveals that, despite the company’s efforts to frame the advancement of its employees as paramount, the employees still perceive this to occur because of a shift in the environment and thus, it is engendered from the outside. Further on, the analysis showed that the employees framed the company’s commitment toward them by enacting an astounding complex in a variety of posts that revolved around the fact that Daimler managed to keep its employees and continued to provide them benefits despite the global economic crisis.

The least employed frame was the frame of fortuitousness that regards events that lack agency and occur by mere coincidence. The frame appeared in relation to corporate social responsibility (n=2, 14.28%) and commitment to employees (n=1, 2.38%). One explanation is that the majority of the articles attributed responsibility to the corporation even in contexts in which the latter had lower chances of bringing about changes. One example is the perception of Daimler’s employees according to which the company can positively impact the political and cultural environment in which it operates. This perception is convergent with the company’s mission statement in which Daimler commits itself to attempting to bringing about changes in the systems in which it operates so long as those have a positive impact on the society.

Conclusion
This study applied Goffman’s (1947) theory to analyze Daimler’s internal communication. The aim of the study was to identify the frames that dominate in the employees discourse with the ultimate purpose of determining the reflection of the company’s values in the employees’ perceptions. Results showed that the astounding complex prevails in the perception of the corporate values of innovation (64.28%), sustainability (41%), safety (43.75%), diversity (33.3%), and CSR (42.85%). This implies that the company’s values are perceived and experienced as something exceptional and out of the ordinary a fact that gives the corporation an aura of perfection and unbeatable achievements. The prevalence of these frames in the experiences communicated by the company’s employees assures an almost supernatural reputation and a safe reservoir from which the company can draw in times of crisis.

The limitation of the study consists in the fact that it analyzed internal communication as it appeared on Das Daimler-Blog, a blog dedicated to the company’s employees. Although Daimler assures the readers that no posts are restricted from publication, there is no evidence with regard to the editing process and the amount of information restricted, if any. Yet, the study is an example of the fact that the framing theory, if coupled with quantitative methods of research can be a useful tool in interpreting the context from which internal stakeholders create and attribute meaning to their workplace.

Table 1. The distinctive matters of the primary frameworks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTINCTIVE MATTER</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THEY OCCUR IN ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Astounding complexes | - extraordinary events that require extraordinary agency  
- the need for a logical explanation that doesn’t run contrary to existing beliefs | - positive changes in the corporate culture  
- exceptional deeds performed by individuals within the company |
| Cosmological interests (stunts) | - abstruse and esoteric things that are perceived as being handled only by a chosen few | - usually refers to the latest technology  
- engenders admiration and amazement among employees as well as pride in identification with the company |
| Muffings | - an event that occurs as a result of a shift of the locus of control from an inside entity to a deterministic one | - a crisis or any type of unpleasant event that hits the company and that was triggered by the shift in control |
| Fortuitousness | - an event that occurs as a result of chance, good/back luck, or coincidence and does not revolve around an agent | An event determined by the political system in which the corporation operates and which disrupts its regular activity. |
Table 2. Daimler’s values.

| INNOVATION | “I believe in the horse. The automobile is a temp- rare phenomenon’ was the shattering verdict of Emperor Wilhelm II regarding this new means of transportation. He could not have been more mistaken: 125 years after the invention of the ‘Patent Motor Car’ by Carl Benz, automobiles are moving the world. The pioneering spirit of our company’s founders, and the passion of that era to transform visions into reality still inspire us today to reinvent the car over and over again.” |
| CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY | “The task at hand is to reconcile the growing demand for mobility with effective climate protection. This is no small challenge, but no one is as well prepared for it as the inventors of the automobile. Only Daimler already today has the products and technologies at its disposal to offer the full spectrum of sustainable mobility. We are optimizing efficient state-of-the-art gasoline and diesel engines in all vehicle categories: With the S 250 CDI BlueEFFICIENCY, for example, we are introducing the first five-liter S-Class vehicle on the market in 2011. At the same time, the battery-powered smart electric drive is already in locally zero-emission operation – and the countdown is under way for large-scale production.” |
| SAFETY | “We are and will remain at the forefront in matters of safety. We are now coming closer to realizing our vision of accident-free driving – and whenever an accident is unavoidable, innovative safety systems minimize injury and damage to road users, both within and outside the vehicle. In addition, we are contributing our expertise to the development of a modern transport infrastructure.” |
| DIVERSITY | “[Our] accomplishments are made possible by more than a quarter of a million Daimler employees worldwide. In their diversity, they reflect our customers and markets. Outstanding achievement has nothing to do with gender, age, or origin: On the contrary, a wide variety of perspectives and skills provide fertile ground for the production of vehicles that generate enthusiasm among our customers throughout the world.” |

Table 3. The presence frequency of Daimler’s values in the primary frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASTOUNDING COMPLEX</th>
<th>COSMOLOGICAL INTERESTS</th>
<th>MUFFINGS</th>
<th>FORTUITOUSNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation (n=27) 64.28%</td>
<td>Innovation (n=9) 21.42%</td>
<td>Innovation (n=11) 26.19%</td>
<td>Innovation (n=0) 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability (n=5) 41%</td>
<td>Sustainability (n=0) 0%</td>
<td>Sustainability (n=0) 0%</td>
<td>Sustainability (n=0) 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety (n=7) 43.75%</td>
<td>Safety (n=4) 25%</td>
<td>Safety (n=0) 0%</td>
<td>Safety (n=0) 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity (n=7) 33.3%</td>
<td>Diversity (n=5) 23.8%</td>
<td>Diversity (n=4) 19.04%</td>
<td>Diversity (n=0) 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR (n=6) 42.8%</td>
<td>CSR (n=4) 28.57%</td>
<td>CSR (n=0) 0%</td>
<td>CSR (n=2) 14.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to employees (n=42) 28.57%</td>
<td>Employee (n=5) 11.90%</td>
<td>Employee (n=14) 33.3%</td>
<td>Employee (n=1) 2.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Information on the history of Daimler was taken from the company's official website www.daimler.de
ABSTRACT
Almost 2 billion people world-wide have navigated in the cyberspace in 2010 urging organizations to use new media in their marketing-communication mix at a larger extent. Companies have acknowledged the importance of online applications for external communication at an early stage, but the potential of embedding them in the internal communication strategies has not been fully accomplished insofar. However, many organizations are now semi-virtual, highly using e-mail, chat, Intranet for employees communicating in the same working space. Further on, there are companies aiming to move to a completely virtual structure by employing and coordinating geographically-dispersed staff. As it has already been envisioned (Thompson, 2000), the emergence of the Internet has influenced employee behaviour, company cultures and team work leading to new organizational models. Virtual organizations have no physical boundaries, activities take place in the cyberspace and IT systems mediate employee interactions (Hughes, O’Brien, Randall, Rouncefiled, Tolmie, 2001). They are flattened hierarchies, built on decentralized corporate cultures and communication networks (Vlăsceanu, 2003).

The goal of this paper is to explore the way solely virtual communication among employees influences work in teams and group characteristics compared to communicating both virtually and face-to-face. I designed and carried out an experiment simulating two advertising companies each made of students’ teams (40 students in total), aged 20, both women and men. The experimental group consists in two teams communicating exclusively virtually via telephone, email, chat or forum and the control one in other two teams interacting both virtually and face to face. In each team, there are ten people with clearly-defined roles, typical for advertising agencies. In order to raise the participation levels and to get closer to the real-world, each virtual team competes with a semi-virtual team, drafting an advertising campaign for the same client, comparable to preparing for a pitch. As a result, two adversary teams have worked for the mobile phone operator Cosmote and the other two for the energy company Petrom. According to previous researches (Ocker, 2001), exclusive virtual communication among employees favours creativity in solving tasks and
exchange of ideas, but in the meantime it reduces personal interactions. Therefore, an advertising agency is an appropriate choice to explore virtual employee communication as it requires high levels of both creativity and team-work when performing jobs.

In order to analyze the processes of internal communication, team identity and cohesion I have applied a set of questionnaires. I have studied group behaviour, mainly control, power, participation, polarization and social homogeneity dimensions, by using Hemphill’s Index of group dimensions (Hemphill, 1950). The Seashore group cohesiveness index (Seashore, 1954) measures group identity and cohesion, while Sociometry Scales of Spontaneous Choice and Sociometric Preference (Moreno, 1934) shows the way people interact and exchange information based on personal working preferences. The analysis of the questionnaires intends to highlight the changes that virtual communication solely produces in team interactions and accomplishing tasks. Moreover it looks into both positive and negative effects on human relations, leadership and people management. Eventually, virtual communication only does not necessarily lead to lower levels of group cohesion, but it influences human relations, people tending to focus more on completing tasks rather than interacting with each other at personal levels.

The results of the experiment can be applied to mediated employee communication, leadership and human relations in virtual groups. For the academic world, the results can be included in the framework of group participation theories, identification and loyalty, and formal/informal communication networks in cyber-space. For businesses, it is a valuable tool intended to help global advertising and public relations companies to manage teams working in different offices, or to effectively make use of out-sourcing and working-from-home systems. The results can be applied by public relations or human resources consultants as well, when addressing the challenges of internal communication in delocalized multinational companies.

**KEY WORDS:** internal communication, employee communication, virtual organizations, group identity, loyalty, human resources, leadership

**INTRODUCTION**

**(Cyber)Internal communications**

The evolution of communication processes from face-to-face dialogue, to mediated and quasi-mediated interactions has led to deep changes in human behaviour (Thompson, 2000). These three types of communication differ in terms of co-location/ non-collocation of speakers, usage of symbolic references (gestures, mimicry, intensity and tone of voice etc), monologue/dialogue character, employed channel, number of recipients and feed-back possibility. As Thompson (2000) foresaw, Internet communications have increased the degree of interactivity, providing the audience with the possibility of feedback. During online interactions the roles of sender and receiver are mutually changeable, and space-time extension becomes reality, due to a wide range of applications available. Text-based synchronous or asynchronous communication forms strongly reducing symbolic references, audio applications, similar to mediated interactions, and video make non-collocation possible and allow reaching a multitude of potential recipients. The four communication types have been integrated in internal public relations programmes: face-to-face communication when organizing meetings, events or through regular human interactions, mediated interactions by telephone or audio-conferences, and quasi-mediated ones through e-newsletters, organizational TV stations, and Internet (email, forums, blogs etc).

**Virtual organizations**

In nowadays business environment, due to the rapid mass-media evolution, almost all organizations world-wide can be considered semi-virtual, as those unable to adapt and embed information technology in their processes are drastically declining. Semi-virtual organizations consist in groups of employees with combined interactions, both face-to-face and virtual, successfully integrating new technologies in their work (Ocker, 2001). In this context, public relations and advertising were geared towards maximum utilization of new media tools like corporate blogs, podcasts, YouTube, social networks (Gutu, 2007, 21) etc. for both internal and external communications. Thus, internal communications have been challenged by multi-business organizations with subsidiaries in several countries to go beyond the physical borders of office buildings. Specialists in human resources acknowledged as well that online communication can be an efficient and cost-effective solution to achieve work-life balance or to retain best employees located remotely.

Moreover, management sciences (Walther, 1996) envisioned and designed fully virtual organizations. Virtual organizations are networks of members and organizational units linked by information and communication technologies, coordinating together activities, skills and resources in order to achieve a common goal (Hughes et al. 2001, 49). They are composed of groups who due to administrative reasons cannot have access to face-to-face interactions and communicate only through online tools (Ocker, 2001). Amongst the clearest advantages of virtual organizations, scientific literature mentions swift adaptation to change, their being global,
The Virtual Organisation is a scientific experiment, aiming to determine the influence of virtual groups. However, despite all advantages, one can hardly identify virtual organizations out of the laboratory.

Virtual groups or teams

A virtual group/virtual team is defined by non-collocation and increased use of communication technologies for monitoring and control. A virtual team is group of people who interact with each other when carrying out independent tasks, guided by a common purpose. Unlike conventional teams, a virtual team works beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries and the organizational networks links are provided by information technology (Hughes et al. 2001, 53). I use “virtual group” and “virtual team” interchangeably in my article, as scientific literature (Prebble and Frederick, 2007, Vakola and Wilson, 2004), has not drawn a clear line when defining them as groups/teams. One can assume that there is a greater degree of interaction and interdependence in the case of teams as they are more heterogeneous being composed of members with different areas of expertise and accomplishing specific tasks in order to deliver the final product.

Relevant researches (Curșeu, 2007) showed that communication technologies affect dynamics and group cohesion. The absence of non-verbal references (appearance, race, colour, gender, tone of voice, mimicry, gestures) decrease the degree of trust between members, but increase their participation with ideas; both in terms of quality and quantity. Also, in virtual groups, subjects receive large amounts of information, they process it faster and the volume of distorted data decreases. As for negative phenomena in virtual groups, they relate to increased time allotted to planning and coordination, weak management, reduced sense of belonging to the group, role-ambiguity, and longer time to clarify tasks content.

Method

The experiment

The Virtual Organisation is an experimental advertising agency, composed of virtual student teams, the first of its kind organized in Romania, with the courtesy of the organizational management department of the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations of NSPAS. The purpose of the experiment is to reveal similarities and differences between groups communicating exclusively virtually and both virtually and face-to-face. It has been inspired by a study (Ocker, 2001) of a mail company with an experimental group communicating solely online and a control one where communication was both virtual and face-to-face. The study showed that semi-virtual teams enjoyed greater group cohesion, conflicts were resolved effectively, there was superior job satisfaction, but the end-product quality did not differ, and creativity has been stimulated more in virtual groups.

The Virtual Organisation is a scientific experiment, aiming to determine the influence of an independent variable (online communication) on several dependent variables (group cohesion, identity, information sharing etc.). The experimental group carried out its activities in the cyberspace, on a forum section of the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, on Yahoo messenger and on the email. On the other hand, the control group had access to both Internet communication and a classroom to use as work-space. Thus, it was a laboratory experiment given the artificiality of the roles, as students had to simulate the position of employees.

The experimental group, referred as VO consisted in 20 students of the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, average age 20 years-old, employing only mediated communication (forum, chat, phone, blog). They were divided into two project teams, each managing an advertising account. The control group, hereinafter SVO, was made in the same way, except that members communicated both online and face-to-face, similar to how it would happen in an advertising agency. Each team was assigned a goal: to create advertising campaigns for a client and in order to increase performance and internal cohesion of teams, a competitive situation was simulated: a client would receive two different solutions of the same corporate briefing (VO and SVO).

To ensure the respect of experimental conditions, each virtual team had to send at least three virtual conferences (Messenger logs) where all team members were present. The control group had the obligation to send only one log, but also to participate in two face-to-face meetings conducted by the manager. The experiment consisted in three stages. The preliminary stage (one month) established the experiment design, calendar, job descriptions, recruitment, selection interviews and setting-up teams followed by a meeting with the participants informing them on the goals of the research. The experiment itself (two months) consisted in creating the campaigns by the four teams. Each team was composed of members with specific roles who were assigned well-defined tasks: project manager (coordinating activities, assessing work and communicating with the research team), account executive (creative brief), strategic planner (planning and research), media planner (media planning), copywriter (slogans, texts, scripts for radio and TV spots), art director (artwork), PR Responsible (public relations actions to support the advertising campaign). Tasks had to be carried out in teams and communication methods used were: for VO, exclusively forum, e-mail, messenger (chat and conferencing), blog, phone, and for the SVO face-to-face meetings have been added. Finally, each team delivered the campaigns and questionnaires, the conference-logs or minute’s meetings. The experiment ended with a meeting where members presented their opinions and they were awarded honorary diplomas for participation. The post-experiment phase consisted in analyzing the data provided by instruments based on: Hemphill’s Index of Group Dimensions, Seashore Group Cohesiveness Index, and the Sociometric Scale of Elections and Preferences.

Instruments

The Hemphill’s Index of group dimensions (1956, John K. Hemphill) is based on fifteen structural
The research aims at comparing the experimental group and the control one, in order to determine the effects of the independent variable (virtual communication only) on disseminating vision and goals, vertical and horizontal communication, networks, status recognition, loyalty and belongingness to the group, etc.

Thus, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, general awareness of the team objectives will be lower than if a group communicates also face-to-face. Virtual communication, characterized by a large amount of information, and a many-to-many feedback, might cause a lower understanding of the group objectives. The absence of understanding and adherence to objectives can lead to lower group cohesion.

2. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, loyalty towards the group will be lower than if the group communicates also face-to-face. The impersonal style of online communication can generate the absence of the feeling of belongingness and interest to know the others. Also, the lack of face (Goffman, 2003) due to non-collocation and less symbolic references can make people feel alienated. Decreased loyalty and belongingness to the group can have side effects such as absenteeism, lower perceived status etc.

3. In groups communicating exclusively virtually, leaders will focus more on following-up with task achievement than in groups also communicating face-to-face. A study (Ocker, 2001) has shown that virtual interactions determine a particular interest in achieving high standards of creativity and performance. Leaders of virtual groups tend to be less preoccupied by building interpersonal relationships. Also, because of the impersonal style of virtual communication, creating interpersonal relationships is not favoured.

4. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, members will give more feedback, increasing upwards communication. One can notice on the Internet that people feel freer to express themselves and give feedback due to anonymity. Extending this observation, upwards communication (members to leaders) can flow easier in virtual groups, as people tend to express themselves more due to the asynchronous character of virtual communication and also to the diminished symbolic references involved.

4.1. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, relationships will tend to be less hierarchical than if the group communicates also face to face. Enhanced feedback and upwards communications are inclined to form rather egalitarian then hierarchical relations in a group. Thus, one may assume that virtual groups will be less centralized and will also have lower degree of internal control.

5. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, more favourable front regions amongst peers (through horizontal communication) will be created. In virtual groups members will be able to occult more aspects of their personality that might not create a favourable public image. Thus, members will have the opportunity to position themselves better and more equal to one another (due to the absence of visualizing physical characteristics, public speaking, and decreased personal interactions etc that can play the role of differentiators).

5.1. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, there will be less interest in finding out information (about the others) not related to task completion than in groups communicating both face-to-face and virtually. Studies have shown that members who communicate only virtually show less interest in finding out additional information about the private life of colleagues, as they cultivate interpersonal relationships to a smaller extent.
Results

Methods of calculation
In this research I applied tailored instruments based on The Hemphill’s Index of group dimensions, Seashore group cohesiveness index, Sociometric scale of elections and preferences on four groups: 1 and 2 (experimental groups) and 3 and 4 (control groups). I analyzed the results of the first two questionnaires by calculating the mean and standard deviation values, comparing the experimental group to the control one.

Regarding the sociograms, I calculated attributes at both micro-level (network nodes) and at macro-level (network level) (Hanneman, Riddle, 2005). For the network nodes I considered the following attributes: degree - the number of links established by a network node, indegree - the number of choices that it receives, centrality with indices betweenness - the direct link between a node and another, and closeness - the way information flows through the network to reach a node (index positively correlated with degree). Average and standard deviation were calculated for attributes.

At the network level, I calculated the following attributes: density - representing the number of possible connections that are formed in relation to all possible links and reciprocity through the “arc method” - calculating the number of mutual links established between subjects, compared to the total connections established. I added other indices: hierarchy - the degree of vertical differentiation of the group (Krackhardt, 1994 apud Hanneman, Riddle, 2005) efficiency - the number of links minus one, reported the total number of links providing information about the effectiveness of communication and network centralization (Hagen, Killinger, Streeter, 1997).

Overall, significant differences between the two groups emerged only for certain items. Sociogram analysis revealed important dissimilarities regarding communication and leadership.

Presentation of results
For certain items in Hemphill’s Group Dimensions Index (Appendices, Table 1), there are relevant differences between the experimental and control groups. I calculated the average and standard deviation for the four groups and the absolute differences between VO and SVO. Based on the series of differences obtained, I generated deciles, ordered ascending series and split them into ten equal parts of 10%. I selected relevant variances, the farthest deciles from the mean (as a measure of central tendency). Therefore, I founded the analysis on those differences in absolute value (the module) which are higher than the first or last deciles.

Regarding the control dimension, the most important difference between virtual and semi-virtual groups is generated by the item “members’ work is closely monitored” (0.59). In virtual groups, the degree of supervision exercised by the manager is stronger than in the semi-virtual ones.

The second item that shows a significant difference (0.41) is “members are afraid to express their own views”, bringing to the fore the fact that due to the nature of virtual environment, written communication can always be reproduced, read again (conference log). Face-to-face communication is mainly verbal, and some issues can go unnoticed because of the noise on the channel, being forgotten or interpreted in an ambiguous manner. Thus, upward communication is hindered by the possibility to store information. However, the above is not supported by the item “only certain types of ideas and opinions can be expressed freely within the group” (-0.21). The slight difference might be explained by face-to-face communication granting non-verbal negative feedback whereas in virtual groups non-verbal references are reduced to emoticons.

The third item generating a salient gap is “the request of a member to leave the group may be refused” (difference 0.40). In this sense one could argue that there are stronger leaders in virtual groups or the group pressure is higher in regulating the behaviour of members. This item supports the results obtained for “a member can leave the group whenever he/ she wants” (- 0.38) and “the only way a member can leave the group is being removed from the group” (0.33).

However, the item “a member who skips group activities should not give an explanation” (0.37) reinforces the observations related to upwards communication. Online, due to the lack of non-verbal references, a subject can “close” all communication channels and easily obscure the real reasons of absence. In addition, efforts to achieve co-location in face-to-face groups result in weakening individual self-esteem if one member would be absent (the others would feel frustrated, as special efforts have been made to arrange an appointment). The results for “a member can be removed by the leader if he/she does not meet the group’s standards” (0.31) indicate a task-orientation in virtual groups at the expenses of cultivating relationships, as opposed to SVO, and a stronger downwards communication.

The power dimension also highlights a number of differences between virtual and semi-virtual groups. The most salient difference is recorded for the item “groups’ failure hardly affects members” (-0.68). Members of virtual groups feel more affected than those of semi-virtual ones, as failure threatens their perceived status of being part of an important group. This item is reinforced by “members would feel ashamed if the group failed” (0.36) and “members feel honoured to be recognized as part of the group” (0.36), but this increase in perceived status can be also a Hawthorne Effect, as members of virtual groups felt special just for having been part of the experiment. Furthermore, virtual synchronous communication enhances self-esteem due to the lack of face (non-verbal elements, fear of talking in public, physical aspect, gender etc.).

The item “members are rewarded for the efforts they put in group activities” recorded the largest difference between VO and SVO (-0.53). Although VO members feel less rewarded than SVO ones, they perceive a greater status. Motivation in VO is self-development, strengthened by the
prestige of the group (thus, it is intrinsic), while motivation in SVO is extrinsic, generated by the reaction of peers and leaders (Stanciu, Ionescu, 2007). A possible explanation for lower extrinsic motivation lies in the fact that virtual communication offers decreased gratifications in terms of non-verbal feedback, being considered “cold”.

The participation dimension generated fewer differences. However, the most important relates to the item “members are interested in group activities, but not all of them work as hard” (-1.03). The prestige conferred by involvement in group activities convinced only some members to be willing to complete tasks. This item supports the results obtained for “most members participate in other activities not related to the group” (-0.40) and “there are long periods in which employees are not assigned any task” (0.40). Focusing on the task and in the absence of co-location, VO allows more spare time, but also lowers interest in building relations. However, virtual groups showed a remarkable desire to counterbalance the task-orientation by engaging in activities unrelated to work. Focusing on completing tasks, leads to another difference for the item “group has the reputation of being effective” (-0.36), members of the virtual groups considering to achieve objectives better. Results of this item are supported by “a member can be removed if he/she does not meet the group’s standards”.

Another item that generated a significant difference is “important activities are left in the hands of the most capable members” (-0.62). In virtual environments the perceived difference between capacities of members is lower (due to occulting negative aspects and highlighting positives ones). Thus, individual skills seemed more equal and VO members presented a levelling in power. In SVO, due to face-to-face communication, differences between people with better skills are more salient and higher trained people can take control as they are more easily accepted by others.

The polarization dimension records relevant differences on some items. The item “group divides its resources to achieve multiple objectives” (-0.46) indicates a stronger centralization of tasks in virtual groups and increased downwards communication. Because of the written nature of communication, groups tend to follow the assigned tasks, confirming the results obtained on the participation dimension. However, there is discomfort created by virtual communication due to lower awareness about the tasks to be completed, according to the results obtained for the item “members understand clearly what tasks need to be done” (-0.46). Without a good awareness of tasks that need to be carried out, a group can create different objectives from the main ones, which sometimes come into conflict. However, differences in items relating to awareness of group objectives are insignificant between VO and SVO, showing that shortcomings generated by virtual communication only can be overcome.

The homogeneity dimension records the fewest differences between VO and SVO, and all dissimilarities show that members in VO groups consider themselves slightly more similar than those in control groups. As items within this dimension depend on interactions between members and as VO focused more on tasks, an impoverishment of information has been experienced.

The item “there are members who have better skills and abilities than others” (-0.20) supports the item “important activities are left in the hands of the most capable members”: tacit information shared through direct experience and relationships lead to a detachment of some members with skills higher than others in the semi-virtual groups (Brătianu, 2006). As virtual communication creates great opportunities for an attractive and easier to manage “front region”, it is less likely to reveal some members as being far more capable than others. Also, in the virtual environment, social and not individual interactions prevail, increasing the possibilities for members to assume certain characteristics of the other. Finally, the perception of “capable” is different: in virtual environment, the leader is the best “technician” coordinating information flows, while in face-to-face communication special features and personal skills play a part in persuasion and gaining social status.

Regarding the standard deviation of responses for VO and SVO, it exceeds the value 1 for 40 out of 53 items in the case of VO, respectively, 28 for SVO. Result show that VO groups have given less uniform responses than SVO ones, virtual environment causing significant differences in perceiving the characteristics of the group.

For the Seashore Cohesion Index (Appendices, Table 1), virtual groups recorded higher values of group cohesion, except from the item “do you consider that you are an important part of your group?” (-0.19). A possible reason can lay in the lower degree of awareness and understanding of tasks and also of the skills’ levelling above-mentioned.

However, the significant difference for “if it were possible to change the group and to carry out the same type of activity and receive a similar reward would you agree to change it?” (0.73) is related to participation offering members the sense of superiority and to the power dimension, creating group identity. Only VO members set-up a team blog to put photos, personal descriptions and information on the project and its status, but updated it scarcely, and created organizational identity elements: logo, wallpapers, team slogans. The second effect concerns the elevated degree of control, shown by a member being refused to leave a virtual group where standard deviation is the largest recorded for all items, and VO is lower than the SVO (0.81, 1.01 respectively). This was the item with the highest degree of heterogeneity, especially for groups who communicated face-to-face. Members of virtual groups proved to be more loyal than those of the semi-virtual groups. Loyalty is correlated with positive motivation and social balance determines loyalty, while de-motivation leads to absenteeism or to abandoning the organization (as happened with one of the members in SVO) (Stanciu, Ionescu, 2007, 217). Loyalty can be cultivated through encouraging communication, which is characteristic for the virtual environment, where conversational interactions are intensified.
The item “the way people support each other” (-0.40) led to the conclusion that members in virtual groups were perceived as helping each other more than those of the semi-virtual teams, emphasizing enhanced horizontal communication due to continuous and simplified online feedback. In face-to-face communication official feedback can be slower (it takes time to organize a meeting), sender and receiver roles are more rigid, with the risk of one person dominating conversation. Virtual synchronous communication enables quick role shifting and feedback and monopolizing conversation is more difficult as each member can impose oneself in spite of personal characteristics and complexes.

Standard deviation of this questionnaire was much lower (between 0.40 and 0.80) apart from the difference aforementioned, suggesting that members were more homogeneous when assessing the identity of the group.

Sociogram analysis reveals information about the individual’s place in the group and the characteristics of the communication networks, highlighting issues such as (Hanneman, Riddle, 2005): prominence and centrality of the group leader, overlapping of informal over formal leaders, equality of access to information, proximity of members. Also, at macro-level sociograms reveal information about the network, the flow of information inside the group, subgroups and probability of some members to leave the group (Appendices, Table 2, Table 3).

Group 1 (experimental) – We First (Appendices, Picture 1) is characterized by the presence of an informal leader (art director 1) who has a large number of links with other members (8 in-degree and 8 degree) and is elected by numerous colleagues. This indicates a high prominence and prestige and relating it to betweenness (8), he proves to be a point of intersection between several members. He has the lowest closeness value (20), thus the member is a milestone in the group, an information provider and his attention is directed to other members as well. The art director 1 is followed closely by the project manager (7 degree and 5 in-degree) also considered a prestigious and central leader, with a high level for betweenness (6.0) and a low value for closeness (21). He occupies an important position, similar to the copywriter’s (7 degree and 7 in-degree), who normally works with the art director. Although the project manager is a prestigious player in the group, his centrality, influencing his role as information source is lower than the copywriter’s.

In contrast, there are three members of the group with in-degree 3 and degree 1 (art director 2, an account executive and a media planner). They have the lowest prestige and centrality, and minimum values (0.00) for betweenness and maximum of closeness (25). They are placed remotely from the central nodes of the network, and just stay in the group either because of their choice, or because of a single mutual tie. Their access to information is limited. The remaining members recorded an average degree (4), and low values for betweenness (0 to 1.67). This leads to the conclusion that the network is formed around three prominent members, both information and power centres, who manage the communication flow within the group.

The sociogram’s macro-analysis confirms the results. The density attribute indicates an average density of the network (0.33) and the reciprocity attribute (0.46) an average cohesion. It is noteworthy that although the network is not very dense overall, reciprocal links are enough, so in some areas, the network members have developed strong relationships, supported by high standard deviation (0.47). Efficiency index indicates a relatively centralized group (0.61), but information is sometimes redundant, since the large number of links indicates a greater number of information sources. The group develops sufficient mutual links, but quite a lot of asymmetric links, which characterizes a hierarchical group, with a small number of prominent leaders.

Group 2 (experimental) - 2ADdream (Appendices, Picture 2) is ascertained by the presence of a strong and prominent leader (9 in-degree and degree) – the project manager. In this case, the informal leader is the same as the formal one. It records the highest value for betweenness (11.00), and a minimum value of closeness (19). The project manager is the core of the network and he manages the largest amount of information, a position which is recognized by the other peers. Most other network nodes have between 4 and 6 degree and low values (maximum 2.33) for betweenness, coupled with significantly higher values for closeness (22-25), indicating relatively large distances that information needs to traverse in order to reach members. However, in Group 2 there are three less important members: the account executive and the two media planners (degree 3). The latter has no mutual connection with an in-degree equal to 0, which indicates less access to information. The account executive has also a peripheral position in the network, holding very low scores (under 1.00) for betweenness.

At the network macro-level there is a density and a standard deviation equal to those recorded for Group 1, 0.33, respectively, 0.47, indicating an average result. Cohesion is also average recording a score of 4.0 for reciprocity. Efficiency (0.58) indicates a fairly centralized group with fewer prominent leaders, except from the project manager (an art director and PR responsible, both with the degree 6, but with 2.67 betweenness, having an unprivileged position as sources of information). Information flows from top to bottom, from a single source to other network nodes, but sometimes periphery is difficult to reach.

Group 3 (control) – Actually, we first! (Appendices, Picture 3) recorded very little prominent or central leaders. The most important informal leader is an art director, with the degree and in-degree equal to 5 and having the highest value for betweenness (4.16) and lowest for closeness (23). The copywriter records an average centrality: degree = 5, in-degree = 5, 3.66 betweenness and closeness, 23. He is followed by the strategic planner with the same values for centrality but the difference is caused by a lower score for betweenness (2.66). The project manager has
an extremely low centrality, degree = 3, in-degree = 2, he is not considered a leader of the group or a network hub, conclusion supported by the low score of betweenness = 0.83 and high closeness (25). Other network nodes have average values (5-3) of degree and betweenness (0.83 to 4.16), and high closeness (21-25). The latter indicates that there are fairly large distances that information must cover between all nodes of the network.

Linking the results to the macro-level analysis, density is low (0.33), and standard deviation (0.47) as well, indicating a rather homogeneous group. What is remarkable is the value of reciprocity (0.60), describing a group where egalitarian relationships prevail. Efficiency (0.67) records the highest value of the four groups, characterizing a group with relatively redundant communications, and weak hierarchy.

In Group 4 (control) - Oranges (Appendices, Picture 4) there are two very strong and central leaders: the strategic planner and the project manager, recording degree 6, in-degree 5 and the difference in ranking is based on betweenness (with values of 9.25, 5.91 respectively). Thus, the informal leader of the group is the strategic planner who manages the information flows and is at the intersection of the two groups. A clique is observed between the strategic planner, media planner 2, the copywriter and the art director, serving as the official team and enjoying the advantage of having the only copywriter in the group, as the other one quit. The remaining members record low in-degree and degree (3-4, respectively, 1-4). In terms of betweenness, it varies from 0 to 9.25, depending on the centrality of each member. In contrast, the closeness values are between 19.00 and 24.00, showing that some members get information easier, while others do not.

Regarding the network macro-analysis, density is medium-low (0.37) and standard deviation as well, implying a relatively homogeneous group. The average degree of cohesion (reciprocity 0.59), indicates that there are plenty of mutual relations, so the group is rather egalitarian than hierarchical. Efficiency recorded a value of 0.60, pointing one or two major sources of information.

Discussion of results

The sociogram analysis coupled with results of the two questionnaires, captures significant differences between VO and SVO. The degree attribute denotes the presence of a larger number of nodes with many links in virtual groups than in the SVO groups, indicating subjects with leadership role, both formal and informal in VO rather than in SVO. This observation can not be extended to in-degree, where the average is the same, so, regardless of the nature of communication, eminent leaders have been recognized as valuable sources of information.

The presence of strong leaders in virtual groups is supported by results obtained for “power dimension”, especially on the item “members’ work is closely monitored”. Better monitoring of activities in VO is associated with the presence of leaders with higher centrality degree. Also, values obtained for items in the Social Cohesiveness Index are positively related to degree scores. Thus, virtual groups were more cohesive, due to greater control and more central leaders. Cohesion was also superior because of perceived prestige (generated by task-orientation and positive self-presentation) that led to enhanced loyalty towards the group.

Sociograms emphasize that in virtual groups there are more members highly appreciated by their colleagues, accounting for 9, 8 or 7 degree against semi-virtual ones where the maximum is 6. In virtual environments showing the positive rather than negative aspects of one’s personality (through written communication) and focusing on tasks rather than on relationships contribute to imposing leaders who possess and distribute information. There is a clear tendency in the virtual groups to create stronger leadership and the organigram and sociogram may overlap.

Another index that provides information about the role of leaders is network centralization. Virtual groups have significantly higher centrality than the semi-virtual ones, 47.22% and 58.33%, 11.11% and 28.57%, respectively, confirming the degree centrality and degree indexes. Coordination in virtual environment requires a leader with higher degree of centrality, consequently, an authoritarian style to keep the group united. This result can be related to reciprocal index, which recorded lower values for VO compared to SVO and efficiency indicating that virtual groups are more centralize. Thus, the study found, contrary to expectations, that virtual communication only, instead of leading to more egalitarian group relations, it generated more subordination, as there is an urgent need to control communication flows because of a greater quantity of information. This result is confirmed by the power and control dimensions, which had higher scores for virtual groups and by the dimensions participation and homogeneity which recorded lower values in the virtual groups.

In conclusion, virtual groups’ cohesion is generated by an intrinsic factor, “accepting a leadership system that can ensure success”. In semi-virtual groups, motivation is generated by an intrinsic factor, “participation in group activities”, and an extrinsic one “competition with an external group”. As an evidence for this, control group 3, entitled itself Actually we first!, in response to experimental group 1. Lower control manifested in semi-virtual groups lead to the apparition of a clique in Group 4. Thus, the group split between two strong leaders (project manager and strategic planner) and triggered a parallel group.

In terms of betweenness, virtual groups recorded lower values (average 2.15) than semi-virtual ones (average 2.25). Although virtual communication is more flexible, sender and receiver roles are interchangeable and the information flow is smoother, still there is a status differences among members, when considering to information access and control. The trend is reflected by leaders, who are also the nodes of the network, registering the highest values on this index: 8 for group
leader 1 and 11 respectively for group 2, associated with degree. The difference between virtual and semi-virtual groups arises in relation to the item: “important activities are left in the hands of the most capable members” and “there are members who have better skills and abilities than others”. Thus, leaders of virtual groups hold an important position within the communication flow, fulfilling the functions of coordination and organization, while in semi-virtual groups’ leaders are considered more capable people. The difference is explained by the nature of face-to-face communication that enables people with strong skills to emphasize their capacities much more than virtual communication.

Low average values betweenness are generated by large discrepancies between leaders and members in the virtual groups and members in semi-virtual groups (where the differences are considerably lower) showing that virtual groups enjoy increased efficiency, greater control of information flow, in order to cope with stress and avoid splitting the group. The result is supported by very high score of network centralization, virtual groups being aware of the need for coordination and centralization.

Regarding the closeness index, the difference between virtual and semi-virtual groups is much lower, thus, distance between nodes depends on the environment in which communication takes place. So, in the virtual environment, sensitive information travels longer distances, difference explained by the fact that face-to-face communication provides access to non-verbal information and answer can be provided on the spot (virtual communication can also be asynchronous).

Applying the results strictly to the advertising agency, in the case of virtual groups, the most prominent and central members are the project managers, art directors and copywriters. The project manager is the subject holding most of the information, so it is remarkably prominent, its presence being necessary for performance. It also confirms the results of previous studies according to which virtual groups focus on creative and original tasks and approaches. With regard to control groups, there is growing importance of strategic planners’ function generated by the organizational role (which, by virtue of his job description needs to communicate with all team members). These groups were less uniform in the choice of prominent nodes. Thus, the study revealed that when involving face-to-face communication, individuals have access to tacit information, helping to identify leaders.

In terms of the network shape, virtual groups have distinguished themselves through a high degree of network centrality and control. Group 1 consists of three nodes with high degree, interconnected and forming star networks. Group 2 formed a single star network, because of the very high degree of the project manager. Both networks can be divided into ring-type relationships between other nodes. Semi-virtual groups have formed networks with low degree of centrality and control, encouraging participation. Group 3 is composed of two not very well defined star-networks, the whole forming two concentric ring networks (both networks have a common region). Group 4 consists of two ring networks (where a node is a bridge between the two circles). One of the circles, the clique, is composed of four members.

Network shape confirms the results of network centralization (VO = 47.22% and 58.33% respectively SVO = 11.11% and 28.57%) and reciprocity that records low scores for VO (0.46 and 0.47) compared to SVO (0.60 and 0.59). Virtual groups had more prominent and central leaders, while semi-virtual ones favoured the emergence of multiple ring-networks. Semi-virtual groups have generated mutual relationships, being more egalitarian than those in virtual groups. Regarding the betweenness index, it pointed out that leaders in VO have more control on communication flows. This supports the results obtained for the closeness index, where, even if the differences between VO and SVO are smaller, information circulating between members (especially from the leaders) took longer in the VO group (star networks) than in the SVO (ring networks).

Thus, some assumptions have been confirmed and others refuted as following:
1. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, general awareness of the team objectives will be lower than if a group communicates also face-to-face. The hypothesis is partially confirmed: virtual groups and semi-virtual ones have had similar results when it comes to understanding the overall group objectives. On the other hand, virtual groups have encountered difficulties in being aware of specific tasks despite high control and centralization. More intense effort of coordination of information flow is required in the online environment. Leaders focused on explaining the important objectives at the expense of specific responsibilities. This has led to a decreased perception of the reward obtained while carrying out group activities.

2. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, loyalty towards the group will be lower than if the group communicates also face-to-face. This hypothesis, in disagreement with some previous studies, has been refuted. Virtual groups were more cohesive and created stronger leaders, who managed to subordinate the other members. Centralized star-networks have generated many more links between members who showed a higher degree of loyalty, influenced by the perception of the prestige of belonging to the group. As a difference from semi-virtual groups, no sub-groups have been created inside the virtual teams. Online environment enables rapid communication and feedback and allows members to display a better front region. All these arguments have led to the conclusion that members of virtual groups showed more loyalty towards their team.

3. In groups communicating exclusively virtually, leaders will focus more on following-up with task achievement than in groups also communicating face-to-face. As for hyper-interactions, they motivated leaders to focus more on task-solving rather than on cultivating relationships, confirming this hypothesis. Increased efforts to coordinate information flow and higher perceived prestige led to more pressure on members in virtual groups for superior achievements. Taking
into account the stage of group development (early), the task-oriented style has led to a higher efficiency of virtual groups than of semi-virtual ones.

4. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, members will give more feedback, increasing upwards communication. This hypothesis was also partially confirmed. The online environment created two side-effects. Firstly, even if it allowed better feed-back and upwards communication, it also led to the non-obligation of providing feed-back or explanations. Thus, members’ absenteeism was not necessarily explained. On the other hand, face-to-face communication generated the expected phenomena: members of semi-virtual teams gave moderated feedback, felt more power of censorship due to immediate non-verbal feedback. Secondly, due to the possibility of identifying people (there was no anonymity) and stocking information in virtual environments, people felt less eager to share certain points of view, fearing about consequences.

4.1. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, relationships will tend to be less hierarchical than if the group communicates also face to face. This hypothesis was affirmed: in fact, virtual groups showed higher degree of control. Leaders were perceived as important sources of information in groups, networks were centralized, the leadership style task-oriented thus, a member could not easily leave the group. High control and coordination in virtual groups allowed information to reach more members but generated rather hierarchical than egalitarian relations amongst them.

5. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, more favourable front regions amongst peers (through horizontal communication) will be created. This hypothesis was confirmed: members in virtual groups considered themselves more skilful and more similar to each others than those in semi-virtual teams. Due to the lack of face and non-verbal clues, virtual communication allowed them to build more attractive front-regions as well. Having better front regions, perceived prestige of the group increased and, members felt proud to be part of the team, and loyalty was influenced positively.

5.1. If the group communicates exclusively virtually, there will be less interest in finding out information (about the others) not related to task completion than in groups communicating both face-to-face and virtually. This hypothesis was confirmed: members of virtual teams were less interested in discovering personal information with regard to their colleagues than those in the semi-virtual groups. They have received information about the others through participating in group activities, while being able to present mainly positive individual aspects of their personality. However, there have been recorded timid trials to overcome the shortcoming through online tools allowing members to share more private information.

**Limits of the experiment**

The experiment results are based on the analysis of four teams (40 people) that have similar characteristics: profile studies, age, gender, which limits the possibility to extend findings on heterogeneous groups and to larger figures. Also, due to costs and technology issues the experiment did not employ all online applications available (e.g. video conferencing). Another limit which may affect the generalization of the results is its application in a single area of activity, advertising, presenting specific characteristics of work and team composition. Finally, being a laboratory experiment, all four groups were isolated, thus the influence of virtual communication on group cohesion was tested without taking in account external factors. For the future, a longitudinal analysis could also help validating or invalidating the results obtained insofar.

**Further application of results**

Nowadays organizations tend to be more and more delocalised due to cost efficiency and sustainability reasons. The availability and multitude of Internet tools and applications make virtual organizations a viable way of doing business especially in services. However, the experiment has drawn the attention upon both positive and negative elements of embedding information technologies in operational internal communication. Amongst the advantages of using exclusively virtual communication one can mention: easier access to a larger amount of information, creating better front regions and discouraging discrimination, focus on task completion, stronger leadership and high levels of motivation and loyalty towards the group. Also, there are notable disadvantage such as: less interest of team-members in creating relationships or in informal communication, more censorship in expressing their own opinions, more hierarchical relations and an impersonal style of communication.

The experiment can lay the foundations for strategic internal communications, especially when considering some key aspects: understanding the internal publics and establishing objectives, strategies and tactics (Cismaru, 2008). I will make several recommendations on the way the experiment results can be used in the strategic internal communications. In terms of objectives, both production and impact ones should be taken in account. Production objectives need to consider higher costs due to the increased usage of online technologies (phone-line costs, online conferencing, hosting, and network maintenance), transport of publicity materials etc. Impact objectives should be able to establish a balance between information (enough official communications should reach all network nodes and leaders to transmit accurate information), attitude (generating adherence towards goals and vision of the organization and loyalty towards the team) and behaviour (making sure that employees manage their time properly, that they are aware of the tasks and they are motivated enough to perform). Both types of strategies (Kendall 1996, apud Cismaru, 2008), information dissemination and event organizations should be used. Information dissemination should be the primary strategy and include online tools, while event organization should add the face-to-face contact advantages.
According to the experiment, internal communication consultants should aim to strengthen leadership in order to prevent absenteeism and build loyalty towards the group. Thus, a first layer of publics is the leaders to whom vision, values and objectives of organization have to be transmitted clearly and their commitment to be gained. A specific attention has to be given to providing extended access to all information resources through internal blogs, newsletters and mailing lists, so that leaders can be fully aware of their specific tasks. Nevertheless, access to information should be as equal as possible for leaders and employees, in order not to locate nodes too faraway from the centre of the network.

A second category of public is represented by employees working remotely who need to feel part of the organization. They should be offered the opportunity to make themselves known to other colleagues and share information not related to their professional life only, though online interviews (in a text or video format), interventions on a forum, and event organization (offline team-buildings, visits and training sessions). They need access to information both through online tools (newsletters, email, streaming conferencing, manuals, procedures) and offline ones (sending the company magazine, branded gifts etc). Open communication should be encouraged through regular impersonal employees surveys in order to overcome the fear of being identified and to enhance upwards communication. Nevertheless, cross-border projects that go beyond daily tasks, such as organizing a charity (or a leisure event) in several locations and mingling colleagues from different departments with employees from virtual teams can raise cohesion. New media tools such as creating Facebook communities, following on Twitter, making a dedicated internal YouTube channel and personal blogs should be encouraged as well, in order to overcome the impersonal style of virtual communications.

The third category of employees (the case being) is the ones working in the boundaries of the office building. They should have access to all online tools allowing constant communication in order to understand the work carried out by their “virtual” colleagues. All afore-mentioned online and offline methods also apply.

As for the future, one can envisage many further aspects that have not been identified by the experiment, and therefore can enrich the considerations above. For companies working globally, having different offices, apart from the virtual communication variable, culture, language, schedules intervene. For example, how will an advertising agency manage to replicate the organizational culture of its French headquarters in India and in New York, taking in consideration that they communicate exclusively virtually with the offices out-side France? Moreover, how will they integrate in the team two art-directors free-lancers working from home in Ukraine and Cape Town? Will this model work for all services, or is it appropriate for creative industries only? These questions and many more can represent interesting directions for future research.

Sources
## Appendix

### Table 1 – Results of the questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONNAIRE</th>
<th>Average OV</th>
<th>Average OSV</th>
<th>Standrad deviation OV</th>
<th>Standrad deviation OSV</th>
<th>Absolute difference</th>
<th>Relative difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEASHORE INDEX</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider that you are an important part of your group?</td>
<td>3,76</td>
<td>3,95</td>
<td>0,77</td>
<td>0,78</td>
<td>-0,19</td>
<td>-4,81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it were possible to change the group and to carry out the same type of activity and receive a similar reward would you agree to change it?</td>
<td>4,57</td>
<td>3,84</td>
<td>0,81</td>
<td>1,01</td>
<td>0,73</td>
<td>17,34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does your group differ from other groups in terms of:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>– Horizontal communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way people understand each other</td>
<td>2,52</td>
<td>2,37</td>
<td>0,60</td>
<td>0,50</td>
<td>0,16</td>
<td>6,36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way people support each other</td>
<td>2,67</td>
<td>2,26</td>
<td>0,48</td>
<td>0,45</td>
<td>0,40</td>
<td>16,37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way people help each other in order to achieve the team’s goal</td>
<td>2,48</td>
<td>2,37</td>
<td>0,68</td>
<td>0,50</td>
<td>0,11</td>
<td>4,46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hemphill Index on Group Dimensions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTROL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The group has unwritten but well understood rules regarding members’ behavior</td>
<td>3,76</td>
<td>3,58</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>1,07</td>
<td>0,18</td>
<td>4,96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The group members are afraid to express their own views</td>
<td>1,62</td>
<td>1,21</td>
<td>1,07</td>
<td>0,42</td>
<td>0,41</td>
<td>28,88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The only way a member can leave the group is being removed from the group</td>
<td>2,33</td>
<td>2,00</td>
<td>1,20</td>
<td>0,91</td>
<td>0,33</td>
<td>15,38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A member who skips the group activities should not give an explanation</td>
<td>1,95</td>
<td>1,58</td>
<td>1,02</td>
<td>0,77</td>
<td>0,37</td>
<td>21,15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A member can be removed if he/she does not meet the group’s standards</td>
<td>3,05</td>
<td>2,74</td>
<td>0,97</td>
<td>1,05</td>
<td>0,31</td>
<td>10,75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Members’ work is closely monitored</td>
<td>3,90</td>
<td>3,32</td>
<td>1,34</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>0,59</td>
<td>16,31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Only certain types of ideas and opinions can be expressed freely within the group</td>
<td>1,52</td>
<td>1,74</td>
<td>1,12</td>
<td>1,15</td>
<td>-0,21</td>
<td>-13,07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A group member can leave the group whenever he/ she wants</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-11.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A member should consider well the consequences when participating in group discussions</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>4.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The request of a member to leave the group may be refused</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>13.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Occasionally members are asked to leave the group</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-13.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POWER**

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61. Members do not allow foreign elements to negatively influence group processes</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Members feel honoured to be recognized as part of the group</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Participation in group activities confers a social status</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. The groups’ failure hardly affects members</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>-0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. A member’s Mistake generates negative effects on all members</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. working in group stimulates members in their pursuit of career goals</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. Group members would lose self-esteem if the group fails</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. Working in group gives members a sense of superiority</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74. Members would feel ashamed if the group failed</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75. Members are rewarded for the efforts they put in group activities</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTICIPATION**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100. Persons wishing to become part of the group need to pass a rigorous selection process</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101. There is a high degree of members’ participation in group activities</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102. If a member is not effective, then he/she is not encouraged to stay in the group</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103. Important activities are left in the hands of the most capable members</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104. Members are interested in group activities, but not all of them work as hard</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>-1.03</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>105. The group has a reputation for being effective</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106. Most members participate in other activities not related to the group</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107. The tasks are well divided between members.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108. Each member has clearly defined tasks to perform</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109. Tasks are often interrupted by disturbing elements</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110. There are long periods in which employees are not assigned any task</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POLARIZATION**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111. The group has clearly defined goals</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112. Group divides its resources to achieve multiple objectives</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113. Its activity is guided by incompatible strategies</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114. The group has a single goal</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115. Members understand clearly what tasks need to be done</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117. The group carries out many tasks that are not subsumed to the main objectives</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118. Each member knows very well what the objectives of the group are</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119. Group objectives are clearly expressed and presented</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120. Each member participates in joint meetings and interacts with all members to achieve goals</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. The group has several different objectives, sometimes in conflict</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122. Members are aware of the groups’ objectives</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123. Members are friends with each other</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### SOCIAL HOMOGENEITY

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>136. Members differ to each other in terms of ambition</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-5.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138. Members have different hobbies</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-1.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142. There are members who have better skills and abilities than others</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>-5.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143. Members believe in different values</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-4.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144. Members have different social backgrounds</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-4.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Picture 1 – Sociogram Experimental Group 1
Picture 2 – Sociogram Experimental Group 2
Picture 3 – Sociogram Experimental Group 3
Picture 4 – Sociogram Experimental Group 4
### Table 2 – Data analysis at network nodes (micro-level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLIENTS</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS (VO)</th>
<th>CONTROL GROUPS (OSV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DEGREE</td>
<td>IN-DEGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIENT COSMOTE</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Account Executive</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Planner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copywriter 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copywriter 2</td>
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Table 3 – Data analysis at network level (macro-level)

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<th>Average In-degree</th>
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<th>Network Centralization</th>
<th>Density</th>
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<th>Reciprocity</th>
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Model for Internal Corporate Communications to Support Sales Force in Acquisition of Large Account Contracts
Dr. Dusan Tomic, MBA, Siemens IT Solutions and Services, Vienna

ABSTRACT
In order to support activities of company’s sales force, especially during the acquisition of large account contracts, it would be beneficial if the access to these customers would be facilitated by use of the contact network already existing in the organization. We often hear of important contracts, which have not been won, because the first management level was not involved in the efforts of providing access to the customer. Thus, the contact network of the first management level eventually existed in the company, but couldn’t be used by the Sales department.

This paper explores, in the context mentioned above, the possibilities of extending the effectiveness of internal corporate communications to the extent that, when deployed, the responsibility for company’s business success is transformed from solely sales responsibility to the responsibility of the whole organization. The controlled disclosure of the contact network of the first management level emerges as the value added product of this process.

In our research we deal with the question if and how the internal corporate communications can support sales teams and act as driving force in steering the whole organization to overtake the responsibility for the business success. We first present an overview of the concept of integrated corporate communications as a framework for further dealing with internal corporate communications aspects. We then put the internal corporate communications in relation with some main aspects of strategic enterprise management, as well as with possibilities for and capabilities of internal networking, lobbying and business campaigning. We also consider modern sales organization within the position in the value chain and identify the requirements on support to sales force. The paper also highlights some aspects of the concepts of social sales and corporate knowledge. We address particularly the phenomenon of trustfulness in the organization.

Based on this theoretical background we developed the novel internal corporate communications model, which optimally supports sales force and we proposed an accompanying business process enabling implementation of the model. We came to the conclusion that situations which led to unsuccessful business results could have been omitted if the value added role of the internal corporate communications had been implemented through novel model given in this paper.

INTRODUCTION
In order to support activities of company’s sales force, especially during the acquisition phases of large account contracts, it would be beneficial if the access to these customers would be facilitated by use of the contact network already existing in the organization. We often hear of important contracts, which have not been won, because the first management level was not involved in the efforts of providing access to the customer. Thus, the contact network of the first management level existed within the company in many cases, but couldn’t be used by the sales department.

There are different causes, treated also in the literature, why the contact networks were present in the company but were not placed on disposal and thus couldn’t be used. In considering the emergence and functioning of contact networks in the company different approaches can be used, but a very useful one seems to be the consideration of contact networks in the context of social capital, which in every company is a key element in support to business success.

In a broader sense, we know that in knowledge management the social capital presents the component which enables the transition from ineffective data collection to real knowledge sharing. In order to empower the social capital in a company to be a driver for business success trustfulness between employees is paramount.

Trustful relationships emerge when all actors agree on same norms and values and try to actively bring them to life in everyday’s business situations. The relationships of trustfulness are the precondition for emergence of such social connections in the company, which will support the development of functioning contact networks. It is thus the important task of company’s management to support activities to unfold the social capital.

There are different definitions and classifications of social relationships, which form the basis for every network. From the point of view of a business company, the very simple classification to formal and informal relationships is adequate and sufficient for exploring aspects which affect the building of internal contact networks and help unclose the existing contact networks in the external environments.

The formal relationships within the organization are described and institutionalized with an organigram. The informal relationships emerge between colleagues and employees spontaneously and based on joint interests, norms and values. This seemingly uncomplicated relationship building has foundation in mutual trust, which presents the actual quality of the relationship.
The simple interplay of formal and informal relationships in the company is a vital foundation for emergence and dissemination of contact networks, but it is evident that it is not sufficient for opening the contact network of the high level management, which is in many cases existent in the company, but cannot be used. To enable this we need to establish a process, which in order to work needs to be empowered by trustfulness.

Considering the fact that the success of a company cannot be made dependant on a hazard as well as on an informal communication and existing but not used contact networks, we want to explore the possibility to transform the internal corporate communications into the focal point of Corporate Communications with the goal to facilitate the emergence and management of contact networks, which will support the access to the customer and thus also the success of a company. We want to prove the possibilities and capabilities to broaden the effectiveness of internal communications and design them to make the whole organization overtake the responsibility for the business success of the company. This responsibility is today commonly and very narrowly seen as the sole responsibility of Sales.

To reach this, the prerequisite is to establish such a component of the Corporate Communications, which has the responsibility to receive information from Sales and provide it for get by internal stakeholders. We assume that this internal communication is bidirectional and functions also in the opposite direction. In this case the responsibility is for all stakeholders to pass information back and of Sales to get it and implement it for the business success. The following picture visualizes the proposed design of internal communications.

We also emphasize that the market attractiveness of the products and services of the company are assumed. This is the basis for the successful existence of the company in the competitive arena and only after having reached this prerequisite there is a solid basis for work on social networks supported by the internal part of Corporate Communications.

**METHOD**

**Concept of the integrated corporate communications**

We want to follow the approach of paramount strategic importance of integrated communications, which was formulated and conceptually enriched by Prof. Haedrich in his theses presented at the Symposium “The strategic importance of communication” on 17th and 18th of April 2008 in Vienna an which we paraphrase hier.

Corporate Communications embrace different areas of impact, but basically we can differentiate between internal communications to employees and external communications as public relations. However, the differentiation between the internal and external communications loses on its value, as the contemporary, goal oriented and effective Corporate Communications choose the access to stakeholders over the integrated communications.

Meanwhile the idea of integrated communications has been widely endorsed and often applied keyword, but it comprises different definitions, which more than often fail to encompass the broadness of impact.

For example, Krober-Riel (Kroeber-Riel,W; (1992): “Integrierte Kommunikation der Unternehmung”) defines the integrated communications, regarding the content and formally, as a coordination of all measures of market communication in order to strengthen and harmonize the messages of Corporate Communications.

This is a widely collapsed view oriented only towards the market and customers. Thus is the stakeholder group “customers” taken into account, but other stakeholder groups are largely forgotten.

In today’s progressive complexity of markets and company involvements and their relationships, it is accepted also by marketing experts that, besides the market stakeholder groups, also the groups in the global environment, e.g. in social, political, cultural, economic and ecological, and in the internal environment, e.g. employees, take an important part in the build-up of positive image of the company and its product portfolio and have to be taken seriously.

The logical bottom line concerning the variety of stakeholder groups of every company is that the integrated corporate communications necessarily have to be trustworthy and authentic, because the coordination of incredibility is hard to implement and mostly has fatal consequences.
One of the most important tasks of the internal corporate communications, if successfully tuned with the integrated corporate communications, is not only the preparation and dissemination of information for and to the internal stakeholders, but also to foster the identification of the internal stakeholders with their own organization.

Only when the internal stakeholders emotionally agree with the policies and public appearance of their organization, they will be ready to fully support the organization and build the mutual basis for trustfulness. Through sharing the same system of values and behaviors, the corporate culture and communications cultures will emerge and form the stable identification basis.

The central importance belongs to consolidation of all internal communications measures in the integrated communications. The goal of integrated corporate communications is reached only then when internal communications are integrated in itself and with the external communications by means of content, formally and on the time scale. It is thus clear that integrated corporate communications are not a pure technical model, but largely combine and unify social and psychological aspects. It is an important task for high level management and has to be accompanied by operational and organizational measures. The management should identify the key aspects of the integrated communications in the company and work on them.

We propose to position the strategic company management as a focal point for the establishment of efficient integrated communications, and especially deal with key aspects being brand build-up, corporate identity and management style.

Taking into account the complexity of tasks imposed on high level management and the measures needed to achieve the integrated corporate communications, it seems necessary to identify further supporting key aspects for additional activities.

We believe that with the inclusion of both lobbying und campaigning approaches in the integrated corporate communications we bring exactly those aspects in play, which enable the support of additional tasks and activities by internal corporate communications. We consider these key aspects of integrated corporate communications, strategic company management, lobbying and campaigning, to be the basis for sustainable internal communications. Further, we propose to put them in such a relationship to internal corporate communications, as to support the Sales organization and activities. The basic concept for this proposal is depicted in the picture below. In the context of support for Sales, we want to show that the key aspects strategic company management, lobbying and campaigning can be used as tools of internal corporate communications.

**Internal Corporate Communications and Strategic Company Management**

Strategic company management is a complex task for high level management, which leads to business success only if done using a holistic approach. It is an approach which accounts for the whole system and should not be confounded with tactics or other instruments of pure operational management. A very comprehensive model is proposed by Prof. Hinterhuber (Hinterhuber, H; (2004): Strategische Unternehmensführung) and we show it in the picture below. The model shows a chain of non-classical components, such as vision, company business policies, corporate culture, which are connected with strategies and organizational processes and lead to an integrated whole.

This model is a framework and can be used to tackle the growing complexities of the business world, especially concerning the categories such as value generation, relationships and social networking, and corporate social responsibility. In this paper we want to deal closer with distinct three aspects of strategic company management being brand building, corporate identity and management style, because they can have strong influence on Sales and we want to bring them in relation with internal corporate communications. The goal is to show that internal corporate communications can influence and enhance these key aspects of strategic company management.
It is of paramount importance for each company that high level management puts efforts in building a strong brand. The employees, as internal stakeholders, play an important supporting role in this process, as their commitment to and identification with the brand springs over to customers, especially in industries and sectors where an intense customer contact is taking place. In service companies, in which naturally the Account Manager to Customer contact is intense and layered, it is especially important that employees reach brand commitment, which sparks over not only to the customer, but also to all external stakeholders. Ultimately, the employees should have the feeling of capability to influence the brand experience and perception of the external stakeholders. It is an important task of the management to use this potential.

The meticulously planned measures of internal corporate communications can significantly help with augmenting the identification of employees with the brand. Proved success belongs in this context e.g. to “brand mantras” as short messages, easy to note, but being an identifiable symbol for a complex brand identity concept.

Some of the well known ones are:
- Nike: authentic athletic performance
- Disney: fun family entertainment
- Siemens: global network of innovation
- Henkel: a brand like a friend

In this context the Corporate Communications have a task to develop the brand identity together with the strategic high level management and to take care of its permanent further changes.

As especially Sales organization impacts the success of business and has intrinsically a close contact with the customer, its work can be substantially supported by a strong brand. This is why the identification of Sales with the brand has to be a high level management task, but in order to be effective and efficient we argue that it has to be supported by well elaborated and matured internal communications. To fulfill this, high level management can make use of Corporate Communications fields of work and impact:
- acceptance on the market place: Advertising, Sponsoring, Sales Funding, Direct Mailing,…
- acceptance in public and in the politics, covered by classical Public Relations,
- acceptance within the company, covered by internal Corporate Communications.

Well integrated corporate communications, which can create the combination of all above stated acceptance categories, will be able to drive the brand identification externally and internally at the same time.

**Internal Communications und Corporate Identity (CI)**

The concept of Corporate Identity is most useful when based on comprehensive internal communications. The established and shared values are best foundation for such comprehension, which appears further as a base for the emergence of corporate culture. We argue that very often well designed strategies and action plans do not bring wanted results because they do not comply with the corporate culture in the company (Hinterhuber, H; (2009): Strategische Unternehmensführung, Buch II, s. 229).

The successful management has the task to establish values as part of strategic company management and to reach the trustfulness of employees in the company through understanding based on values. Trustfulness is the foundations for the growth of the identification with the...
company, the category which brings a positive contribution to corporate image and finally to the business success.

The question now is, if the trustfulness reached during the build-up of corporate identity is a solid basis for opening the contact network of the high level management towards sales and vice versa? Is this the right framework in which the high level management and Sales can reach mutual understanding and agreement on a level high enough as to open the existing contact networks for use for both sides?

All contacts which exist in a company build a powerful potential in today's networked business world. The establishment of openness as a value in the company, especially in connection with contact networks, means for the high level management very often to step out of the zone of comfort. High level management finds itself very often confronted with the question, if the disclosure of their valuable contact networks will pay off or if a certain sales occasion builds an impulse strong enough for this open minded disposal. However, this question arises then and only if there is no real basis for trustfulness towards employees and if information about the activities of Sales does not exist. The missing flow of information from Sales to high management levels has also a lack of trustfulness towards the management in the background. Within the Sales department there seems to be a sort of fear and anxiety that the own activities would not be supported by high level management. From the point of view of Sales, this might be provoked by own feeling of not being able to estimate how the management is going to react to certain acquisition situations and activities they work on. In fact, the real cause is the chronicle lack of trustfulness between the Sales department and high management levels.

From the point of view of a missing basis for trustfulness in the organization, we consider its buildup to be a major success-defining factor. As the trustfulness in both directions, from the management levels to Sales and vice versa, should be built up, it seems inevitable and necessary to provide support to both organizational units. This particular supporting role can be overtaken by Corporate Communications, if there is a commitment to build an open system, in which no potential, especially the contact network, stay hidden and thus unused. Corporate Identity provides a framework, which helps strengthen the commitment to achieving an open system. The existence of such a commitment is on its side a question of corporate culture.

Working in its supporting role in building up trustfulness between Sales and high management levels, the Corporate Communication can define internal communications topics relevant to dealing with contact networks. As the open culture in the company grows, it will be for example possible to setup and drive a network binding program. The checklist which helps position the topics is:

- identification of individual and business preoccupations of a target person,
- definition of usefulness of particular support for both sides,
- involvement of key players with actual topics and activities,
- definition of other related actions.

Internal communications and management style

An authentically participative management style forms the basis for the open communications process to many topics, including the exchange of information about the key players in the contact networks in the company. Only under these circumstances will Sales be ready to disclose its contact partners as well as the management will be ready to place its contact network at disposal to help Sales people.

The question now is if Sales and high level management are going to mind these cornerstones? The establishment of an open corporate culture by management, with the support of Corporate Communications and the motivation of the whole organization to accept, value and live this culture is a strategic component from the point of view of building a mutual understanding and any type of agreement.

As an evidence of the emergence of a truly participative management style a simple action plan for the management of now shared contact network between Sales and the high level management can be created. Here we consider the Corporate Communications to be an appropriate owner of this action plan in its new and important supporting role.

Internal networking and lobbying in the internal corporate communications

The internal corporate communications can be supplemented by a model of internal lobbying as well as through an elaborated concept of internal networking to support the chosen topics, tasks and projects. This approach widens the impact of Corporate Communications and promotes it to be a central contact point for high level management concerning gathering of information out of organizational units in the favor of Sales.
Through internal lobbying approach we augment the value of Corporate Communications, as the transported information needs to get a new character and has to contain special features related to quality in order to be extensively goal oriented. At the same time the Corporate Communications turn into a trustful contact point for functional units and departments, which take their topics, contents and requirements and prepare them to provide support through established approach of internal lobbying. The prerequisite for the bearing strength of this approach is the existence of trust in the organization as well as the existence of high understanding in communications, based on reached agreements.

The goals to be reached are manifold. Primarily, it is the goal to support winning of contracts, but further an internal network should emerge with the goal to reach trustfulness at the level sufficient for leveraging individual potentials of the employees.

Contacts are a major social potential of a person, as an important subcategory of potentials as a whole. To unleash them we need a solid base of trust in the peers, organization and business stakeholders.

Involvement of employees in the communicative networks in the company boosts the feeling of affiliation to the company and the organizational units and the motivation for each employee to truly participate and be the integrative part. Therefore, we argue that it is the task of Corporate Communications to develop concepts and respective tools to integrate employees in the communicative networks in the company supported by the internal lobbying approach.

The more the employees identify themselves with the company, the more they will find acceptance for the activities and operations of the company and the trustfulness in the management will grow. The higher the acceptance for und inner endorsement of the company and its strategy, the higher will be the readiness to promote the interests of the company internally (multiplication) and externally (to the external stakeholders) and to share and communicate the own actions and let others to participate in this actions.

The interchange of the contacts with the high level management and the access and sharing of contacts during the preparation of an acquisition case with the involvement of Corporate Communications, within the framework and tools set up by them, will open ways for successful business closures.

The envisaged quality of communications can be built up by concerted actions of internal lobbying and well planed internal networking and should be seen as a provision of Corporate Communications for the benefit of the whole company. Lobbying is in its roots a representation of interests with the goal to effectively place a particular interest in front of the decision makers.

Lobbying activities have a clearly defined goal, which has to be achieved within the defined timeframe. In this context we see internal Lobbying to be a project of Corporate Communications. With the lobbying directed into the organization to support activities of Sales, we start a process which draws attention to the project and effectuates that high level management and internal stakeholders feel responsible for the project.

**Contemporary requirements for the support to Sales in the company**

There are several different models of sales work automation and sales workflow management designed and implemented in different organizations and with different goals. The important fact, which seems to be largely underestimated, is that the value of all sales process improvements is to grant additional time to sales people for their external communications with the customers, but also and not less important for the internal communications within the company, with the colleagues, stakeholders and different management levels.

**The need for a holistic support to sales in the company**

Sales Workflow Management enables Sales people to invest a portion of time in the internal communications, as well as to build them up and to foster them. We see an important goal in working out and understanding how the communication between Sales and other functional units and high level management and vice versa can lead to increasing efficiency and company success. Further we consider the support to Sales to be a task and responsibility of many company units and stakeholders and want to highlight it and analyze it as a whole. The result will be a novel communications model, in which the support to Sales is triggered by Corporate Communications. The Sales efficiency, as a pillar of business success, should be established as one of major values in the company. It is thus important to communicate this value effectively, as it should be accepted and supported by all internal stakeholders. On the other hand, as this value should be a part of Corporate Identity, the Corporate Communications have to promote it.

The requirements on today’s Sales change massively caused by the quantity of accessible information, which overcharge the capacities of customers and bring uncertainties in the decision process. In order to get support in the process of decision making, managers look for a trustful partner in the salesperson from every supplier, because they now have to make decisions under time pressure and based on trust. The salesperson becomes a member of the network of its customer and has to act accordingly. He has to act as a network-salesperson. In order to be able to do this he/she has “to know the complex decision making processes in today’s business world and be able to analyze the networks existing in the background”. He/she must also be capable to estimate, how the decision making processes will develop under the existing market conditions (Baumgartner/Friedschröder/Zernatto, 2009: „Netzwelten – Strategisches Netzwerken im Business“, p. 15). The focus has to be placed on systemic servicing and development of the customer, in order to be able to generate the business under
the condition of growing uncertainties. It is thus obvious, that it is a necessity to provide an adequate systemic support to Sales in the own company. The term of a network-salesperson is thoroughly defined if it is completed by the network in the own company. The contacts of the high level management could be used in this context as information and image promoter in the public, whereas the internal company network should help Sales to overcome uncertainties with own knowhow and insights. It is not the any more prevalent that financial structures impact the business, as the social connections put their stamp to many decisions and deals in today’s business environments (Baumgartner/Friedschröder/Zernatto, 2009: „Netzwelten – Strategisches Netzwerken im Business“, p. 13).

**Emergence and features of „Social Sales“**

Although we live and work in a globally networked world, supported by social networking platforms (Xing, LinkedIn, Facebook etc.), the sales process seems very often to be seen as not very social category. The point is that today’s customer developed to be a social customer and requires form salesperson and their organizations to change their mind and ways of servicing them.

The question is here why should this approach seek for a change in the sales process? The successful sales has until now also been based on good connections and relationships and they were the basis for successful sales operations. The point is that the customer changed and this is the main change. He has an enormous choice in the globally opened market and is thus not the object of a salesperson but much more a partner. Such a customer is turning to be a partner of the whole company of his salesperson, which requires another form of transparency. The establishment of transparency towards the customer can be authentic only if transparency is a feature of the own company. To let this transparency emerge, there has to be openness towards and fair play with all stakeholders, from employees, over suppliers, to customers. The exchange of information under such conditions turns to be a proof of personal and value oriented relationships between each other.

It is clear that contacts existing in the company will be needed to enable and boost such a complex assistance to and partnership with a customer. It is not less clear that a huge support by extensive internal communications will be needed in order to disclose these contacts for use. It is a new concept for Corporate Communications needed, in which the Corporate Communications overtake a mixed and strong supporting and leading / managing role.

**RESULT**

**The novel communications model for optimized support to Sales**

Taking into account all best practices of Sales Workflow Management, which enables salespeople to spend more time with customers and other stakeholders in the acquisition and service process, as well as the development of social sales and customers looking for a “person like me” in their salespersons, or moreover a “company like me” in the whole vendor organization, we developed a novel communications model, which incorporates the capability of holistic support to Sales. It is in the context of this paper our primary goal to use the novel model to open the contact network existing in the organization and make the organization use it and dispose of it.

The model is shown in picture below.

The cornerstones of the model, which emerge from the defined processes and tasks of the model actors (involved roles and organizational units), can be postulated as follows:

- Sales communicates its (lead) customers to Corporate Communications, including sufficient and well structured detail information about the project, contact persons and other key players within the customer’s organization and among other stakeholders,
- Corporate Communications start activities to support Sales,
- internal lobbying for he project begins aimed at:
representing the interests of the project e.g. in front of the research and development department in order to speed up the development of the product or in front of the marketing department, if a market oriented activity is beneficial for the business case, and
getting to find out relevant contacts in the relevant project environment, especially in the high level management.

- Campaigning towards high level management starts, as opening of the contact network of the high level management has to be achieved,
- The high level management provides in a structured form its contacts, whilst the other stakeholders provide their knowhow and insights, but also the contact network out of the project related environment,
- Corporate Communications prepare a feedback information for the Sales and starts eventually an own communications initiative aimed at supporting Sales.

**Business Process for the implementation of the novel communications model**

For the implementation of the communications model described in the former chapter it is necessary and most efficient to develop and establish a dedicated business process. In order to conduct and support activities, which are conceptually designed within the process, appropriate tools will be needed. This paper does not deal with tooling, but any type of rather simple shared lists, as Sharepoint offers today for example, can be used and customized to fulfill the needs.

During the design of the business process we tried to find answers to following three questions:
- Who is the next to get the work done?
- How does he/she come to know what task has to be fulfilled?
- Who is actually performing the work?

With aid of these questions we were able to identify the flow in the process and thus design the process accordingly. In following figure we show by means of a swim-lane diagram the involved organizational units and responsible roles (actors) together with the activities they will take on and fulfill in the process.
In this model Sales has the task to prepare and provide the contact list and its action plan. Corporate Communications department will analyze the action plan and will begin to plan the measures it has to take. We recommend in this stage to produce a lobbying-grid, e.g. a Sharepoint list as mentioned before, which relates to the action plan but emphasizes contact network features, and a campaigning plan to be executed in the direction of high level management.

Irrespective or realization itself, all these measures have the common goal to activate the stakeholders. The action plan is introduced to high level management, the functional units get to know details of the business opportunity or business case and related issues and all can efficiently contribute to the common goal and respond accordingly to the common responsibility.

As a result the high level management will place the contact network at disposal. Corporate Communications department will take on the contacts and provide a consolidated feedback to Sales. Taking into account the contact network and the support by functional units, Sales will be able to further plan its activities and will subsequently update the own knowledge about the contact networks in the company. This should be done in close cooperation with Corporate Communications department and high level management.

This model is not a rigid construct and each company can adapt it to own requirements. It is much more a framework for the design of business processes between the Sales, Corporate Communications, functional units and high level management, which will help Sales to fulfill the forecasts and make this success to be a responsibility of the whole organization.

Discussion and conclusion
We think that to support activities of company’s sales force, especially during the acquisition of large account contracts, the use of the contact network already existing in the organization can be achieved by the implementation of the proposed internal communications model. The number of contacts, which have not been won because the high level management was not involved in the efforts of providing access to the customer, would diminish. The role, tasks and activities of Corporate Communications are extended to the level which enabled the major change in positioning the responsibility for company’s business success from solely sales responsibility to the responsibility of the whole organization. The controlled disclosure of the contact network of the high level management emerges as the value added product of this process.

With our research and the communications model presented we want to propose the Corporate Communications to be a driving force in steering the whole organization to overtake the responsibility for the business success and itself be a major support to Sales departments in enabling an environment for achieving better results.

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Public Relations in Fuchs’ Co-Operative Social System and Network Enterprise

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper, the author theoretical relates Fuchs’ Participatory, Co-Operative, Sustainable Information Society (PCSIS) conception with the role of Public Relations in the establishment and coordination of internal communication in the network enterprise, where collaborators are expected and expect to participate in an active, powerful and collaborative business social structure to achieve common business goals (Freeman 1994, J. E. Grunig 2000, Fuchs 2008).

Public relations are considered a critical discipline in the establishment, maintenance and improvement of collaborative relationships in social and productive networks. Especially because the new enterprise model – the network enterprise – is defined by horizontal hierarchies and participative environments, where top management gives work autonomy and power to employees in decision-making process (Castells 2000, Fuchs 2008).

Public relations have to assure dialogue, that is, a two-way exchange of messages and influence between the organization and stakeholders, creating mutual engagement and benefits to society (macrolevel), to the involved groups (mezzolevel) and to the individuals (microlevel). Harmony between the organization and its stakeholders is essential because the organization needs a sense of order to prevail in its web of stakeholders, nevertheless, the influence, that is the power to get an actor to do something we want him to do, has to be mutual (Plowman 1998).

We start our article with social theory of the network society that allows us to frame the work of Fuchs about the Participatory, Co-Operative, Sustainable Information Society (PCSIS) and the Network Enterprise. Then we present our arguments about the role that public relations can play in this social and organizational system, focusing its contribution to the internal communication.

Key-words: Fuchs; Co-operation; Network Enterprise; Public Relations; Internal Communication

Short Thought: Public Relations role in cooperative and participative systems
INTRODUCTION

The generic principles that guide the democratic society in the Era of information and communication technologies (ICT) are the same that can be applied to the definition of the profession of public relations and that must be recognized by society and by top management in the organizational environment. These principles include: collaboration, participation, trust, commitment, common interests (J. E. Grunig 2000).

Our main argument with this work is rooted in social theory, that is, in the need to understand the increased complexity, rapid change, technological dependence and deconstruction of social structures in contemporary everyday life and organizations. As a result, we use the social theory to highlight the need of organizations to build relationships and communicate with their stakeholders (Ihlen, van Ruler and M.Fredriksson 2009, 1-3).

In this article, we intend to relate the emergence of a new social system defined by Fuchs (2008) and based in the social transformation provoked by the rising of the information and communication technologies and its social and productive predominance; with the role of public relations in organizations. As such, it is a socially oriented public relations approach (Ihlen, van Ruler and M.Fredriksson 2009).

Despite the affirmation that public relations practitioners do not have primary responsibilities in internal communication, because those are carried on by Human Resources (Waymer and Ni 2009), in this article, public relations are considered a critical discipline in the establishment, maintenance and improvement of collaborative relationships in social and productive networks. Especially because the new enterprise model – the network enterprise – is defined by horizontal hierarchies and participative environments, where top management gives work autonomy and power to employees in decision-making process.

We start our article with social theory of the network society that allows us to frame the work of Fuchs about the Participatory, Co-Operative, Sustainable Information Society (PCSIS) and the Network Enterprise. Then we present our arguments about the role that public relations can develop in this social and organizational system.

1. Christian Fuchs, the PCSIS and the Network Enterprise

The network society presents conflicting features in its essence originated in processes of fragmentation; exclusion and polarization of individuals, that take into account their idiosyncrasies and differences. Therefore, the understanding of the contemporary world demands the analysis of the network society and of its conflicts and contradictions. So, while Castells (2000) and Manovich (2001) stressed the convergence, the integration and the collaboration among the network society constitutive elements, van Dijk (2005) added the exclusion and the competition among them.

It is Christian Fuchs (2008), however, that will show the distinction between the antagonistic dimensions that fit the informational capitalism and that are connected with the two dominant logics that define the correlation between Internet and Society: the logic of cooperation and the logic of competition.

In Fuchs’ opinion, networks are characteristics of all societies and not original from the contemporary western one. As a result, he finds more suitable to use expressions like: “transnational/global network capitalism” or “transnational/global informational capitalism” to stress both the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity; and the role of information and of ICTs in society (2008, 101).

The idea of informational capitalism presents a productive and economic system based on the rising of cognitive, communicative and cooperative labor, in dialectics with the rise of technologies. In his words: “informational capitalism is based on the dialectical interconnection of subjective knowledge and knowledge objectified in information technologies” (Fuchs 2008, 104).

The self-organization theory can be applied in several dimensions of the social system. Fuchs analyzes the antagonism between competition and cooperation in the informational ecoLOGY (sustainability and environmental impact of technology); online politics (e-participation, surveillance and social movements) and Internet economy (class competition and the network enterprise).

The author supports the logic of cooperation defined by: a bigger equality of opportunities, e-participation, sustainability and solidarity. Nevertheless, he recognizes that the ideal scenario is dazzled by the dominant logic of competition that favors the technological elites, the e-domination (associated with the electronic control and vigilance) and the consequent alienation of who feels socially and technologically excluded. The competitive process subjuggates the structures of the modern society to the interests of who detains the social, political and technological power. As such, the natural resources, labor and culture are consumed according with the dominant actors’ wishes (2008, 338-339).

To survive in the society, human beings have to appropriate and change nature (ecology) helped by technology to produce, distribute and consume resources (economy) that enables them to make collective decisions (polity), form values and acquire skills (culture). Economic, political and cultural structures form the three baising systems of sociological theories (Habermas 1981, Giddens 1984, Bourdieu 1986) and have inspired Fuchs in the definition of the PCSIS.

Fuchs (2010) faces participation and cooperation as sustainable alternatives to the market logic and competition, defined by asymmetric distribution of resources, domination and exploitation. “Co-operation” includes people in social systems, lets them participate in decisions, and established a more just distribution and access to resources. Bearing this in mind, the author proposed a new
model of society: the Participatory, Co-Operative, Sustainable Information Society (PCSIS). The PCSIS is a society in which knowledge, technology and social system are together and shaped so that human beings are included in a social system and self-determine their social system collectively; interact in mutually benefitting ways for them, for the group and for the generations to come.

Supported by the theoretical framework of social self-organization ideas, Fuchs says that the social system produces itself based on an internal logic. Self-organization is understood in terms of cooperation, participation, democracy, respect, solidarity, responsibility and acceptance. As such, all human beings intervene into society for the satisfaction of common needs and there is an active hope for a better society (2008, 32).

Cooperation is conceived as a component with additional qualities because it is based “on the active, knowledgeable, transformational societal capacities of human beings” (Fuchs 2008, 32). In cooperation, all actors are involved, mutually dependents and beneficiaries because goals are shared. The cooperative society is based in a shared symbolic system and involves mutual learning and common production. To reach the actors goals more efficiently, social relationships are developed in a highly networked, interconnected activity rooted in communication with the intention to achieve common understanding.

So “co-operation” is a particular type of communication, reliant in the shared understanding of social phenomena; in the concerted use of resources and in the common feeling of belonging to a jointly constructed social system. In opposition to cooperation, Fuchs presents competition as an exclusive social system where only the needs of a specific group of individuals are achieved. While we can imagine a society without competition, we cannot imagine a society without cooperation, because cooperation is the highest principle of morality, which assure the surviving of society. In Fuchs’ words, “cooperation is the Essence of society” (2008, 33).

Transnational informational capitalism creates new methods and qualities of domination and competition, but it also generates new opportunities for cooperation and participation pointing toward alternative futures. Nevertheless, in contemporary societies competition dominates cooperation (Fuchs 2008, 119-120).

In the Internet economy, the network enterprise conception is marked by the ideology of cooperation (Castells 2000, Fuchs 2008). Organizations are based on flat hierarchies, with decentralized structures, flexible production mechanisms, flexible specialization and participatory management. At the internal level, teamwork and semiautonomous working groups gain importance and autonomy for the accomplishment of specific tasks and goals in a predetermined deadline. This context is possible, first, through the use of computer networks for internal and external communication and work coordination. And second, with the adoption of participatory management strategies that aim to create cooperating relationships among investors, management, and workers; and promote identification and inclusion of workers within the organization (Fuchs 2008, 148-149).

The network enterprise is supported by technology, but technology becomes rapidly obsolete. While substituting and adapting technology, only the human component remains stable. As such, only the workers can assure the continuity of the system. The network enterprise is based on technological networks and social networks, but only the latest ones are flexible enough to assure its continuity. So this kind of organization relies on the role of the internal communication, not only to improve satisfaction and performance (Bartoo and Sias 2004, Rosenfeld, Richman and May 2004, among others) and to guarantee the continuity of the production, but also, as an important contributor to enhance corporate reputation and credibility, because employees are seen by external stakeholders as significant sources (Hannegan 2004).

On one hand, employees who feel at home and enjoy their work, have some influence in the internal decisions and believe to have a role in the organizations’ life and success; will feel more integrated and contribute to the construction of a “we” identity into the organization. This identity will then be transmitted to external stakeholders, because “satisfied employees care more about customer satisfaction” (Lamb and McKee 2004, 8). On the other hand, employees that are able to use communication channels and to communicate with their top management are more satisfied with the information they receive and with their work, and feel a greater responsibility to advocate for the organization (White, Vanc and Stafford 2010), to engage in the innovation process (Castells 2000), and to apply more effort (Lamb and McKee 2004, 8). This feeling will be deepened if employees have more access to their top managers, because this will increase their trust in the administration and their sense of community (White, Vanc and Stafford 2010).

Even so, participatory organizations where superiors have trust and confidence in subordinates and where subordinates feel free to discuss any job-related issue with their superiors and are involved in decisions related to their work are rare. Despite the technological advance and the communication channels that can be settled, the distinction and separation of roles between “the owners of property and the owners of labor remains an unchanged central characteristic of society” (Fuchs 2008, 150).

Cooperation is better than competition, but the economic democracy requires full economic cooperation and not a selective and opportunistic collaboration that only seeks for a profit-oriented goals. According with Fuchs (2010), “co-operation” is based in an inclusive logic that establishes social systems, in which all involved actors benefit.
2. “Co-operation” and Public Relations

For this theoretical essay, public relations are understood as an ethical communication activity (Lieber 2008), developed into and for the organization to strengthen its mutually influential relationships with stakeholders, that is, with the groups that can affect and are affected by the actions of an organization (Freeman 1984). The stakeholder theory, first presented by Freeman (1984), is an alternative conception to the stockholder (or shareholder) theory, by which the author innovated the idea of managerial capitalism by replacing the notion that managers have a duty to shareholders by the conception that managers stand for a fiduciary relationship to stakeholders (Freeman 1994, 39). As a consequence, all stakeholders (and not only shareholders) must participate in determining the future of the organization.

In public relations theory, a stakeholder becomes a public when a group of individuals who can affect or are affected by an organization becomes committed and interested in the organization's life. As such, a public seeks for information and is aware of the organizational issues that it tries to influence. Grunig and Hunt (1984) have distinguished active and passive publics, stating that passive publics are the same as stakeholders. Consequently, stakeholders are a more broaden category: every public is a stakeholder, but not every stakeholder becomes a public. In this work we have chosen the stakeholder terminology considering that even passive publics can be cooperative and at any time can become an active public.

Publics' participation should be assured by communication as the principal technique that allows the establishment of symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships inside the organization and between stakeholders and management (Grunig 2001). Those personal relationships have to be managed by a specialist to assure its maintenance, intensification and the cooperation between their actors. In consequence, the public relations practitioner must assume its role as a "communication architect" with an integrated view of all communication dimensions of the organization. As the stakeholder theory does not give primacy to one stakeholder group over another (Freeman 1984, Freeman, Wicks and Parmar 2004), the public relations practitioner has to keep their relationships in balance to avoid conflicts and jeopardize the survival of the organization. Finally, the public relations practitioner has to simultaneously satisfy three distinct duties: duty to self, duty to client and duty to society (Lieber 2008).

As such, public relations professional has to assure dialogue, that is, a two-way exchange of messages and influence between the organization and publics, creating mutual engagement and benefits to society (macrolevel), to the involved groups (mezzolevel) and to the individuals (microlevel). Harmony between the organization and its stakeholders is essential because the organization needs a sense of order to prevail in its web of publics (see picture n.º 1). Nevertheless, the influence, that is the power to get an actor to do something we want him to do, has to be mutual. To remind the organization of their needs, publics use conflict. In these circumstances, public relations have a double function: keep harmony and managed conflict, to give surety to the two-way symmetrical model of communication that implies cooperation between the organization and publics (Grunig 2001).

In sum, the public relations practitioner can be considered the «missing link» (Lauzen and Dozier 1992) among the environmental challenges, the micro and the internal level of the organization.

**Picture n.º 1 The organizational web of publics (example)**

For our paper’s purpose, we will focus on the role of public relations in internal communication, that is, in the development of communicating channels at the internal level of the organization and with the internal publics, at all levels. The internal publics depend on the type of organization and of the groups of employees that can be identified within the organization’s activity and purpose, but usually we can name: investors; strategic management (dominant coalition, top management); middle managers (directors, head of departments, division leaders); work teams (departments, divisions); and project teams.
As remarked by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier internal communication is decisive in organizations
to develop structures and cultures and provide a context for public relations practice in the
organization (2002, 480). The internal communication can be conceptualized as “the strategic
management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organizations across
a number of interrelated dimensions” (Welch and Jackson 2007, 184). To promote cooperation
among the different kinds of employees, the internal communication must be assured in an
uninterrupted, clear and consistent basis, and this is the public relations practitioner task. Only
in this basis, the internal communication management will sustain “commitment to the organization,
a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its
evolving aims” (Welch and Jackson 2007, 188).

The employees’ commitment to the organization is associated with the day-to-day communication
and the ethical workplace practices. It implies emotional attachment and loyalty to the
organization, as well as, a positive attitude among employees. The positive sense of belonging
to the organization is related to strong motivation and with the sharing of common beliefs and
values. These two main goals of internal communication are interrelated to engage all groups
of employees with their jobs and with the organization. Besides, they are important for the two
remaining goals: the development of awareness of environmental changes and understanding of
the consequences of these changes to organizational purposes (Welch and Jackson 2007).

Internal communication management requires the development of technical communication roles
and activities. To name a few: message exchange between departments; supporting major change
programs; employees’ motivation; and communication facilitation enhancing communicating
skills. All these activities are carried on using means like: face-to-face meetings, house organs,
intranet, e-mail, conferences, briefing rooms, and notice boards. These means are used to fulfill
employees’ communication needs related to: general information about the organization (for
example: who is who, mission, values, market performance and so on); particular information
about their job (what they have to do, career opportunities, training, and access to information);
about their performance and recognition as valuable assets in the organization achievements
(Ralph and Yeomans 2009, 325-326).

In sum, internal communication dimensions include participation in communication, its direction
and the content of communication (Welch and Jackson 2007). All handled so that employees may see
their function as more than “just a job”. In other words, engagement, involvement, satisfaction, high
motivation, loyalty, recognition, pleasant and safe working environment are important ideas to internal
communication managers; and to public relations professionals (Lamb and McKee 2004, 9-10).

According with Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, excellent organizations have participative cultures;
decentralized, deormalized and complex structures. The more symmetrical the system of
communication the more the organizational culture is participative: a necessary condition to
increase the motivation and satisfaction of employees; and to evidence the importance of the
public relations practitioner role (2002, 481).

But to be accepted as valuable to organizations and see their communicating role recognized,
public relations professionals have to achieve professional status and develop a set of values for the
profession (Grunig 2000). As noted by Berger (2005), public relations practitioners have a limited
range of influence and power within the organization. Normally, they are not part of the dominant
coalition – that is, of the strategic decision-making core (Berger and Reber 2006) - and this is a
constraint for them “to do the right thing” even if they want to. In the adoption of a cooperative
model defined by dialogue, inclusion, and negotiation, the power and the influence are shared
and the decision makers considered the public relations’ advice. Because this professional is
educated and has expertise in working with other in the establishment of dialogic communication
and relationships (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier 2002, 323).

In his study, Plowman (1998) stresses the importance of the conflict management among
publics to the public relations empowerment. The conflict resolution can empower public
relations practitioners to become an effective part of the communication process in the dominant
coalition of the organization, because communication skills developed by public relations are
central to conflict resolution and conflict are endemic to organizations. As a consequence, if the
public relations practitioner proves to be essential to conflict resolution, he will be valued by top
management (Plowman 1998, Grunig 2000); envisage as an expert and heard when decisions
have to be taken.

In a more recent study, Bowen (2008) says that the main route for public relations practitioner to gain
membership in the dominant coalition is by getting involved in the resolution of an organizational
crisis situation. According with the researcher, crisis is such a demanding situation that it allows
public relations practitioner to prove he is worth to the organization, lending credibility and perhaps
increasing the understanding among the dominant coalition of the potential contributions of public
relations.

As such, top management has to understand and appreciate the role of public relations and those
practitioners have to reinforce their skills, experience and education. But they do not need to
become managers as presented in the works of Grunig and Grunig 1992, Plowman 1998, Grunig
2000, Berger 2005; because the network enterprise is characterized by horizontal hierarchies and
by cooperation among organizational actors. Besides and as verified by Berger and Reber, it is
not a seat at the table that assures the public relations practitioner that he will be heard, that he
will have a voice in the organization (2006, 18).
The actual predominant capitalist management structures and discourse practices are asymmetrical marked by a hierarchical, instrumental and controlling orientation in decision-making and discourse. Besides, the perception on public relations roles and influence is rooted in stereotypes, such as: public relations are a soft science with no measurable economic value; inclusive approaches do not make sense in an “us-against-them” business world; emotional responses and relationship building are not profiting business (Berger 2005).

The organizational power of the public relation practitioner will depend on what he does in the organization, his success in doing it, and the skills he needs to fulfill his tasks (Berger, Reber and Heyman 2007). Besides, he will have to conquer the trust and respect of the dominant coalition that “protect its own interests and deny change in the organization” (Plowman 1998, 247).

As showed by Coombs and Holladay (2007) not everything about public relations is negative. Public relations have an important role in shaping society and contribute for the transnational activism, public diplomacy and corporate social responsibility. Additionally, and as stated by Heath (2005) public relations allows people to share and to understand ideas before making a choice. This way, public relations gives power to publics and promotes their cooperation in society and within business corporations.

In contemporary societies, marked by the “informational capitalism”, organizational communication agents, producers; communicative arrangements and practices; and communication decisions are essential in the lives of the society, of the organizations and of the individual. As such, if the organization has a participative culture the communication will be more symmetrical and more people (employees, including public relations professionals) will be empowered (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier 2002, 488), because “participative cultures emphasize collective responsibility, decision-making and values” (idem:494). As such, public relations practitioner as a relationship manager is a crucial asset in our days in the new model of society: the Participatory, Co-Operative, Sustainable Information Society (PCSIS).

**Final Remarks**

Following Grunig’s opinion (2000), we state that public relations professionals can be the voice of collaboration within the network enterprise and promote the two-way symmetrical model of communication. In addition, they should contribute to the recognition of collaboration as the core value of democratic societies.

On the other hand and by itself, the role of the public relations practitioners changes with the social change and it needs to be valued and studied as a social practice, and not only as a business function (Sriramesh e Vercic 2007, Ihlen, van Ruler and M.Fredriksson 2009).

On the other hand, society and individuals require media literacy to equip citizens with the analytical tools that allow them to critically analyze media messages and images, avoiding manipulation, persuasion and deception. After all, media portrait public relations in a negative way (White and Park 2010), that is, as a powerful tool used by the interests of corporations and governments to gain and maintain their power in an asymmetrical and competitive social relationships that opposes the dominant and the dominated. But if the PCSIS is promoted among society and organizations, a positive portrait of public relations will emerge tied to cooperative initiatives that can start in internal communication as argued in this theoretical paper.

Future research can be done using this theoretical introduction. For example, to realize what is changing in the praxis of the organization. Which structures are becoming more flat, with horizontal hierarchies? What voice is being given to employees, and to which employees? Finally, is cooperation more than a buzzword used by top management in their annual or mensal speech? Or it is effectively encouraged and practiced in the organizational and social context?

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Public Relations practitioners at Swiss Post: Ardent devotees or indifferent subordinates?  
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ABSTRACT

Corporate Communications is an essential function in every large organization. It helps to anchor the corporate values with the various publics of the organization. Based on this practical observation the researcher aimed to find out whether the people responsible for communicating Swiss Post’s messages are true believers in the core values of the company or if they are just doing their jobs distributing whatever messages they are told to distribute. The Swiss Post provides the basic postal service in Switzerland and employs 61,000 people throughout the world. In order to investigate their attitude towards the organization, 19 Public Relations practitioners at Swiss Post’s Corporate Communications office were asked to sort a 52-statement Q sample adapted from a public relations “relationships value questionnaire.”

Participants sorted statements such as, “I am happy with this organization,” and “I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me,” from strongly agree (+4) to strongly disagree (-4) according to their assessment of their personal relationship with the organization. Two factors emerged from the subsequent correlation and factor analysis of the 52 Q sorts. All participants loaded on a factor (15 on Factor A and 7 on Factor B – this adds to more than 19 because of 3 confounded Q sorts). The key findings demonstrate that there are two groups of Public Relations practitioners at Swiss Post’s Corporate Communications: the “enthusiastic ambassadors of the Swiss Post spirit” and the “critical – but loyal – Swiss Post Public Relations practitioners.” An explanation of how open and transparent ways of collaboration between these two groups provides for balanced and credible communication to both internal and external publics is provided. Implications and limitations are discussed.

Background and objectives of research

The researcher is working for Swiss Post. The company provides the basic postal service in Switzerland. At the same time, its activities in more than twenty countries account for almost a fifth of the company’s revenue. Swiss Post employs 61,000 people throughout the world.

As the Director of Corporate Publishing for Swiss Post, the researcher holds the overall responsibility for everything that is published on the corporate level both in print and online. He and his team create all publications for Swiss Post’s internal and external publics.

In this setting it is interesting to assess Public Relations’ relationships value by the people responsible for transmitting the corporate values. As Wright (2008) states:

“Today we can laugh in the face of politicians, ignore the strictures of bureaucrats, and create and destroy celebrities with a single text message, but we are still supposed to kowtow to our employers like serfs at the annual hiring fair (p. 22).”

The researcher’s goal was to find out whether these people – all of them working within the Public Relations department at Swiss Post’s Corporate Communications – are true believers in the core values of the company or if they are just doing their jobs sending out the messages to their internal and external publics as they are ordered.

For the purpose of this study the researcher used the well-known Public Relations relationship value questionnaire (commonly called the “Grunig Relationship Survey”) by Grunig and Hon (2002, p. 145-147), which is usually used to evaluate how publics perceive companies. Simply responding to the 52 statements of the questionnaire in the usual way can lead to a blurry picture of a company if all statements are generally agreed on by participants. Grunig himself confirmed this fact when writing that “relationships cannot always be reduced to a few fixed-response items on a questionnaire” (2002, p. 2). The task of sorting the statements in a Q pattern (which is forcing participants – in this case the employees responsible for transmitting the values and core messages of Swiss Post to internal and external publics – to weigh the statements against each other and set priorities, thus contributes to a more differentiated outcome.

Literature Review

As “the essence of public relations is relationships with publics” (Devin, Holmes, & Garrett, 2007, p. 34), the 52 Grunig Relationship Survey statements are an appropriate way to assess the PR practitioners’ personal relationships with their employer. Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992, p. 69) consider good relationships equally important as they “make organizations more effective because they allow organizations more freedom – more autonomy – to achieve their missions than they would have with bad relationships”. “The future of Public Relations lies in the development of relationships, and the future of measurement lies in the accurate analysis of those relationships”
agrees Paine (2007, p. 185). In the end it is all about credibility and trust. Therefore, investing in good relationships is a wise decision. Brunner (2008, p. 156) states:

Because trust is so critical, it is foolish for an organization to compromise trust for a short-term payoff. The long-term reputation the organization will acquire by being trustworthy will serve the organization and its publics better.

By executing their jobs, the Public Relations practitioners at Swiss Post contribute on one hand to a large extent to corporate culture and employee commitment at the company. However, as Schein (2003) remarks, corporate culture may not be directly visible and measurable. Using the picture of an iceberg he explains that the only visible things about corporate culture are the consequences. Everything created by senior management and employees reflects corporate culture. According to Martin (2006), organizational culture, is “the way we do things around here”. And, as Schein sums it up, the core of corporate culture lies in the heads of the people who work for the company. Their perception and their «realities» are important. This definitely applies to everything that is published by a company for its internal and external publics by a company, as well.

On the other hand, as Corporate Communications also produces various external publications (such as Swiss Post's customers' magazine that is distributed four times per year to every household in Switzerland, the annual report and the content for its corporate website which is accessed more than one million times per month), the impact of the way messages and values are translated into content published for external publics is obvious, too. In these challenging times for the company (a new postal legislation and the possible full liberalization of the postal market are underway), the necessity to be perceived as trustworthy and credible is even more important. Or as Haigh and Brubaker (2009, p. 9) put it: “When a source is perceived by the audience to be credible, that source is much more persuasive than a source seen as uncredible or one for which credibility is indeterminate at the outset.”

Considering the hierarchical pressure within a corporate environment, there is a fine line between enthusiastically crafting and publishing content that reflects what senior management defined as corporate values and messages, and acting as responsible Public Relations practitioners whose goal is to really contribute to the company's credibility, both internally and externally. This credibility gains even more importance with the increasing popularity of social media – internally as well as externally. If the content of the messages initially sent out by a company does not match the tonality of a potentially following dialogue, the company's credibility – and even its long-term business success – might be jeopardized.

**Method**

The researcher based his research on Q methodology because “it can be considered an innovative method in social sciences and complement qualitative as well as quantitative research” (Müller & Kals, 2004). As Q methodology allows to summarize the responses of a study while still keeping the human uniqueness (Brown, n.d.), it is the ideal choice of method for the present study. In Q Methodology participants are asked to sort a sample of statements from a concourse about a topic according to a condition, feeling or judgment. As the statements have to be sorted in relationship to each other and in a fixed distribution from strongly negative to strongly positive, every so-called Q sort reflects the participant’s subjective point of view. According to Webler, Danielson, and Tuler (2009), all Q sorts are then analyzed:

- using statistical techniques of correlation and factor analysis to reveal patterns in the way people associate opinions. The results of these analyses are then grouped into factors which express different social perspectives (p. 5).

According to Webler et al. Q studies also reveal “how the individuals who did the Q sort agree or disagree with the perspectives” (p. 5).

The researcher used the complete Grunig Relationship Survey that attempted to create a measurement scale in this field for his research. By choosing the already existing 52 statements the researcher did not have to use a structured sampling approach in order to make sure that the variables include every possible element of the concourse.

Nineteen participants – all working in Public Relations-related functions in Corporate Communications at Swiss Post – took part in the study. All participants were administered the 52 statements taken from the Grunig Relationship Survey. The participants were asked to sort the statements according to their assessment of their personal relationship with the organization (e.g. Swiss Post) on a 9-point scale ranging from -4 (strongly disagree) to +4 (strongly agree).

**Figure 1: Q sort grid for the study**
Every participant’s assessment could be influenced by various elements. These did not necessarily need to be directly related to their jobs only. As the company provides the basic postal service in Switzerland, there is simply no way to escape: Every person who lives in the country is also a customer of Swiss Post. Due to the confidential nature of the outcome, the Q sorts were collected anonymously. The researcher decided to collect anonymous sorts in order to obtain results that reflect people’s honest and unbiased opinions. The participants were able to sort all statements without having to fear any sort of negative impact on their working situation.

Findings
Following factor analysis, seven factors emerged. Two of them had an eigenvalue of more than 1 and were taken into account for further description. While the complete results are to be found in the according chapter (Q results calculated using PQMethod 2.11), the researcher presents an excerpt hereafter in order to facilitate the explanation of the analysis.

The rotated factor matrix tells us two things:
1) how many factors (or points of view) there are in the 19 Q sorts (there are two) and
2) which sort is loaded on what factors.
To be significantly loaded on a factor, the factor loading must be at least ±.36, as this is a significant loading at the p < .01 level.

Factor A – Enthusiastic ambassadors of the Swiss Post spirit
Fifteen participants loaded significantly on factor A. It is called “Enthusiastic ambassadors of the Swiss Post spirit” since all participants loading on factor A want to work together with Swiss Post because they are happy with it. They feel treated fairly and justly and think that the company cares about them. They feel satisfied with what Swiss Post gives to them and they find that they are not abused.

This characterization is based on the analysis of the statements that scored highest in the Q sorts defining factor A:

Factor B – Critical – but loyal – Public Relations practitioners
Seven participants loaded significantly on factor B. It is called “Critical – but loyal – Swiss Post Public Relations practitioners”. The participants feel that Swiss Post abuses its power and does not satisfy them. In their opinion the relationship between Swiss Post and them is not based on equality, as the company has a tendency to benefit more from the mutual relationship. However,
the statement that scored highest overall among the 7 participants who loaded onto factor B is number 5 (Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.). This clearly shows that they still are in a “comfort zone” and find positive aspects in their relationship with Swiss Post as well.

This characterization is based on the analysis of the statements that scored highest in the Q sorts characterizing factor B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The organization fails to satisfy the needs of people like me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 19. Whenever this organization gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return. |
| 1. This organization does not treat people like me fairly and justly. |
| 4. I am happy with this organization. |
| 23. This organization helps people like me without expecting anything in return. |

Figure 4: The statements for factor B (critical – but loyal – Swiss Post Public Relations practitioners) that scored highest

Conclusions and Recommendations

The normative model for excellence in Public Relations builds on symmetrical two-way communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 291). Employees are also a public of Swiss Post. This is underlined by the PRSA Official Statement on Public Relations which stresses the necessity for institutions “to develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics, such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders, and other institutions, and with society at large” (PRSA Foundation, 1991, p. 4). Therefore the normative model for excellence in Public Relations applies to this study, too.

For a large majority of the Public Relations practitioners at Swiss Post’s Corporate Communications (e.g. those who loaded mainly on factor A), the relationship between them and Swiss Post clearly tends toward excellence. They feel treated fairly and think that the company is concerned about them (statements 1, 5, 10, 20). Even the participants who mainly loaded on factor B expressed their satisfaction with the way that the company is concerned about them (statement 5). This shows on one hand that these participants too feel some sort of symmetrical relationship in the communication between them and the company. Yet they have expressed their honest opinion by saying that Swiss Post fails in establishing a truly balanced relationship.

Marken (2001) states that “Public Relations is a service and support function” (p. 39). “Service” implies “to serve” and to “support” speaks for itself. For Swiss Post’s Public Relations practitioners in Corporate Communications this means that they have a) to serve the company and b) to support it.

Because the messages distributed via the various Public Relations publications of Swiss Post are targeted to both internal and external publics, the discussion about credibility also leads to the question whether Swiss Post’s internal and external publics are happily believing whatever the company communicates or if more truthfully crafted messages serve their purpose better. Do Swiss Post’s Public Relations practitioners serve the company well if they craft messages far from being true because they are blinded by the enthusiasm they feel for their organization? Or should they not rather pay close attention to the credibility of the messages and to maintaining a long-term relationship between the company and its various publics?

Swiss Post is facing changes in the postal law and the final step to full liberalization of the domestic postal market. In this setting it is indispensable that the company builds on trust and common understanding in order to maintain good relationships with its publics. Jeopardizing them would be counterproductive as “companies without trust will fail to thrive” (Hurley & Siebers, 2007, p. 7). And in the case of Swiss Post it could even threaten the successful future of the company. Therefore maintaining good relationships is an important goal which can only be achieved if the messages are honest and true.

One could say that the more the Public Relations practitioners responsible for transmitting the corporate ideas and values are committed to Swiss Post, the more straight from the heart their messages come. But this does not yet say anything about the credibility of the messages. The truthfulness and effectiveness of communication counts. And in this respect the researcher is convinced that a fair share of skepticism adds to credibility in communication.

As this study shows, between a quarter and a third of the participants have a more differentiated opinion regarding their relationship with the company than their colleagues. Still they play an equally important role in communicating Swiss Post’s ideas and values as their more enthusiastic counterparts: It is they who really balance the messages, enter into passionate discussions with
their colleagues, edit the texts that contain too much Public Relations lingo and contribute to the actual real-world image of the company. Or, as an expert puts it swiftly, “communications must be honest and transparent” (Inside job, 2009). In this respect the researcher considers both groups of participants in this study who loaded on factor 1 and factor 2 equally important. If the two groups succeed in maintaining a mutually fruitful way of collaboration, they can assure that Swiss Post communicates in a balanced and credible way in the long run – a goal that has to be of utmost importance to the company.

Limitations
The results of this study would have become more precise if the full set of 52 statements and their relationships among each other had been thoroughly analyzed. The researcher would have had the opportunity to interview the participants to further clarify their points of view if they had not sorted the statements anonymously. However, some participants might not have sorted the statements as honestly as they actually did during this study.

Suggestions for Future Research
The participants will be asked to answer the 52 statements again, this time in an ordinary survey. The comparison of the results will allow the researcher to make a statement regarding the quality of the two research methods. Additional research can focus on the importance of employee engagement among those employees who are responsible for transmitting the core values of an organization that should, in turn, influence employee engagement throughout the entire organization.

References
Appendices

Measuring instrument

The Q sort consisted of 52 statements directly taken from Grunig and Hon’s Public Relations relationships value questionnaire as published in Stacks (2002):

1. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
3. I have no desire to have a relationship with this organization.
4. I am happy with this organization.
5. It bothers me when this organization ignores my interests.
6. Whenever this organization gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.
7. Sound principles seem to guide this organization’s behavior.
8. This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.
9. I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.
10. The organization fails to satisfy the needs of people like me.
11. I don’t consider this to be a particularly helpful organization.
12. This organization doesn’t make me feel obligated to repay it for what it does for me.
13. This organization does not mislead people like me.
14. The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision making process.
15. I would rather work together with this organization than not.
16. Both the organization and people like me benefit from their relationship.
17. This organization does not especially enjoy giving others aid.
18. I keep track of benefits I have given this organization to make sure I get as many benefits in return.
19. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
20. In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around.
21. I feel a sense of loyalty to this organization.
22. I feel people like me are important to this organization.
23. This organization helps people like me without expecting anything in return.
24. When this organization receives benefits from others, it repays them right away.
25. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
26. When I have an opportunity to interact with this organization, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation.
27. Compared to other organizations I value my relationship with this organization more.
28. In general, I believe that nothing of value has been accomplished between this organization and people like me.
29. This organization is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.
30. This organization seems to keep track of what it has done for people like me and what we have done in return in order to keep an “even” relationship.
31. I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.
32. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
33. This organization really listens to what people like me have to say.
34. I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.
35. Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this organization.
36. I feel that this organization tries to get the upper hand.
37. Even though people like me have had a relationship with this organization for a long time it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.
38. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
39. This organization is known to be successful at the things it tries to be.
40. This organization won’t cooperate with people like me.
41. I could not care less about this organization.
42. Most people enjoy dealing with this organization.
43. I feel that this organization takes advantage of people who are vulnerable.
44. This organization will compromise with people like me when it knows that it will gain something.
45. I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.
46. This organization has much knowledge about the work that it does.
47. I believe people like me have influence on the decision-makers of this organization.
48. There is a long-lasting bond between the organization and people like me.
49. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with people like me.
50. I think that this organization succeeds by stepping on other people.
51. This organization takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization.
52. I feel very confident about this organization’s skills.
Results calculated using PQMethod2.11

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Factor Matrix with an X Indicating a Defining Sort

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% expl. Var. 38 12 12 12 12 12 12

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PQMethod2.11
ISDP Research Methods project
Path and Project Name: C:\PQMethod\lorenz
### Factor Q sort values for each statement

This table shows the factor arrays. They were calculated using PQMethod2.11, too. The difference between factor A and factor B can be seen in the far right column (Δ). The higher the difference between factor A and factor B, the darker red the statements are shaded.

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<td>2. This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I have no desire to have a relationship with this organization.</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am happy with this organization.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It bothers me when this organization ignores my interests.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Whenever this organization gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>7. Sound principles seem to guide this organization’s behavior.</td>
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<td>8. This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.</td>
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<td>10. The organization fails to satisfy the needs of people like me.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I don’t consider this to be a particularly helpful organization.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. This organization doesn’t make me feel obligated to repay it for what it does for me.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. This organization does not mislead people like me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision making process.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I would rather work together with this organization than not.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Both the organization and people like me benefit from their relationship.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. This organization does not especially enjoy giving others ad.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I keep track of benefits I have given this organization to make sure I get as many benefits in return.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I feel a sense of loyalty to this organization.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I feel people like me are important to this organization.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. This organization helps people like me without expecting anything in return.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. When this organization receives benefits from others, it repays them right away.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Variance = 5.385, Standard deviation = 2.320)
Is there a difference between internal and external communication: a posit for all stakeholders in corporate communication

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ABSTRACT
In previous debates, scholarly symposia and writings, as well as in organisational practices, the pivotal importance of internal communication in the corporate environment could not have been emphasised enough. These debates were rife until the rediscovery of stakeholder theory and the concept of stakeholder engagement. The King Report III on Corporate Governance for South Africa (now well-known and implemented across the globe), illustrates the pragmatic approach to the integration of stakeholder management in corporate governance with its separate chapter on "Governing Stakeholder Relations". For the first time the inclusive approach to stakeholder relationship management is explained in more detail than usual and principles on how stakeholder relationships can be managed in a corporate governance context are provided. These have implications for corporate communication in general, and distinguishing between internal and external communication in particular. Including stakeholder approaches into mainstream strategy has been a topic of recent studies in management and communication science.

Internal and external communication as constructs will be repositioned in this paper. The argument is that the governance of all stakeholder groups is becoming more important in the corporate environment. In any given communication situation, a stakeholder could play many roles in an internal or external organisational environment. Total stakeholder engagement and involvement will have implications for organisational practices and corporate sustainability.

The explosion in social media and networking has empowered corporate citizens beyond imagination. They are assuming new roles: not merely as employees, clients or the community in general, but on the virtual stage of communication, they are taking on roles as citizen editors, journalists, writers, recipients and interpreters of their own communication material. They are becoming the reputation ambassadors or demolishers in the corporate environment. Due to the fact that all stakeholders are now co-creators of corporate knowledge, the borders between internal and external organisational communication are vanishing. In the new stakeholder engagement environment, cyberspeak will be regarded as the new corporate discourse and rhetoric. In this continuous neo-corporate communication environment, it is not about communication control, but about communication power-sharing. In this paper stakeholder engagement as an all-inclusive communication management approach will be illustrated by utilising literature on stakeholder theory, corporate governance and the influence of integrated reporting on the operations of organisations in the growing importance of corporate reputation management.

Prologue
The recent strong focus on governance and sustainability has changed the contemporary business–society landscape and as a result also that of corporate communication. Stakeholder theory in general and the inclusive stakeholder approach to corporate governance in particular, posits that all stakeholders should be engaged in the strategic decision-making processes of an organisation. The oversight function of the board should therefore include the consideration of the legitimate interests of all stakeholders – employees, customers, investors, government, community, media – in their strategic decision-making (King III, 2009). Cheney and Christensen (2001) have argued that on-going and genuine two-way dialogue between organisations and their stakeholders provide the best approach to the management of complex issues that characterise contemporary society. Organisations therefore have to engage in a dialogue process within and beyond the boundaries of the organisation in order to engage significant stakeholders (Foster & Jonker, 2005, p.56).

Katsoulacos and Katsoulacos (2007, p.55) state that the need for a proactive role by governments, business and the civil society in development has motivated three interlinked business movements, namely corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate sustainability and global reforms on corporate governance. CSR and corporate sustainability involve the organisation’s assessment and improvement of its economic, environmental and social impact to align it with stakeholder requirements using integrated reporting. Corporate governance (legal responsibilities) provides the foundations upon which CSR and corporate sustainability practices can be built. According to Aula and Mantere (2008, p.118) a recent trend in strategic management emphasises the role of networks in strategic management. Organisations operate within networks formed by customers, partners, subcontractors, legislators and other stakeholders. Quirke (2000, p. 21, cited in Welch & Jackson, 2007, p.178) furthermore argue that the assets of an organisation in the information age include the knowledge and interrelationships of its people. Internal communication is the core process by which information can be processed for the organisation to create value. The paradigm should therefore not only be to practice internal communication for the sake of communicating with employees, but internal communication in order to prepare employees to serve other stakeholders from a value-based perspective. The focus should be on the communication system (and therefore processes) instead of the boundary (Mattei, 2010). This
requires new management approaches, entailing that employees accept increased responsibility for the destiny of the organisation. The management style is about individual and collective leadership – the ability to build relationships, connections, community and a positive culture and value system (Verwey, 1998, p. 13). Beerel (1998, p.3) states that in the ‘adaptive age’ there is a need for leaders who can deal with the ‘systemic’ problems that go to the very core of who we are in a dynamically interrelated and interdependent world. This responsible leadership focuses on recognising interconnected relationships, developing adaptive capacities, and developing communities that can learn through dynamic feedback. Van Wyk (2002, p.13) further refers to ethical leadership plus rational management as ‘good governance’ and states that: “The lack, or absence of sustained good governance remains the greatest challenge in the world today.”

Contemporary business and communication perspectives

The basic philosophy of the King I (1992), King II (2002) and King III (2009) reports on corporate governance for South Africa is the inclusive stakeholder approach to corporate governance. The King II Report (Executive Summary, 2002, pp.13-18) states that by developing good governance practices, managers can add significant shareowner value to an organisation. However, organisations not only need to be well-governed, but also need to be perceived in the market as being well-governed. The board’s responsibilities in the inclusive stakeholder approach are therefore to define the purpose of the organisation and the values by which the organisation will perform its operations; and to identify the stakeholders relevant to the business of the organisation. All these factors must be included in the corporate strategy and must be implemented by management. The board must also ensure that there is effective communication for its strategic plans and ethical code, both internally and externally. The King III Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa, 2009, was developed around the three pillars of governance, sustainability and strategy. Chapter 8: “Governing Stakeholder Relationships” specifically addresses the inclusive stakeholder approach to corporate governance (King III Report, 2009, p.13).

Profit-organisations have also recognised that embedding an organisation in society is a beneficial strategy that promotes business continuity and growth. Consequently, managers are increasingly interested in the management of corporate performance and its effects on various stakeholders within society (Epstein & Roy, 2001, as cited in Galetzka, Gelders, Verckens & Seydel, 2008, p.435). Managers need to know the most effective way in which to communicate about performance throughout the organisation. External disclosure initiatives to communicate (positive) performance indicators may also be a way to overcome stakeholders’ concerns and promote stakeholders’ relationship with an organisation (Epstein & Roy, 2001); and to validate success and justify resources (Behn, 2003, as cited in Galetzka et al., 2008, p.436). According to Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006, pp.138-140) it is increasingly acknowledged that both management and stakeholders can influence the profitability of organisations. Corporate social responsibility is now referred to as corporate societal responsibility to avoid the narrow interpretation of the term as applying to ‘social welfare issues only’. The issue of CSR then shifts from a largely instrumental and managerial approach to one aimed at managing strategic networks where longer-term relationships with stakeholders are considered in the strategic planning of the organisation. The business-society approach developed along with techniques such as (strategic) ‘stakeholder dialogue.’ This development signals the quest for the ‘balanced organisation’, which has a moral identity and combines medium-term profitability with longer-term sustainability (Kaptein & Wempe, 2002, as cited in Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006, pp.138-140).

In the light of the above developments, the global communication profession developed the Stockholm Accords during the first half of 2010 and approved these at the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management’s PR Forum in June 2010 in Stockholm, Sweden. This guiding document for communication management professionals and academia, highlights the role that governance, management, sustainability, internal communication, external communication and the coordination of internal and external communication can play in strategic communication management.

The arguments in this paper are based on certain communication management and strategic management theories and theoretical perspectives that assisted with the conceptualisation of a new integrated and multifaceted approach to communication management across porous organisational boundaries.

Theoretical perspectives

In her now classic work, Leadership and the New Science, Margaret Wheatley (1999, xii) explores the territory of the new science – the theories of biology, chemistry and physics - that creates a framework to rethink worldview. Wheatley (1999, p.4) discovers new ways of understanding the challenges that contemporary organisations face: chaos, control, freedom, communication, participation, planning and prediction. In an environment where information is an essential element, more fluid, organic structures of boundaryless and seamless organisations are emerging; whole systems or ‘learning organisations’ where people exhibit self-organising capacity. In these organic organisations forms change, but the mission remains clear – structures emerge, but only as temporary solutions that facilitate rather than interfere (Wheatley, 1999, pp.15-18). From Wheatley’s (1999, p.105) perspective it is only the meaning of information that makes it useful – meaningful information circulates, grows and mutates in the conversations and interactions that occur between people. She refers to ‘meaning’ as ‘the most powerful force of attraction’ in organisations and in individual lives and regards it as the ‘strange attractor’ in organisations. She also suggests that values create such attractors. Beerel (1998, p.2) suggests that people are moving out of a ‘technical age’ of technical fixes into an ‘adaptive age’ where there is a return to meaning-making and a focus on the values that underlie those meanings. Gratton (2000, p.112) refers to the ‘three tenets of the new agenda’, namely time, meaning and the soul. Technology
also changes our perspective on reality and reflect symbols that express life's deeper meaning (Verwey, 1998, p.12).

**Reflective paradigm**

The reflective paradigm is a theoretical model developed to understand the conditions of existence for late modern organisations and the function of public relations. It defines, analytically, phenomena such as the triple bottom-line (people, planet, profit), multistakeholder dialogue, symmetrical communication and ethical accounts. It is based on the ability of reflection (Luhmann, 1984/1995; Holmstrom, 2000; Luhmann, 2000, as cited in Holmstrom, 2002, p.1), and is based on two analytical assumptions: (1) social systems are capable of reflection and (2) there is an evolution towards the coordination of society which activates learning processes towards reflection as a general feature of social processes (Holmstrom, 2002, p.3). As a communicative network, an organisation is kept together by a specific logic, a social system of meaning (Luhmann, 1998). The organisation’s perception of its function and role in society is based in this particular perspective (Holmstrom, 2002, p.3). In the reflective paradigm, a basic dynamic for a business enterprise is economic. However, reflection opens up the possibility for a broader perspective involving the horizon of a public sphere. It is in this broader perspective that ‘reflection’ is identified: an expression of polycontextual self-regulation – a ‘multistakeholder dialogue’, ethical programmes, a broader value orientation, ‘triple bottom-line’ and ‘symmetrical communication’ (Holmstrom, 2002, pp.8-9).

**Excellence theory**

The Excellence theory is a broad, general theory that begins with a general premise about the value of public relations to organisations and to society. It integrates a number of middle-range theories about the organisation of the public relations function; the conduct of public relations programmes; and the environmental and organisational context of excellent public relations (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p.54). Grunig et al. (as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p.34) used the following premise to integrate a number of theories of public relations into a general theory: Public relations contributes to organisational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organisation’s goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organisation. Public relations contributes to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies. Public relations is most likely to contribute to effectiveness when the senior public relations manager is a member of the dominant coalition where he or she is able to shape the organisation’s goals and to help determine which external publics are most strategic. Grunig et al. (as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, pp.31-33) state that the value of communication can be determined at least at four levels: programme level, functional level, organisational level and societal level. Since the completion of the Excellence Study, Post, Preston and Sachs (2002) developed a theory of organisational effectiveness, defining it as the stakeholder approach to organisational wealth (Grunig et al. as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p.33). Post et al. (2002) pointed out that organisations have intangible assets as well as physical and financial assets. The most original current approach to estimating the value of these intangible assets is that of relational wealth (Grunig et al. as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p.34). Freeman and Gilbert (1992) saw business “as a connected set of relationships among stakeholders where the emphasis is on the connectedness” (Grunig et al. as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p.34).

**Stakeholder theory**

Friedman and Miles (2006, p.1) quote Freeman (1984, p.46) when they define a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives.” They furthermore state that the stakeholder concept represents a redefinition of all organisations to be thought of as a grouping of stakeholders - the purpose of the organisation should then be to manage the interests, needs and viewpoints of stakeholders. The concept of stakeholder management was elaborated on by Evan and Freeman (1993, p.62) resulting in the following two principles: (1) Principle of corporate legitimacy: The organisation should be managed for the benefit of its stakeholders. The rights of these groups must be ensured and they must participate in decisions that substantially affect their welfare. (2) The stakeholder fiduciary principle: Management bears a fiduciary relationship to stakeholders and to the organisation. It must act in the interests of the stakeholders as their agent, and it must act in the interests of the organisation to ensure the survival of the firm, and in so-doing safeguard the long-term stakes of each group (Friedman & Miles, 2006, p.1).

In later work Freeman (2004, p.58) uses a different definition of stakeholders as “those groups who are vital to the survival and success of the corporation”, in which the two above principles are altered and renamed (2004, p.64): (1) The stakeholder-enabling principle: Organisations shall be managed in the interests of stakeholders. (2) The principle of director responsibility: Directors of the organisation shall have a duty of care to use reasonable judgement to define and direct the affairs of the corporation in accordance with the stakeholder enabling principle (Friedman & Miles, 2006, p.2). Freeman (2004, p.64) adds a further principle, which reflects a relatively new tendency in stakeholder theory - to consider the stakeholder concept from the perspective of the stakeholders: (3) The principle of stakeholder recourse: Stakeholders may bring an action against the directors for failure to perform the required duty of care (Friedman & Miles, 2006, p.2).

**Structuration theory**

Witmer (as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p.366) recommends structuration theory as an extension to systems theory that enables public relations scholars to overcome some of the limitations inherent in the traditional systems perspective, such as the organisation/environmental interface and environmental scanning; the communicative practices of social organisations; and the recursive nature of institutional structures through human interactions. One of the factors
that impact on an organisation’s ability to communicate with its publics, and specifically its employee publics, is organisational structure. Witmer (as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p.368) suggests that structuration theory offers explanations in the following areas: (1) The organisational/environmental interface: Structuration focuses on the way in which organisational members reproduce social systems. Organisational/environmental interconnections both create and are created by an organisation and its members and are therefore co-constructed through social interaction. Structuration overcomes the time boundedness of general systems theory - it accounts for the development of internal and external opinions and trends over time to facilitate and encourage forecasting and long-term planning. (2) Publics as discursive communities: Structuration encourages a view of publics as created and recreated through shared experiences (Botan & Soto, 1998). In a technological age ‘new publics arise as discursive organisations through members’ shared experiences’. In on-line communicative interactions, members utilise their experiences to constitute and enact dominant ‘ideological meaning systems’ (Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Mumby, 1989). (3) Organisational culture as lived experience: Culture is created through the interactions of human actors, both as organisational members and as constituents of organisational publics (Witmer, as cited in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, pp.368-369).

**Arena model of reputation**

Aula and Mantere (2008, p.61) identified a tension between two competing discourses on organisational reputation: the financial, value-driven capital discourse and the meaning-driven, interpretive discourse. For an organisation to become good it has to pay attention to both aspects of reputation. The latter can be regarded as a negotiation of meaning, taking place between an organisation and a number of stakeholders. The strategic management of reputation requires an understanding of an organisation’s internal and external environment. Aula and Mantere (2008, p.62) use the communicative metaphor of arena to describe the environment in a market of meaning. Organisations interact with their stakeholders in different types of arena where interactions create mental impressions. They also integrate the concepts of ‘negotiable reputation’ and ‘reputation arenas’ into their discussion. They argue that organisational communication occurs in exchange of texts, new and digital media, meetings, unofficial networks and the Internet. Ralf Stacey (1991) calls these places of organisational communication, the ‘arenas’ of communication. He uses the term ‘arena’ within an organisation’s boundaries to refer to internal meetings, hallway discussions, et cetera. However, arenas can also be studied through the interrelationships between an organisation and its external stakeholders. The media is an arena, as are interactions with stakeholders or between employees. Arenas are places where the organisation and its stakeholders encounter each other and create new knowledge, representations and interpretations about the organisation. Arenas are therefore the birthplace of reputations where interactions between organisations and their stakeholders occur (Aula & Mantere, 2008, p.62). Statements about an organisation create stories that are transmitted among stakeholders and these statements generally concern issues or themes that are interesting to stakeholders (Aula & Mantere, 2008, p.63). In the ritualistic view of human communication, communication can be defined as a process, in which a common culture is created, reformed, and regenerated. From the ritualistic view of organisational communication, reputations can be seen as the production and renewal process of the conceptions and representations of an organisation, whether good or poor (Aula & Mantere, 2008, p.66).

**Strategic management theories**

In a strategic management framework developed by Katsoulakos and Katsoulacos (2007, p.356) to ‘mainstream’ corporate responsibility into strategic management approaches, the following six theories of strategic management are conceptualised against the criteria of value, responsiveness and responsibility: (1) Industrial organisation/environmental approaches; (2) Resource-based view (RBV) and related theories of core competencies and dynamic capabilities; (3) Business networking and relational perspectives; (4) Knowledge view of the firm; (5) Corporate responsibility and sustainability; and (6) Stakeholder approaches.

The reference model for stakeholder-oriented integrative strategic management illustrates the interaction of the above theories in developing a single strategic management capability. An important contribution includes the development of the concepts for advantage-creating knowledge and advantage-creating stakeholder relations according to resource-based theory. Katsoulakos and Katsoulacos (2007, p.356) furthermore differentiate between the instrumental elements of stakeholder approaches and the ethical aspects or intrinsic elements of these approaches.

**Internal communication**

Communication can be considered as the essence of organisations and organisational performance: it is the medium through which organisations acquire their primary resources (capital, labour and raw materials) and build up stocks of secondary resources (‘legitimacy’ and ‘reputation’). Organisations directly negotiate the prices and terms on which a resource is purchased; and they indirectly influence the context within which these exchanges take place (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, pp.1-2). According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, p.2) the organisation’s communication systems can be defined as “the multiple tactical and strategic media it relies on to communicate with its stakeholders, as well as the message content it chooses to diffuse through those media.” The system includes marketing communication, public relations, investor relations, and employee communication; institutional communications that influence the framing of issues; and ‘social responsibility’ and ‘good citizenship’.
Defining internal communication

Gaps in internal communication theory have led to a call for research on the mandate, scope and focus of this academic field (Forman & Argenti, 2005, p.257; Welch & Jackson, 2007, p.178). Cheney and Christensen (2001, p.231 as cited in Welch & Jackson, 2007, p.180) argue, for example, that internal and external communication have been superseded by the notion of fuzzy boundaries and therefore no longer exist as separate fields. Internal communication becomes external as soon as employees communicate to external stakeholders. Individuals also have dual stakeholder roles such as that of internal employee and external customer. Internal communication, although having an identity, is therefore seen as being integrated with external communication. A distinction can also be made between internal communication and employee communication. The latter is increasingly being regarded as a subdiscipline of internal communication and refers to stakeholders over whom there is positional authority, either directly or indirectly. In addition, internal communication includes two emerging disciplines: (1) cross-departmental communication and (2) organisational effectiveness. Methods for improving quality and efficiency such as Six Sigma, have exposed poor internal communication (up, down and across) as a root cause of poor organisational performance and presents an opportunity for communication managers to contribute to organisational success (Grimshaw, as cited in Doorley & Garcia, 2007, p.142). According to Welch and Jackson (2007, p.178) the most common definition of internal communication found in literature is that of Frank and Brownell (1989, pp.5-6), which reads: “the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities”.

Three definitions that are most relevant to the topic of this paper and that will be elaborated on later, are: (1) Internal corporate communication: Welch and Jackson (2007, p.186) refer to an internal corporate communication dimension of internal communication and defines it as “communication between an organisation’s strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims.” (2) Integrated internal communication: Kalla (2005, p.302) proposes a multidisciplinary approach and calls for an integrated view to internal communications in order to fully enjoy the benefits of internal knowledge-sharing. She regards integrated internal communication as being composed of all the academic disciplines or domains that Miller (1996) identifies in the cross-section between communication and organisational life, namely: business, organisational, management and corporate communication. It includes formal and informal communication; has both an internal and an external side; and is broader than the tasks performed by corporate communication. (3) Integrated organisational communication: Barker and Du Plessis (2002, p.4) suggest an integrated conceptual model to address integrated organisational communication that includes the areas identified by Kalla (2005), namely: organisational, business, corporate and management communication. In later work Barker and Angelopulo (2006, p.40) focus on communication integration and defines it as “the cross-functional process of creating and nourishing strategically determined relationships with stakeholders by controlling or influencing all messages to these groups and engaging in purposeful dialogue with them” (adapted from Duncan, 2002).

Integrated communication: from fragmentation to integration

In acquiring physical and symbolic resources, organisations have established specialised groups and departments (community relations, government relations, customer relations, labour relations and human resources) at corporate and business unit level to communicate with targeted stakeholders. This has led to a fragmentation of the organisation’s communication system that has limited its effectiveness (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p.3). According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, p.4) and other authors (Vos & Schoemaker, 2001; Einwiller & Will, 2002) integrated communication is a systematic process for building a coordinated communication system inside the organisation to support a coherent corporate image, brand and reputation. Doorley and Garcia (2007, p.269) define integrated communication as a dynamic communication practice aimed at advancing not only the marketing plan, but also the overall operating or business plan of the firm and in so doing aligning brand with reputation. Knecht (1989, as cited in van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p.30) furthermore describes integrated communication as follows: Corporate communication helps an organisation to create distinctive and appealing images with its stakeholder groups, build a strong corporate brand, and develop reputation capital (see also Dowling, 1994; van Riel, 1995; Fombrun, 1996). Integrated communication requires the organisation to conduct communication management from the perspective of stakeholders; to conduct research on their communication needs and then disseminating it to appropriate individuals in the organisation. The integration process needs to be supported by a planning process from senior management focussing on the vision, mission, philosophy and annual goals. According to Gronstedt (1996, pp.39-40) some organisations have adopted a corporate-wide planning process called ‘policy deployment’ to integrate departments and achieve the organisation’s vision. Vos and Schoemaker (2001, p.15) cluster their approach to integrated communication in three principal domains, each requiring its own approach: (1) concern communication (seen from the organisation as a whole, especially aiming at external relations); (2) internal communication (aimed at internal relations) and (3) marketing communication (aimed at the consumer). They describe the concept of integrated communication on a macrolevel (communication policy should be embedded in organisational policies), a mesolevel (harmonisation on communication policy and departmental level) and a microlevel (harmonisation between the various communications activities of an organisation).

Van Riel and Fombrun (2007, pp.14-15, 25) posit that internal and external affairs departments have “lost their historical monopoly over communications”. They also argue for a more integrated approach to corporate communication, which encompasses marketing communications, organisational communications and management communications (regarded as the most strategic
cluster – the communication that takes place between the management level of the organisation and its internal and external audiences). They define corporate communication as “the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the organisation depends.” Blaaw (1986, as cited in van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p.25) defines corporate communication as: “The integrated approach to all communication produced by an organisation, directed at all relevant target groups. Each item of communication must convey and emphasise the corporate identity.” Van Riel and Fombrun (2007, pp.31-36) furthermore state that corporate communication is successful when communication provokes changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours; when communications are honest and symmetrical; and when communications are accountable and adopt measurable success criteria. They state that criteria against which corporate communication should be evaluated, are embedded in corporate reputation.

Communication integration
Barker and Angelopulo (2006, p.42) explain that a ‘market orientation’ is a way of thinking and organising in which the needs of the organisation’s stakeholders are considered in all decisions and actions. Communication integration is the process in which the objectives of market orientation can be realised. This approach requires a stakeholder orientation of everyone in the organisation and is a method of identifying stakeholder needs, aligning the organisation’s offerings to these needs, and maintaining a dialogue with stakeholders throughout. Barker and Angelopulo (2006, pp.43-48) suggest three specific areas of communication that must be considered when undertaking programmes for the integration of an organisation’s communication, namely: (1) message sources, (2) important junctures of communication (translating the mission into strategy; implementing strategy; planning and executing external communication; delivering service; and forming customer expectations of the organisation and its products or services) and (3) strategies of integration. Duncan and Moriarty (1997, as cited in Barker & Angelopulo, 2006, pp.48-49) suggest specific strategies for integration that can be classified as follows: Strategies with a corporate focus, those that address operational processes and strategies that relate to organisational infrastructure.

Internal communication and structure
Research conducted by Holtzhausen (2002, p.323) confirmed the link between communication management strategy and organisational structure. In effective organisations, strategy leads to structure or structural change (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 325). Holtzhausen (2002, p.326) also reiterates that power is important and that the communication management function should be incorporated into the power structure of the organisation. The credibility of this function will be crucial to its ability to implement strategy and structural changes (Holtzhausen, 2002, p.337). Theories about organisational structure identify a variety of organisational types, matrix and network organisations. Communication problems experienced in modern organisations can predominantly be attributed to bureaucracy as an organisational type (Holtzhausen, 2002, p.324). Structuration theory furthermore holds that changes should be made at the level of everyday interactions in order for change to occur in an organisation (Holtzhausen, 2002, pp.326-327).

Electronic communication as a tool for integration
At a time where the focus is on systemic principles and a trend towards connectivity, networks are growing in size and complexity. Driven by information technology and in particular the social media, organisations are forming partnerships and becoming part of networks - even networks of networks. The ability to effectively manage networks is the new measure of success (Verwey, 1998, p.7). Kelly (1997) refers to this as network economics. The real change – that which is reshaping the economy, is not a computer revolution, but a communication revolution. The effect of connectivity is what economists call ‘the law of increasing returns’. Verwey (1998, p.1) states that as a result of information technology in the Age of Communication, shifts are occurring in the relationship of the corporation to individuals and society as a whole. The new corporate building blocks of connectivity, corporate renewal and culture can evoke and liberate the intellectual capital in the organisation, and more importantly revive its spirit. Engaging and communicating with stakeholders to identify their concerns allows the organisation to set objectives and key measures of performance for each of the stakeholder groups. The internet has an important role to play in this process (Cooper, 2003, pp.232) and is as a result increasingly becoming part of business models (Einwiller & Will, 2002, pp.104-105). The accessibility and interactive possibilities of the internet allow users to easily identify and convey information relevant to their interest (Cooper, 2003, pp.232; Einwiller & Will, 2002, p.105).

Bonsón and Flores (2011, p.34) state that opportunities for corporate dialogue should be created by organisations, thereby increasing the level of transparency. In this space of social networks and virtual communities, places are created where people learn, co-create knowledge and share their experiences (Elia et al. 2009, as cited in Bonsón & Flores, 2011, p.34). A process of technological democratisation is currently taking place in the electronic media environment. Adopting corporate dialogue would mean facilitating multidirectional flows between the stakeholders of an entity and engaging them in communication through the contribution of content, comments, tagging, et
cetera (Bonsón & Flores, 2011, p.35). Apart from information conveyed by the organisation itself, transparency is also enhanced by other internet sources like independent sites for corporate information, consumer communities, anti-corporate sites and discussions in newsgroups (Einwiller & Will, 2002, p.105).

**Internal communication and corporate reputation**

Internal communication plays a central role in increasing employee identification with the organisation – a dimension of corporate identity and consequently corporate reputation. Kennedy (1977) found that images held by external stakeholders are a function and a reflection of those held by employees. Management and employees are central to any discussion of the identity formation, maturation, and dissemination process intended to lead to sustainable advantage (Melewar, 2008, p.8). Gotsi and Wilson (2001) state that a corporate reputation reflects a stakeholder’s overall evaluation of an organisation and is based on the stakeholder’s direct experiences with it. Reputation is built within the stakeholder networks that surround organisations. Dortk (2006, p.322) furthermore found a correlation between corporate reputation and internal communication. In a study of Turkey’s leading business magazine, Capital’s, ‘Most Admired Organisations’ survey the top 10 and bottom 10 organisations listed have been analysed. It was found that the top 10 organisations give weight to internal communication; they consider measurement to be a significant factor in their activities and believe that ‘commitment’ is a major contribution towards business results; they develop and put into effect internal communication plans more often than the bottom 10 organisations; and they believe in the impact of internal communication on corporate reputation.

**Internal corporate communication: a stakeholder approach**

Welch and Jackson (2007, pp.184-186) suggest the following four dimensions of internal communication: Line management, team level internal communication, project level internal communication and internal communication that focuses on communication with all employees. From the latter, they conceptualised internal corporate communication, which they define as "communication between an organisation’s strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims." Their Internal Communication Matrix furthermore focus on the importance of corporate messages, goals of internal communication (commitment, awareness, belonging and understanding) and the context of internal communication (external and internal environment) (see Welch & Jackson, 2007, p.186). A stakeholder approach is followed in the Internal Communication Matrix to broaden the internal communication concept and highlight the interrelationships between all forms of internal and external communication.

According to Foster and Jonker (2005, p.52) messages should not be passively received and ‘understood’ by stakeholders. Rather, the stakeholder should actively develop meaning, created in terms of their perspective on the world in which they live and the situation at hand, which implies a strong reflexive quality. The process of stakeholder engagement will lead to more communication and interactions, and finally to a ‘nexus of transactions’. The key to this emerging organisational concept is managing the ‘transactivity’ of the organisation. This approach to communication, being action-oriented, is also compatible with the achievement of organisational goals (Foster & Jonker, 2005, p.56). This perspective on internal communication can be linked to the responsibility dimension of strategic management as conceptualised by Katsoulacos and Katsoulacos (2007, p.362). They refer to the ‘enterprise strategy’, which highlights the need for changing the relations between organisations and society to enhance as organisation’s societal legitimacy (Ansoff, 1979). From this perspective the ‘redefined corporation’ mobilises resources to create wealth and benefits for all its stakeholders (Post et al., 2002). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and related concepts such as corporate citizenship and social accountability are associated with ethical issues and can be seen as a way of corporate self-regulation. Stakeholders have also been defined as risk-bearers based on the argument that a stakeholder should have some form of capital at risk, either financial or human, and therefore has something to lose or gain depending on a organisation’s behaviour (Clarkson, 1995, as cited in Katsoulakos & Katsoulacos, 2007, p.362). From this perspective the King III Report (2009) refers to stakeholders as the organisation’s ‘compliance officers’.

**Integrated internal communication: a knowledge management approach**

Many scholars stress that the ability to effectively share knowledge internally is fundamental for maintaining a competitive advantage (Grant, 1996; Kogut & Zander, 1993; Spender, 1996). Kalla (2005, pp.310-311) describes knowledge-sharing as a function of integrated internal communications. Knowledge-sharing is the formal and informal exchanges through on-going social interaction, which mobilise knowledge that is dispersed around the organisation. Two themes, namely efficiency, and security and motivation, emerge around knowledge-sharing. This approach to internal communication can be linked to the responsiveness dimension of strategic management as conceptualised by Katsoulakos and Katsoulacos (2007, p.360). They state that dynamic strategies associated with enhanced organisational responsiveness can be subdivided into: (1) strategies associated with flexibility and agility addressed by core competencies and business networking strategies; and (2) strategies associated with detection and reaction speed addressed by dynamic capabilities and learning/innovation strategies.

According to King and Cushman (1994, p.2) communication functions as a second-level support activity in an environment where organisational strategy focus on non-communication activities such as product cost or product differentiation. However, when response time becomes the primary source of competitive advantage or organisational strategy, the effective functioning of communication within and between organisational units and business processes becomes
the primary cross-organisational activity. ‘High-speed management’, as King and Cushman (1994, p.2) define it, is a set of communication and management principles designed to assist a firm in its reaction to environmental volatility by allowing for rapid adaptation to changing environmental conditions. It uses communication principles and information technology in creating a rapid response system that is innovative, adaptive, flexible and efficient. Dynamic capabilities represent an organisation’s ability to reconfigure competences to address a rapidly changing environment. They allow an organisation to adapt to changing opportunities by using a diverse base of network resources (Gulati, 1998; Gulati et al., 2000). Responsiveness is also dependent on the learning and innovative capacity of the organisation. Learning is ultimately ‘the only sustainable source of competitive advantage’ (Williams, 1992; De Geus, 1988) and depends on the ‘capacity for knowledge absorption’ by the members of knowledge networks and their ‘collaboration motivation’. Stakeholder engagement is closely related with the concept of social capital described by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as “. . . networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (Katsoulakos & Katsoulacos, 2007, p.360). Responsiveness is also facilitated by transparency as advocated by responsibility strategies as it encourages broad stakeholder participation in risk management processes (Katsoulakos & Katsoulacos, 2007, p.361).

**Strategic internal communication: a resource-based approach**

The fuzzy boundaries of contemporary network organisations and the complexities that they create, prompted Mazzei (2010, p.221) to consider alternative approaches to internal communication. She proposes a definition and model of internal communication on the basis of the resource-based theory and intangible resources for competitive advantage, instead of the traditional systems approach of organisational boundaries. Internal communication is defined as a set of interactive processes to generate knowledge (as an intangible resource) and allegiance (through communication behaviours such as dialogue). Mazzei (2010, p.231) states that the internal communication department has a key role in encouraging active employee behaviours in addition to delivering messages. Inactivity derives from a lack of awareness, sensitivity, ability and a sense of constraint. In planning activation strategies, it is necessary to forge a link between internal communication and human resource management systems (Mazzei, 2010, p.231). This approach to internal communication can be linked to the value dimension of strategic management as conceptualised by Katsoulakos and Katsoulacos (2007, p.360). Environmental-based strategies focus on market characteristics and examine how best an organisation can configure its value chain to obtain a competitive advantage (Porter, 1980, 1985), while resource-based theories address how organisations can perform activities within the value chain more efficiently (Barney, 1991). Organisations adopting a resource-based approach begin the strategy process by identifying their core resources and how they can be leveraged and developed to achieve corporate goals.

The collective knowledge and learning capacity in the organisation (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990) enables resource recombination (Schumpeter, 1934; Penrose, 1959) and offer opportunities for developing core competencies. Strategies for developing core competencies are frequently combined with networking and knowledge management strategies. The focus of resource-based theory may be too narrow by concentrating on the acquisition and protection of critical resources since knowledge of how resources are brought together, coordinated, integrated, and put into use is the essence of the successful firm (Spender, 1993, 1996). Networking strategies should combine a ‘competence’ perspective for the acquisition and development of knowledge and capabilities with a perspective of ‘governance’, for the management of ‘relational risks’ and the minimisation of transaction costs (Williamson, 1999). From a value perspective, instrumental stakeholder approaches view stakeholders as controlling resources that can facilitate or slow down the implementation of strategies and therefore must be managed to create competitive advantage (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Trust is also regarded as a moderating mechanism facilitating coordination of expectations and interactions between economic actors (Zucker, 1986, as cited in Katsoulakos & Katsoulacos, 2007, p.359).

**Enterprise communication: a corporate governance and sustainability approach**

It is proposed in this paper that communication in the context of the governance and sustainability of the enterprise should be considered as part of a multidimensional approach to integrated communication. Governance and sustainability communication supports ethical corporate governance and more specifically board communication, the governing of stakeholder relationships, corporate social performance, social auditing and integrated reporting. Simmons (2004, p.601) uses stakeholder theory to advocate ‘ethical corporate governance’ as an alternative philosophy and practice for managerialism, which is seen as morally and commercially inferior to ‘moral management’ in the new era of stakeholder-accountable organisations. This alternative philosophy centres on the concept of ‘the responsible organisation’ with a stakeholder systems model of corporate governance offered as the means of operationalising this. Simmons (2004, p.601) suggests that effective governance can be integrated with CSR, and that incorporating stakeholder views in decision-making processes enhances organisation performance and reputation. The ethical stance is also more participative in recognising extended stakeholder relationships across increasingly permeable organisation boundaries (Solomon, 2001, as cited in Simmons, 2004, p.602).

Two types of organisation-stakeholder relationship constitute challenges to conventional approaches to corporate governance: the organisation’s relationship with its employees; and alignment between how an organisation describes its actions and how stakeholders perceive these (Simmons, 2004, p.603). According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, p.34) success of corporate communication results when organisations demonstrate their accountability on three levels: (1) overall accountability (involves demonstrating the effects of corporate communication on building a favourable reputation...
Governing stakeholder relationships

Muzi-Falconi (2009) states that the ability to effectively govern relationships, within and amongst networks as well as with society at large, reinforces the organisation’s ‘license to operate.’ In the mid-eighties corporate governance concerns began to emerge in organisations with the shareholder versus stakeholder debate. The stakeholder model has since gained significant ground and has now become a primary responsibility of the board of directors in many countries, and one that management needs to monitor and report on to the board. The 2009 King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa is an example of this shift towards stakeholder relationship governance, with its Chapter 8 on “Governing Stakeholder Relationships.” Muzi-Falconi (2009) further refers to stakeholder relationship governance from an organisational and relational perspective, considering the societal perspective and integrating this with the value network society model of the organisation. From this perspective the stakeholder decides to have a stake in the organisation. However, the organisation may decide to ignore, to involve (allow access and input) or to engage (actively attempt to include in its decision-making processes) some or all of its stakeholders. The principal contributions of communication management to organisational value rely on (1) the ability to collect, understand and interpret stakeholder and societal expectations to organisational leadership, with the result of improving the quality of management decisions; (2) the ability to introduce organisational processes to effectively govern stakeholder relationships, and (3) the ability to facilitate and enable other organisational functions to govern stakeholder relationship systems. By ensuring a permanent stakeholder dialogue based on contents (rather than messages), both the organisation and its stakeholders can reciprocally modify opinions, attitudes, decisions and behaviours in closer alignment with the public interest and prevailing expectations of society, represented by active citizenship groups (rather than merely those of the organisation or its stakeholders). From this perspective the quality of effective relationships with stakeholder is based on the dynamics of the following four indicators which may be measured, before, during and after: trust, commitment, satisfaction and control mutuality. A responsible organisation is effective when it achieves balance on objectives between the three different levels of interests involved in organisational activity: the organisation’s interest; the different and often conflicting interests of its stakeholder groups; and the public interest (Muzi-Falconi, 2009).

In research conducted by Spitzeck and Hansen (2010, p.378) it was found that stakeholders of contemporary organisations are granted a voice regarding operational, managerial and strategic issues. The power granted to stakeholders by the organisation, varies from non-participation to co-decision making. Another way of giving stakeholders a voice is through the participation of non-executive directors (‘public interest directors’) on the board. They come from outside the bubble of organisational reality (Senge, 2008) to the inside and have the challenge of continuously aligning the worldviews of those inside and outside.

Auditing

Literature on corporate sustainability posits that businesses should integrate sustainability principles into corporate strategic policies and business processes (Gao & Zhang, 2006, p.722). Corporate sustainability as an ideology for rethinking business beyond corporate social and/or environmental responsibility activities requires systemic corporate culture changes ‘consistent with the concept of sustainable development.’ The key premise of corporate sustainability is that organisations should fully integrate social and environmental objectives with financial aims and account for their actions against the wellbeing of a wider range of stakeholders through an accountability and reporting mechanism. Social auditing is a practical approach to engage stakeholders in assessing and reporting on corporate sustainability, with a focus on the framework of AA1000 and the dialogue-based social auditing model. The AA1000 standard stresses the principle of inclusivity in the dialogue process, so that organisations should seek to include as wide a collection of stakeholder groups as possible (Gao & Zhang, 2006, pp.724, 730). Legislation and market mechanisms are ways of persuading businesses to shift towards sustainability, however, they largely ignore the ‘internal’ impetus and peculiarities of a business for change. Engaging stakeholders through constructive dialogue is perhaps a more effective way to achieve change as ‘dialogue draws together the values, issues and indicators relevant to stakeholders in a language that is meaningful, consistent and useful for decision making.’ (Cheney & Christensen, 2001).

Long and Arnold (1995) rule out dialogue ‘intended only as a forum to share ideas’ and emphasise that dialogue must lead to ‘discrete action’ and ‘parties should be prepared to change if the results … demand it’. In other words, parties to genuine dialogue should be open to the transformative effects of their communication (Gao & Zhang, 2006, p.729). Social or environmental reports are key stages in any stakeholder dialogue process. Therefore, social auditing designed as a process of assessing and reporting on social and environmental performance of an organisation has an important role to play in the above engagement process (Gao & Zhang, 2006, p.730).

Reporting

It is commonly recognised that there is a strong relationship between the stakeholder perspective, which stresses non-financial aspects of organisation behaviour, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability (including environmental respect) and corporate governance. Zambon and Del Bello (2005, p.130) refer to these emerging organisation ideas and attitudes as ‘stakeholder responsible (or oriented) approaches’, which provide insights into the ‘active role’ subtly played by stakeholder-oriented reporting (for example, social and sustainability statements). In the last few years, issues linked to corporate social responsibility, sustainability, environmental...
respect, corporate governance and similar aspects have influenced the governance and the actions of a growing number of organisations and institutions, thus contributing to a change in their attitudes and actions. A particular outcome of these dynamics is that more and more organisations declare the importance of preparing reports showing information of a non-financial nature to stakeholders with the aim of providing them with a clearer view of organisational performance in terms of social responsiveness, long-term sustainability, environmental respect and corporate governance (Zambon & Del Bello, 2005, p.130). These concepts also foster a concrete change in corporate behaviours and practices because since they pose an ‘urgent’ implementation challenge, thus implying a need for making concrete behavioural and reporting choices (Zambon & Del Bello, 2005, p.131).

Conclusion

With good interactive relationships built through communication in a shared arena of meaning, an organisation and its stakeholders create a common vision - a shared reality of the organisation and its operations. Effective communication should therefore be built more upon the idea of community (communicare) than on the transfer of information (communicatio) (Aula & Mantere, 2008, p.177). Contemporary business and communication perspectives are changing to include strategic stakeholder dialogue in the communication mix when communicating with stakeholders (Van Tulder & van der Zwart, 2006, pp.138-140). Taking into account the reflective paradigm, the excellence theory, stakeholder theory, structuration theory, the arena model of reputation and specific strategic management theories, this paper posits a new approach to communication in the boundaryless organisation, considering the strategic dimensions of value, responsiveness and responsibility. Its (1) overview of traditional integrated communication approaches and (2) its link to reputation management; (3) internal corporate communication from a stakeholder perspective; (4) integrated internal communication from a knowledge management perspective; (5) strategic internal communication from a value-based perspective, and (6) enterprise communication from a corporate governance and sustainability perspective provide new insights and considerations on a paradigm for ‘internal communication’.

Important considerations in this debate include accountability, transparency and reporting of the financial and social performances of organisations (Deegan, 2002; Gray, 2002). Galetzka et al. (2008, p.434) state that stakeholders provide an organisation with essential resources, such as finances, employees, and legitimacy, which makes it vital for organisations to invest in relationship management to justify additional resources. The purpose of legitimisation is often a strong motivation for internal and external communication about organisational performance to those ‘who have a right to know’ (Deegan, 2002). The quality of an organisation’s relationships with stakeholder communities is vital for business performance (Clarkson, 1995; Gardberg & Fombrun, 2006; Sirgy, 2002) and communication management will therefore have an indispensable role to play on various levels in the future organisation. Its unique approach to and understanding of multifaceted issues and reputation arenas also makes it the ideal function to facilitate communication processes across boundaries to create value for all parties involved.

References


Strategic Linkages Between Internal and External Constituencies During Organizational Turbulence

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Strategic Linkages Between Internal and External Constituencies During Organizational Turbulence: Communicative Interactions Between Employees and External Publics and Their Processes and Outcomes

Internal communications is now one of the main concerns and must-considered functions of CEO’s, because business objectives are delivered by people (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Employee awareness of its organization’s operations, problems, goals and developments will increase their effectiveness as ambassadors, both on and off the job (Theaker, 2004). “Employees who are aligned with the company’s values can help their organization attain a sustainable advantage by giving external stakeholders experience of these values. Thus, employees represent significant brand value and an organization’s leadership has a responsibility to marshal this opportunity” (Chong, 2007, p. 202). In fact, media relations efforts will not succeed if employees don’t understand and agree with the messages the company is delivering, because 1) employees are a company’s face to all its various constituencies and 2) employees execute the business plan that is at the heart of all the communication aimed at other audiences (Holtz, 2004).

Employees interact with external publics on a daily basis and play as agents of the organization, representing or misrepresenting organizational strategic interests based on their experiences and relationships with their employers. The digital age that embraces these new communication technologies has made it possible for communication to become a two-way conversation between management and frontline employees, sharing information back and forth at blazing speeds (Whitworth, 2006, p. 210).

Accompanied with the digital age, however, the impact of social media, including Twitter and Facebook, has blurred the lines between people’s personal and work lives (Treadaway & Smith, 2010). Such impact has brought inevitable concerns of revealing confidential information that can be viewed by millions and making discriminatory or critical comments regarding the company, its employees or its clients. And yet, only 41 percent of 808 people identified that there is a specific policy to address employee use of external social media, according to the IABC Research Foundation’s 2010 Employee Engagement Survey. Such effects of employees’ communicative interactions are especially salient and pronounced during organizational turbulence such as crisis and major transition like corporate merger and acquisition.

Kim and Rhee (in press) tested two unique aspects of such employee communication behavior: the megaphoning effect and the scouting effect. “While the megaphoning concept tries to capture employees’ positive or negative communication behaviors about their organizational accomplishments or problems, scouting refers to employees’ voluntary communication efforts to bring relevant information to the organization” (Kim & Rhee, in press). The study identified how organizations’ positive or negative employee relationship affects employees’ communication behaviors; Employees with positive relationships are more likely to engage in positive communication behaviors related to their organizations.

Despite the importance of communicative behaviors originated from employees, there has been no in-depth qualitative research examining the potential causal effects of such behaviors and strategic links between this important internal constituency and external constituencies - how specifically employees generate strategic opportunities and threats to their hosting organization other than through their productivity, job turn over, and loyalty. One critical link of the two different constituencies is “communicative actions” between constituencies, specifically the information selection and transmission to external publics by employees. This research investigated 1) how employees tend to (communicatively) behave for their troubled organizations during crisis or major transition periods and 2) in what ways their (communication) behaviors influence organizational effectiveness via influencing the external constituencies opinions and perception about the organizations regarding turbulence.

Using quantitative, an online survey measured the level of organization-public relationship (OPR) for the employees whose organizations have undergone crisis situations, such as financial difficulties or an executive replacement due to business slump. Using qualitative, focused interviews identified key factors that affect employee’s communicative behaviors including its tonality and magnitude and further illustrate specific mechanisms that shape external constituencies’ (e.g., suppliers, media reporters, and shareholders) evaluation of the organizations. Based on the findings the research presents the practical and theoretical implications of the communication interactions between internal and external constituencies to the strategic management and strategic communication management.
Conceptualization

According to Collins (2001), a primary task in taking a company from good to great is to create a culture wherein people have an opportunity to be heard. Such culture, however, would become ineffectual if employees were apathetic toward the organization and thus not willing to acquire, select, or transmit strategic information for the organization. In other words, employees who have a low level of organization-public relationship are less likely to engage in communication behaviors. Instead, they are more likely to engage in information attending (passive information acquisition), information permitting (passive information selection), and information sharing (passive information transmission). More importantly, those employees may become passive about any degree of communication behaviors in regard to their organizations. Even worse for organizations, those employees are more likely to become adversarial during an organizational crisis. For example, three separate but related recalls of automobiles by Toyota Motor Corporation at the end of 2009 and start of 2010 damaged the company not only financially by losing US$ 5.3 million but also to its well deserved reputation. During the crisis, the world’s largest automaker had to suffer from negative statements that made public by numerous former employees and current employees at the outsourcing companies.

“They let Americans do what they do best, advertising and services, and in that area they left us alone,” said Laurence Boland, who left Toyota in 1995 after 25 years at its sales organization. “But when it came to money and technical matters, they kept the control in Japan.” (Vartabedian & Bensinger, 2010, para. 10)

He appeared on local television to do the unthinkable: criticize Toyota, announcing that he would no longer accept orders from the automaker or its affiliates. “I said on TV what they all want to say, but are afraid to.” (Fackler, 2010, para. 8 & 9)

Nothing tests an organization’s employee communications function more than a crisis. In times of crisis, the last thing any organization needs or wants is an uninformed or incorrectly informed employee walking about providing commentary about the situation (Hoffman, 2001). According to the Grunig Relationship Survey, “communication with publics before decisions are made is most effective in resolving issues and crises because it helps managers to make decisions that are less likely to produce consequences that publics make into issues and crises” (as cited in Paine, 2007, p. 136). Further, the organization that fails to keep employees accurately and adequately informed misses the opportunity to spread good information and counteract rumor and poor media reporting regarding the crisis (Hoffman, 2001).

As important as the organization-employee relationship, five independent variables of the situation theory of problem solving (STOPs) - problem recognition, involvement recognition, constraint recognition, referent criterion, and situational motivation - (Kim & Grunig, 2011) are also key factors that impact one’s communicative behaviors. For example, if employees detected a high level of constraint recognition, they are less likely engage in the information transmission of communication behaviors.

Some public relations scholars believe “employees or investors are the most strategic public” with which organizations must strive to develop mutually beneficial relationships (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p. 270). Internal communications deserves close attention, as employees may be the most important audience for a company’s organizational communication and corporate branding efforts (Chong, 2007, p. 201). Using six dimensions of the organization public relationship assessment (OPRA) - control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, communal relationship, and exchange relationship (Huang, 2001), the individual level of organization-employee relationship was measured for further analysis with their communicative behaviors.

Outside of the organization, the environment is a larger information arena in which people, objects, and organizations compete, and “create a constant cascade of signals and messages” (Choo, 2002, p. xiii). As organizations increasingly adopt new technologies, the information provision options for employees also increase; as organizations undergo transformations, information seeking behavior is expected to be of more importance to both the individual and the organization (Fiedler, Lash, Wong, & Tiainen, 2006).

Therefore, the following four hypotheses that are based on employees’ level of the OPRA and communication behaviors that are adopted from the STOPs - information acquisition, information selection, and transmission - (Kim & Grunig, 2011) along with five independent variables of the STOPs are set to identify a linkage between organization-employee relationship and employees’ communication, and to help addressing the overarching topic question: During crisis or major transition periods, how does an organization-employee relationship impact on the tendency of employees’ communication behaviors that influence organizational effectiveness by influencing the external constituencies opinions and perception about the organizations regarding turbulence?

H 1: Employees with the higher level of OPRA are more likely to engage in active information acquisition (information seeking).

According to Kim and Rhee (in press), there are two degrees, as for information selection and information transmission - of information acquisition – active information seeking and passive information attending. Information seeking is defined as “the planned scanning of the environment for messages about a specified topic” and information attending is defined as “an unplanned discovery of a message followed by continued processing of it” (Grunig, 1997, p. 9). This question
helped identifying how the level of OPR relationship affects one’s information selection during organizational crisis.

H 2: Employees with the higher level of OPRA are more likely to engage in active information selection (information forefending).

According to Okura, Dozier, Sha, and Hofstetter (2008), employees can become informal agents who collect information that has strategic value to the organization (as cited in Kim & Rhee, in press). Such information selection has two communicative behaviors – information forefending and information permitting that are active and passive, respectively (Kim & Rhee, in press). Information forefending is “the extent to which a problem solver accepts any information related to a given problem-solving task” (Kim & Grunig, 2011). Information permitting is “the extent to which a problem solver permits any information related to a given problem-solving task” (Kim & Grunig, 2011). This question helped identifying how the level of OPR relationship affects one’s information selection during organizational crisis.

H 3: Employees with the higher level of OPRA are more likely to engage in active information transmission (information forwarding).

Employees can also relay and circulate learned information to other members of organization (Okura, Dozier, Sha, and Hofstetter 2008, as cited in Kim & Rhee, in press). And so it is the role of internal communicators to engage employees to become active advocates for the organization (Whitworth, 2006, p. 207). The communicative action that is engaged in this behavior is defined as information transmission (Kim & Rhee, in press). Of this, information forwarding that is active refers to the extent of planned, self-propelled information giving to others; and information sharing that is passive refers to the extent of sharing information reactively only when someone requests one’s opinion, idea, or expertise about the problem (Kim & Grunig, 2011). This hypothesis identifies how the level of OPR relationship affects one’s information transmission during organizational crisis.

Methodology

Research is “a process of systematic inquiry that is designed to collect, analyze, interpret, and use data” with purpose of understanding, describing, predicting, or controlling an educational or psychological phenomenon or to empower individual in such contexts (Mertens, 2010, p. 2). There are three types of research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is often framed in terms of using words (qualitative) rather than numbers (quantitative), or using closed-ended questions (quantitative hypotheses) rather than open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions) (Creswell, 2009). According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), quantitative researchers consider it to be of primary importance to state one’s hypotheses and then test those hypotheses with empirical data to see if they are supported; on the other hand, qualitative research primarily follows the exploratory scientific method.

This research used mixed methods by collaborating an online survey (quantitative) to identify the interviewees’ level of the OPRA and to learn their organizations’ recent crisis and multiple focused interviews (qualitative) to investigate their inner experiences with their own words. Conducting a survey prior to interviews benefited the interviews by 1) obtaining the interviewees’ OPRA levels and general communication behaviors, which were applied to latter focused questioning and 2) allowing the interviews to be focused more on interviewees’ storytelling.

There are two benefits of interviews that are distinguished from quantitative research: 1) because the ideas of interviewees have priority, interviewees are able to explore their own thoughts more deeply and honestly and 2) the responses derived from interviews are the subjective views of the interviewees, thus the evidence is based on their own meaningful interpretations of individual experiences (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 221). A focused interview, which was taken for the core of this research, is conducted for a short period of time – an hour, for example (Yin, 2009). Therefore, the interviews may still remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner, but the interviewer needs to follow a certain set of questions derived from the protocol (Yin 2009). Given the need to collect in-depth insights and viewpoints, interviews - which Yin (2009) claims are “the most important sources of case-study information”- served as the prime source for learning how the selected employees view and (communicatively) behave to their organizational crisis.

Stage 1: An online survey

An online survey (http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22C4VPQUZXA) (see Appendix A) was launched on March 31, 2011 for participants in South Korea who were solicited through a personal network via e-mail and phone call. The online survey was regarded as a screening tool to select focused interviewees and as a preliminary investigation to measure one’s level of the OPRA. The survey was closed on April 14, 2011 with 31 completed responses, exceeding a goal of 30 participants.

The participants were asked if their organizational had undergone crisis during the past 1 to 2 years, followed by the questions related to the OPRA and their basic communicative behaviors about information acquisition, information selection, and information transmission. The questions also included their communicative behaviors including information selection and information transmission in regard to the organization and their external public, such as family members, friends, and outsourcing partners. All questions were answered using a 7-point Likert scale with some open-ended questions for personal information and organizational crisis. The statement of possible follow-up interviews was given at the beginning of the survey.

Stage 2: Interview Recruitment

The candidate interviewees were explained beforehand about the study with consent information,
including purpose and topics of questions and no compensation policy, and made an independent decision about participation (see Appendix B).

Among those who identified the organizational crisis, seven participants agreed for focused interviews. Four interviewees from the same organization identified the same organizational crisis as financial difficulties and three interviewees each identified their own organizational crisis as an executive replacement due to business slump, a product recall and an information leak, and a company’s negative reputation among consumers. The interviewees were recruited via e-mail and telephone that were provided during the online survey.

Stage 3: Focused Interviews

The procedure protocol was 1) to use seventeen established open-ended questions (see Appendix C) for each interview based on their survey responses, 2) to conduct each interview via telephone or e-mail, and 3) to complete each interview within half an hour. The seventeen questions were created based on three dependent variables and five independent variables that are adopted from the STOPS (Kim & Grunig, 2011) theory.

Prior to asking each question, the interviewees were given their previous survey answers that were related to the topic of each question for recollection. For example, the survey question “I have recently posted a positive comment(s) online to advocate my organization,” rated by using a 7-point Likert scale, was modified for interviews as “have you ever commented on positive or negative articles or postings on the Web about your organization? If so, please provide examples. For example, you may have supported (positive materials) and refuted (negative materials) to the topic, or opposed (positive materials) and agreed (negative materials) to the topic. If not, why not?”

Due to the low geographic accessibility, most of the interviews were conducted via telephone from April 7 through April 17, 2011. The different time zone made one interviewee difficult to commit for a telephone interview schedule, and thus an e-mail interview was conducted for this case. To avoid any succinct answers, the written e-mail interview was supplemented with additional requirements to encourage narrative responses. For example, one question related to information transmission, ”Today, may people are active in social networking media, such as Facebook, Twitter, or personal blogs. Have you linked the web sites or positive/negative articles of your organization to your social networking media site?” was supplemented with following subsidizing questions: 1) if so, please provide examples, 2) do such activities increase when the organization is in crisis? and 3) if not, why not?

As the interviews require narrative feedback from each participant, the presented questions led to further relative topics if necessary. The interviews were transcribed (see Appendix D) immediately after each interview in accordance with the date the interview took place. All identifiable personal information (i.e., name, organization) was coded with a random digit (i.e., Respondent 1, Respondent 2).

Results

Among 31 complete survey responses, 9 participants acknowledged that their organizations have undergone crisis during the past 1-2 years. They were contacted for focused interviews via e-mail and telephone. Two participants disagreed to be interviewed due to the following reasons - Participant 8 thought that her organizational crisis (financial difficulties) was nothing more than a general global economic depression which has impacted almost every corporations worldwide, and thus did not want to posit the situation as an individual crisis; Participant 9, although she answered that her organization has recently been in crisis, was neither willing to specify what crisis it was nor comfortable discussing any negative remarks in regard to her organization.

Out of the seven selected interviewees, four employees (Respondent 1, 2, 3, and 4) from the same organization that recently has suffered from financial difficulties. Respondent 5 identified there has been an executive replacement due to business slump, Respondent 6 identified a product recall and an information leak as the recent crisis, and Respondent 7 has been experienced the company’s negative reputation among consumers.

Individual OPRA

Each interviewee’s level of the OPRA was measured based on the preliminary online survey. Two measurements (see Appendix E) for each of the OPRA’s six dimensions that were based on a 7-point Likert scale were selected and averaged (Table 1). The value for the second statement of the trust “my organization does not have capabilities to accomplish its goals,” was reversed. For example, Interviewee 1 weighed this statement at 2 (second lowest of a 7-point scale) and it was calculated at 6 (second highest of a 7-point scale) based on the meaning of the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Communal</th>
<th>Exchange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 (4/6)</td>
<td>5.5 (6/5)</td>
<td>5 (5/5)</td>
<td>4.5 (5/4)</td>
<td>5.5 (5/6)</td>
<td>1.5 (2/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (1/1)</td>
<td>1 (1/1)</td>
<td>1 (1/1)</td>
<td>1.5 (2/1)</td>
<td>2 (2/2)</td>
<td>4 (4/4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (2/6)</td>
<td>1.5 (1/2)</td>
<td>4 (4/4)</td>
<td>5 (4/6)</td>
<td>5 (4/6)</td>
<td>4.5 (5/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5 (3/4)</td>
<td>2 (2/2)</td>
<td>3 (3/3)</td>
<td>2.5 (2/3)</td>
<td>3.5 (4/3)</td>
<td>3.5 (3/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5 (4/5)</td>
<td>2 (2/2)</td>
<td>4 (4/4)</td>
<td>4 (4/4)</td>
<td>4.5 (4/5)</td>
<td>4.5 (5/4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 7 rated all dimensions except the exchange relationship higher than the median, 4 (between 1 and 7). These two interviewees especially rated control mutuality higher than the median, while all other interviewees rated the same dimension at the lowest of all dimensions. Interestingly, both interviewees rated the exchange relationship lower than the five interviews. Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 5 also rated five dimensions higher than the median, but both interviewees rated the control mutuality at 2.

Interviewee 6 showed the similar pattern as Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 5. Among all interviewees, Interviewee 6 showed the most moderate ratings throughout the dimensions. No dimension was rated at extremely low (1) or extremely high (7). Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 4 rated all six dimensions lower than or at the median. Notably, the ratings of Interviewee 2 indicated that he had no trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction at all. Interviewee 4 was followed by the second lowest ratings for control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. This back-to-back comparison, however, does not explain the overall OPRA for each interviewee.

For example, Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 7 who were defined as having good relationships with their organizations rated the exchange relationship poorly. Also, Interviewee 3, Interviewee 5, and Interviewee 6 who were defined as having moderate relationships with their organizations rated five dimensions, except the control mutuality, as high as or even higher than Interview 1 and Interviewee 7. For instance, Interviewee 3 rated the satisfaction higher than Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 6 rated the communal relationship higher than Interviewee 7. Therefore, the rated value from six dimensions was added for each interviewee and the added value placed the interviewees in order (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Added Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interviewee 7</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interviewee 6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Individual OPRA level based on six dimensions

**Communicative Behaviors**

**Information acquisition.** Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 7 engaged in the active information acquisition by seeking the relative information on daily basis. However, both interviewees stated that such behavior was a part of their job tasks in the marketing departments of their companies. They also added that they would not be as active if not required. Interviewee 5 also actively engaged in information acquisition based on the perception that employees “should know what’s happening in the company.” He was willing to extend his information seeking to the competitors. Despite the information seeking, Interviewee 2 explained his behavior as “a part of my habit.” His goal of information seeking was different from the previous three interviewees – finding relative information. Interviewee 2 used to be passionate to find the up-to-date information related to the industry during the beginning of his career at the company. It has been remained as his routine behavior but without the same goal or passion.

Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 6 engaged in the passive information acquisition by attending given information. Both interviewees relied on the information provided by their companies (i.e. intranet, official announcement). Particularly, Interviewee 3 believed that the information provided by the company was how much the company wanted the employees to know. Interviewee 6 regarded the information seeking was the company’s responsibility and the employees were in the position to be ‘informed’. Interviewee 4 thought that an additional effort to information seeking was not necessary by stating, “I get the company related information faster.”

Although Interviewee 2 engaged in information seeking, an active information acquisition behavior, his habitual behavior cannot be seen as being originated from a genuine ‘seeking’ purpose. With
this regard, it was concluded that Interviewee 1, 5, and 7 engaged in information seeking while Interviewee 2, 3, 4, and 6 engaged in information attending. There was no significant difference in information acquisition, as both respondents tend to participate in information seeking than attending (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Added Value</th>
<th>Information Acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interviewee 7</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee 6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Individual OPRA level with Information Acquisition

Information selection. Interviewee 1, 5, and 7 complained that the negative articles about their companies and their crises were unfairly portrayed. They all agreed that the articles were based on the 100% truthful facts but Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 5 explained that those negative remarks were based on one-sided facts. Although such articles contained the unbiased facts, Interviewee 1 evaluated that they did not include all facts that were necessary to explain the discussed issues properly from the company’s point of view. Interviewee 5 was skeptical about the media, stating that he did not have credibility in the media itself. Interviewee 7 explained that there was a negative perception among people toward the companies like her employer (a foreign firm) and such perception affected how described her company’s crisis more negatively. They thought that the information did not deliver “a full story behind the issue,” which made the public leaning toward the negative side in regard to the companies and issues. They regarded the articles as biased stories and generally ignored by forefending the information.

Interviewee 2, 3, 4, and 6, on the other hand, showed a tendency of information permitting. They reasoned their trust in the media, which ultimately led to the information permitting by stating, “(it’s) what I am exactly experiencing at work.” (Interviewee 2) “matches the facts” (Interviewee 3), “…are accurate. I have no choice but to believe” (Interviewee 4), and “News articles are fact-based stories” (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 2 stated that reading the articles confirmed him the intensity of the problems that his company has had and promoted him to focus more on the negative outcomes of the problems. Interviewee 3 added that the media occasionally reported one-sided facts but he believed that follow-up articles would eventually cover the full story. Interviewee 4 particularly showed his strong media credibility, as he thought that he had the wrong information if it differed from what was on the media (Table 4).

Information transmission. All interviewees except Interviewee 1 answered that they would not bring up the issue during conversations with others but with different reasons. Interviewee 2, 3, and 5 did not want to talk about the negative issues. Interviewee 2 stated that having conversation about the issue would not make any difference. If it was brought up and discussed negatively, he in fact felt satisfied since he could not be the one who could freely ‘bad-mouthing’ his company. Interviewee 3 reasoned that it was simply unpleasant topic. Unlike Interviewee 2, however, she felt offended by the other’s hearing negative remarks as she thought that such negativity about her company discounted her as an employee of the company. However, she would not defend her company because it would make the situation worse. Interviewee 5 had the past experience that the others criticized him for defending the company and the crisis. Interviewee 5 gave an example that he was called “brain-washed.” Several of this experience discouraged him to discuss such issues with others. At the same time, he understood why the others were negative about his company. Therefore, three interviewees (Interviewees 2, 3, and 5) were passive about transmitting the information to their external public.

Interviewee 4 talked to his wife who worked at the same company but would not talk to the others such as his family members and friends. Therefore, it was regarded that he would only discuss the
issues with someone who was related or impacted by the issues. When others brought it up, he tried to stay objective. Interviewee 6 did not talk about the company at all outside work. If asked, he would freely discuss what he believed. Both interviewees stated that everyone is entitled to their own opinions and they had no intention to correct them. Interviewee 4 was also passive about the information transmission. For Interviewee 6, although he would not be enthusiastic about discussing the company, he was willing to discuss the issue negatively when given a chance. Based on his attitude toward the crisis, his active information transmission in this case could be regarded as more damaging than the passive information transmission.

Interviewee 7 would not talk about her company’s crisis because she was already aware of what others would say (negatively). Although she agreed that she was not required to have a positive attitude only because she was employed, when asked she would try the best to explain the situation from the company’s side. Interviewee 1 was the only one who would bring up the conversation. However, it was limited to a stress-relief purpose rather than a bad-mouthing. She would also use the conversation as an opportunity to clarify any misunderstanding parts from the company’s side. At the same time, she was not afraid to confirm the wrongdoing part of her company but would avoid insinuating the negative issue during the conversation. Despite the passive attitude to discuss the issue, both interviewees utilized the opportunity to forward their information - active information transmission - to others with a purpose of clarifying the situation (Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Added Value</th>
<th>Information Transmission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interviewee 7</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interviewee 6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Active *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>Passive</td>
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</table>

* Active information transmission potentially damages the organization.

Table 5. Individual OPRA level with Information Transmission

Coping with problems. The difference between active and passive communication behaviors of information acquisition, information selection, and information transmission among the interviewees reflects “coping theory” (Lazarus, 1998) and “situation specific emotional reaction” and “situational perception” (Kim & Kim, 2010). When people sense problematic situations (problem recognition), they first turn to problem-focused approach to “to change the troubled person-environment relationship by acting on the environment or oneself” (Lazarus, 1998, p. 374). If the problematic solving failed and the individual is discouraged in acting on the problem causing situation (constraint recognition), they turn to the emotion-focused coping that manages to reduce the stressful emotional residues caused by the intractable situation (situational motivation) (Lazarus, 1998; Kim & Kim, 2010).

Applied to the results, all interviewees were highly aware of problem (high problem recognition) since their job tasks or workload (Interviewee 1, 3, 5, and 7), job security (Interviewee 2), promotion (Interviewee 4) and compensation (Interviewee 6) were affected by the crisis. All interviewees also recognized the absence of authority to solve the problem directly (high constraint recognition), shown in the comments such as “There’s nothing I can do (to solve this problem).” The high constraint recognition discouraged them to involve in the problem solving (low involvement recognition). Interviewee 3, for example, stated, “One thing I can do from my position is not to talk about my company negatively.” Interviewee 7, on the other hand, stated that she did her best at work as usual because it was only thing she could do.

Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 7 found themselves in the positions where they could at least aid the company’s problem solving process by doing their best at everyday job tasks. Based on this, they remained in the problem-focused coping. However, the negativity of Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 6 elevated as they noticed the disability to solve the problems that had a great potential to impact negatively on his job security (Interviewee 2) and the financial benefit (Interviewee 6). This led them to emotion-focused coping.

Interviewee 3 and 4 were in between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. They passed the problem-focused coping but not yet reached the emotion-focused coping stage to release the negative emotional residues. In this sense, Interviewee 5 was also regarded to be in between the stages, because he did not have negative emotional residues like Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 4 but did not show interests in problem solving or assisting problem solving. Overall, the different levels of communication behaviors made impossible to place all interviewees in either problem-focused or emotion-focused coping (Figure 1).
Second thoughts on the declined interviews. Based on the results from the seven focused interviews, two respondents who declined the focused interviews were found to have relatively better OPR than the interviewees overall (Table 6). Since they were acknowledged that the focused interview was related to their organizational crisis, their good OPR might have influenced their decisions to decline the interviews.

Table 6. Individual OPRA level for the respondents who declined the interviews

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<td>27.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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Conclusions
OPR on the Communicative Behaviors
Interviewee 1, 2, 3, and 4 who work at the same company and face the same crisis showed the distinctive difference in the OPRA; while Interviewee 1 was found to have a good OPR, Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 4 showed the worst OPR among the seven interviewees. The Interviewee 2’s OPRA value was about one-third of the Interviewee 1’s value. Based on this, it can be said that the same crisis has a different impact on one’s OPR.

Interviewee 5 engaged in more active information acquisition than Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 6 who were ranked higher in terms of the OPRA value but it can be explained by the mere difference of the OPRA values (- 0.5) between Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 3 or 6. However, Interviewee 7 and Interviewee 1 who were ranked at the highest and showed active information acquisition were assigned by authority for such behavior, which made their behaviors unclear to be the voluntary information seeking. Therefore, based on the OPRA order the OPR had some degree of impact on information acquisition but not significantly correlated. To support H1, the research needs to be extended to a bigger population and excluding the employees whose main job tasks require engaging in information seeking.

The findings were similar to those for the information acquisition since Interviewee 5 also showed the active information selection. However, he showed a strong distrust toward the media, leading him to forefend the most information delivered by the media. Such skepticism made unclear to define his behavior as an active information selection. If the two interview questions for the information acquisition were not based on the news articles, the results would have been different for Interviewee 5. In regard to this, it can be concluded that the OPR level correlates with information selection, supporting H2.

The results supported H3 as the individual OPR showed its impact on the information transmission. Interestingly, the employee who rated the trust and control mutuality low at 3 and 2, respectively, also engaged in the active information transmission. However, the information he was forwarding to his external public was negative. Such active information transmission is potentially a higher threat to the organization than the (passive) information attending. In this regard, the information transmission - in terms of being active and passive - needs to be reexamined for the organizational crisis situation.

Social media and Organizations
As discussed, social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, has become an integral part of people’s daily lives. Some may argue that it is mainly for the college-aged kids who are 18-24 years old. In fact, the change in social media use among Baby Boomers who are 55-64 years old rose from 9% in 2008 to 43% in 2010 according to Marketingchart.com. Responding to the growth, 71% of companies are now able to monitor employees’ social media use; among them, 53% main a social media policy and 39% of respondents’ organization ban social media use (nCircle, 2010).

Two of three information transmission questions were based on the online activities. Four out of seven interviewees’ companies were found to be strictly banning the use of social media at work or the discussion of the company on it. Two interviewees were either not active on social media or not willing to incorporate her personal social network with the work relations. One interviewee viewed such media as social mingling tool, thus found no use of finding or sending the work-related information. As much people focus on the rise of social media, organizations’ social media policies and employees’ perception of social media need to be as importantly examined.
References


The honest broker?  
The role and ethics of internal communicators within Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.  
Laura Smith, HMRC

ABSTRACT  
The role of ethics in internal communication (IC) is an issue that has not yet been debated – with topics such as the role and position of communicators and the type of work they should or should not be engaged in not yet asked. This research aims to start this debate by looking at the experiences of staff within one organisation – UK government department Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs – using qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews. It explores where communicators sit in the relationship between organisation and staff; what they perceive their role to be; the type of work they engage in; whether they encounter any ethical dilemmas, and how they deal with them.

INTRODUCTION  
IC is a developing and growing profession, with an increasing number of post-graduate and career-related courses available to communicators, and a growing drive to up-skill those working in the sector. -Currently it shares many of its resources with the more established PR industry. These include its major representative bodies, founded for PR practitioners but expanded to cover communicators, and the work of its scholars – with very few writing solely about IC, and many research areas left unexplored.  

Among these areas is ethics. While there is a glut of material available about the subject in PR – arguably due to the profession’s drive to divorce itself from the looming spectres of spin and dishonesty – very little if anything at all has been written about it in an IC context. Fundamental ethical questions about the role and position of communicators and the type of work they should or should not be engaged in have not yet been asked, while a separate code of conduct for those working in IC has not yet been established. This study aims to start the debate about the role of ethics in IC. To do so it focuses on theory from the PR industry, using the experiences of communicators within HMRC – one of the UK’s biggest public sector organisations – to see whether it is applicable to the profession, and focuses on the key ethical questions outlined above.

Boundaries of the study  
Because of its time-restricted nature, this study cannot stray beyond the confines of its remit and go outside the realms of HMRC, or explore wider-ranging topics relating to the organisation, the broader role of IC or ethics that arise during research. It is hoped this study will begin the debate about ethics in IC in a broader context, and can be used as a foundation for subsequent researchers to build on.

Literature review  
Ethics and internal communications  
When defining ethics, care is often taken to distinguish between ethics and morals. The latter are said to be values or principles held by the individual (Gregory, 2009), and as such are not universal. Ethics, on the other hand, encourage consistent behaviour and see moral principles formally studied and codified into systematic frameworks. They are not relativist, and allow for decisions to be made about what is right and wrong in a reasoned and structured way, with others able to understand why such decisions have been made even if they do not agree with them. (Gregory, 2009; L’Etang, 2003; Mullins, 2002).

PR has been forced to tackle the question of ethics and how they apply to practitioners head-on, due to both the profession’s poor public image and a perceived wider crisis of trust in contemporary capitalism (Galloway and Harrison, 2005; Jempson, 2005; Mersham, Skinner & Valin; Walle, 2003). But the same focus has not been brought to bear on the emerging profession of IC – where the exploration of its ethical dimensions has barely begun.

Yeomans points out that despite it often being seen as ‘essential’ to organisations, little attention is paid by PR theorists to IC (2009, p318). Jackson and Welch (2007, p176) agree – stating there are ‘considerable gaps’ in IC theory. One of these gaps would seem to be ethics – a potentially dangerous blind spot for a profession where senior practitioners are said to need high levels of credibility to reach top management positions (Durutta, 2006).

Honest broker or persuasive advocate?  
Fawkes points out the term ethics is often applied to describe business decisions rather than the holistic process, including acts of communication, which led to them (2007). In a similar way, discussion about IC is often limited to the sum of its parts. Emphasis is often placed on what functions the practitioner should carry out (Quirke, 2008), or where a communications unit should
and Hoffman’s view that IC exists to ‘systematically influence’ employees – but basic questions role of IC has been hinted at by scholars such as Yeomans (2009, p318), who echoes Strauss which has connotations of ‘deceit and lies’ (Gelders and Ihlen, 2010, p59). Persuasion as a (2007) suggests this discomfort stems from a failure to divorce persuasion from propaganda, which leads to the issue remaining largely unexplored in the profession’s literature. Messina is to ‘persuade, not to inform’. Fawkes (2007, p320) agrees, saying advocacy is ‘essentially of advocacy’s key connotations – persuasion. L’Etang (2008, p132) insists the role of advocates to ethics of communicators being compromised. In doing so, attention may also focus on one organisation and communicator – where the latter is, after all, a paid employee of the former – is possible in the first place.

The potential conflict of these competing interests is reflected in PR, where the debate over practitioner role and position is well-advanced, although lacking in clear answers. Mershman et al (2003, p16) dismiss notions the profession displays ‘integral bias’ with practitioners nothing more than ‘the robot agent of his master’s voice’, arguing the reality is ‘quite different’. But this is vehemently contended by L’Etang (2008, p132), who scotches any notion practitioners are ‘detached observers and reporters’, arguing they are ‘hired advocates’ who will defend ‘whichever sectional interest employs them’.

It should perhaps be asked whether this notion of advocacy – being paid to represent the interests of another, ostensibly the purpose of IC – automatically infers bias, and whether or not this leads to ethics of communicators being compromised. In doing so, attention may also focus on one of advocacy’s key connotations – persuasion. L’Etang (2008, p132) insists the role of advocates is to ‘persuade, not to inform’. Fawkes (2007, p320) agrees, saying advocacy is ‘essentially persuasive’. But persuasion is often seen as the antithesis of ethical communication.

**Persuasion**

According to Fawkes (2007, p327), the PR field treats persuasion with ‘moral repugnance’, which leads to the issue remaining largely unexplored in the profession’s literature. Messina (2007) suggests this discomfort stems from a failure to divorce persuasion from propaganda, which has connotations of ‘deceit and lies’ (Gelders and Ihlen, 2010, p59). Persuasion as a role of IC has been hinted at by scholars such as Yeomans (2009, p318), who echoes Strauss and Hoffman’s view that IC exists to ‘systematically influence’ employees – but basic questions about whether or not communicators are carrying out persuasive work and if it is ethical or not have not yet been asked.

Grunig and Hunt addressed persuasion when introducing the concept of two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical communication. The latter is rooted in one-way persuasion, and sees communicators aiming to generate agreement between the organisation and its publics by bringing them around to the organisation’s viewpoint (Edwards, 2009), steering them towards actions Grunig sees as socially irresponsible, manipulative and, crucially, ‘unethical’ (1989, cited in Grunig and White, 1992 p40). In contrast, symmetrical communication, with dialogue used to generate understanding, is seen as inherently ethical and one of the hallmarks of an ‘excellent’ IC department (Grunig, 1992, p532).

But whether or not it is possible for an IC department to live up to this hallmark is debatable. Jackson and Welch (2007, p187) contend conducting all internal communications through dialogue would be ‘unrealistic’ and a ‘practical impossibility’ – with one-way communication from managers to employees both ‘unavoidable and necessary’.

And Grunig’s insistence that persuasion is ‘morally contestable’ (Avenarius, 2007, p109) has also come under fire. Pointing out communicators are hired to ‘influence behaviour’, Porter (2010, p128) calls persuasion ‘necessary and inevitable’. Messina (2007) and Fawkes (2007, p316) take this further, arguing all organisational communication, and implicitly then the work of all internal communicators, is inherently persuasive. Communicators, they argue, attempt to persuade a public a topic is worthy of their attention merely by addressing it. It is this perceived impossibility of disentangling communication and persuasion that leads Fawkes to cite and agree with Jaska and Pritchard, arguing: “It cannot be seriously maintained that all persuasion is bad or undesirable.”

Porter (2010) argues the challenge is to persuade ethically. Messina (2007), agrees, contending the debate should not be about whether persuasion is right or wrong, but about how ethics should define its limits. He suggests the key to ethical persuasion is the concept of free choice on behalf of the recipient – with this choice defined in terms of having enough information to make rational and reflective decisions.

This ability to choose and reflect could be seen to give the receiver the ability to discount or retain the message they are given regardless of whether or not it is persuasive. It could be theorised this judgement is in-built into the communications process, with publics treating organisational messages, including IC, accordingly. Welch (2006, p142) citing Valin argues people automatically ‘discount’ organisational messages by between 30 and 50 per cent – with Tobin (2004) pointing to a similar cynicism in the results of the 2003 Edelman survey. With publics prepared to be persuaded, and automatically adjusting their trust in messages to compensate, it could perhaps...
be argued persuasion is not inherently ethical or unethical – but the stuff of human interaction (Fawkes, 2007).

**Power**

Another component of symmetrical communication is that it is based on dialogue arising from an equal power relationship. Grunig (1992, p564) stresses one of the key roles of excellent and ethical IC is to empower staff to the point of equality, so their relationship with the organisation can be defined by ‘negotiation and compromise’. Unethical asymmetrical IC, on the other hand, seeks to reinforce existing power inequalities, attempting to control staff and make them dependent on the organisation.

It could be contended that Grunig’s view ignores the wider context in which IC exists. It could be argued the balance of power within organisations is based on a wide-ranging set of cultural factors, which impact on what staff expect from the organisation and vice versa. Some cultures foster unequal power balances, reflected in psychological contracts – Smythe (2009, p83) points to more traditional organisations where the ‘cradle to the grave’ mentality still exists, with the dependency of staff on the organisation expected and accepted by both sides. Yeomans (2009) argues that asking how employees are viewed and treated is a key ethical role of communicators – but even with this awareness it is difficult to see how IC in isolation could be responsible for the seismic changes to power relationships Grunig sees as necessary.

Somerville (2001 cited Gregory 2009, p277) implies Grunig’s view is idealistic, saying it is ‘simply not the case’ that all participants in a dialogue are equal. Galloway and Harrison (2005) agree, arguing unequal power relations in dialogues are the ‘norm rather than the exception’. They contend adopting symmetrical communication on a broad scale would require ‘fundamental changes to western corporate culture’, which could explain why, as Grunig and White themselves admit, asymmetric communication is very much the ‘dominant worldview’ (2002, p39).

**Navigating the ethical maze**

How internal communicators make ethical decisions or find their way out of ethical dilemmas has not yet been explored. No one dominant code or framework exists laying down guidance for those engaged in IC, who may turn to the field of PR in search of help. Again PR does not offer a single solution, with some arguing this is because a universal and comprehensive prescription for communication ethics does not exist (Galloway and Harrison, 2005). Instead, the profession has at its disposal a range of frameworks aimed at individuals, or a number of codes developed by representative bodies to guide the conduct of their members.

As previously mentioned, one dilemma internal communicators may face is how to ethically reconcile clashes between competing interests. To help resolve this issue for PR practitioners, Seib and Fitzpatrick (1995, cited in Gregory, 2009) designed a model based around duties, which Gregory adapted into a diagram (see figure 2.1). But while this model may be useful in identifying potential areas for conflict, crucially it does not provide guidance on what should be done when such situations arise. Although the duties are numbered, they are not placed in a hierarchical order, making it unclear which should take precedence. Galloway and Harrison (2005) point out this is often a feature of wider codes of conduct held by representative bodies, arguing ignoring such conflicts leads to confusion. They contend this, more often than not, leads to communicators prioritising client or employer interests – the value which ‘best serves’ career and employment prospects.

In considering whether the model is useful, internal communicators must also ask if some or all of the four duties identified by Seib and Fitzpatrick are applicable to their role. Questions may be raised about ‘duty to society’, with IC implicitly designed to stay within the organisation rather than being disseminated into society at large. Gregory (2009, p282) points out the term is synonymous with the concept of work being ‘in the public interest’ – which Avenarius (2007, p111) contends should be the ‘fundamental motive’ for PR practitioners.

But although there has been no debate as to whether the standard is applicable to IC, or achievable by communicators, they may still find themselves being bound to this imperative. IC is still closely linked to PR, with a number of communicators members of large representative bodies predominantly founded for PR practitioners. The concept features heavily in a number of the codes of ethics that
are implicitly agreed to by joining (Chartered Institute of Public Relations; Public Relations Society of America, 2000), despite controversy over the use of the term in PR. Messina (2007, p34) points out that although public interest is ‘liberally invoked’ in codes of conduct scholars have failed to discuss how it is determined. He comes to the conclusion that the need for ethical practitioners to show they have acted in the public interest is ‘unachievable’ and ‘must be abandoned’.

The wider concept and role of such codes has also been debated. Marshall (2002, p107), argues signing on to a formal code of ethics is ‘vital’ for practitioners, as it offers both them and society at large protection if problems should arise. But Bowen (2007) and L’Etang (2003) question the fact that, unlike professions such as medicine and law, communicators do not have to join a representative body, and thus agree to its codes of conduct, in order to work. This is combined with a perceived lack of enforcement and effective sanctions for members in breach of the codes, which led Mersham et al (2003) to declare what was perhaps obvious – it wasn’t possible to guarantee practitioners would abide by codes of ethics. This state of affairs has led to Bowen (2007) dismissing such codes as ‘impotent’, and L’Etang (2003, p65) as a purely ‘symbolic affair’. Both point to the study of ethics as more useful than codes in helping practitioners assess ethical dilemmas, with Bowen warning a lack of training in this area could leave communicators ‘ill-prepared’, risking damaging individual careers and the reputation of a profession as a whole.

But, even with these perceived limitations, the existence of such codes is still recognised as important. L’Etang (2003, p65) calls a code an ‘essential’ requirement for professional status, while Washbourne (2009) puts forward they are a key part of a profession establishing its autonomy, and thus being able to set its own goals and standards. It could be argued then, that IC as a profession must develop its own code of ethics if it is ever to step out of PR’s shadow and be ruled by imperatives and values fully representative of its own.

**Methodology**

**Objectives**

Based on the literature review, a number of research topics about ethics and IC present themselves. Key points are:

1) Whether or not communicators see their role as having an ethical dimension
2) Where communicators think they sit in the relationship between staff and organisation and how they perceive their role in it.
3) Whether internal communicators see persuasion as part of their job and whether or not they think it is ethical.
4) How internal communicators find their way out of ethical dilemmas and approach ethical decision making.
5) Whether communicators have any knowledge or skills to help them consider any ethical issues, and if they would consider development in this area to be useful.

**Research methodology**

The two dominant worldviews informing research in PR and IC are the interpretive and the realist (or positive). The former seeks to understand social reality through the point of view in it, while the latter attempts to discover universal laws of cause and effect which apply across different times and contexts (Daymon and Holloway, 2010).

Interpretive research tends to use qualitative methods, which are broadly associated with words as the unit of analysis. There are several aspects of qualitative research which makes it appropriate to the study of ethics:

1) Based on participant viewpoint – it allows people to be subjective.
2) Provide insights into causes and motivations.
3) Flexibility – it allows researchers to explore new and surprising avenues, and is particularly useful when developing and evaluating new ideas.
4) Holistic focus – it allows researchers to orient towards a wide range of interconnected activities, experiences or beliefs rather than one or two isolated variables.

(Daymon and Holloway, 2010, p4-7; Diggines and Wiid, 2009, p88)

In-depth interviews are commonly used when carrying out qualitative research to explore the perspectives and perceptions of various stakeholders and publics. The advantages of using in-depth interviews are:

1) Freedom to explore the subject area – the researcher is able to probe for more information from interviewees if an interesting topic arises.
2) Sensitive information – the one-on-one nature of interviews leads to a free exchange of information that may not be possible in other methods, such as focus groups, due to societal pressures.

(Birks and Malhotra, 2007, p 211; Daymon and Holloway, 2010, p167)

However, the disadvantages can be:

1) Sensitive to interviewer bias – the answers might easily be influenced by the behaviour of the person asking the questions.
2) Lack of generalizability/transferability – interviews from a study of a specific organisation may not contain information relatable to the industry or profession as a whole.

(Szondi and Theilman, 2009, p205)

The former was mitigated through the development of an interview guide, with a concerted effort made to maintain as much neutrality as possible. It is thought the researcher’s previous training in interviewing in a journalistic setting helped minimise personal impact. The latter is discussed in section authenticity and trustworthiness.
Research design

HMRC is spread out in offices across the UK. Given the time and cost restraints of the project, it was decided telephone interviews would be conducted rather than talking to participants face-to-face. Disadvantages of this method include not being able to record the non-verbal behaviour of those taking part, which Szondi and Theilman (2009) contend can add to results. It is also arguably more difficult to build up trust with the participant, which Daymon and Holloway (2010) identify as a crucial element of the interview process. This was mitigated through being clear about the purpose of the study throughout, emphasising taking part was optional, and through the interviewer being open and approachable – adopting a friendly manner to help participants feel at ease.

To focus the purpose of the interview and to minimise the risk of interviewer influence through leading questions, an interview guide was prepared in advance, outlining the main topics to be raised. Care was taken to phrase questions simply to aid understanding. Multiple questions, which may confuse participants, and straight yes or no closed questions, which offer little information, were also avoided (Merriman, 2009).

The interviews were conversational and informal, to encourage participants to freely discuss their thoughts and feelings. Although guided by the interviewer to focus around the main topics, the conversation was not steered towards a predetermined outcome, with the interviewer asking follow-up questions where required to examine an issue in more depth. Notes were taken, while all the interviews were recorded in full and then transcribed.

Sampling

Daymon and Holloway (2010) set out that whom qualitative researchers select to take part in a study, where and when is determined by the purpose of the study – what they call purposive or purposeful sampling.

In this case, the study relates to how ethics relates to IC within HMRC, looking at the attitudes and behaviours of those working in the field. So the inclusion criteria for a homogenous sample were: a) working for HMRC, b) internal communicators.

Within HMRC, communications staff are dispersed organisationally, with some based in the central communications directorate and others allied to various business units. They are also in different grades – ranging from administrative assistants to members of the senior civil service. To be representative of the population, a judgemental sampling technique was used – the researcher deliberately sought participants coming from both a range of business units and grades. Seven potential participants were approached, with four volunteering to take part – referred to in the subsequent findings as A, B, C and D.

Daymon and Holloway (2010) point out there are no rigid rules or guidelines for sample sizes – although, most often, samples fall anywhere between four and 40. With this study, it is considered four cases provided enough detail to explore the questions at its heart and the responses of those involved – in retrospect, if all seven of the potential participants had taken part, it would have supplied a greater mass of data that would have been more difficult to analyse and would, perhaps, have lost its depth.

Authenticity and trustworthiness

Daymon and Holloway (2010) suggest using authenticity and trustworthiness, which should be central to the research process, to measure the goodness or quality of a study. This is an alternative to the conventional reliability and validity which, they argue, is based on quantitative study with debatable value for qualitative projects. They list a number of components for ensuring studies are authentic and trustworthy. Techniques used in this study to satisfy them have been set out below:

1) Credibility – the method of research has been clearly outlined. A member check of the data was also carried out by sending the final report to the participants in the study, to find out if their reality had been presented in a credible way.

2) Transferability – as previously mentioned, it is recognised that it is more difficult to transfer or generalise the findings of an interview-based qualitative study to other settings than it generally is with quantitative research. This has been overcome by linking the research and the findings of the study to the research and theories outlined in the literature review. In this way, it is shown the findings relate, or are transferable to, other settings in the industry.

3) Dependability – the decision-making process of the study, and the context of the research, has been described in detail, allowing the reader to evaluate the adequacy of the analysis.

4) Confirmability – it has been shown how data is linked to its source so the reader can determine the conclusions and interpretations have come directly from them – not any preconceptions held by the researcher.

Data analysis

Recordings of the interviews were listened to several times for familiarity, and then transcribed. The transcriptions were then read repeatedly with key words, themes, issues and remarks identified by the use of codes (Daymon and Holloway, 2010).

The coded information was then collated together, and further analysed for patterns and central themes. These central themes were then explored both in the context of the study itself, and in terms of the wider literature available on the topic – a key part of transferability.

After this was completed, a copy of the final report was sent to participants in a member check. Two of the four participants responded, and said they felt the assignment was credible and fair. One minor factual amendment was made.
Findings and recommendations

Key findings from the data analysis

The majority of participants did not see ethics as being a key part of their role as internal communicators within HMRC. When asked to carry out communication tasks, A, B and C said they either thought about ethical implications infrequently or not at all. It is suggested this is linked to a number of issues within HMRC – most notably the communicators’ own relationships with the department, the perception of their roles and gaps in existing training and knowledge.

The role and position of communicators. When asked about the positioning of communicators in the relationship between HMRC and staff, responses fell into two broad categories – idealistic and realistic. The idealistic standpoint – espoused by B, C, and D – saw communicators initially identifying themselves as being in the middle of this relationship and not aligned to either side. B echoed the ‘honest broker’ mentality, and said: “I see myself as a kind of third party really, almost a neutral person.”

But this neutrality is a façade, with the reality that communicators are more aligned to the organisation than its staff acknowledged by all the participants after further questioning. They linked this to their own status as employees of the department – pragmatically seeing their bias as an accepted part of their role. D said: “I think you have to accept you’re here to do a job and that you’re paid by the organisation to do it, so you will be more towards the organisation than staff.”

In terms of the power relationship between communicator and department, this allegiance turned to subservience for A, B and C. They saw themselves as functionaries – very much advocates, whose job was to take a top-down message and to translate it for staff, rather than influencing, guiding or questioning the decisions behind its content. A said: “I’m here to do what the department wants me to do… I’m not here to question the department.” This role could be seen to give them very little autonomy – and was linked by C to the status of internal communications within HMRC as a whole. They said: “I don’t think IC within HMRC has a particularly strong voice… it just tends to be yeah, I might not like it, but suck it up and do it.”

This unquestioning stance could be seen to be linked to A, B and C’s lack of consideration of ethics. B said they did not think about ethics because they ‘assumed’ it had been thought of elsewhere in the chain of command. C argued their opinion on whether something was ethical or not made no difference if the department wanted it to be communicated. A, meanwhile, claimed their position in the department meant the consideration of ethics and the potential impact of any message was not their responsibility. They argued: “Ultimately, if I’m the person who publishes the story that has been signed off by various people at the top of the organisation, then it’s not on my head.”

Only D indicated they saw the consideration of ethics as being an important part of their job. This could be linked to their own relationship to the department, which they saw as being more equal than other participants, casting themselves in the role of ‘adviser’ rather than functional. This could be because, as the most senior member of staff interviewed, their role gives them access to leaders and decision making processes those further down the chain simply don’t have, putting them in a position of greater influence. But even this influence has perceived limits. D repeatedly stressed the ability of senior leaders to take or reject the advice offered, and was clear the role has very defined boundaries that should not be crossed. “Should we as a communicator be actually dictating what she [the chief executive] can and can’t say?” they asked. “I suspect not.”

Making decisions/knowledge and skills. Two areas that would seem to be closely aligned are the knowledge and skills of participants and how they deal with ethical dilemmas and make ethical decisions. Training in IC was sporadic – with only B and C having any. None of the participants had any relevant training in ethics. Where courses in IC had been undertaken, they had not contained any teaching on the subject, while journalism courses previously taken by A and D were seen as being job-specific and thus non-applicable to their IC roles.

Also sporadic was membership of representative bodies. Two of the four, again B and C, were members of the CIPR – while A and D were not aligned to any such organisation. Interestingly, neither B and C had read the code of ethics they had implicitly agreed to by joining the CIPR – B because they felt uninvolved with the CIPR as a whole, and C because they had ‘never thought about it’ being relevant, indicating again they did not see ethical considerations as central to their job.

It is on this somewhat questionable foundation that communicators within HMRC are making ethical decisions and facing ethical dilemmas. When discussing how to deal with the latter, all the communicators expressed doubt in being able to resolve the situation themselves. All participants – even C and D who work at a more senior level and are managers – said they would approach their line manager for help. It was indicated this was the result of the intensely hierarchical structure of HMRC rather than an innate belief in the ability of their line managers. When asked what made their line manager better equipped to deal with ethical dilemmas than themselves, A summed up the responses of the participants by concluding: “Probably nothing to be honest.”

The dangers of relying on the hierarchy for guidance was highlighted by C, who according to the logic of participants would be expected to deal with ethical dilemmas faced by their staff. They said they did not feel well-equipped as a line manager to deal with such issues, stating: “I wouldn’t feel on particularly strong ground.”

Again it was only D, the most senior member of staff, who said they would feel confident if a member of their team came to them with an ethical dilemma. Interestingly, it was also only D who
Suggested they would look outside the chain of command if placed in a dilemma that could not be resolved through it. A, B, and C said they would abide with the judgments made by their managers, even if they disagreed with them, which could again be linked to their own subservient relationship to the top-down department. B saw this as necessary to safeguard their job, explaining they worried about losing it if they got ‘too stroppy’. This theme of ‘just doing it’ was echoed by A and C, with the latter pointing out their role entailed a ‘huge degree of compromise’, which they deemed ‘quite unfortunate’. D, in contrast, said they would be prepared to report the matter to a whistle-blowing line – but conceded it would have to be a major incident to do so.

None of the participants identified any existing framework or code of conduct they were relying upon to make ethical decisions. Whether or not the message was considered persuasive did not play a role. All participants unhesitatingly confirmed persuasion was part of their jobs, and saw this as being ethical, even though IC in HMRC would seem to be solely asymmetrical. C called persuasion ‘inevitable’ while D argued that if it was acceptable for bodies such as unions to try and persuade staff to take a certain viewpoint on matters, then it was acceptable for HMRC as well.

Instead, ethical decisions were being made individually, through groups of co-workers or through the chain of command – and were most often being seen in terms of right/wrong and honest/dishonest. The latter distinction had an interesting relationship to truth. All of the participants stated they believed the department should be honest with staff, but went on to explain this honesty had limits – truthfulness was constrained by the organisation picking and choosing which pieces of information to share. All participants saw this – and their complicity in disseminating the information – as being understandable and ethical. B summed up the responses by saying: “Sometimes you don’t necessarily tell everyone everything … if it’s not necessary then why do it?”

D maintained the difference between right and wrong was clear, with those unable to make decisions based on the distinction ‘in the wrong job’. But B and C both pointed out that what one person thinks is ethical may differ from another. Without standardized training, a code of conduct or any other form of guidance or framework in place for communicators within HMRC, it could be argued the current approach to such decisions is largely based on individual morals rather than universal ethics. This variation could well provide an inconsistent service, undermining the credibility of IC as a whole.

This worry was directly expressed by B, who felt a code of conduct would be of use to HMRC’s internal communicators as it would provide a standardized approach. The notion was supported by D and A, who argued a code would be valuable as it would provide guidance to those coming into the profession for the first time. C said a code would also be a good way of setting out the ‘reasonable expectations’ people in the business could have of IC – and would arguably give communicators a stronger platform from which to push back on decisions. Training was also seen as being of use by A, B and C – although it was rejected by D on the basis that, as already discussed, they knew what was right and wrong – while both A and C advocated the idea of group forums where problems or issues could be discussed.

**Recommendations**

Three recommendations arise from the research. They are:

1) That HMRC draws up a code of ethics for internal communicators. This would set out expectations of IC’s role and provide a standard platform upon which ethical decisions can be made and dilemmas debated, giving communicators greater power to push back if placed in an ethically dubious position. To be effective, the code would need to be supported by clear escalation routes, with an agreed conflict resolution process built-in – and would need to be agreed and endorsed by senior leaders.

2) That HMRC reconsiders the training process it has in place for internal communicators, which is currently sporadic. In doing so, some element of ethical training should be included – whether this is through formal study or more informal group experience (see below).

3) That HMRC strengthens its network of communicators, building links between them so they can share experiences and best practice. It is felt this would help improve the level of service provided by IC both generally and in dealing with areas such as ethics, providing a more consistent and thus reliable service – raising the reputation of the profession within the department as a whole.

**Conclusions**

It is clear ethics is a neglected subject for IC in HMRC. Without clear guidance and the necessary skills and frameworks to make clear and transferable judgments, communicators are in danger of being left to wander the ethical maze alone – finding the best route out they can, and making regular use of the path of least resistance.

This is a gap HMRC should look to address, but has wider implications for IC as a profession. IC needs to assess if the lack of consideration of ethics by communicators in the department is case-specific or, suspected by this researcher, industry-wide, and the implications of this answer. More work needs to be done on defining what structures need to be in place to help internal communicators in their everyday work, and in a broader context, what can be done to bolster the skill-set and reputation of IC as a whole. It also needs to debate whether the codes of ethics currently available for its members are sufficient, or whether it wishes to split away from PR and establish its own standards.

A number of topics for further research present themselves. They include:

- Mirroring this research on a broader scale, using both private and public sector organisations to see whether the findings differ.
• Looking at the links between persuasion and distrust of organisational messages in an IC context.
• Carrying out a study of the existing codes of conduct with communicators to assess their usefulness, and perhaps establish a foundation for an IC code.

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The Strategic Role of Internal Communication. Comparing Communication and Management Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Current debate in corporate communication, organizational communication, and public relations literature states that internal communication is vital for organizational management and success. While advocating its strategic role, communication scholars fail to provide a unifying frame of the strategic contribution of internal communication to the organization.

In this paper we argue that the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm, a framework to interpret the strategic role of communication in light of the Entrepreneurial Organization Theory, could be used to evaluate the strategic contribution of internal communication to support organizational decision making processes and to drive organizational success. According to this paradigm, the strategic contribution of communication to the organization consists in four dimensions that can be defined as its aligning, energizing, visioning, and constituting activities.

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the pivotal role played by internal communication within each dimension of strategic communication. Adopting the entrepreneurial perspective, we posit that internal communication activities enrich and strengthen the strategic role of communication at various levels, supporting the development of the organization and activating the entrepreneurial élan of employees and managers.
The Strategic Role of Internal Communication. Comparing Communication and Management Perspectives.

Current debate in corporate communication, organizational communication, and public relations literature states that internal communication is vital for organizational management and success (Argenti, 2009; Dolphin, 2005; Kalla, 200; Rapert, Velliquette & Garretson, 2002; Robson & Tourish, 2005; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Yates, 2006). While advocating its strategic role (Argenti, 1998; Argenti, Howell & Beck, 2005; Dolphin, 2005; Forman & Argenti, 2005; Tucker, Meyer & Westerman, 1996), communication scholars fail to provide a unifying frame of the strategic contribution of internal communication to the organization.

In this paper we argue that the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm, a framework to interpret the strategic role of communication in light of the Entrepreneurial Organization Theory (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2011), could be used to evaluate the strategic contribution of internal communication to support organizational decision making processes and to drive organizational success.

This conceptual paper aims at describing and evaluating the pivotal role of internal communication and, in doing so, at further developing the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm.

In this paper, firstly, we briefly recall the major features of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm; secondly, we present the main contribution of internal communication and we evaluate it in relation to each dimension of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm. Finally, we discuss to what extent internal communication is strategic and plays a pivotal role within the entrepreneurial communication activities in supporting organizational governance and contributing to organizational success.

The Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm

A growing number of communication and management scholars have been theorizing on the institutionalisation of the strategic role of communication within organizations (Gregory, 2008; Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Varčič & Sriramesh, 2007; Invernizzi, Muzi Falconi & Romenti, 2009; Lurati & Eppler, 2006; Zerfass & Huck, 2007). Today the field of inquiry of strategic communication appears rich, broad, multidisciplinary albeit highly fragmented due to the multiplicity of management and organizational perspectives to which authors refers.

The Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm (ECP) attempts at integrating these fragmented perspectives in a unifying framework. The model underpins four components of strategic communication which have been singled out on the basis of the Entrepreneurial Organization Theory (EOT) (Alvarez & Barney, 2004; Burns, 2005; Busenitz et al., 2003; Bygrave, 1989; Dew, Ramakrishna & Venkataraman, 2004; Foss & Klein, 2005; Ireland, Hitt & Sirmon, 2003), which offers a unique conceptual framework to combine the endogenous and exogenous perspectives of the theories of the firm applied to communication (Gregory, Invernizzi & Romenti, 2010).

According to the ECP, the strategic contribution of communication to the organization consists in four roles/dimensions that can be defined as its aligning, energizing, visioning, and constituting activities.

The Aligning dimension of strategic communication includes environmental scanning and boundary spanning activities, as well as the bridging and engaging ones. Entrepreneurial studies say that strategic decisions are modelled by continuous gate-keeping activity (McFadzean, O’Loughlin & Shaw, 2005). Thanks to its boundary spanning function, corporate communication holds a privileged position for observing and interpreting the context in which an organization operates (White & Varčič, 2005). The monitoring and interpretation of the on-going dynamics in environmental scanning stimulates management to formulate strategies and processes aligned with the on-going dynamics in the company social context and with the most relevant expectations of stakeholders. This facilitates the progressive legitimisation of the company in its environment, which is a necessary condition in maintaining its long-term licence to operate (Steyn, 2007) and developing supportive networks of stakeholders, which are one of the major drivers of entrepreneurial activity (Butler, Brown & Charnomnram, 2003). Entrepreneurship needs social interaction in order to generate support from others and to shape and develop new ideas (Sadler-Smith, Hampson, Chaston, & Badger, 2003). Assuming an approach of this type means building bridges between the organization and its most vital stakeholders, as well as activating and facilitating their participation and involvement. So beyond boundary spanning and environmental scanning, the Aligning dimension includes bridging with and engaging the most important stakeholders, developing solid symmetric relations and long-lasting partnerships with them (Grunig, 2001; Ledingham, & Bruning, 2000; Ni, 2006).

The Energising component deals with the role of communication in stimulating organizational partners’ orientation to innovation and in the creation of collaborative networks to drive innovation through the combination of existing resources, the development of capabilities and the spread of knowledge. Strategic communication supports management in reassuring stakeholders regarding changes due to innovation, supplying adequate information, and listening to what happens in the organisational context (Zerfass & Huck, 2007). Successful organizations should be innovation-driven and entrepreneurial studies stress how orientation to innovation is important in using resources, competences and capabilities in innovative ways and in promoting individual entrepreneurial behaviours (Echols & Neck, 1998). The Energizing dimension of communication transmits an innovative spirit to all organizational partners, stimulating them and giving them room for expression. As the efficacy of decision making increases proportionally to the number of participating members (Knights,1997) strategic decisions should be rooted in the interchange between the organization and its most important interlocutors, rather than being defined only
autonomously by the dominant coalition (Stroh, 2007). Successful implementation of strategies is a product of involving people all throughout the organization (Morris & Kuratko, 2002; Morris, Kuratko, & Schindehutte, 2001). Communication therefore has the aim of rendering organizational partners responsible by virtue of their being of key importance in implementing innovative processes (Dougherty, 1996) and communication professional activists should concentrate more on facilitating rather than on managing communication.

The Visioning dimension of communication concerns the definition and diffusion of corporate mission, strategies and guiding values in order to envision and to share a common vision of the future, as well as to deliver coherent messages. Entrepreneurial organization studies highlight the transformative and visionary role performed by management in modelling corporate strategies and in creating a meaningful vision around organizational projects (Gupta, MacMillan & Surie, 2004). In this regard the communication activity focuses on what to communicate in order to obtain the desired effect (Stroh, 2007). So Visioning means communicating the decisions regarding strategic company choices in order to channel collective energy towards common goals consistent with company mission and guiding values. Strategic communication activities are essential in shaping a single, clear company position in the minds of its stakeholders as well as in developing a solid long-term reputation (Cornelissen, 2008). The Visioning dimension corresponds to the enabling role of communication (Zerfass, 2008), which means that communication facilitates the implementation of company decisions. In order to do so the CCO follows the actual decisional momentum and exercises influence on the ways in which decisions are communicated and carried out. This means knowing how to unfold innovative potential in an organisation, to overcome critical obstacles, and to resolve any opposition through constant search for commitment on the part of key stakeholders (Howell, & Higgins, 1990).

The Constituting dimension of strategic communication refers to the enactment of competitive environment and organizational settings through communicative activities and the sense-making processes of organizational stakeholders. As opportunities become real in the creative mind of the entrepreneur (Zander, 2007), the entrepreneurial attitude of the organization is closely tied to the ability to activate, build, and re-invent the organizational competitive scenario (Gupta et al., 2004) on the basis of the individual interpretations of the reality (Daft, & Weick, 1994; Weick 1995). The role of communication in sense-making processes consists of pin-pointing in advance the communicative aspects of decisions taken, of the strategic options the organization has at its disposal, and of the specific strategic objectives. So thanks to the inclusion of communication in the dominant coalition, the process of sense-making gains a more complete and articulated outlook. Communication becomes something more than an infrastructural component of the business. It feeds the decisional process, influencing its contents through the reflective activity of the analysis and interpretation of the competitive and organizational context. The constitutive component plays a crucial role in the definition of the communicative aspects of decisions, completing the different ways in which communication contributes significantly to the corporate decision making process.

In figure 1 the Strategic Communication Paradigm is represented. The model synthesizes the roles of the strategic communication activities in supporting the organizational decision making processes. Each dimension of strategic communication is related to its corresponding dimension of the Entrepreneurial Organization Theory. The comparison between the communication and the EOT dimensions allow us to show the role that each component of strategic communication exercises in creating competitive advantage and in contributing to the success of the firm.

The four dimensions are not related to each other because each dimension must be evaluated by itself and because there is no starting point where the support of strategic communication to organizational decision making begins. Instead, as entrepreneurial organization theory and practice suggest, an entrepreneurial idea and activity can start from any phase or dimension of strategic communication and continue, following different paths.

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**Figure 1.** The Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm and its underlying dimensions from the Entrepreneurial Organization Theory (adapted from Invernizzi & Romenti, 2011).
The Strategic Role of Internal Communication in Entrepreneurial Perspective

On the basis of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm previously described, in the following sections we analyze and discuss the strategic role of internal communication comparing its most important contents with the four dimensions of strategic communication.

Adopting the entrepreneurial perspective we argue that internal communication enriches and strengthens the strategic role of communication at several levels. In the Aligning dimension, internal communication concerns the internal scanning of individual decisions and actions, and the engagement of the employees as co-decisional partners. Within the Energizing dimension, internal communication holds a crucial role in stimulating innovation, in mobilizing intrapreneurialism and in empowering employees. Next, the Visioning dimension of internal communication deals with the fine-tuning of employees with the organizational mission, especially through leadership communication, and the coordination of the discretionary initiatives of the organizational members. Finally, the Constituting dimension relates to the role of internal communication in the co-construction of the organizational reality and in the cast enactment of supportive employee work teams.

In figure 2 the strategic contribution of internal communication to each dimension of the ECP is presented.

Figure 2. Internal communication activities in the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm.

Aligning through scanning and engagement

The creation of adequate internal communication flows enables middle and top managers to take more informed decisions thanks to the internal scanning of individual decisions and actions and the reflective role of communication. Internal symmetrical information flows and feedback allow the exchange of more accurate information genuinely linked to local situations between managers and employees (Shockley-Zalaback, 2009). While the diffusion of internal messages ensures that everybody in the organization knows company goals, the establishment of symmetrical internal communication networks allows everybody to speak out and to be listened to (Cornelissen, 2008; van Riel et al., 2009). Internal communication is not just the broadcaster of top management strategic directions, rather it gives voice to the micro-decisions and actions actually undertaken by organizational members. In this way internal scanning allows top managers to get in touch with the actual dynamics in the organizational context at the three levels. Inside the organization, internal scanning activity, for instance through climate analysis and organizational audits, draws an accurate picture of the evolution of the internal social reality. It also informs managers about the proper functioning of the productive processes by asking and listening to people actually involved. This allows managers to prevent and eventually correct inefficiencies and avoid bottlenecks which may impair organizational activities. Finally, with regard to the external environment, internal scanning allows us to observe and interpret the context outside the organization on the basis of the perceptions held by organizational members, which means strengthening and enriching the organizational glance on its competitive environment with the perspectives of people who are actually in touch with organizational key stakeholders, such as clients and suppliers. The communication activity that we called Aligning, therefore, involves a two-way process: it is not just a matter of shaping employee behavior according to management prescriptions and rationale, but it urges management to take employee opinions seriously (van Riel et al., 2009) and to include them in their intended strategy through continuous listening activity.

Decision making processes do not happen in isolation far from individuals. Strategy can be effectively carried out only with the engagement of organizational members at large, integrating human capital considerations into strategic management processes (Boswell, Bingham & Colvin, 2006), which means engaging and involving people in strategic dialogue from the beginning, before strategic decisions are taken. In this way, people feel they are actually participating in decision making. As the outcomes of strategic decisions arise from collective actions, internal communication guarantees the consistency of those actions over time, supporting the mutual adjustment among actors through continuous conjoint evaluation of the strategic options and of the outcome of actual decisions and actions. Alignment does not happen in retrospect, it is rather an iterative process as engaged employees tend to spontaneously perform convergent behaviours. Due to the critical role of the human agency, employees become co-decisional partners of paramount importance for the organization to engage and motivate (Argenti, 1998). Internal communication supports the establishment and maintenance of internal networks of
mutual trust in which people are spontaneously willing to cooperate, to express their opinion, and to negotiate priorities. In Aligning, the key role of internal communication is, therefore, the creation of symmetrical frequent interactions (Dolphin, 2005; Welch & Jackson, 2007) and of positive exchange relationships (Boswell, 2006) upon which a trustworthy partnership between the organization and its members can be built. Strong interpersonal relationships among managers and employees (Jo & Shim, 2005; Röttger, & Voss, 2008) are the key to transforming employees into ambassadors of commitment to organizational goals (Argenti & Forman, 2004) and, in turn, to themselves being a source of sustained competitive advantage (Colvin & Boswell, 2007).

Within the Aligning dimension of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm, internal communication participates mainly in bridging and engaging activities, addressing, in particular, the relationship with the internal stakeholders (employee engagement). Although environmental scanning and boundary spanning typically address the analysis of the environment outside the organization, internal communication helps corporate communication to include specialized and localized information and knowledge held by organizational members in its monitoring and interpretation of the environment (internal scanning). In this way internal communication helps the organization to act successfully as a cohesive whole.

Energizing internal stakeholders
As competitive advantage should stem from “the hearts and minds of employees” (Quirke, 1996:71), the creative and intellectual potential held by people in the organization is the core asset to build competitive differentiation and success. Unlocking the knowledge capital and the innovation potential encapsulated in employees has thus become a critical factor of success in today’s competitive environment. Communication scholars ascribe this task to internal communication, namely to the specialized services of knowledge, learning and innovation communication (Dolphin, 2005; Kalla, 2005; Lurati & Eppler, 2006; Zerfass, 2005; Zerfass & Huck, 2007). Internal communication can no longer be a mere information carrier since the transfer of objective information is just a taken for granted premise to the strategic processes of learning and knowledge creation. Rather knowledge communication is a “deliberate activity of interactively conveying and co-constructing insights, assessments, experiences, or skills” (Lurati & Eppler, 2006: 85), which aims at creating new insights, at embedding this advancement into actions, and, therefore, at developing new capabilities to compete successfully (van Riel et al., 2009). Orientation to learning is more than a trial and error activity which happens by chance; it is rather a precise attitude which is distinctive of “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together” (Senge 1990: 3). Internal communication takes on a crucial role as an incentive to renewal mechanisms, promoting learning activities and high performances. Organizational learning is about interacting with others, both cooperating and competing with them “to get one’s own learning heard” (Weick & Ashford, 2001: 727).

Internal communication plays a strategic role in mobilizing intrapreneurialism and empowering people to share their tacit knowledge, to work in teams, and to change the way in which they get things done according to environmental shifts. New knowledge crops up from interactions among individuals and the dialectic between tacit and explicit knowledge. So the spider web of internal communication flows should continuously redesign and enhance new connections among cross-functional and self-organizing creative teams, fostering the social processes which are the locus of learning and knowledge combination. As individuals differ in their ability to create and sense opportunities for innovation, internal communication should support innovative team leaders in developing and strengthening their charismatic authority to coordinate people's efforts in breaking through crystallized routines, in recognizing the value of innovation, and in assimilating it into day-to-day activities. In order to do so internal communication should support the creation of an organizational climate and environment which actually enables people to interact, to enrich their expertise, and to embrace open innovation (Zerfass, 2005; Zerfass & Huck, 2007). As people are central in innovating and transferring knowledge, the challenge for internal communication is to find a balance between transmitting previously codified knowledge, and empowering people to become the process owner of their jobs, stimulating them to accomplish their tasks in the best possible way and to learn how to face changing conditions without remaining stuck in inefficient routines.

In the Energizing dimension of the ECP, internal communication is the pivotal element around which the strategic role of entrepreneurial communication revolves. In this case internal communication does not just feed some specific ECP activities; rather it covers all the functions of strategic communication within the Energizing dimension. Energizing thus means using internal communication to mobilize people to initiate change rather than to adapt to it; to encourage employees to drive innovation processes rather than to simply accept innovation; to channel people’s efforts to create and combine new knowledge rather than to merely transfer what has been already codified. Internal communication is the key process by which employees are empowered to expand their role in that way (Campbell, 2000; Zerfass & Huck, 2007) and to become “proactive individuals, highly involved and committed as independent contributors with initiative and a well developed sense of responsibility” (Campbell, 2000: 52).

Visioning and leadership
Inside the organization, effective internal communication feeds the fine tuning among employees and the organization, connecting them to a company’s strategy and vision (Argenti & Forman, 2004: 46), diffusing the organizational mission statement (Cheney & Christensen, 2001), and supplying employees with information about the company’s evolving aims (Welch & Jackson,
2007). Internal communication is the carrier of corporate mission, history, culture and values, which are embodied in the ongoing narration of corporate stories (van Riel, 2000; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). These stories incorporate the fundamental values, beliefs and competences originated in the organization and provide a reliable framework to guide organizational actions and behaviours (Larsen, 2000). Internal narratives shape employees’ mindset, providing them with a common line of sight on organization objectives (Boswell, 2006) and creating a positive sense of belonging (Welch & Jackson, 2007) and identification in the organization (Smidts, Pruyn & van Riel, 2001) as a unified body. In this regard internal communication forges the mental programming of the mind (Hofstede, 1991) of organizational members, thus helping them reconcile the potential conflict among personal and corporate goals. The frequent and constant broadcast of the content of strategy to everybody in the organization supports managers in getting employees on their side (Dolphin, 2005) and in disseminating the seeds of consensus and cooperation required to implement strategy (Rapert et al., 2002).

Managers retain a crucial role in motivating employees through leadership communication, which creates a voice for management decisions (Huebner, Varey & Wood, 2008) and explains the rationale behind strategy (van Riel et al., 2009) to organizational members at large. The kind and style of leadership communication carried out by managers and employee supervisors is a core determinant of the nature of the relationships developed between management and its staff and a key driver of employee willingness to contribute to organizational objectives and to get involved in decision making processes (Robson & Tourish, 2005). CEOs and senior leaders are the primary visionaries of corporate strategy, so the communication of corporate mission and vision should necessarily start from them (Argenti & Forman, 2004). Being a transformational leader requires the commitment of managers to engage in a communication process which raises the aspirations of their followers according to the leader’s own visions (Zerfass & Huck, 2007: 114) and thus influences people shaping their mind (Hamrefors, 2010). Leadership communication serves as orientation mechanism (Mast & Huck, 2008); more specifically, internal messages from leaders communicate a special perspective on the future of the organization which instils higher ideals, trust, admiration, loyalty, and the willingness to make exceptional efforts into organizational members (Campbell, 2000: 54). In this way, internal communication not only disseminates the corporate vision, but also promotes a process of internal transformation committing individuals to act in a way that fulfills leaders’ visionary aspirations.

This reminds us that Visioning is more than shaping employee mindset according to the company mission; it is also about taking advantage of employees’ initiatives coordinating individual discretionary behaviours in a way that fosters strategic decision attainment. Nowadays, the added value of employee-contributions to the organization resides in their capacity to spontaneously take initiatives that contribute to the implementation of strategy (van Riel, Berens & Dijkstra, 2009). Organizations which impose strict and narrow prescriptions of tasks (Colvin & Boswell 2007) on their employees dismiss the potential value encapsulated in their actions. In order to take advantage of employee autonomous behaviours as one of the most valuable assets (Argenti, 1998; Argenti & Forman, 2004), from which competitive advantage stems, the organization needs on the one hand to coordinate and drive its members toward its goals; on the other hand to allow them to freely express their potential (Cornelissen, 2008), finding the proper balance between the organizational coordination-control stance and the individual call for autonomy and creativity (Cornelissen, 2008).

In the Visioning dimension, internal communication starts from leadership communication to shape the collective frame of mind and the attitude of organizational members, trying both to make them know the content of the mission statement and to instil in them the visionary mood to carry it out successfully. In relation to the ECP, internal communication makes a crucial contribution tuning in the minds of internal stakeholders with company objectives and coordinating their initiatives in order to guarantee consistency with organizational mission. This represents a critical prerequisite for entrepreneurial communication to play its strategic role in shaping company position and reputation, and in enabling the implementation of company decisions.

**Constituting internal context**

The Constituting dimension reminds us that organizations are not an objective a priori structure where communication simply occurs (Rapert et al., 2002); rather they are intersubjectively co-constructed through communication exchanges. Communication scholars (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Kuhn, 2008; Putnam & Nicotera, 2010; Taylor, 2009) posit that communication is a synonym of organizing. In this way, they recognize the constitutive power of communication. In other words, organizations are complex symbolic interpretive systems (Hatch & Schultz, 2000), basically made up of interpersonal networks of sensemaking (Jo & Shim, 2005) and of sequences of communication acts linked to actions (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). Inside the organization a multitude of communication flows participates in the enactment of the internal environment through the construction of the internal reality, the negotiation of membership rights, the structuring and the coordination of actors’ roles inside the organization (McPhee & Zaugg, 2009; Taylor, 2009). The organization does not exist until its members intersubjectively co-construct a shared framework of meaning about the organization itself and their roles (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983).

The management of meaning, therefore, becomes a critical activity for organization leaders (Zerfass & Huck, 2007). The Constituting dimension highlights that internal communication exchanges are the locus and the means by which impression management efforts are carried out to influence and guide actions inside the organization (Ginzel, Kramer & Sutton, 1993). Internal communication networks assist managers in the cast enactment of supportive work teams, which means gathering and mobilizing “a supporting cast of participants who become committed by the vision to the discovery and exploitation of strategic value creation” (Gupta et al., 2004, p.242).
Since the creation of a cast of supporters is vital for the enactment of the managers’ vision, building a supportive workforce has become critical for the organization to attain success (Colvin & Boswell 2007; De Ridder, 2004) and to reach the future position envisioned by its leaders. Internal communication flows support the co-orientation of meanings generated in the interactions among individuals (Taylor, 2009). In this way, communication exchanges produce a collective identity for the employee cast and a common organizational plot in which people perform their activities on the basis of a shared interpretation of organizational vision. As organizational actors rely on their interpretation of reality to coordinate and control their own and others’ activities (Kuhn, 2008), these interpretations have the performative capacity to turn communication statements into real actions (Huebner et al., 2008) and therefore to mobilize supporters’ commitment.

According to the ECP, communication plays an important role in highlighting the communicative implications of decisions taken, giving voice to communication at the table of decisions and leading the enactment process of competitive context. Internal communication feeds these activities, sustaining the enactment processes at lower levels in the organizations and driving organizational members’ interpretive efforts towards a shared understanding of the organization, its objectives, and its decisions.

Final Remarks
The main objective of this paper is has been to discuss how important and pivotal the role played by internal communication within strategic communication is.

In communication and management literature the importance of strategic communication in supporting the governance of organizations and in achieving their goals and success has been widely studied and proved.

In the introductory section of this paper we have reproposed the main dimensions of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm, which shows how deeply strategic communication supports the entrepreneurial development of organizations (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2011).

In the central section of the article we have developed our main objective, which consists in showing how pivotal the role of internal communication within organizational strategic communication is. To do so, we have analyzed and discussed the most important initiatives of internal communication related to each dimension (Aligning, Energizing, Visioning and Constituting) of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm.

In the Aligning dimension, internal communication activities help the organization to keep in touch with actual ongoing dynamics in the organizational context and, therefore, to take better informed decisions. On the one hand, internal scanning allows managers to collect specialized and localized information and opinions; on the other hand, internal stakeholder engagement sustains the inclusion of organizational members’ perspectives in strategic decisions. In this way, managers pave the way to decision acceptance in advance and thus facilitate their attainment.

In the Energizing dimension, the internal communication activities are carried out so as to channel people energy towards innovation, instilling intrapreneurial élan to initiate change and embrace innovation. Employee empowerment, knowledge creations, learning processes and innovation dynamics, therefore, become crucial in transforming organizational members into proactive entrepreneurs.

In the Visioning dimension, internal communication not only disseminates the contents of company mission, but, most of all, takes on the responsibility of tuning in employees to organizational mission, vision and strategy. The development of a strong awareness of the leaders’ communicative role is required to lead this visioning process. While managers communicate their special vision of the future to employees, internal communication helps coordinate organizational member initiatives.

In the Constituting dimension, internal communication operates at a twofold level. Communicative acts of organizational members co-construct the reality inside the organization and, in turn, the organization itself. Sensemaking and meaning making activities allow managers to guide the interpretive processes of people inside the organization, thus facilitating the cast enactment of teams of supportive employees.

We conclude this first step, which of course needs to be further tested both conceptually and empirically, by analyzing the strategic role of internal communication. By examining the evolution of internal communication, we can state that in the last years it has progressed from a simple informative function to being a complex meaning creator and proactive behaviour activator. We argue that, on the basis of what we have seen in each dimension of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm, internal communication supports the growth of two main organizational driving forces within organizations. All the internal communication activities are actually focused to develop a common vision of the company and of its strategy and, at the same time, to increase innovation and micro-entrepreneurship among employees, which means that internal communication plays a central role within the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm, both supporting development as well as activating auto-entrepreneurship of employees and managers.
References


When change and crisis communication goes hand in hand: Towards a local processual co-worker perspective in internal communication

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KEY WORDS: change communication, crisis communication, internal communication, co-workers, leadership, social media

INTRODUCTION

Change and crisis processes are often considered as two distinct phenomena and has also evolved as two separate research fields. This paper, however, takes its starting point in the assumption that there are important relations between crises and changes – especially from an internal communication perspective and focusing on sensemaking processes. Maitlis and Sonnenshein (2010) argue that “both are often situations characterized by ambiguity, confusion, and feelings of disorientation” (p. 552). Changes as well as crises can be seen as threatening, evoking strong emotions of fear and anxiety. Weick (1993) calls such situations cosmology episodes, i.e. when someone unexpectedly do not know what to do or how to handle a situation. In today’s complex society co-workers have to deal with unexpected situations on a more or less daily basis (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). “The unexpected” can be catastrophes such as the recent tsunami in Japan, the rise of a new competitor with an innovative technology, a fusion between two organizations or internal changes such as the implementation of new core values. These and similar situations, which are characterized by a high degree of ambiguity, evoke the question of “what’s the story?” among co-workers and trigger sensemaking and communication processes in order to make sense of the situation and lay the foundation for actions. Accordingly, the foundation of this paper is that both organizational crises and changes are situations that initiate co-workers’ sensemaking processes and communication.

If we turn to leading scholars’ definitions of crisis, we can also see the close relation between a crisis and a change process. Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger (2007, p. 7) define a crisis as a “specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty or are perceived to threaten an organization's high-priority goals”. Further, Weick (1988, p. 305) points
out that crises are characterized by: “[…] low probability/high consequence events that threaten the most fundamental goals of an organization. Because of their low probability, these events defy interpretations and impose severe demands on sensemaking.” Both references stress the treat to organizational goals, which appears as a contrast to planned changes that aim to enhance goal achievement. However, from a co-worker perspective, major organizational changes may be experienced as a threat to work identity, to career development, and so on. It should also be noted that in both change and crisis situations co-workers often have to change their practices and re-enact the social constructed environment. Further, these two situations entail great communicative challenges for an organization and its co-workers. Following the meta-theory of “communication is constitutive of organizing” (CCO) (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Putnam & Nicotera, 2010) that grounds the role of communication in the ontology of organization, it is clear that communication is not only an important tool to handle crises and changes, but it is essentially in the communication processes that crises as well as changes are constituted (cf. Deetz & McClellan, 2009).

Since many planned organizational change processes and crisis management efforts have failed, researchers have searched for alternative perspectives. Nowadays, there is an increasing interest in understanding changes as well as crises as emergent, local processes. And more and more often changes and crises are seen as open, continuous and unpredictable processes with no clear beginnings or ends. This alternative perspective focuses not solely on management and managers, but puts rather co-workers and their sensemaking processes and actions in the limelight (Heide & Simonsson, forthcoming 2011). However, the perspective of co-workers are often neglected in strategic communication (including internal communication) research, notwithstanding that the outcomes of both organization crises and changes are direct effects of co-worker’s interpretation, sensemaking and (re-)actions. Particularly crisis communication scholars, who primarily have focused on external publics, have neglected co-workers and other aspects of internal communication. An exception of the rule is Karl E. Weick’s (Vroom & Weick, 1967; Weick, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1998a, 2000, 2010, 2011; Weick & Quinn, 1999; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007) research on crises and changes. Weick has focused on the cognition, perception and sensemaking process in crisis situations, but he has not explicitly put communication in the centre. Albeit recently, some researchers (cf. Selnow, Veil, & Streifel, 2010; Taylor, 2010) have pointed out the need for more research on internal crisis communication in order to develop the field. We strongly believe that there is a close relation between the fields of crisis communication and change communication, when they are understood from a local, emergent or late modern perspective (cf. Mattlis & Sonenshein, 2010). This encompasses an interest in co-workers and an understanding of co-workers’ contribution to the overall result of an organization.

The aim of this paper is, firstly, to discuss and elucidate the relationship between the two research fields of change communication and crisis communication. Secondly, the aim is to propose a theoretical framework for research on internal communication in uncertain and ambiguous situations (i.e. crisis and change). This theoretical framework will draw on an emergent, processual perspective on change and crisis, which puts co-worker communication and sensemaking processes in the centre. A processual perspective gives better prerequisites to understand a complex and chaotic organizational reality with resistance, misunderstandings, power struggle, different meanings and goals, and so forth (cf. Balogun, 2006; Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001). In the next section, we discuss differences and similarities in crisis and change research. An episodic, phase-oriented perspective is contrasted towards an emergent, continuous perspective. After this, we develop some theoretical implications of the latter perspective for internal communication. Taking the emergent, continuous perspective on change and crisis as our starting point, we discuss some theoretical ideas about vertical and horizontal communication processes in uncertain and ambiguous situations.

Change and crisis as controllable, episodic events

From a philosophy of science perspective, the functionalistic perspective has been dominating the fields of both change and crisis communication (Falkheimer & Heide, 2006; Johansson & Heide, 2008). In this perspective organizations are understood as close-coupled and rational systems; communication is seen as a relatively uncomplicated transmission process; and change and crisis processes are reified and believed to follow certain firm stages. Further, in the functionalistic perspective there has been a general mythologization of leadership and a strong tendency to perceive leaders as “Supermen” that can rule more or less willing followers (cf. Tourish, 2008). Leaders are thus believed to have potential and resources to predict, plan and control organizational processes.

Both changes and crises have traditionally been portrayed as linear phenomena, developing through distinct phases. As concerns change research, the dominant view suggests that changes are episodic, discontinuous, infrequent and intentional (Alvesson & Svenningson, 2008; Johansson & Heide, 2008; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Changes appear as management-driven programmes that are to be carried out during a set time period. The programmes develop through general phases such as the three steps of unfreezing, changing and refreezing in Lewin’s (1951) well-known model. Changes are further seen as dramatic or revolutionary where the organization goes from one state of affairs to another (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

The hub of this kind of change is the management team and the initiatives taken in that group. People are often assumed to have an inherent unwillingness to change and, consequently, there is a strong focus on how to overcome inertia and resistance (Dent & Galloway Goldberg, 1999; Ford, Ford, & McNamara, 2002). The remedy to this problem is often named communication: carefully planned communication processes and convincing messages about an attractive future will make employees motivated, engaged and willing to implement the change. Openness and involvement are seen as important communication principles (e.g. Kotter, 1996), but too often as
a means of overcoming resistance rather than as a means of creating learning, understanding or a participatory process (Balogun, 2006; Simonsson, 2008). Johansson and Heide (Johansson & Heide) argues that “communication is reduced to a tool for declaration and explanation of the planned change, often with a focus on the ‘what, when, who, and how’, and as a way to transport organizational members’ feedback of their attitudes and feelings” (p. 292).

Turning to crisis research, we often find the same notion of episodic events. Crises are seen as occurring in distinct time periods with some firm phases and a clear beginning and end. The basic phases are the pre-crisis phase, the crisis or the acute phase, and the post-crisis phase (Heath, 2010). The acute phase, i.e. the period after the crisis has occurred, has received most attention from both scholars and practitioners (Falkheimer, Heide, & Larsson, 2009; Heath, 2010). As a consequence, the focus has been on “damage control” and other reactive activities rather than prevention and proactive activities (Kent, 2010). Just like in the case of episodic change research, communication is primarily seen as a tool. Skilful and carefully planned communication is supposed to mitigate the effects of crises and the organization’s reputation will be restored. When it comes to pre-crisis communication the main focus is on how to plan and prepare for the actions once the crisis has occurred – rather than on how to identify, interpret and react on “warning signals” at an early stage (i.e. prevention of crises). It should also be mentioned that episodic crisis research is heavily sender-oriented and crises tend to be treated from the standpoint of the organization rather than from the standpoint of the organization’s stakeholders (Kent, 2010). A sender-orientation in a crisis situation often means a manager-orientation, which is another point of similarity with the traditional view of changes.

Behind the notion of separate, sequential phases is a rationalistic idea that the change/crisis process and its results are possible to predict, plan and control. In recent years, there has been an increasing criticism towards this rationalistic view within both change and crisis research. For instance, Beer and Nohria (2000) argue that 70 per cent of all planned change projects fail to reach their set goals. Along similar lines, crisis communication researchers have argued that too much focus on planning can do more harm than good since it can cause organizations to become locked into fixed routines and acting (Falkheimer & Heide, 2010).

**Change and crisis as emergent, local processes**

Partly as a response to the critique towards the rationalistic approach, there is a call for a processual, emergent perspective (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; Andrew, Richard, & Kim, 2001; Falkheimer & Heide, 2010) focusing on change and crises as continuous and unpredictable process in need of improvisation rather than detailed planning. Within this alternative perspective, changes are considered as evolving gradually during a longer time period without a clear beginning and end (Weick & Quinn, 1999). While the focus on episodic, planned changes is linked to the notion of stability being the “natural” condition, scholars who focus on changes as emergent see constant changes as the norm (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; Peirano-Vejo & Stablein, 2009). The emergent, discontinuous view does not reject the value of strategies and plans, but argue that we often tend to exaggerate their impetus. By means of plans, senior managers can initiate and influence the direction of change, but not control or foresee all outcomes. Thus, plans do not work as a simple stimulus, but are modified, reinterpreted and changed – often in an unpredictable way (Balogun, 2006). Change is thus considered as a process in which sensemaking has a key role. How organization members interpret and make sense of the changes will have consequences for their actions and, hence, the outcome of the change process. This means that co-workers and their feelings, experiences and interpretations are put in the centre rather than senior managers’ decisions and plans. If co-workers cannot make sense of the change plans and act accordingly, there will be no change. From this follows a focus on micro processes and local interpretations, which increases our understanding of the pluralism of feelings, attitudes and experiences prevailing in times of change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

As concerns crises, it would perhaps be an exaggeration, to claim that crises – in similarity with changes – are ubiquitous or continuous phenomena. Though several researchers advocate that crises are not to be seen as distinct, punctual events, but rather as complex, integrated, processual phenomena (Falkheimer & Heide, 2010; Johansen & Frandsen, 2007). Whereas traditional crisis researchers regard crises as isolated events that are either on or off, and focuses on the acute phase, the emergent perspective puts attention to the whole process and the dynamics of the crisis. By inspiration from chaos theory, crises are seen as caused by a number of small, interrelated events, more often related to complex systemic aspects rather than single events or individuals (i.e. scapegoats) (Bechler, 2004; Kersten, 2005; Sellnow, Seeger, & Ulmer, 2002).

Advocators of the emergent perspective further argue that the complexity of today’s reality, means that it is more or less impossible to plan and foresee everything. Each crisis situation is unique, which means that organization members cannot rely on a pre-written plan, but must be able to improvise, make situated decisions and try different actions (Falkheimer & Heide, 2010; Falkheimer, et al., 2009). Whereas improvisation is linked to flexibility and adaptation, it does not mean that it is a totally random and spontaneous process. Weick (1998b, p. 546) argues that effective improvisation requires both depth of experience and “a simple melody that provides the pre-text for real-time composing”. Translated to crisis management, it means that it is important with training for a variety of crisis situations. It also means that we need a flexible plan that provides a basic beat and which we can start with and return to in improvising (Falkheimer & Heide, 2010). As concerns communication actors, the focus on local micro processes directs attention towards co-workers and their important communication role before, during and after a crisis. Co-workers are in the middle of the operational business, and hence, they have the possibilities to identify weak signals at an early stage (cf. Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). During a crisis, it is often co-workers who have direct contact with different stakeholders, and consequently, they are important ambas-
As indicated, the emergent, local perspective does not reduce communication to a tool to mitigate the effects of a crisis. In line with a social constructionist approach, communications is rather seen as having a constituting role: “social reality is constituted through the words, symbols and actions that members invoke (Putnam, 1983, p. 40; see also Taylor & Van Every, 2011). Of course, a natural disaster such as a tsunami is not to be seen as a social construction, but possible institutional image crises following in the wake of it, is a social construction. Several individuals and groups may also experience the same disaster, but interpret it totally different – due to, for instance, previous experiences and access to different kinds of information.

**No clear-cut differences between changes and crises**

As shown in the above discussion, it is possible to discern two broad theoretical approaches – the episodic and the emergent – within both change and crisis research, which have much in common. The basic tenets of these two approaches are summarized in the table below.

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Table 1: Two different perspectives on change and crisis

In the following sections, we will discuss some implications of the local, emergent perspective for internal communication during ambiguous and uncertain situations. The following sections will include two basic themes – vertical communication referring to communication between managers and employees, and horizontal communication referring to communication among employees, either within a work group or across organizational boundaries. Of course, there are no sharp lines between vertical and horizontal communication. It could for example be argued that information and actions from top management often is the topic of informal conversations among employees. Even so, we think the distinction serves as a way to structure and clarify some crucial aspects of a theoretical framework for internal communication in uncertain and ambiguous situations.

**Vertical communication processes – communication between leaders and co-workers**

There is a widespread faith in leadership in today’s society, and leaders have become our modern heroes (Alvesson & Spicer, 2010; Sims, 2010). Times of turbulence and uncertainty tend to give even more fuel to our faith in effective leaders. The crisis management scholars Ulmer, Sellnow and Seeger (2011, p. 64) argue that we sometimes expect our leaders to be “superhuman in their abilities to solve problems and create positive outcomes”. In the following sections we will discuss...
the post-heroic leadership perspective that implies a more modest view of leaders. The argument is not that leaders are unimportant, but rather that most leaders are not that heroic and influential as we often expect them to be. We will also argue that co-workers should be seen as part of and actively involved in the leadership process.

Leadership perspectives

Leadership research has traditionally been oriented towards leaders as individuals; the main focus has been on what leaders think, say and do. Up to the early 1980s, leadership scholars put great efforts in understanding what personal traits, styles and situational variables make the excellent leader (Parry & Bryman, 2006; Strannegård & Jönsson, 2009). In the last few decades, a so-called “new leadership approach” has been developed, which has its primary focus on aspects such as visions, change, symbols, ideas and images (Jackson & Parry, 2008; Parry & Bryman, 2006; Strannegård & Jönsson, 2009). The “new” of this approach consists of a conception of leaders as managers of meaning; leadership is about influencing employees’ ideas and images of what is happening, rather than setting some goals and then controlling for their achievement (Salzer-Mörling, 2009; Smirich, 1983b; Smirich & Morgan, 1982). Language and various symbols are the primary means to manage meaning, and hence, this is a much more communication-oriented perspective than the preceding leadership approaches. Just like previous leadership perspectives however, the new leadership approach maintains the focus on leaders as influential, heroic individuals, whereas co-workers tend to be treated as more or less passive recipients (Simonsson, forthcoming). Put differently, leadership is conceived as a monologic process, which in turn, is associated with a linear, transmission view of communication: leaders/senders transfer meaning through vehicles such as vision, mission and values (Fairhurst, 2001).

In recent years, however, there have been an increasing number of scholars who challenge the myths of powerful and heroic leaders, suggesting a rethinking of leadership as a relational, co-constructed and discursive process (see Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Collinson, 2006; Jackson & Parry, 2008; Tourish, 2008). This alternative perspective – sometimes called post-heroic leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2010; Collinson, 2005) – highlights the more mundane aspects of leadership such as listening, chatting and being cheerful rather than rhetorical speeches and inspiring visions (Sveningssson & Alvesson, 2003). Leadership is further seen as a mutual, collective process rather than a “one-man show”. In line with a social constructionist approach, it is not only leaders, but also co-workers, who manage meaning and contribute to the reality construction that informs the decisions and activities of the group (Fairhurst, 2008; Hosking & Morley, 1991; Sveningssson, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009). Co-workers are thus regarded as active communicators and co-producers of meaning. The monologic view is replaced by a dialogic view (Fairhurst, 2001); which draws attention to how meaning is contested and socially created rather than transferred from manager to subordinate.

As we see it, the episodic view of change and crisis is strongly linked to a heroic view of leadership, whereas the emergent perspective goes hand in hand with a post-heroic leadership perspective. It should be noted however, that there are different versions of the post-heroic perspective, which broadly put can be placed along a continuum (cf. Jackson & Parry, 2008; Simonsson, forthcoming) with two poles. At the one end we find the idea of leadership as a distributed or shared phenomenon, and the relevance of the distinction between leaders and subordinates is questioned. Following this perspective, everyone has the potential to become a leader and almost all actions can be seen as leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2010; Shamir, 2007). However fascinating, it might seem a bit problematic that there seems to be no followers if everyone becomes a leader (Shamir, 2007). This version of post-heroic leadership also tends to neglect the power and other “resources” inherent in a formal management position. At the other end of the continuum, we find a view, which recognizes the importance of formal leaders, but even so regards leadership as a mutual process involving several actors. The formal management position comes with an interpretive prerogative and an expectation to influence interpretations, which gives managers a clear advantage in processes of sense making (Simonsson, 2002). However, in accordance with a meaning-centered, dialogic view of communication, it is argued that organization members’ definition reality is not only a result of leaders’ actions and utterances. Co-workers can make both re-interpretations and counter-interpretations of leaders’ messages, they can influence each other in the sensemaking process and they can also influence their leaders’ sensemaking (Chreim, 2006; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Framing

Unexpected occurrences such as reorganizations, downturns in economy and product failures threaten stability and acts as sense-making triggers. In such situations of uncertainty and ambiguity we tend to move away from a habitual way of making sense to a more reflexive, conscious and active sense-making (Balogun, 2006; Chreim, 2006; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). In an acute crisis situation, there might be a great need of very firm information such as who has the mandate to make a decision or in what order people from a building is to be evacuated. But most of the answers in a change or crisis situation are not obvious, related to some “true” or fixed facts, but is rather of such a complex nature that they must be negotiated in a process of social construction where symbols play a key role. Hence, situations of crisis and change are opportunities where employees actively search for meaning, and what their leaders say and do are often important cues in this sense making process (cf. Deetz, Tracey, & Simpson, 2000).

Framing is described as the most basic process of managing meaning, and usually, it refers to a managerial discursive activity aimed at management of meaning (Chreim, 2006; Deetz, et al., 2000; Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Framing involves the use of language and other symbols to influence how others interpret organizational events. Through language, managers can categorize topics and help their employees find some order, through language focus can be placed on cer-
tain aspects, a situation can be labelled in a certain way and vibrant stories can be created which makes the vague and ambiguous intelligible and meaningful (Deetz, et al., 2000). Framing can also be said to include the aspect of embedding an event or experience into a context. The rise of a new competitor or falling sales figures may be interpreted differently due to the context they are related to. Altogether, this means that framing is not about providing “pure” information, but rather to ennoble or translate information into a meaningful message (Smircich, 1983a).

The question is, however, whether leaders take this role as translators. Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) argue that leaders often miss opportunities to frame or reframe events, to explain the why and consequences of decisions and to secure commitment from employees (cf. also Deetz, et al., 2000). Along similar lines, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008), argue that leadership communication in change processes are too meagre and tend to suffer from symbolic anorexia – managers tend to be too “plain” in their communication, not using symbolic framing devices to any great extent. Managers tend to use abstract and “neutral” words without connecting it to a local context, which easily results in lack of meaning and expressiveness. A richer use of symbols could for instance include the use of stories gathered within the organization, illuminating metaphors, personal examples, or new ways of acting or arranging the communication process in order to underline the core message. However, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) stress the importance of relating symbols to a local context. If the symbols do not have a clear connection to organization practices, they will appear as “empty words” or clichés that easily lead to cynicism and resistance.

However, before leaders can frame or give sense to an unexpected and ambiguous event, they must themselves make sense of it (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). This applies to both an individual and collective level, i.e. each leader must develop their own understanding, but in many cases, leaders at different levels and in different positions also need to develop a common sense-giving strategy. It is not that all leaders should use the same words or ppt-slides, but they need to develop a common core message in order to gain credibility and focus in their communication. As an example, we can mention a company, which launched a new strategy illustrated by a star model taking the form of umbrellas, pyramids, squares and so on. Perhaps needless to say, managers just mechanically repeated the slides; others did not like the star and translated it freely into new models taking the form of umbrellas, pyramids, squares and so on. Perhaps needless to say, there was no strong commitment to the new strategy among the employees, but rather apathy or confusion. This situation could have been avoided if the managers had got the opportunity to have a dialogue and create a collective sense of the strategy, before they were supposed to give sense of it for their employees (cf. Balogun, 2006). Furthermore, the lack of a common picture of a situation, may lead to disparate actions among organization members, which may have devastating effects – especially in times of change or crisis.

### Sensemaking as a reciprocal process

The focus on leadership communication, which aims to direct, inspire and coordinate, should be balanced with a focus on participatory communication through which we create, invent and innovate together (Deetz, et al., 2000). In line with the post-heroic view of leadership discussed above, sensemaking is a reciprocal and interactive process. Peirano-Vejo and Stabilein (2009) argue that “sense-giving is an endogenous activity enmeshed in the on-going sense-making of both sense-givers and receivers” (p. 445). It could be argued that interactive and dialogic sensemaking are especially important in times of uncertainty and ambiguity. Co-workers have often other experiences and closer knowledge of the operations than their managers, which means that their views are necessary to create an adequate interpretation of an ambiguous situation.

Research on change process has however shown, that managers – especially senior managers – have very limited knowledge of what is going in the organization and how their own communication and other events are understood (Alvesson & Sveningson, 2008; Balogun, 2006). A related problem is that employees tend to be quite “generous” with favourable or supportive information, while withholding or distorting negative information – sometimes called the MUM-effect (Coombs, 2012). Deprived of critical communication leaders develop inaccurate perceptions which, in turn, form the basis of their decisions, actions and further communication. According to Larson and King (1996) there are many historical examples such as the Bays of Pig invasion of Cuba and the Vietnam conflict, where critical decisions have been based on false assumptions, supported by misleading information. Tourish and Robson (2006) discusses the same problem and argues the following:

There has been little examination of the sensemaking heuristics employed by both managers and non-managerial staff that stimulates the former to disregard much of the already muted critical upward communication they receive, and the latter to suppress its transmission in the first place (p.711).

Tourish and Robson (2006) further state that we are left with a paradox. On the one hand, today’s organizations suffer from information overload, but on the other hand, there is a strong lack of truthful upward communication. The same authors also claim that supportive voice from co-workers tend to be rewarded and recognized, while the weak flow of dissent voice is met with silence or actions which penalize dissent.

In order to develop more participative and inclusive models of leadership we need to pay close attention to the communicative processes that characterize the relations between leaders and co-workers (Tourish, 2008). We need to focus more on how employees appropriate and misappropriate the framing efforts of leaders (Chreim, 2006) and how co-workers influence their leaders’ sensemaking activities. A more dialogic, participatory approach – in line with the post-
heoric leadership perspective – would stress and illuminate the value of dissent and the role of co-workers in the leadership process (cf. Novak & Sellnow, 2009). It should also be noted that one prominent feature of so called high reliability organizations (HROs) – skilled at mindful signal identification and proactive crisis management – is the encouragement of errors and the prevailing efforts to learn from near misses (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). High reliability organizations such as hospitals and nuclear power plant should thus be important sources for learning more about how to foster critical upward communication. However, even in HROs there might be a culture, which says that it is okay to report some kind of misses and problems, but not others. As an example we can mention Skåne University Hospital, where all employees must report even “near misses” related to patient security, whereas the chairman of the union for medical doctors in a newspaper article, argues that it is not popular to report about negative consequences of the fusion between two hospitals (Strömkvist & Löfqvist, 2010).

**Horizontal communication processes – communication between co-workers**

In the following section we will discuss horizontal communication, i.e. formal and informal communication between co-workers at the same or different hierarchical levels in an organization. Even if this form of communication embraces the majority of all organizational communication, it has not received corresponding interest from scholars. Foremost, scholars have focused on vertical internal communication. Further, we will discuss social media and its potential as an internal horizontal communication channel.

**Organizations are products of communication**

When internal communication is discussed by scholars, it is typically related to exchange processes of information, knowledge, ideas and values within an organization (see e.g. Argenti, 2003; Kalla, 2005). Internal communication is then understood as processes that happen in an objective, stable and already existing organization. Hence, the organization per se is often taken-for-granted and ontological questions are not raised. There seems to be a general tendency of lacking awareness of ontology and epistemology among many scholars within strategic communication/public relation/corporate communications, although the term organization has been discussed since at least the 1970s. In an article from 1974 Karl E. Weick remarks:

> The word, organization, is a noun and it is also a myth. If one looks for an organization one will not find it. What will be found is that there are events, linked together, that transpire within concrete walls and these sequences, their pathways, their timing, are the forms we erroneously make into substances when we talk about an organization. (p. 358).

Weick clearly takes a process perspective on organizations. Also Putnam and Nicotera (2010), who are cofounders of the CCO approach (communicative constitution of organization), take a process perspective but emphasize that organizations are not only products of communication and talk. There is also a material and enduring side of an organization in form of texts, routines, objects, machines, buildings, and so on. Putnam and Nicotera mean that it is important to analyse how we use “organization”. They point out three different meanings of the term organization: (1) organization as object (entity), (2) organization as a perpetual state of change or becoming (process) and (3) organization as grounded in action (entity from process). In this paper, where we are focusing on co-workers handling of ambiguity situations, the process meaning of organizations is most convenient. With this meaning of organization internal communication, and not at least communication between co-workers, is a prerequisite for organizations’ existence. In other words, communication, talk, conversation, and interaction between co-workers are fundamental in organizing (Weick, 2009). An organization is composed of a network of relationships among co-workers. And it is through daily, horizontal communication among co-workers that these relationships are generated and developed, and it is via peer communication that understanding, sensemaking and learning evolves (cf. Taylor & Van Every, 2011; Weick, et al., 2005). Consequently, since reality is a social construction horizontal communication is especially important in situations characterized by a high level of uncertainty and ambiguity, e.g. organizational changes or crises. As Weick (1995, p. 9) emphasizes: “[p]roblems do not present themselves to the practitioners as given. They must be constructed from the material of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain.” These situations produce an increasing need for co-workers to talk with each other in order to understand and make sense of the situation and lay ground for actions.

Thus, all organizations are constituted of different communication networks, i.e. contact patterns between organizational members that occur through transmission of information (Monge & Contractor, 2001). The foundation of communication networks is relations between people, groups and organizations. Traditionally scholars have differentiated between formal and informal networks and organizations. Already in the beginning of the 20th century, Chester Barnard (1938/1968) stressed the importance of informal communication for the effectiveness of formal organizations. In contemporary research the traditional distinction between formal and informal networks has become blurred, since new management philosophies have led to new organizational structures such as teams, matrix forms of organizational structures and network organizations. And this development has further lead to an immense expansion of horizontal communication in organizations, facilitated by new information and communication technology (ICT) that challenge traditional communication paths and hierarchies. Hinds and Kiesler (1995) found in their study that new media are used as a medium for horizontal communication across formal organizational boundaries. The concept “new media” is related to the development in the 1970s of mass communication media from analogue to digital technique (Sullivan, 2009), and an example of a highly topical new media is social media.
Social media in internal horizontal communication

In research literature social media are often depicted as dialogic and fast channels in building and maintaining relations (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003). Some scholars, such as Marken (2005), claim that social media can make organization’s strategic communication more effective, while it foster both one- and two-way communication and can be used for both interpersonal and mass communication. But the major advantage of social media that are pointed out by many scholars is the enhanced opportunity for interactivity that also makes it more realistic for organizations to reach the ideal symmetric communication. All these characteristics of social media suit well for puzzling situations, and social media seems therefore to be advantageous in such situations. In puzzling situations, as mentioned above, there is a larger need of information and communication within an organization, and there is also a need of common values that can guide co-workers actions. A great part of horizontal organizational communication takes place in verbal interpersonal communication face-to-face and through e-mail. With the implementation of social media, new opportunities arise for co-workers to communicate across organizational borders and to connect to new contacts within the organization and thereby be part of different communities.

The fast and great breakthrough and diffusion of social media has led some scholars (e.g. Cooke & Buckley, 2008) to talk about a new media revolution. Cooke and Buckley have identified factors that explain the social importance of the media, e.g. user generated content and social interactions and users abilities to rate, comment and review. According to Cooke and Buckley social media will have significant impact on how people act, think and understand our age. An overwhelming part of research articles on social media and organizations focus on external communication, but there are still some examples of research on social media and internal communication. One example is Costello and Bosque (2010) that found that e-mail still is the most preferred medium for internal communication among university librarians, even if both blogs and wikis had been used as internal media for several years. They conclude that the library staff has been too slow to integrate social media into the everyday work routine, and that explain why these media not are used in any greater extend. Another example is Friedl and Verčič (2011) who notice that the adaption of social media in internal communication tends be slower than in private life. Their research indicates that even younger co-workers prefer traditional media for internal communication. Heide (2002) made the same observation, almost ten years ago, about the adaption of electronic discussion groups in internal communication with the aim to improve and make organizational learning more efficient. The engineers and developers at SonyEricsson Mobile Communications in Lund (Sweden) were heavy users of discussion groups in their spare time, but they did not use this media for communication or knowledge production during their workday. Among the reasons of not using this communication tool was lack of time and few incentives in form of management’s appreciation. The low adaption of social media in internal communication can also be explained by the fact that communication professionals still are rather conservative when it comes to use of new technologies for professional use (e.g. Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Porter, Sweetser, & Chung, 2009).

We are, although, quite convinced that social media in a near future will play an even more important role as an internal communication channel. With social media follows new communication practices and ways for co-workers to keep contact and produce new and maintain old relations. Cox et al. (2008) claim that internal blogs can be an efficient way to produce an increased dialogue in an organization. Many co-workers use frequently social media in their private life and are skilled users of these media for sharing and finding information, and for building and maintaining relations. Eventually there will a demand for a wider and more regularly use of social media in organization settings, when social media has been normalized and taken-for-granted as medium. In organizations that already has integrated social media in their communication system, they constitute an informal communication platform that will challenge our assumption about work places and organizations, e.g. since co-workers have greater opportunities to freely and open express their opinions, collectively acquire new knowledge through wikis and collaborate across organizational borders (Semple, 2009).

Social media give co-workers prerequisites for informal communication between organizational members across different organizational levels and boarders (cf. Mei, Bansal, & Pang, 2010). In other words, the use of social media in organizations implies new opportunities for co-workers to comment and discuss a crisis or a change process (Caldiero, Maureen, & Ungureanu, 2010; cf. Sweetser & Metzgar, 2008). There is an prevalent understanding among scholars that a continuous dialogue through organizational blogging during a crisis can alleviate some frustration among co-workers and different stakeholders, that occur when organizational information is spare (Stephens & Malone, 2010). Such blogging would also be an important source for co-worker’s sense-making processes in a complex and ambiguous situation. Informal communication has, as we already have mentioned, always been important for organizations, but this form of communication is often private and limited to interpersonal communication for instance via e-mail, in the corridor or at the water cooler. With the use of social media in an organization a lot of informal communication will be visible and accessible to other co-workers. This information can be an advantage for co-workers in cosmology episodes, when they are looking for alternative understandings and explanations of a situation. Consequently, social media offer co-workers help to make sense of puzzling situations. In sum, if social media shall be a success in the internal communication it has to be integrated into the daily work processes and management must realize the importance of informal communication between co-workers and encourage this form of communication.

Social media imply an even further blurring of the border between internal and external communication. In puzzling situations co-workers will not be restricted to social media within an organization. They will look for alternative understandings and explanations also outside the organization, and contribute with material on external blogs and similar media. Social media is a rather effective communication platform for co-workers in reaching people in close and extended networks of friends and acquaintances (Skoric, Liao, Poor, & Tang, 2011). Social network sites such as Facebook, is
primarily restricted to pre-existing networks with friends or other networks and is not primarily a medium for reaching wider publics. Skoric et al. underline the importance of trust and close friendship ties in social networks sites. Further, their research shows that blogs and forums have potential to reach people outside an inner circle of friends, but these media are still quite limited to publics that already are engaged in a subject or an issue. Schultz, Utz and Göritz (2011) study shows that the medium matters more than the message in crisis communication and that social media is important in the social construction of crises. They found, among other things, that Twitter-users are more likely to share information with others, often in form of links to newspaper articles. There is accordingly a tendency that people in first hand are motivated to connect via social media to other with the same opinion or interest (Smith, 2010). Jin and Liu (2010) also underline that the motives to use social media builds on individual's interest in a specific question, a need to search or share information they cannot find elsewhere or to discuss and looking for support. And this is also true in off-line communications; a requirement for dialogues to occur is engagement in a factual matter or issue (cf. Wikström & Eriksson, 2002). When co-workers are faced with cosmology episodes they are deeply motivated to find different answers and will also use external social media.

In general there is a widespread believe in social media and its potential effects. So far we have discussed different positive effects of using social media in the internal horizontal communication. It is fairly simple to be caught up by social media and unreflectively praise it in a technical deterministic way. Social media gives in deed great potentials for an even expanded horizontal internal communication, symmetric communication between co-workers and leaders and co-workers, co-created understandings and decisions. If management of an organization takes these potentials seriously and wants develop a more democratic organization, they have to change the management philosophy, listen more to co-workers opinion and encourage and reward co-workers to deliver negative feedback. In sum, it is not enough to implement new media in an organization. The ordinary power relations in an organization are not simply erased when a new media is introduced. Deetz and Brown (2004, p. 183) underline that: “Unfortunately, most representation forums are used by management to suppress or defuse conflict arising from stakeholder groups rather than foster genuine conflict and productive interaction for the sake of company improvement.” Hence, the members of management must ensure that they communicate regularly with both internal and external stakeholders as more actors using social media can influence the organization and shape a crisis (Caldiero, et al., 2010).

Concluding discussion
In the recently published The handbook of crisis communication, Coombs (2010) has written a chapter titled “Crisis communication and its allied fields”. These allied fields subsume the PR fields of risk communication, issues management and reputation management, but also disaster communication and business continuity. These fields are certainly relevant for placing crisis communication into a larger context, but we believe that it would be highly valuable to also include change communication as an allied field. Crisis and change communication has evolved as two more or less isolated research fields, which seems to delimit the choice of research questions and the theories and concepts we apply. Rather than defining a situation as a crisis or change, and applying certain theoretical frameworks accordingly, it seems more fruitful to focus on the specific communication difficulties and challenges that tend to prevail in the specific situation.

Crisis communication has traditionally had a strong focus on external dimensions, but in order to bring the research field a step further it is necessary to start focusing internal communication aspects. Change communication has a strong internal focus, which further supports the argument that change should be regarded as an allied field to crisis communication. Also Taylor (2010) argues for an internal crisis communication as an important research area: The external crisis response reflects a complex, negotiated outcome created by various internal relationships and processes. To better understand crisis we must better understand these intra-organizational relationships and processes (p. 698).

In a similar fashion, some crisis communication scholars draws attention to the need of focusing on both internal and external stakeholders (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010; Ulmer, et al., 2011). Employees are thus considered as one of several stakeholders. Frandsen and Johansen (2010) highlight interesting aspects that make employees different from many other stakeholders. For instance, employees have other and perhaps more varied stakes than other stakeholders, employees may have a stronger identification with the organization, and they act not only as receivers but also as senders in a crisis situation. These differing aspects show that it is necessary to communicate with employees in another way than other stakeholders. The statement that co-workers is one important stakeholder among others may be true if the research is grounded in a traditional positivistic ontology, where reality is understood as something in being. Although, from a social constructionist perspective, where reality is understood as a process in of becoming (cf. Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), the statement is a logical fallacy. The emergent perspective on crisis and change that has been put forward in this paper is based on a social constructionist perspective, and hence, the organizations are seen as a result of communication and interaction among organizational members, i.e. co-workers. Thus, rather than employees being a stakeholder group, they and their relations constitute the organization. As Weick (1974) pinpoints, organization as a noun is a myth, and that strengthen further the arguments for a emergent perspective on crisis and changes. If we want to acquire more in-depth understanding of crisis communication, scholars ought in an increasing degree reflect on their ontological and epistemological stance and discuss its influence on the research result. Pieczka (2011) made a similar observation in a recent article on the use of dialogue in public relations research, and she argues that dialogue is inadequately comprehended and slightly used. She discusses dialogue from an ontological perspective and illuminates the constitutive nature of communication.
Further, we are convinced that the research field of crisis communication can benefit from research on organizational change communication and also from organizational communication in general, where there has been an ontological and epistemological awareness and discussion since the beginning of the 1980s (see the seminal book by Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). Almost 20 years later Stanley Deetz (2001) underlined that we as communication scholars should not only study communication processes and media per se, but rather contribute with new knowledge by explaining organizational processes from a communication perspective, i.e. how communication produce and reproduce the social constructed reality. Ten years later, Newton, Deetz and Reed (2011) claim that despite the linguistic turn in organization studies and its strong influence, all too many scholars still hold to a functionalistic (or naive realism) approach, which can be explained as a function of strong expectations on research to produce useful and practitioner relevant knowledge. And many scholars that acknowledge social constructionism overlook the implications of the perspective when it comes to the actual collection and analysis of empirical material. We are looking forward to more close-up studies of how co-workers handle puzzling situations in organizational settings, and where scholars analyse and try to understand the processes from a communication perspective. In the traditional organization literature there are not many examples of research from a process- and practice-oriented perspective. All together, research within – foremost – the field of crisis communication tends to stay on a macro-level with a rather long distance to the practice, where crises are detected and handled. In recent times there has been an increasing interest in co-workers’ actions and interactions in organization studies (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidt, 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007; Wilson & Jarzabkowski, 2004). This development is part of an overall movement in the social sciences away from prescriptive, and often too simplified, and normative models. This movement is often named the “practice turn” (Orlikowski, 1992; Orr, 1996), and can be seen as a part of a humanizing management and organization research (Weick, 1979). Jarzabkowski (2004) concludes that there is a gap between the theory of what organizational members do and what they actually do in local and everyday reality. Since it is through actions and interactions within practice that organization are constituted and social life transformed and reproduced, we need to analyse the fields of practice (Schatzki, 2001).

To sum up, we have in this paper tried to give some key thoughts in developing the study of crisis communication. We have stressed the importance of ontological and epistemological reflections, and we have also suggested a social constructionistic perspective on crisis communication. This perspective implies an increasing focus on the practices of co-workers and the internal relations and communication between co-workers in handling puzzling situations. Co-workers’ communication and relations constitute an organization, and it is therefore vital for scholars to put co-workers in the limelight. By focusing on co-workership, post-heroic leadership and social media new potentials for participatory crisis communication models will follow.

Acknowledgement
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References


When Power Fails: Crisis Communication in the Workplace

Sherry Devereaux Ferguson, Alexandra Hendriks

Problems involving the failure of hydro plants, nuclear reactors, and other systems designed to supply power to large communities of people have been ongoing occurrences over many decades. Every natural disaster includes a power component; however, the increasing complexity of electric power systems and networks increases their vulnerability to failure in the case of natural disasters such as earthquakes, ice storms, tsunamis, hurricanes and tornados, floods, and uncontrolled forest fires (Prezant et al., 2005). As Zhong and Sun (2010) note, electric power networks constitute key infrastructures, and their failure can paralyze large urban centers. With the increasing frequency, degrees of seriousness, and lack of predictability in the occurrence of natural disasters, as well as threats from terrorist elements, the issues raised by power failures demand increased scrutiny.

Although the inclusion of an employee communication component appears in crisis management plans, the literature suggests that more emphasis is put on communication with external publics than on communication with internal publics. Yet if the employees do not have accurate information and functional communication networks, they may experience significant confusion and, in turn, communicate inaccurate information to others. As Cagle (2006) noted, “Support from employees cannot be overvalued” (n.p.).

That was the case on Thursday, August 14, 2003, when large parts of Canada (Ontario and Quebec) and the United States (Northeast and Midwest) experienced the most far-reaching hydro failure in the history of the two countries. In total, the power outage affected more than 55 million people and 13 million residents of New York City. Affected infrastructures included not only power supplies, but also transportation, water supplies, communication, governance, and industry. The blackout occurred just after the 4:00 P.M. EST rush hour in New York City. Prezant and colleagues (2005) concluded that a prolonged and widespread power failure could easily overwhelm the city’s ability to respond to emergencies. They further noted that “despite heightened interest in disaster planning since September 11, 2001, we could find no published analyses, other than anecdotal
reports in the lay press, on the impact of a widespread power failure on a modern municipal healthcare system” (p. 596). Aghababian and colleagues (1994) anticipated the impact of this kind of power failure on hospital facilities when they wrote about the need for every hospital to have a comprehensive plan to deal with the consequences of such events. Likewise, Bell and Seidner (2002) had encouraged healthcare organizations to establish an effective disaster preparedness plan that would enable the continuation of financial functions in the event of power failures caused by fire, floods, or other disasters.

The impact was also strongly felt in Canada, where the power outage brought many operations of the federal government to a halt. This study sought to identify the responses of employees at one large federal agency in the week following the power failure—responses that enable us to see both deficits and strengths in the organization’s crisis management system. In an effort to conserve energy in the week following the failure (August 15-22, 2003), the Canadian government closed many of its buildings. Widespread confusion resulted when employees sought to obtain information on their work schedules and possible relocation of their work environments. Soon after the restoration of power, a major federal agency commissioned a survey to respond to employee concerns about an alleged communication void that had developed during and following the power failure. The commissioned survey sought to answer the following question: How effective was the emergency communication system in the period following the August 2003 power failure? More specific questions included: How did employees acquire information on their work situation? What problems did they experience? How would they have preferred to acquire and share information? What improvements could be made to existing systems of information dissemination?

**Literature Review**

In order to answer the major research question, the following review of the literature will examine factors that can cause the failure of employee communication systems and ways to avoid such failures.

**Planning Systems and Coordination of Roles**

On April 13, 1992, a swollen Chicago River flooded the underground tunnels of many buildings in the downtown loop of Chicago. City managers had to shut down the electrical power system and oversee the evacuation of several buildings, including the Chicago Hilton Hotel. With only a 30-minute lead time, hotel management responded to the power failure by implementing its Power Failure Emergency Plan (PFEP) in a “virtually flawless” manner (Bard, 1992, p. 4). This kind of advance planning is considered essential to dealing with crisis situations of all varieties (Horsley & Miller, 2009; Joynt et al., 2010; White, 2009). Unfortunately, many companies have not planned in a coherent way, and “even routine events such as a power failure or equipment malfunction can approach natural disaster proportions for key operations such as computer systems” (Tillar, 1994, p. 1).

Strategic and operational planning systems and a coordinated team response are critical in the management of crises (Ferguson, 1999; Reddy et al., 2009; Reuter, Pipek, & Muller, 2010; Stachowsky, Kaplan, & Waller, 2009). Tay and colleagues (2010) and Balinsky and Sturman (2006) speak of the importance of integrated systems-level responses and inter-agency cooperation, and Gonzales, Verbraeckt, and Dahanayake (2010) and Johnson and Ritter (2009) say that such cooperation and coordination of roles and responsibilities is not optional when multiple government departments and agencies or jurisdictions have a stake in a crisis. As in the case of Hurricane Katrina, the extent to which multiple stakeholders are able to coordinate their efforts will have life or death outcomes. In circumstances involving heavy stress, Dowdall-Thomas, Culliney, and Piechura (2009) and Pudlinks (2008) discuss the value of peer support action plans. Manuals can also help to guide the action of employees in times of crisis. In cooperation with Stanford University, Schiff (1999) created a guide to improve earthquake performance of electric power systems. One part of that guide suggests response procedures that are capable of reducing the impact of those failures.

The process of coordination in an actual crisis may not, however, always reflect the planned patterns laid out in the crisis management plans or the relatively safe environments of tabletop exercises. Freimuth and colleagues (2008) found, for example, that communicators experienced difficulty following established risk communication principles in a simulated environment that mimicked real time pressures and other stresses. For that reason, researchers such as Zhong and Low (2009) argue for the need to be flexible and to adapt to the unique circumstances of any emergency situation. Left to its own, they say, the parts of any complex system will “self-organize, learn, and adapt” (p. 220) to the dynamic and changing environment. Gonzales, Verbraeckt, and Dahanayake (2010) also found that “current practices concentrate on standards and hierarchy, but mutual adjustment and emergent coordination also occur” (p. 25).

Horwitz (2009) discusses the critical role played by this kind of flexibility in the case of two organizations that responded to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. While governments in general and FEMA in particular failed to respond adequately or quickly to the crisis, Wal-Mart and the U.S. Coast Guard provided exceptions. In the face of a tragedy of previously unimaginable proportions, Wal-Mart responded quickly with supplies that people needed to survive, and the U.S. Coast Guard rescued more than 24,000 people in the wake of the storm. Critical information reached the right people quickly, and middle managers and others were able to improvise and to act promptly without the impediments of organizational roadblocks that could have slowed the process. In the same way, Gretenkort (2009) downplayed the usefulness of a “master plan” of the type described in textbooks on hospital incident management; instead, he argued for “sensitization of all staff and qualification of a continuously working task force within the hospital with regular contact to the corresponding authorities and acquired competence for internal crises” (p. 194).
Up-to-Date, Accessible, Timely, and Clear Information
Since many employees assume ad hoc roles in times of crisis, the availability of current and timely information should be a high priority for the organization. A number of studies have discussed the importance of both timing and timeliness in crisis communication: “When and how often to release information on television are important issues in crisis and emergency risk communication” (Wei, et al., 2010, p. 1013). Reynolds (2010) states that “the right message at the right time” is critical to effective leadership in crises (p. 262), and Tay and colleagues (2010) agree that communication must be “strategic, timely, concise and clear” (p. 312).

Sometimes organizations choose to use ambiguous or equivocal messages to communicate internally or to avoid responsibility for some action. For example, many government and professional organizations or associations rely on jargon when they communicate internally, knowing that the members will be able to interpret the language. Jargon can be highly functional as a shortcut when organizational members understand the lingo. At other times, organizations choose to employ vague and ambiguous language in order to avoid taking legal or other responsibility for some act (Kline, Bethany, & Weber, 2008; Simunich, Weber, & Kline, 2009).

In crises, however, ambiguous and equivocal messages are counter-productive, producing confusion and inability on the part of the employees to respond in a coherent way to the crisis. Cole and Fellows (2008) pointed to inadequate clarity and failure to adapt messages to the demographics of their audiences in the case of hurricane Katrina. Garnett and Kouzmin (2007) observed: “Hurricane Katrina was as much a communication disaster as it was a natural and bureaucratic disaster. Communication gaps, missed signals, information technology failures, administrative buffering, turf battles, and deliberate and unintentional misinterpretations delayed and handicapped both the recognition of the crisis that Katrina posed and the response to its devastation” (p. 171). A similar lack of information and transparency characterized institutional responses to the H1N1 flu scare. The authors claimed that use of buzzwords such as pandemic, dramatic overestimations of death rates, and lack of confidence in the public’s ability to deal with uncertainty on the part of politicians and policy makers aggravated the situation (Feuef & Gigerenzer, 2010). A number of researchers also looked at similar failures in the earlier case of SARS.

Multiple Sources of Information
Drawing upon multiple sources of information in emergencies or crises can be vital to acquiring adequate and updated information. Klein and colleagues (2009) discuss the way by which emergency department staff in one organization accessed more than one source to stay abreast of what was happening with the H1N1 influenza virus alert. From her research, Sellnow (2010) concluded that a single warning issued through standard media channels is usually insufficient in reaching stakeholders in a crisis. Since audiences draw their information from many different sources (reflecting cultural and other needs), crisis managers need to understand how best to reach specific audiences. Another study also found that people want to receive their information from sources “similar to them” and in messages “that are sensitive to them” (Ni, 2009, p. 123). The failure to reach all audiences in the case of Katrina illustrates the problems that result from not heeding these findings (Cole & Fellows, 2008).

The reliance of some media on official sources for information can also be restrictive at times, although crisis management scholars consider the credibility of sources in times of crisis as key to managing the crisis. Nonetheless, some researchers urged that organizations partner with journalists in an effort to get information out to the public (Holmes et al., 2009; Ojeda & Veil, 2010).

Technology Applications
Many recent studies (e.g., Palen et al., 2009) have examined the role to be played by technologies in crisis situations such as the massacre of 32 people at Virginia Tech University; and a number of educational institutions have explored possibilities for establishing mass notification systems, including reliance on “cell phones, PDAs, Blackberries, banners, and PA systems” to cope with such situations (Butler & Lafreniere, 2010).

In urban emergency situations, for example, researchers have explored the benefits of mobile computing in delivering information and facilitating ad hoc communication in the field (Monares, et al., 2011). They have developed a low-cost mobile application (MobileMap) that complements the traditional radio communication systems and allows for collaboration in emergency situations. Portmann and Pirzada (2008) agree that wireless mesh networks, which allow connection of handheld or laptop computers in field operations, provide useful technologies for public safety and crisis management applications. Many fire and police departments, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders are already using these types of mobile computing technologies. Some warn, however, that increasing information flow and interconnectedness among responders can have negative as well as positive effects, sometimes causing the organization to lose control (Waltman, 2008) and sometimes creating inconsistent and conflicting or excessive information for those who depend on multiple sources (Gonzales, Verbraeck, & Dahnanayake, 2010). In the case of the Asian tsunami affecting Thailand, communication networks were quickly overwhelmed (Beresford & Pettit, 2009). Tilar (1994) noted that plans should be in place to handle an increased volume of calls in times of crisis so that systems are not overloaded. Some researchers (e.g., Liu & Jin, 2010) are looking at the use of blogs to counter unreliable information and to respond to employee queries in the case of organizational crises.

Training
Reuter, Pipek, and Muller (2010) address the need for collaborative training tools that can prepare organizations to communicate effectively in crises, not only internally but also with other
organizations. They describe one such prototype used in the training of employees at a German electricity provider. Crichton (2009) discusses training exercises developed to improve situational awareness, communication, and ultimately team-level decision making. Haar, Jehn, and Segers (2009) also developed a model for establishing team “connectivity” in crisis situations. In addition to face-to-face communication and shared situational awareness, their model relies on shared mental conceptions of the task and team and a model for cooperation.

Training exercises that employ simulations and “soft skills” have long been considered as indispensable in preparing for effective crisis management (Haferkamp & Kramer, 2010; Tay et al., 2010). For example, Freimuth and colleagues (2008) discuss the valuable lessons acquired in a simulation involving an avian flu scare in Georgia. Seventeen risk communicators in a local health district participated in that simulation.

The most common kinds of simulations use virtual multi-game software such as that developed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CERC) (Hewitt, Ramoll, & Trotta, 2008; Reynolds, 2010) or the DREAD ED project (Haferkamp & Kramer, 2010) or scenarios that call upon all likely players in a crisis management situation to assume roles and behave as they would behave in the actual crisis situation. For example, in the 1980s, the U.S. and Canada mounted a major simulation that required communication and other specialists in many government departments and agencies of the two countries to coordinate their responses to a staged event. They were told that a tanker—located on the Detroit River that separated Detroit, Michigan, from Windsor, Ontario—had been boarded by terrorists. The tanker was said to contain toxic gases, which the terrorists were threatening to release into the atmosphere. The wind currents were such that both countries would be affected. The simulation entailed negotiations with the terrorists, as well as coordination of responses involving team players in both countries. Sarriegi and colleagues (2009) point to the deficit of research into large-scale crises with cross-border dimensions and infrastructure interdependencies. The authors point out that knowledge of the interdependencies is fragmented, residing in many different stakeholders who need to be identified and connected. Some scholars are also advocating the use of smaller scale and virtual simulations (Veil, 2010) and case studies (Jaques, 2008) in public relations education to train upcoming practitioners in how to deal with crises.

Some researchers are also using computer software to analyze the behavior of individuals participating in these simulations. In one simulated crisis, for example, Stachowsky, Kaplan, and Waller (2009) used pattern detection software to analyze the behavioral patterns of 14 nuclear power plant control room crews in a simulated crisis. The MobileMap developed by Monares and colleagues (2011) allows for the recording of information in naturalistic settings, which enables later analysis of the interactions and learning opportunities for the organization.

As to who receives training, a study of specialist and non-specialist responders found that the large majority of the roles in crisis situations are emergent in nature (Petrescu-Prahova & Butts, 2008), implying the need for approaches that look at training more than crisis management teams. So while it is useful to hire specialists in risk or crisis communications (the approach taken by a New Jersey public health organization, Taylor et al., 2008), or to train emergency management teams, it is also important to acknowledge that many employees will come forward to fill impromptu leadership and support roles in any crisis.

Methodology

This study involves a naturalistic setting and an actual (rather than simulated crisis). As noted earlier, this power failure, which affected both heavily populated regions in Canada and the northeastern United States, was unprecedented in scope and potential for disastrous consequences. Thus, the event was significant and worthy of study. In addition, Stachowski, Kaplan, and Waller (2009) note that “while research on team effectiveness during nonroutine events is growing, naturalistic studies examining team interactions during crises are relatively rare” (p. 1536). Yet we have a need for such research to validate existing crisis management models. Zhong and Low (2009) concluded that many conventional crisis response communication models, developed and favored by researchers, are grounded in the “linear, command-and-control principles of ‘scientific management’, that they are rather limited in describing flexible reactions to the changing circumstances and explaining the dynamic and complex crisis response situations” (p. 220).

In seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency communication system at Agency X, the researchers asked the following questions: How did employees acquire and share information? How would they have preferred to acquire and share information? What improvements could be made to existing systems of information dissemination? 1

Sampling Procedure and Profile of Respondents

The survey was sent to all Ottawa-based employees employed by the agency by means of an email web link. Responses were registered between September 1, 2003, and September 5, 2003. In total, 209 out of 600 employees responded to this survey. The response rate was just over 33%. Demographics related to workplace location, job category, and length of time employed by the agency are presented below.

When asked to indicate the Ottawa office in which they normally work, 66.7% of respondents (138) normally work at location A; 31.4% (65) normally work at location B; 1.9% (4) normally work at location C.

1 In order to preserve anonymity, the title “Agency X” or “the agency” is used in place of the actual name of the organization. Similarly, the workplace locations are referred to by location A, B, and C. In the same way, the specific titles of the respondents have been changed; however, broad job designations are preserved.

2 The percentages in this report represent the total number of employees who responded to each question (excluding those who failed to respond to a given question).
In response to a question about province of residence, 77% of respondents (160 employees) lived in Ontario; 22.7% (47 employees) lived across the river in Quebec.

As illustrated in Figure 1, respondents indicated their job category as follows: 19 employees were in the executive category; 34 were directors; 69 were agents; and 81 operated in support services (e.g., Human Resources, Communication, secretarial, etc.).

Figure 1

Figure 2 demonstrates how the sample breaks down in terms of the number of years that respondents had been employed by Agency X. Twenty-four respondents had been with the agency for less than a year. Eighty-four respondents had been with the agency for one to five years. Thirteen respondents had been with the agency for six to ten years. Eighty-five respondents had been with the agency for more than ten years.

Survey Questions

The major research question was “How effective was the emergency communication system in the period following the August 2003 power failure?” In order to answer this question, the researchers generated a survey that elicited information on the employees’ work situations during the crisis, how employees learned about the closures, their patterns and networks of communication, and their preferences regarding sources of information in times of emergency, and information. The study also requested demographic information. The specific questions follow.

Work situation during crisis. Day by day, could you please indicate the situation in which you found yourself for most of the day? On leave? Worked at the office? Worked at home or other location? Unable to work (e.g., didn’t have computer, power, or necessary materials)?

How employees learned about the closures. How did you first learn that the agency offices were closed on Friday August 15? What sources of information did you rely on regarding the closures (Thursday August 14 through Friday August 22)? Did you receive any conflicting or inconsistent information regarding whether or not you were to report for work on any particular day? At the time of the power outage, did you know the emergency telephone number for the agency?

Personal networks of Communication in the period of August 14-August 22. If you received emails regarding the closure, from whom did they come? Supervisor? Colleagues at work? Others (friend/neighbor/family member)? If you received phone calls regarding the closures, from whom did they come? Supervisor? Colleagues at work? Others (friend/neighbor/family member)? Did you check the Treasury Board web site at any time during the crisis?

Preferences regarding emergency communication. In a future crisis situation, how would you prefer to be informed about an emergency closing of the office? Please rank the options from 1 to 7, with 1 being your most preferred method of receiving information and 7 being your least preferred method of receiving information. (Assume that all systems are functioning normally.) News reports? Agency web site? Agency emergency telephone number? Message on your work voice mail? Agency email message? Personal contact from work colleague or supervisor? Other (please specify)? Do you have any suggestions regarding how the agency should communicate with employees in future crisis situations?

Demographic information. The study also requested demographic information related to the Ottawa office in which the employees worked, their province of residence, their job category, and years worked for the agency.

Results

The following results identify the work situation of respondents during the power outage, their first sources of information, later sources of information, quality and reliability of information, networks of communication, awareness of emergency contacts, preferences for receiving information, and employee recommendations for improvement.

Work Situation during Crisis

Respondents indicated the work situation in which they found themselves on each day following the power outage in the following way. (See Table 1.) Close to two thirds of employees said that they were not able to work on the Friday and Monday following the closures because they did not have a computer, access to power or necessary materials. While the percentage of employees...
unable to work decreased later in the week. A third of employees continued to indicate that they were unable to work (at office or home) as late as Friday, August 22.

Only a small percentage (20% on Monday and 26% on Tuesday) of the agency workforce were able to work at the office, home, or other location early in the week of August 18. While more employees worked at home or in another location (26%) than in the office (20%) on Wednesday, August 20, the situation had reversed itself by Thursday, August 21. Close to 35% of employees worked in the office on Thursday, 21% worked at home.

Table 1—Work Situation during the Power Outage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day by day, could you please indicate the situation in which you found yourself for most of the day?*</th>
<th>On leave</th>
<th>Worked at the office</th>
<th>Worked at home or other location</th>
<th>Unable to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, August 15</strong></td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, August 18</strong></td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, August 19</strong></td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, August 20</strong></td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday, August 21</strong></td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, August 22</strong></td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Respondents could only check one response per day.

Figure 3 presents the work situation of respondents in different agency offices in the days following the power outage. These percentages represent the proportion of employees who indicated that they were unable to work each day, excluding those who were on leave. As the week progressed, the building most affected by the power outage was the building at location A.

Although most employees in other offices were able to work by Wednesday, August 20, more than half of the employees not on leave in the building at location A indicated that they were unable to work at the office or at home on these days.

Figure 4 provides the percentage of employees, by province of residence, unable to work on the days following the power outage (excluding those who were on leave). By Monday, August 18, employees who lived in Quebec were almost as likely as those who lived in Ontario to indicate that they were unable to work. This tendency continued to manifest throughout the week of August 18 to 22.

Figure 5 provides the percentage of respondents, by job category, who were unable to work on the days following the power outage (excluding those who were on leave). Among employees not on leave, those at all levels of the organization appeared to have been equally affected by the power outage on Friday, August 15. On subsequent days, the highest percentage of disrupted work
schedules involved employees in support services, followed respectively by agents, directors, and executives.

Figure 5

How Employees Learned about the Closures

Employees responded, as follows, to the questions that asked about how they first learned that the Ottawa agency offices were closed on Friday, August 15, 2003. This part of the questionnaire sought to discover early versus later sources of information and to identify problems with the information employees received.

First sources of information. Most employees (59%) learned about the office closures through mass media such as the radio, newspaper, television, or the Internet. For example, respondents indicated the following: “Power still out but used battery operated radio to hear TBS announcement but did to know if that applied to agency until I called the emergency no.” “Heard on the radio around 8 am that federal employees were asked not to report to work—no answer from the agency reception.” “CBC news website indicated that all government would be closed on Friday.” Twelve per cent of employees first learned of the closures by showing up at the office on Friday. An example of a comment related to this category was the following: “I went to work on Monday, August 18 and found out from security.” Another noted that s/he suspected the office would be closed but needed to retrieve some papers and a laptop computer—so went anyway. Only 29% learned of the closures by additional means (telephone, personal contact, email, or other). A limited number called their supervisors or got their information from the voice mails of supervisors or other federal employees. Few got their information from email. (See Table 2.)

Ontario residents were more likely than Quebec residents to learn first of the closures through media reports; they were also more likely to receive a phone call at home regarding the closures. Quebec and Ontario residents were equally likely to first learn of the closures by showing up at work.

Table 2–First Sources of Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did you first learn that the agency offices were closed on Friday, August 15?</th>
<th>Overall (n=199)</th>
<th>Ontario residents (n=160)</th>
<th>Quebec residents (n=47)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Went to the office</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called the agency reception</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media reports</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called the agency emergency telephone number</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted a work colleague or friend</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received a phone call at home</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received an e-mail at home</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later sources of information. Below is an overview of additional sources of information upon which respondents relied in the week following the onset of the power outage (Monday, August 18 through Friday, August 22). (See Table 3 for details.)

The employees were most likely to call the agency’s emergency telephone number or check media reports for information regarding the closures in the week following the onset of the power outage. However, messages were unavailable at the agency in the first days following the power outage, and the phone was not working. One explained, for example, that the emergency number was not functional until Wednesday. After visiting the office building on Monday, she followed the advice of the building commissioner and went to the Treasury Board website for updates. Another employee indicated that he “called a general government emergency number which . . . specified that all government employees should call for an update.”

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4 The emergency telephone line was not working on Monday and Tuesday.
Table 3–Later Sources of Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What sources of information did you rely on regarding the closures (Monday, August 18 through Friday, August 22)? *</th>
<th>Overall (n=209)</th>
<th>Ontario residents (n=160)</th>
<th>Quebec residents (n=47)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to the office</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called the agency’s reception number</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media reports</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called the agency’s emergency telephone number</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called the building security</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted a work colleague or friend</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received a phone call at home</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received an e-mail at home</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a message on my work voice mail</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Respondents could select multiple answers.

Despite attempts by communication personnel to reach employees, only 3% indicated that they had received an email at home during the week of August 18-22 (see Table 3). A much larger percentage (46%) said that they had received email communications (presumably at some other location) during that week. (See Table 4.)

One in five employees contacted work colleagues or friends to acquire information. For example, one employee said, “Each day was a bit different. I called my supervisor on Sunday and then the agency number the rest of the time. I received a call at home one day.” Another responded, “Called my supervisor at home as message on the agency number was unclear as to whether to report in on Wednesday.” A number of employees (15%) continued to go to the office to confirm the situation.

Awareness of emergency telephone number. Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of the agency emergency telephone number at the time of the power outage. (See Figure 6.) Only 17.6% of respondents knew the emergency telephone number at the time of the power outage. One employee noted: “In all of the e-mail ‘noise’ I receive daily, I really don’t recall being informed of the office’s emergency number.” Several employees expressed frustration when attempting to use the emergency number. The most often cited complaint was timeliness, the failure to update the messages regularly or to provide information early in the day.

Examples of comments from respondents included the following. One speculated how anyone could call an emergency office number that was not operational until Wednesday. Another complained, “Returned from holiday on 17 Sunday evening. I called the emergency phone at 11:00 but it only spoke of Friday the 15th. Not very useful for knowing what would happen on 18.” Still another said: “It was very confusing until the emergency number was communicated. . . . (and) even access to the building was unclear until the message was changed late in the day Tuesday, August 19, each day the message was updated too late for most workers. It should have been changed by 6:00 a.m.” One person called but received no response at the agency reception, an executive’s office, the number of the parking attendant, or a 1-800 number printed on the emergency card provided by the agency.

Figure 7 presents the percent of employees, by office location, who knew the emergency number at the time of the power outage. Compared with employees working in location B, those in location A were more than twice as likely to know the number (9.2% versus 22.2%).

Figure 8 (next page) depicts the percentage of respondents, by years worked for the agency, who had heard of the agency emergency number at the time of the power outage. Employees who had worked for the agency for more than 10 years were only slightly more likely than employees who had worked for the agency for less than one year to know the emergency number.

Eventually employees learned the accurate agency emergency number for the period of August 18 through 22, and close to two thirds of employees identified this number as an additional source of information in the week that followed the onset of the emergency.
Conflicting, inconsistent, or ambiguous information. More than one quarter (27.1%) of employees indicated that they had received unreliable information regarding whether or not to report to work on any particular day. This finding was more common among residents of Quebec (80.9%) than residents of Ontario (71.0%). Among respondents who indicated that they had received unreliable information, some commented on the nature of the inconsistencies in their responses to an open-ended question. Others added comments on ambiguities in the messages. These responses fell into several categories as described below.

Ambiguous or unclear messages

References to essential versus nonessential services confused some employees. Employees didn’t know if they were essential or nonessential in the crisis situation. For example, one employee said, “Even though I saw the media reports that nonessential staff stay home, I called the office and spoke to my head. He informed me that there were others working in the office but no support staff. I asked if there was a need for support staff and got a vague answer.”

Another person said, “Before I knew of the agency emergency number, I had to rely on the media which was not entirely clear who was “essential” or “non-essential.”

The use of words such as may, could, and encourage in agency messages confused employees. The voice mail message “there are no new messages” confused at least one employee. One person noted that the French translation on the emergency voice mail on Wednesday, August 20, was completely incoherent and somewhat contradictory.

Sometimes the lack of clarity related to the quality of the voice mail recordings. For example, one respondent said, “There was a recording that gave the emergency number, but the number was spoken so quickly that it was difficult to decipher, let alone remember.”

Sources that contradicted each other

Some respondents noted inconsistencies between messages on the main agency reception number, the voice mail, and general government numbers to which they were referred by the media or Treasury Board. One respondent noted, for example, an inconsistency between the agency message “encouraging employees to work from home” and a message from the Ontario government asking employees to stay home and conserve electrical power. A similar discrepancy occurred when the media announced closure of offices at the same time that the agency was encouraging employees to go to work. Some noted that the Treasury Board website also said to stay home, whereas the agency message was “to do everything you can to get some work done even if the building was closed.” The Treasury Board messages on other days were to stay open, but the agency messages were ambiguous or unclear or the respondent knew that the buildings were leased (thus not on the Treasury Board list of government facilities that would be open). Some also observed a discrepancy between Treasury Board announcements and radio announcements.

The problem was further aggravated by the fact that agency employees did not know whether the Treasury Board messages applied to their organization, which is arms-length to the government and not always bound by the same regulations. For that reason, a number of respondents mentioned their uncertainty on whether to rely on Treasury Board directives. One employee explained that “the message must be explicit for the agency staff since we often do not react or do the same as the rest of government.” Despite concerns that Treasury Board announcements might not apply to them, 37.5% of respondents checked the Treasury Board website at least once during the emergency period.

Reliance on the media was also problematic. At least one media outlet said, for example, that supervisors would contact employees, but not all employees heard from their supervisors. Some employees did return to work after being called by a supervisor or secretary; but when they showed up, they found that most other employees were not present. In another case, a media source said that government offices were open on Friday, August 22, but not all agency offices were open. The fact that some office buildings were open while others were closed created confusion among employees. A number of respondents noted inconsistencies in messages distributed by different media outlets.

Outdated information

The most frequently cited concern related to the timeliness of the information. Seventeen employees said that Wednesday’s voice mail message about the opening of location A was changed late on Wednesday morning. Six employees noted that they did not know whether to report to work on Friday since the emergency voice mail accessed by location B employees was not updated on Thursday night or early Friday morning. Some respondents noted that the government website and the 1-800 Canada number were out of date.
General failure of planning systems
Some respondents noted the general failure of the emergency preparedness system. One employee asked, for example, “What emergency preparedness?” Others commented: “Poor preparedness strategy—I was unable to log on to the network; the phone system didn’t work; no calls from supervisors; unable to determine whether I was “essential” as described by the media. Failing grade of F.” “Thank God it wasn’t the World Trade Centre. I called my boss’s, boss’s boss—3 levels up and was told. ’I know as much as you do, just wait and see.’”

Personal Networks of Communication
This section of the survey involved an effort to identify networks of communication. (See Table 4) While we were aware that these questions would elicit some redundancies in responses related to face-to-face, email, and telephone communication, the usual first sources of information for employees in non-crisis conditions.

Forty-four per cent of respondents said that they had received an email from a supervisor, work colleague, and/or other agency representative regarding the closures.

Almost 40% of respondents said that they had received an email from a communication staff member. Phone calls were a more popular medium for communicating about the office closures than emails. Fifty-two per cent of respondents reported having received a phone call regarding the closure from a supervisor, work colleague, or other person. Phone calls came from supervisors almost twice as often as from work colleagues. Eleven per cent of employees said that they had received a phone call from a supervisor, work colleague, or other person. Phone calls came from supervisors almost twice as often as from work colleagues. Eleven per cent of employees said that they had received a phone call regarding the closures.

Table 4 – Networks of Communication regarding the Closures

If you received e-mails/phone calls regarding the closures, from whom did they come?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>E-mails</th>
<th>Phone calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues at work</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (friend/neighbor/family member)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Respondents could select multiple answers.

Preferences and Recommendations
Respondents were asked how they would prefer to be informed about emergency closings of the office in the future. (See Table 5.) They were also asked for recommendations on how the agency could improve its communication performance in the event of future crises.

Preferred information sources.
Respondents were most likely to rank the agency emergency telephone number as their preferred method to learn about emergency closings of the office in the future; this option was also most likely to be ranked among respondents’ top three choices. However, some added qualifications, such as the following: “Only if the emergency number has today’s or tomorrow’s news. Not yesterday’s.” “The emergency telephone number is enough if we are sure that it will be available.”

Personal contact by work colleagues and supervisors was also a popular choice among respondents. More than a quarter of respondents ranked the latter choice as number one. Two thirds ranked this option among their top three choices. In open-ended responses, employees added the following kinds of comments: “Initially a phone call and then the emergency number.” “Message on home answering system.” “A call by designated agency person to inform of situation.” “Telephone tree, if telephone system is working.” Although respondents preferred to hear from their supervisors, one suggested the necessity for a back-up from a work colleague in case the supervisor is unavailable: “There should be a primary and secondary back-up established. In my view, for each employee, the primary contact should be their supervisor and the secondary back-up should be a mutually agreed-to colleague.”

Third in popularity overall was a message on the work voice mail. Almost 60% of respondents placed this means of communication among their top three preferences. About 19% placed this means of communication as their top choice. While more than half of respondents placed news reports among their top three choices, only 15% chose news reports as their top choice for learning about emergency closings. One employee suggested that the government make daily television announcements, in English and French media, at a fixed hour to update employees and to provide instructions on actions to be taken the following day. Few respondents (only 3%) chose the corporate website as their top preference for learning about emergency closings. A much larger percentage (25%), however, ranked the agency website among their top three choices.

Five people noted their preference for news media as a source of information in emergency situations. One observed: “For a widespread problem that affects the agency (such as the recent power outage), I think that the media (CBC radio, in particular) is the most effective way to communicate information to employees. Most people have radios. CBC’s format allows for timely updates and periodic repetition of information.” Another agreed: “Phone or radio . . . phone continues to work even in a power outage and radio stations continue to broadcast. (I
keep a battery powered radio for emergencies as well as the car radio.) CFRA in Ottawa always broadcasts information regarding emergencies and closures."

Compared with other sources, email was the least preferred source of information. Only 1% chose emails from the agency as their top choice for communicating about crisis situations; 9% ranked emails from the agency among their top three choices. Thirteen people commented on the uselessness of websites and email communications in power outages; they also noted that not all have access at home. In addition, some mentioned the fact that they were being urged to conserve energy in the recent power outage at the same time that colleagues and supervisors were continuing to send emails. For example, one lamented, "I noticed all of the emails when I got back to the office – there is no point sending emails for people that don’t have laptops (admin staff). In this case, we were told to conserve energy, so we turned off the computer."

Eight per cent of respondents placed sources of information not listed in the survey options among their top three preferences. When asked to identify those sources, respondents most often mentioned the agency reception and the agency main number.

Table 5–Preferred Sources of Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In a future crisis situation, how would you prefer to be informed about an emergency closing of the office?</th>
<th>Ranked First %</th>
<th>Ranked in Top Three %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News reports</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency telephone number</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message on your work voice mail</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail message</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact from work colleague or supervisor</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations. Respondents also provided suggestions in an open-ended question as to how the agency should communicate with employees in future crisis situations. These suggestions fell into several categories as described below. Many of these points mirror or strongly reinforce the responses to earlier parts of the survey.

Maintenance of Up-to-Date Telephone Contact Lists

Seventeen respondents recommended that the agency should place a heavy reliance on telephone contacts; and a number stressed the need for a comprehensive up-to-date list of employee phone numbers, which employees could keep at home. For example, one noted, “Each group should develop a phone recall list with everyone’s phone number which should be kept up to date.” Another suggested sending out pre-programmed messages to keep contact information up to date. Eight individuals suggested that the agency should maintain current emergency numbers and procedures on its Internet and Intranet sites (e.g., its orientation site). One employee added that Internet technicians could load the agency emergency number onto the Outlook contacts list used at work. Some employees stressed the importance of relying on the Treasury Board website.

Other suggestions for ensuring accessibility to emergency contact numbers included distributing magnets or stickers with the emergency number or putting the emergency number on ID passes. Several observed that a wallet-size card could include all emergency numbers, central number, website address, and contact names. “Employees could be issued a wallet-sized card with various contact numbers in the office including for example, HR contacts and the emergency number.”

Use of Telephone Trees, Automated Calls, and Multiple Channels to Reach Employees

Others suggested the means by which employees could be reached in times of emergency. Thirteen specified, for example, the usefulness of an up-to-date telephone tree or chain. For example, one said, “During the power outage and following week, my husband received three phone calls from his supervisor, following an established phone tree. I received none.” Several specified that the tree should be top-down, with the executive communicating with directors, directors with agency personnel, etc. Others suggested that each person should have between one and ten contact names to call in an emergency situation.

One employee said that the agency could develop automated phone lists that are capable, in times of emergency, of calling employees’ home numbers with pre-recorded messages. Alternatively, five employees suggested leaving messages on work voice mails (e.g., through the use of the auto-attendant). They also said that the voice mail system should be functional at all times during an emergency, offering the emergency telephone number and clear directions for what employees should do. Alternatively, the emergency number could override the main voice mail. One employee suggested that the building commissioners could inform supervisors and others of what messages are reaching employees (letting them know, for example, that the employees were being encouraged to go to the office so they expected them and so that employees would not find the offices closed when they arrive).

A clear bias for the emergency telephone system continued to surface in the recommendations section of the survey, with 24 respondents mentioning the importance of a functional emergency telephone number. One employee suggested taping messages to the buildings. Several suggested the need for multiple channels of communicating with employees.
Importance of Up-to-Date, Timely, and Clear Messages

Employees continued to stress, as they did throughout the survey, the critical nature of clarity and timeliness in all communications—by whatever channel. Sixteen employees stressed, for example, the importance of timely communication from supervisors, and two suggested the need to remind supervisors to update lists. As one noted, “More timely communication from supervisors is essential; having to rely on the media or on friends is an extremely poor substitute.” Another said, “I should have received a call from my supervisor first thing in the morning not after supper. I had to go into the office to find out it was closed.” One complained that the number on his emergency card was invalid: “Emergency cards provided to employees should be updated on a regular basis. In particular, I am disconcerted that the 1-800 number on my card was not correct.”

A number of employees asked for voice mail and emergency telephone messages to be updated regularly during the day; others expressed a preference for set times, publicized in advance with employees. Examples of responses included the following: “Please update the emergency phone message at regular times and state what those times are on the message; e.g., ‘next update will be at . . . ’ “Perhaps make sure that the emergency number voice recording is updated preferably before 10:00 P.M. the night before.” Another requested that information be available about 6:00 P.M. on Sunday. Another suggested that the message could state the time for subsequent updates.

A number also continued to focus, in their recommendations, on the need for clarity and precision in the messages. They noted, for example: “Clarity on the voice messages so that employees are not forced to waste a vacation day as a result of an oversight by the agency.”

Need for Planning

A few employees observed that the agency needs to develop standard operating procedures and clear policies for crisis situations, including consistent messages, a list of key contacts, a system for responding to questions, and methods for disseminating information. For example, comments from employees included the following: “Is there a crisis? There should be clear criteria as to what is a crisis and instructions provided to all employees and what to expect when it occurs. If there are some now, it wasn’t evident where they were.” “My only suggestion would be to prepare standard messages in advance and identify key people (depending on the nature of the crisis) on whom to rely. Also it should be clear how the message will be distributed to—possibly one source distributed via phone and another source via Internet.” Some employees wondered whether plans developed for Y2K or the historical Ottawa ice storm could not have been applied in this situation. A few employees remarked that office voice communication systems, lighting and ventilation systems need to be improved or checked prior to the return of employees to buildings.

For example, one employee said that the voice communication system on one floor was poor: “During the power outage on the 12 of August this system was either totally inaudible or could only be heard in one location on the entire floor.” Another noted, “I felt the emergency lighting should have come on sooner and should have been brighter. We are in an inside office, therefore we had no light whatsoever.”

Training

Other employees commented on the need to provide employees with training in how to deal with emergency situations. One employee suggested, for example, that the agency should “learn from this experience and develop a good contingency plan.” Others observed: “We all need some level of training for each type of emergency—fire, terrorism, incident, power outage, injuries, etc. For those new to the agency, it would be preferable to have this within the first month of starting. The packages given to new employees should also contain all this information.”

Dissenting Voices

A few employees expressed satisfaction with the emergency communication system. Examples include the following: “I think we did a pretty good job with this one. Of course there is always room for improvement but again I think things worked out pretty well.” “We seemed prepared.” “We were no worse off than other organizations. Once I knew the emergency telephone number, I found the information clear and relatively prompt.” “I think it was handled very well. My supervisor called me and gave me the emergency telephone number so that I could call each day. He said he could also be contacted at home or his cell if I needed information.” “I thought the agency emergency number was a good system that worked well.” “They did great as far as I am concerned.” “I thought the directives were clear and well communicated.”

Discussion

As noted in the literature review, the impact of power outages has received almost no coverage in the literature despite its potential to create many secondary crises. Moreover, studies of employee communication have not tended to focus on threats to the internal order in such circumstances. This paper seeks to address this deficit by uncovering some of the problems experienced by Canadian employees in the August 2003 hydro failure. As these survey results demonstrate, the employees of one federal agency found that their ability to function under these difficult circumstances was seriously impeded.

While the findings of this study reinforced many of the principles that fill the pages of crisis management literature, it also unveiled some less common findings. Using the framework established in the literature review, we will summarize and comment on some of the themes that emerged when we analyzed the survey responses.
Planning Systems and Coordination of Roles

Many employees noted that the planning for a power failure or other natural disaster had been inadequate. The voice mails were not functioning in some cases. The emergency telephone did not work for the first few days of the outage. Buildings were often locked when employees tried to go to their offices to work or to collect papers or laptops. Some had limited or no power in their homes to receive messages. Cellular systems were overloaded. Only a handful of employees received official emails at home, although a larger percentage received email messages at other locations. Employees did not know whom to call, and they did not know which sources to trust. From office to office, people were improvising in their efforts to secure information. Some tried to reach the voice mails of their supervisors; others called their supervisors at home or received calls at home from colleagues or supervisors. No one seemed to be in charge, and many employees had no access to telephone trees, current contact lists, or information on procedures. Some stressed the need for the agency to develop standard operating procedures that included the preparation of messages, the identification of crisis team members, and methods for disseminating information.

Prior to the power outage, few employees appeared to be aware of the agency emergency telephone number. Some were concerned and upset to realize that the emergency phone numbers on their cards did not work and that the general office number did not function for some time.

The need for better coordination of efforts emerged strongly from this study; and since many leaders are emergent, the utility of a manual with basic procedures seems obvious. As mentioned earlier, expanding employee training to include individuals who are not on the crisis management team also makes sense.

Up-to-Date, Accessible, Timely, and Clear Communication

Employees often didn’t know whose information to trust. They tended to go to the media first when they did not hear from informed supervisors or work colleagues. But that information was often confusing and inconsistent. For example, agency employees were not sure whether government announcements applied to them. Being a quasi-government agency, they did not know whether to follow Treasury Board guidelines. At the same time, they were receiving a number of different messages from different media, some stating that all offices were open when, in fact, some buildings were closed and some were open. The provincial government in Ontario and Treasury Board announcements sometimes urged workers to stay home, while agency messages implied (but did not state directly) that their employees should return to work. Sometimes broadcasters said that supervisors would be in touch with their employees, but then nothing happened. Further inconsistencies surfaced in messages on the main agency reception number, voice mails, and general government numbers that were broadcast on local or national media outlets.

Also the language used in announcements was often unclear in its implications. For instance, when newscasts or other sources said that only employees providing “essential” services should go to the office, most employees did not know if their jobs fell into that category. Was a secretary an “essential” service if her boss occupied an important position? Did cleaning staff constitute essential services? What about communicators? This confusion, resulting from the use of ambiguous language, could explain the fact that employees working in service capacities were least likely to go to the office or work from home. Other ambiguous terms included may work, could work, and encouraged. This kind of language added to the sense of uncertainty felt by employees. Also a few people mentioned lack of clarity or rushing of words on the voice mail systems. Since not all employees are equally fluent in both languages, it would have been difficult for some employees to understand messages that were spoken too rapidly.

The most often mentioned concern was timeliness. This concern surfaced time and again in every part of the survey. Respondents lamented that the voice mail systems were often out of date. The agency website, the main government website, and the 1-800 Canada number were also out of date. Their emergency card was out of date—that the numbers did not work.

Training

As in the literature, training emerged as a major theme, with many employees urging the organization to offer training in order to avoid confusion in future situations and instruct them on how to deal with emergency situations. They also asked for information to be shared in orientation packages given to new employees. They acknowledged that the training should recognize differences in the range of crises that could be experienced in the workplace.

Other Recommendations

When asked for their preferences in sources of information, more than eight out of ten employees listed the emergency number among their top three choices for learning about emergency closings. Comments appearing in the open-ended questions also supported this statistical finding, and the same preference emerged in the information-seeking behavior of the employees during the blackout. Close to two thirds of employees tried to reach the emergency telephone number to learn more about the closures.

A second popular source of information was personal contact in the form of telephone calls from supervisors or designated work colleagues. They stressed the need for current lists of phone numbers and the development of telephone trees or automated calling systems for reaching employees. The telephone appeared to be the most popular medium for inquiring information. The third preference was messages left on voice mail systems at work. Only a few listed broadcast, print, or other media as one of their first choices for information, although most had relied on media in the August power outage.
Emails from the agency did not appear to be either a preferred or an effective means to reach employees. Almost none received emails at their homes, and many were frustrated to find voluminous emails at their office when they returned. The unique situation of some government workers explains the reason that they may not find emails to be a useful means of communicating. Privacy and security policies often prevent government employees (as well as employees of organizations that maintain personnel records, health care records, R&D findings, or other secure data on their computers) from accessing their work at home. As a consequence of these kinds of restrictions and issues, most respondents believed that other communication media should be used in future crisis or emergency situations, especially interpersonal channels involving telephone trees and communications from their supervisors. This finding may be relevant to a wide range of organizations.

The respondents also believed that multiple channels of communication should be used to reach employees in times of crisis; this conclusion also supports the findings of many studies that appear in the crisis management and emergency management literature. Not all employees were dissatisfied with the way that the emergency was managed; however, we are able to learn the most from those who experienced frustrations and blockages in their ability to continue functioning in an unreliable communication environment.

References


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**ABSTRACT**

Since communication is one of the key components of every organization it is clear why understanding successful communication has an influence on global organizational success. Significance of communication in higher education institutions is just as big as in all other institutions, especially under the light of huge changes that the Croatian academic community is going through. The main goal of this study was to further investigate internal communication satisfaction and job satisfaction at a Croatian university. The additional goal was aimed at testing the relationship between internal communication satisfaction and the level of employment. Results confirmed the assumption that there is a significant correlation between job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction. The study also showed that teaching and research assistants are generally more satisfied with internal communication than professors. The highest dissatisfaction was connected to the question of the amount of gossip in the organization.

**KEY WORDS:** internal communication, communication satisfaction, internal communication

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Relationship Between Employee Status, Job Satisfaction And Internal Communication Satisfaction At The University Of Zagreb

Ana Tkalac Verčič, Ph. D.
Ivana Srblin, mag. oec
1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the central components of each organization, so it is clear why a better familiarity with communication processes is significant for overall organizational success (Tkatalc Verčič, Poloski Vokic, Sinčić Corić, 2009). Managers spend 75 per cent of their work time in some type of communication (Minzberg, 1973). There is abundant evidence that more is better, when communications is concerned (Carriere and Bourque, 2009). For instance, Robinson and Tourish (2005) claim that there is significant academic evidence that shows how communication helps increase organizational success. Hargie and Tourish (2002) write about studies that show how an increase in communication quality leads to a number of organizational benefits. Quinn and Hargie (2004) also agree that a key value of good internal communication is in relationships that these organizations build, and through that good communication becomes a part of organizational efficiency. Dickinson, Rainey and Hargie (2003) claim that there are quite a large number of studies that link improvement in organizational communication practices with a whole range of positive results. It is clear, therefore, why many organizations invest significant financial and human resources into setting up successful internal communication systems with the main goal of enabling the communication of relevant information to all employees, on all organizational levels.

Significance of communication in academic institutions is equally big as in any other organization, especially in the light of change that has been going on in and around the Croatian academic community. The importance of successful communication at the universities is universal (Bakanauskienė, Bendaravičienė and Krikštolaitytė, 2010). In Croatia, just like everywhere in the world, internal communication should be concerned with informing, motivating and empowering employees in various complex and challenging situations. Croatia certainly isn’t the only country in which higher education is transforming. Experiences of other countries show that changes that are happening in academic institutions are significantly affecting job satisfaction (Oshgabemi, 1997). On the other hand job satisfaction is one of the necessary prerequisites for higher education success and is positively correlated with the level of university success (Trivelis and Dargenidou, 2009). Job satisfaction has numerously been linked to successful organizational communication (Bakanauskienė, Bendaravičienė and Krikštolaitytė, 2010). This is why the major goal of this study was a further analysis of the link between job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction at a Croatian university. Since numerous studies pointed towards a strong link between internal communication satisfaction and satisfaction with superiors it is interesting to explore how the status level of employees affects overall communication satisfaction. So, as an additional goal, in this study we aimed to explore potential connections between internal communication satisfaction and the level of employment (employees being divided into two groups - assistants and professors).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Internal communication and organizational success

Communication in organizations represents the transfer of information, ideas, attitudes or emotions from one group or person to another group or person (Tkatalc Verčič, Poloski Vokic, Sinčić Corić, 2009); it includes various aspects of sharing and receiving information and represents one of the basic activities of managing an organization, significant for organizational success (George and Jones, 2006, Robbins and Judge, 2007).

According to Robson and Tourish (2005) there is substantial evidence in the literature that the quality of internal communications increases the likelihood of organizational success. Other authors like Hargie and Tourish (2002) state that the increase in communication quality leads to a number of useful outcomes for the organization, while Quinn and Hargie (2004) believe that good internal communications are necessary for organizational efficiency. Dickson, Rainey and Hargie (2003) cite numerous studies that show a link between improvements in communication practices and various positive outcomes for the organization. Clampitt and Downs (1993) say that internal communication of higher quality leads to increase in productiveness, reduced absenteeism, higher level of product and service quality, an increased level of innovation, reduced number of strikes and a reduction in costs. Two communication variables (quality of communication with superior and communication with same level employees) positively correlate with certain measures of overall organizational success (Snyder and Morris, 1984).

Unsatisfactory organizational communication, can, on the other hand, lead to a number of negative consequences. Hargie and Tourish (2002) give an example according to which teams which work in isolation and share a minimum of information, slow down positive change. Same authors also found that lower quality of interdepartmental communication generates a feeling of isolation and dissatisfaction which is connected to lower levels of involvement in the decision-making process (Hargie and Tourish, 2002). It is, then, possible to conclude that an unsatisfactory exchange of information leads to insecurity and increases distance among people.

Employees want to communicate with their peers and superiors in order to feel involved and satisfied (Anderson and Martin, 1995). Research also shows that employees whose needs are satisfied through better communication have a bigger chance of building successful workplace relationships (Rubin, 1993).

There is a significant number of studies that explore the connection between job satisfaction and communication satisfaction (Petitt, Goris and Vaught, 1997). Job satisfaction can be defined as job evaluation or work context evaluation, and can further be explained as a global feeling about a job or a group of attitudes on various elements of a job (McShane, 2004). Herzberg was among the first researchers to investigate the connection between job satisfaction and communication
satisfaction in the 1960ies (Carriere and Bourque, 2009). In the beginning, most studies were concentrated on the influence that communication with a superior had on job satisfaction. Today, this relationship has expanded and includes satisfaction with communication climate, information on how well someone is doing at his/her job etc. (Downs and Adrian, 2004). The connection between job satisfaction and communication satisfaction is one of the central questions of this study as well. It is clear from the presented overview how important communication satisfaction may be for organizational success in general (Gray and Laidlay, 2004).

2.2. Measurement of internal communication satisfaction

Communication satisfaction is an emotional reaction connected to fulfilling expected standards in the process of message exchange and represents a pleasurable and satisfying experience (Hecht, 1978 according to Mueller and Lee, 2002, pg. 221.). According to Downs and Hazen (1977, pg. 64.) communication satisfaction is a general feeling employees have towards their surroundings. Same authors also mention Thyre’s definition on communication satisfaction as personal satisfaction with accomplishing successful communication as a receiver or sender of the message (Downs and Hazen 1977, pg. 64.).

In a more specific sense, internal communication satisfaction can be defined as a positive or negative belief on communication between employees (Hsu, 2002, pg. 7.), or individual satisfaction with various aspects of communication in different interpersonal, group or organizational contexts (Downs and Hazen, 1977, Mueller and Lee, 2002).

The topic of internal communication became popular during the 1950ies, but really came into focus during the 1970ies. According to the Organizational Communication Division of the International Communication Association, in 1985 there were 500 different questionnaires for assessing communication satisfaction. Only a fifth of those questionnaires were used in more than two studies, while the other 80 percent were primarily used in the particular study they were developed for (Downs, DeWine and Greenbaum, 2004). Taking into consideration certain criteria for assessing questionnaire characteristics, Downs, DeWine and Greenbaum (2004) divided questionnaires into three categories: general questionnaires, communication process questionnaires and organizational results questionnaires.

During the 1970ies, the International Communication Association developed a questionnaire for assessing internal communication satisfaction called International Communication Association Survey. Even though this instrument is mostly used in combination with other methods it can also be used on its own. The questionnaire is comprised of 122 questions divided into 8 subgroups, covering the most important aspects of internal communication (Downs and Adrian, 2004).

2.3. Internal communication satisfaction in academic institutions

Even though there aren’t too many studies centered on exploring internal communication satisfaction in academic institutions, recently the number of papers on this topic has been growing. On the other hand, the amount of research measuring the link between job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction is relatively large, just not in academic settings. In one of these studies, Oshagbemi (1997) used the content analysis method to explore reasons for job dis/satisfaction. Results showed that the biggest influences on job satisfaction are teaching and...
research activities. Beside these two major variables, job satisfaction was also affected by job security and changes in the way universities were managed.

Trivellas and Dargenidou (2009) explored the influence of organizational culture and job satisfaction on quality of service in higher education. Results showed that particular cultural archetypes are connected to various dimensions of service quality. Hierarchical culture was dominant among administrative staff, while clan and hierarchical culture were dominant among teaching staff.

White, Vanc and Stafford (2008) researched internal communication satisfaction, received information and sense of community at a university. The major goal of the study was to analyze the perception of employees on information flow, their preferences on the way they receive information, the influence of communication media and readiness to stand up for their organization. Authors concluded that the preferred source of information for all groups of employees is the management. Employees who are closer to this source believe they receive full information and this makes them feel an important part of the organization. Research also showed that informing is not the same as communicating. Information can arrive through e-mail, but face-to-face communication still gives employees a feeling of full information, allowing them to send feedback and thus feel as a part of the community.

In a recent study conducted by Bakanauskienė, Bendaravičienė and Krikštolaitis (2010), authors analyzed employees’ attitudes towards certain elements of job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction. Research, conducted at a university in Lithuania, aimed at exploring the relationship between job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction, has proven a strong positive link between the two. There have been no such studies in Croatia, so far, which makes the topic interesting to authors. Higher education institutions are specific and different from profit oriented organizations. The perspective in this type of institutions is different when internal communication is concerned.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research instrument

In order to acquire data for this study, the previously mentioned questionnaire (developed by od Tkalac Verčič, Pološki Vokić and Sinčić Ćorić in 2009) was used. Some of the items were adjusted to this particular study (information on the department and level of employment), while the 32 items measuring internal communication satisfaction were left intact. The questionnaire can be divided into three parts. The first part is a question on job satisfaction. The response to this question is offered on a 7-point Lykert type scale, with the answers ranging from completely satisfied to completely unsatisfied. The second part is comprised of 32 items (also with a 7-point Lykert type scales attached) which are divided into 8 groups, representing 8 dimensions of communication satisfaction. The third part includes two previously mentioned demographic questions. These final two questions represent the basis for dividing respondents into two basic groups for analysis.

3.2. The sample

Research was conducted on a sample of 71 respondents. This purposeful, convenience sample was selected from 280 professors and assistants employed by the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Zagreb. Respondents filled out the questionnaire anonymously. The final two demographic questions caused some dissatisfaction among certain employees since they felt their anonymity was compromised. In order to allow complete anonymity to everyone involved, the respondents were allowed to skip the final two questions if they felt uncomfortable. Out of 71 questionnaires that were returned 69 were considered valid.

4. RESULTS

In order to analyze results it was necessary to divide respondents into two groups. All of the professors (assistant, associate and full) were defined as group 1 (N = 26), while all of the teaching and research assistants were defined as group 2 (N = 36), while the respondents that didn’t state their status (N = 7) were included in some of the analysis, but not all. Study included respondents from 15 (out of 17) departments of the Faculty.

The first question in the questionnaire was aimed at measuring job satisfaction. Graph 1 shows the relationship between average responses of the two groups (assistants and professors). It can be seen that professors state a slightly higher level of job satisfaction than the assistants, while the general level of job satisfaction is very high.
In order to answer the first research question, we calculated the correlation between stated job satisfaction and general internal communication satisfaction among assistants (average job satisfaction for this group was 5.69 while average internal communication satisfaction was 4.5) and professors (average job satisfaction for this group was 5.95 while average internal communication satisfaction was 3.86). As could have been expected from previous research mentioned in the literature review, the correlation coefficients were significant in both cases (for the assistants $r = 0.65; p < 0.01$; and for the professors $r = 0.59; p < 0.01$) which confirms the assumption that job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction are connected and interdependent.

To try and answer the second research question, we compared the average internal communication satisfaction levels among professors and assistants and by using a t – test for small dependent samples and tested the differences. The questionnaire for internal communication satisfaction is comprised of 32 items divided into 8 dimensions. Results, shown in mentioned 8 dimensions, are presented in table 1. Table 1 also shows which dimensions show a significant difference among professors and assistants, when satisfaction levels are concerned.

**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations of stated internal communication satisfaction for assistants and professors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Assistants</th>
<th>Professors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with feedback information*</td>
<td>3.96 (1.258)</td>
<td>3.09 (0.998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with communication with superiors**</td>
<td>5.87 (2.322)</td>
<td>4.59 (1.222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with horizontal communication</td>
<td>5.40 (1.988)</td>
<td>4.95 (1.365)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with informal communication</td>
<td>3.99 (1.008)</td>
<td>3.77 (1.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with information about the organization</td>
<td>3.44 (0.958)</td>
<td>3.37 (0.885)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with communication climate*</td>
<td>4.14 (1.348)</td>
<td>3.29 (0.868)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with the quality of communication media</td>
<td>5.04 (2.223)</td>
<td>4.33 (1.574)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with communication in meetings</td>
<td>4.15 (1.328)</td>
<td>3.83 (0.997)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < 0.01  
* p < 0.05

As table 1 shows assistants stated a higher level of internal communication satisfaction in all 8 dimensions measured. The biggest (statistically significant) difference between the two groups was in three dimensions: satisfaction with feedback information ($p < 0.01$); satisfaction with communication with superiors ($p < 0.05$) and satisfaction with communication climate ($p < 0.05$). The biggest difference among self reported communication satisfaction can be seen in items “How well my superior is informed about the problems that I have at work” (graph 2); “How much my superior understands my problems” (graph 3) and “The number of decisions that are made based on informal communications” (graph 4).
Finally, graph 6 shows average answers to the question on satisfaction with the information on work protocols and regulations. This was the only item in the whole questionnaire in which assistants stated a lower level of satisfaction than professors.

5. DISCUSSION

In order to explore the main question of this study and analyze the relationship between job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction at a Croatian university, we calculated the correlations between those two variables on a set of employees of the institution. The correlation proved to be statistically significant and this once again allows a conclusion that job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction are two interdependent variables, also at this type of organizational setting.

For answering the second problem of the study and examining the possible connection between job level (all of faculty being divided into teaching and research assistants and professors) and internal communication satisfaction, we compared the answers of the two groups. The results show that assistants were generally more satisfied with internal communication than professors. Assistants stated a higher level of satisfaction in all of the 8 dimensions of internal communication satisfaction (out of which satisfaction with feedback information, satisfaction with communication with superiors and satisfaction with communication climate showed a significant difference). Assistants showed a lower average score in only one, out of 32 questionnaire items – satisfaction...
on information on work protocols and regulations. As White, Vanc and Stafford (2008) already
found out, employees at lower hierarchical levels usually state a lower level of satisfaction on these
types of items because of the fact that being further from the top, means less information of this
type. People closer to the top know more and are happier with it.

Further inspection of the results points toward a few other items, like satisfaction with informal
communication that was the lowest in the whole questionnaire (on average). Some of the items
in the questionnaire caused a certain level of confusion (like the question on satisfaction with the
number of decisions based on informal communication or the amount of gossip). Respondents had
a need to state their unsatisfaction with the selection of this particular channel of communication,
which wasn’t what the questions asked. The goal of the questionnaire was to find out how satisfied
people are with the results of this type of communication.

Items on “availability of social media”, at the university, were higher (as can be expected) among
assistants. Professors stated that they are not satisfied with the availability or outcomes of this
type of communication. A high percentage of respondents stated that they don’t really have an
opinion towards these types of questions which indicates they probably don’t use them frequently.
The question of social media usage as a channel of internal communication should probably be
also further explored.

According to Downs and Hazen (1977) job satisfaction correlates highly with satisfaction with
relationships with superiors, feedback information and communication climate in the organization.
According to these authors mentioned dimensions of internal communication are extremely
important for increasing the levels of job satisfaction. Our research, however, points to a slightly
different conclusion. Professors stated a very high level of satisfaction with their job (M = 5,95) and
a relatively high satisfaction with their communication with their superiors (4,59), but on the issues of
communication climate (M = 3,29) and feedback information (3,29) professors were less satisfied.

On the other hand, assistants stated a lower level of job satisfaction (M = 5,69), but had a higher
level of satisfaction with communication climate (M = 4,14) and feedback information (M = 3,96)
then professors. Their general internal communication satisfaction level was also higher then among
professors (M = 5,87). Stated results point to a conclusion that assistants are also happier with
their jobs then with the way they communicate at these jobs. It is still unclear if all answers were
completely honest or if they were (at least to a certain extent) a result of a lack of complete anonymity.

5.1. Research limitations and suggestions for future research
Main limitations of this study are mostly connected with sample characteristics (size and selection
criteria). Since a purposeful sample doesn’t allow an objective validation of results this represents
the main drawback (Marušić and Vranešević, 2001). The other big problem is questionable honesty
in answering the questionnaires (since the premise of anonymity wasn’t complete). Another
limitation is the inadequateness of the measure for job satisfaction. To measure this variable in a
valid and reliable way it is necessary to include better instruments for its measurement.

Future research of described issues should be aimed at a more detailed analysis of the relationship
between job satisfaction and various dimensions of internal communication satisfaction in higher
education institutions. Special focus should be placed on analyzing the use of informal channels
of communication as well as other various reasons for an insufficient internal communication
satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSION
It is generally believed that internal communication satisfaction is one of the elements of job
satisfaction and a significant variable in increasing productivity. Modern organizations stress
the importance of the human factor as a main resource of every organization, while employees
represent the most important internal public when communication is concerned. Good
communication has become a must in modern business. It is becoming increasingly important to
have a higher quality of information flow, better communication climate and introduce a two way
communication process.

In this study we tried to get a better insight into internal communication satisfaction at a Croatian
university. The thesis according to which job satisfaction and internal communication satisfaction
are significantly related has been confirmed. The other thesis that introduced the idea that there is
a difference in internal communication satisfaction in regard to job level has also been confirmed.
Results show a higher level of internal communication satisfaction among teaching and research
assistants then among professors (in all items of the questionnaire but one).

The study also pointed towards certain areas that haven’t been researched enough. Internal
communication satisfaction will represent an important area of future research. One of the major
goals of every organization should (in the future) include organizing good internal communication
systems, building high quality internal relationships and raising satisfaction levels of all parties
involved in modern business practices.


What is internal communication in Europe

Ana Tkalac Verčič, Ph. D.
Dejan Verčič

ABSTRACT
Internal communication function is gaining in importance in Europe. In the UK, internal communication specialists claim a professional status and they founded an independent Institute of Internal Communication in 2010. The article presents a Delphi study among the leaders of European associations on internal communication. Results of the study are fuzzy: respondents see internal communication as an interdisciplinary management function integrating elements of human resources management, communication and marketing, but at the same time they see it primarily as a part of communication function, and being at the same time managerial and technical. However, they believe that internal communication is an independent research field.

KEY WORDS: internal communication, public relations, corporate communication, employee communication, strategic communication, communication management, human resources, internal marketing

1. INTRODUCTION
Internal communication is among the fastest growing specializations in public relations and communication management. Its boost started in 1990s in the US and continued in 2000s in Europe. Globalization, deregulation and economic crises that brought with them permanent restructuring, downsizing, outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions and all kinds of more or less creative destructions resulted in disappearing trust of employees in management, lower loyalty and an increased need for strategic dealing with ever greater diversity of workforce. More competitive labor market may have produced cheaper human resources, but their emotional engagement with employers became an issue to be managed.

Academic research has only recently reacted to the new realities in public relations. In this article we give a brief review of literature on internal communication and then move to a Delphi study in internal communication in Europe. In 2010 in the UK, practitioners in internal communication organized an independent Institute of Internal Communication (www.ioic.org.uk), separate from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (www.cipr.co.uk) – which operates its own specialist group for internal communicators CIPR Inside (http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/member-groups/cipr-inside). On the European level, the Institute of Internal Communication is leading a transformation of the Federation of European Business Communicators Associations (www.feiea.com) into an European association of internal communicators. Similar transformation is happening in the US within the Council of Communication Management (www.ccmconnection.com).

To understand what is going on in European internal communication in the Delphi study representatives of the eleven members of the Federation of European Business Communicators Associations (FEIEA) were asked to respond to a series of questions in two waves in 2010 and 2011. Analysis of their responses produced a fuzzy picture of internal communication in Europe.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
In academic literature, there is plenty of publications on communication in organizations, but only few on internal communication. Communication is a central concept for organization and management theory and practice (Thompkins 1987) and most academic theorizing and research about the field has been done in organizational communication (Goldhaber 1993; Jablin & Putnam 2001; Jablin, Putnam, Roberts, Porter 19878) and organizational psychology (Drenth, Thierry, de Wolf 1988; Lowenberg & Conrad 1998; Schein 1988) departments. Human relations discipline sees communication as a management tool (Heron 1942; Fitz-enz 1990; Lachotzki & Noteboom 2005), marketing perceives employees as internal customers and so it has developed internal marketing (Ahmed & Rafiq 2002; Dunmore 2002; Gummesson 2000). For public

1 Authors would like to thank Fraser Likely, a partner and president of Likely Communication Strategies Ltd, for helpful comments on the previous version of the manuscript.
relations employees are internal stakeholders that form internal public(s) and so it has developed internal public relations (Seitel 1989) or simply internal relations (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006): “partnerships must be built with internal stakeholders” (Sowa 2005: 433). If there is a difference between public relations and corporate communication (Argenti 1998), on internal communication they are the same (Oliver1997; Cornelissen 2008). Communication is an essential element also of change management (Carnall 1999; Clarke 1994; Deetz, Tracy & Simpson 2000; Kanter, Stein & Jick 1992).

Cheney & Christensen (2001) argue that in today’s fluent organizational environments, internal and external communication need to be integrated and that the difference between the two is becoming meaningless or is even misleading. But empirical studies in practice of applied communication in contemporary organizations find internal communication among the top five responsibility areas of public relations and communication management practitioners everywhere where we have empirical insights. This is a consistent finding of empirical studies in Europe and in the USA (Lurat, Alyukhov, Dixius & Reinhold 2010; Sweering Sen, Bonefeste, Rezvan, Lee & McHargue 2009; Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Verčič & Moreno 2010). In practice, internal communication specialization seems to be emerging, not disappearing. Practitioner books on internal communication are entering into multiple editions (Quirke 2008; Myth & Mounter 2008; Wright 2009).

Kalla (2005) organizes the body of internal communication in four domains: business communication (concerned with communication skills of employees), management communication (focused on management skills and capabilities for communication), corporate communication (focused on formal communication), and organizational communication (addressing more philosophical and theoretically oriented issues). Integrated internal communications subsume all four. While she uses the term in plural (internal communications), Berger (2008) writes it in singular as employee/organizational communication. Argenti (1998) is promiscuous in writing about employee communication and internal communications as synonyms (and using the terms corporate communication and corporate communications interchangeably), while Cornelissen (2008) consistently uses the term corporate communication in singular. Welch and Jackson (2007) break down internal communication by stakeholder groups into four dimensions: internal line management communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication. Likely (2008: 15) after studying articles in the Strategic communication management “journal and other internal communication publications, conferences and forums” found that internal communication function operates five roles: “(1) communicator (reporter/facilitator/democrat); (2) educator (trainer/coach); (3) change agent; (4) small ‘c’ communication consultant (operational performance and process advisor); and (5) organizational strategist (relationship manager).”

Hargie and Tourish (2002), Dickinson, Rainey and Hargie (2003), Quinn and Hargie (2004), Robson and Tourish (2005) argue that there is a strong research evidence that improvements in internal communication produce positive consequences for organizational overall performance. Clampitt and Downs (1993) claim that the main benefits of an internal communications audit include improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, higher quality of services and products, increased levels of innovation, fewer strikes and reduced costs. Snyder and Morris (1984) found that two perceived communication variables (the quality of supervisory communication and information exchange within the peer work group) were positively correlated to critical revenue and workload measures of overall organizational performance. Yet, after a thorough literature review Grunig (1992: 575) concluded: “In spite of all of this research, however, we emerge from this section with little theoretical understanding of how internal communication makes organizations more effective.”

3. DELPHI STUDY IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN EUROPE

Delphi research method was developed by the Rand Corporation in the US for studying future, complex and/or ambiguous processes. It is consists of iterative and anonymous interviewing of purposefully selected experts. The core idea of the method is that iterative process of interviewing will produce either convergence of expert opinions somewhere in the middle, or produce clear divisions of the group opinions. It is expected that a group can articulate such ‘true’ opinions in two to five iterations. Investigators can start with vague and unstructured questions and go from the second to the final round of interviews by using expert’s responses as inputs for each consecutive round. The Delphi technique consists of conceptualization and writing of the initial questionnaire, selection and mobilization of respondents, distribution, collection and analysis of the responses to the initial questionnaire, preparation of the second questionnaire based on the results of the first analysis, development and administration of the second and subsequent questionnaires, and writing of the final report (Brody & Stone 1989; Emmons & Kaplan 1971; Helmer 1966; Linstone & Turoff 1975).

The Delphi method is an often used research technique also in public relations. White and Balphin (1994) used it to study public relations practice in the UK, while Wakefield (2000) used it to study international public relations. The largest Delphi study in public relations was executed in 1999 and 2000 as a part of the European Public Relations Body of Knowledge (EBOK). The purpose of the EBOK was to codify the existing body of public relations literature in Europe and to enable its fuller use and application which is restricted by linguistic, cultural and administrative barriers. 37 participants from 25 countries participated in three waves of interviewing. Results of the study were presented in the final report by van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi & Flodin (2000), three academic articles (Verčič 2000; Verčič, van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin 2001; Verčič, van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin 2004), a programmatic Bled manifesto (van Ruler & Verčič 2002) and were instrumental as inputs for an ethnographic study on public relations in Europe (van Ruler & Verčič 2004) and the largest empirical survey in public relations and communication management that is carried out annually in Europe since 2007 (Moreno, Zerfass, Tench, Verčič & Verhoeven 2009).
4. THE STUDY

The critical element of a Delphi study is the quality of respondents. Representatives of their national associations in the Federation of European Business Communicators Associations (FEIEA) were asked to participate. The FEIEA had in 2010 eleven member associations (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the UK). The Czech Institute of Internal Communication (IIK) became an associate member in 2011 with a prospect of becoming a full member in 2012.

Initial questionnaires were distributed electronically (via e-mail) in November of 2010, with an intention to receive responses in a month. It took four months to receive ten responses. Investigators developed and distributed the initial questionnaire in English language, but received responses in English, French and German languages. Before analysis, French and German responses were translated by researchers into English language.

After analysis of the responses from the first round, researchers developed a closed-item questionnaire and distributed it in June of 2011. Eight responses arrived. In July 2011, the researchers concluded that it is not feasible to try a third round, so the study was completed after two rounds. Results are revealing and may be an informing input for further research.

5. RESULTS

5.1. The definition – round 1

In the first round we asked what is the definition of internal communication the participants and their associations use. Some of the participants defined it simply as all forms of communication within the organization. Participants mentioned that internal communications should motivate employees and through that create value for the company. Although there were a number of respondents that defined internal communication simply as the writing of the “staff magazine”, most agreed that the stereotypical image of internal communicator that is only in charge of the employees and through that create value for the company. Today the information manager is more of a mediator between the management and the workers, as well as an internal coach for the management.

A minority of participants described internal communication as aligning employees or members to the purpose, goals and strategy of the organization, so as to enable it to perform its activities effectively. Some mentioned that internal communications are deemed to be an essential management tool in order to support company business and its development, along with the involvement of people working in it. According to a number of participants internal communication also includes all forms of communication within the organization, communication with organisation’s internal publics (employees, but also former employees, scholars, students and others).

One of the respondents stated that internal communication is concerned with corporate information and communication. It is the aspiration (starting from the vision and proceeding to policy and mission statement and eventually to the strategy) of achieving a systematic analysis and distribution of information at all hierarchical levels to be simultaneously coordinated in the most efficient way possible.

After the majority of the participants stated that internal communication includes the engagement of and exchange of information between employees or members of an organization in order to create understanding, we decided to base the questions in the second round on that.

5.2. The definition – round 2

In the second round we asked the participants to choose one of the three focuses that were offered in order to describe what internal communication is for them. Most of the participants found that the best description of internal communication can be given through the statement that it is a management function in charge of communication. The statement that internal communication can be defined as all communication within organization received slightly less agreement, as well as the statement that it is a technical specialty in charge of communication. Even though all three of the mentioned statements had the same modal value (4), their means were slightly different. It seems that the field can be best described by using the combination of all three statements.

In order to reach further understanding of the concept of internal communication we also asked the participants to tell as what they believe internal communications are in charge of. The highest level of agreement (M = 4,38) was with the statement that they are in charge of information dissemination. Participants had a slightly lesser agreement (M = 4,13) with the statement that IC is in charge of management and production of internal media, followed by – alignment of employees with organization’s purpose (M = 4,00). It seems that the one-way approach to communication is the predominant view among these experts. All of the other statements that were included in the questionnaire had a level of agreement that was over 3,00, implying that all of the statements describe internal communication to some extent. This includes – communication within organization (M = 3,88); organizational culture (M = 3,75); improvement of organization’s communication (M = 3,50); motivation of employees (M = 3,38); engagement of employees (M = 3,25); and finally - mediation of management and employees (M = 3,13), that had a mean only slightly above 3,00.

When all of the described statements were viewed through the modal values it can be seen that only two statements – IC is in charge of information dissemination and IC is in charge of management and production of internal media – have the modal values of 5 (meaning that most participants completely agree with mentioned statements). These two statements are closely followed by the statement that IC is in charge of alignment of employees with organization’s purpose, where modal value is 4 (most participant agree with this statement). This analysis points to a relatively technical view of internal communications.
5.3. The relationship with other management disciplines – round 1

In the first round of our research we also tried to identify the respondents’ opinions on the relationship internal communication has to other management disciplines. The areas that were mentioned as close to IC included human resources as a close area, as well as change management, organization development, public relations, marketing and general management, corporate human resources, corporate strategy, and as the most logical partner – corporate communication. Most of the participant agrees that internal communication as a discipline is intertwined with these disciplines, particularly in the communications and human resources area. Participants frequently mentioned that managerial activities cannot be properly performed without using internal communication to some extent. They also didn’t perceive internal communication as subordinate to any of the mentioned disciplines, except when management structures in a given organization place internal communication in a reporting line to one of them.

In the initial questionnaire most of the respondents stated that internal communication should be a part of the strategy and planning of the organizations and as such should be strategically approached, planned measured and reviewed. Some of the respondents see internal communication as the function in the organization in which various teams meet which is why the relationship among various fields (with internal communication) is close. In words of one of the respondents – the internal communication specialist should ideally be knowledgeable in multiple disciplines because only then can he/she be a valid partner to the management.

5.4. The relationship with other management disciplines – round 2

In the second round we offered various solutions to the question of position internal communication should hold in an organization. Quite expectedly (as can be seen from the description of round 1) most respondents agreed that internal communication is an interdisciplinary function integrating elements of human resources management, communication and marketing (M = 4,25). A relatively high level of agreement was connected to the view that IC is a part of public relations/corporate communication (M = 3,75). This was followed by statements that IC is a part of human resources management (M = 3,63) and IC is a management function at the same level as human resources management (M = 3,63). Slightly lesser agreement was with the statement that IC is a management function at the same level as public relations/corporate communication (M = 3,50). Even though the agreement with the statement that IC is a management function at the same level as marketing was slightly above average (M = 3,13), most of the respondents strongly disagreed with the idea that IC is a part of marketing (M = 2,00). These results reflect what round 1 pointed towards – there is a certain amount of overlap with human resources/corporate communication/public relations functions (although not so much with the marketing function), but it cannot be squeezed into any of those boxes and more and more deserves a box of its own.

5.5. Internal communication as a theory or practice based field – round 1

Even though most respondents stated that they believe internal communications is a technique based activity rather than a theory based field, almost all of them agreed that the adoption of some theoretical framework would be helpful to support its daily implementation. Cited framework mostly came from management and psychological theories. Some participants also mentioned language studies, media work, and marketing.

Mostly participants agreed that IC is mostly based in the field of general communication, but with a significant input from management and human resources sciences. Public relations was mentioned by only one participant, while two of the subjects concluded that internal communications was a completely practical field (one of them reducing IC sole to employee media). In spite of this agreement on the fact that internal communication is predominantly a practical field one respondent expressed an opinion according to which the discipline would gain added professional credibility from a widespread recognition of an underlying theoretical basis. As one respondent concluded, IC an inclusive discipline; theory alone will be no benefit if one is not able to communicate accordingly in leadership situations.

5.6. Internal communication as a theory or practice based field – round 2

After conclusions from the first round were formulated as statements for the second round, the participants’ levels of agreement were not a surprise. The two statements with highest levels of agreement included - IC is a practice based discipline and draws from knowledge of many sciences (M = 4,13) and - IC draws from communication science (M = 4,13). The idea that internal communication should lean on management science was next - IC draws from management science (M = 3,75), followed by the statement - IC as a practical field needs its own scientific foundations, researchers and studies (M = 3,50). Finally, according to most of the participants theories from psychology have the least amount of influence on internal communication - IC draws from psychology (M = 3,25). It seems that all of the mentioned fields have something to offer, but theory lacks any significant importance for every day operations. This general opinion is probably also somewhat dependent on the fact that all of the participants in this study were practitioners.

5.7. Knowledge and skills needed in internal communication practice – round 1

After we asked participants, in round 1, what are the most important knowledge and skills necessary for an internal communication professional, a number of different answers emerged: languages, writing and editing, basic psychology, organizing events, communicating and understanding different cultures, understanding of various media (online, video, print, etc.), understanding of research techniques, change management, project management, marketing, work with media, branding and design.
Most participants stated that among the most important are various communications skills such as writing, speaking, presenting, gathering and analysing data, having an understanding of web, video and editing processes in order to manage them.

One of the participants stated that internal communication is all about journalism knowledge and “layouters”, but most of the other respondents mentioned the importance of management skills, business skills and communication skills. One of them stated that a communication professional must possess thorough knowledge of the company’s business and market, coupled with very good listening skills if the outcome of internal communications processes is to be effective and useful.

5.8. Knowledge and skills needed in internal communication practice – round 2

In round 2 we then offered a list of various types of skills and knowledge and asked the participants to rate their importance on a scale from 1 to 5. Most of the skills were rated as highly important. The highest level of agreements and the highest overall score was reached for communication skills (designing, presenting, speaking, writing…) – (M = 4.88 and a modal value of 5). Other necessary skills were rated as follows: diplomacy and mediation skills (M = 4.63); general management knowledge: planning, organizing, executing, measuring (M = 4.50); strategic communication knowledge (audience segmentation, messaging, channel and media selection, communication audits) – (M = 4.50); networking skills (M = 4.50); strategic business knowledge (M = 4.25); intercultural skills (M = 4.13); project management knowledge (M = 4.00); journalism skills (M = 4.00); business skills (M = 3.88) and coaching skills (M = 3.88).

It seems that according to respondents various types of knowledge and skills are important and even though most of them concentrate around communication type of activities, there is still a number of areas to be covered.

5.9. Internal communication as a separate research field round 1 and 2

In round 1 most of the respondents (7 out of 9) stated that in their opinion internal communication is a separate field. Some of them said it can be separated from other communication disciplines (i.e. public relations, media relations, etc.), even though it can also be perceived as a part of the overall company communication efforts rather than a separate research field. One of the respondents elaborated IC is a separate field since the relationship between members of the organization is distinct from the nature of other stakeholder relationships – shareholders, customers, regulators, etc. Another respondent established that depending on the company, internal communication is located in either the “Communication” or “Human Resources” department. In most companies, it is not an independent department. However, on the scientific level, internal communication becomes a fully-fledged field of research.

In round 2 the respondents did not change their opinions. 6 participants (out of 8) stated internal communication is a separate field, while 2 stated it is not.

5.10. Current issues in the field – round 1

In the first round we asked what the current issues in internal communication were, according to our participants. The number of issues mentioned was quite big. Some of the respondents concentrated their answers around problems that internal communication seems to face in their organizational status, such as the independent nature of IC or the justification of their existence. One of the participants ascribed this to the limited objective and academic demonstration of internal communication contribution to organizational well being and fulfillment of organizational goals, as well as the lack of legal imperative compelling organizations to make provisions for internal communication. The same respondent also added that internal communication traditionally lacks a recognised qualification-based professional development path, which leads to low barriers to entry into the profession and a consequent lack of perceived professionalism.

Aside from these obvious problems that internal communication professionals are facing in the establishment of their profession, there are certain issues that are emerging and are effecting the way the IC function is being shaped. According to participants these issues included the digital native generation that started to join the job market and therefore bring a pervasive way of experiencing communication. Other issues that came up among respondents included credibility of leaders, engagement and employee loyalty, motivation, social media, cultural differences and interpretation of messages, communication of line managers/managers, web based social networking, communicating change, communicating during social crisis and issue management.
5.11. Current issues in the field – round 2
In the second round we offered those of the issues that were offered most frequently and asked the participants to state the level of their agreement with the importance of particular issues. The issues that were mentioned repeatedly round 1 also had the highest average and modal values. One of the hottest issues IC seems to involve new internal digital (social) media. This statement had a very high average of M = 4.75 and a modal value of 5. Change communication follows closely with an average level of agreement of M = 4.63. Topics of employee engagement, loyalty and motivation (M = 4.38); value for money (M = 4.0) and trust and credibility of leadership (M = 4.00) have relatively high scores as well. Issue of cultural diversity had an averages only slightly higher than 3.00 (M = 3.25) but a modal value of 4, meaning that opinions depend largely on the origin of the respondent. Outsourcing (even though it came up in round 1) did not receive very high scores in round 2 and so doesn’t prove to be a relevant issue in general.

What are the current issues in internal communication? (5 means agree and 1 means disagree)

<table>
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<th>Answer Options</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>4.75</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and credibility of leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee engagement, loyalty, motivation</td>
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<td>4.38</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.25</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auditing, budgeting, and return on investment measures</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Table 1]

5.12. Various names that describe the field – round 1 and 2
One of the first issues that we faced in trying to give a full overview of the field were various names that are used to describe the function. In round 1 we asked the participants to give us their insight into this question. Even though some terms were mentioned more frequently than others a relatively high number of optional terms emerged. The discipline was described as internal communication, internal communications or IC, or employee engagement. Occasionally it was described as internal marketing or internal public relations. Other names that were mentioned included business communications, employee communications, employee relations, relations with internal publics, corporate communications, leadership communications and management communications. We included the most frequently mentioned ones in round 2 and asked the respondents to state their agreement with each term (as the best description of the field) on a scale from 1 to 5.

[Figure 2]

It seems that the term internal communication (in its singular form) is by far the one that most respondents agree with (M = 4.50). Only other two terms that received a higher than average score were employee communication(s) (M = 3.75) and corporate communication(s) (M = 3.13). The term internal marketing had the lowest average (M = 2.13) and modal value (1).

8. Which of the following is the most appropriate name of the field? Please rate your answer, where 5 means agree and 1 means disagree.

5.13. Internal communication as a separate field in practice – round 1
In the first round we ended the questionnaire by asking our respondents whether internal communications are a part of human resources management, public relations, marketing, corporate communications or a practical field of their own? There seemed to be quite a high level
of agreement in the answers respondents gave that internal communication is a field of its own, since it requires some specific set of knowledge and skills or, at least, a specific combination of them. However, in words of one participant IC cannot exist by themselves since they can only be successful if they “live” the company. That’s why, no matter where they are placed from an organizational standpoint (being them with human resources, with communications or with top management) they must have a daily exchange with other areas (including operations) in order to be properly effective. In practical terms, internal communication is managed within human resources, corporate communications or another organisational unit according to the convenience of individual organisations.

So out of round 1 the idea that emerged was - even though there is a strong relationship that internal communications have with other departments (mostly human resources) - it should represent a separate field in practice i.e. a separate department in the organization.

5.14 Internal communication as a separate field in practice – round 2

Round 2, however, points to a different situation. In the questionnaire (in round 2) we offered four statements that defined internal communication as a part of marketing, human resources, a part of communication (corporate communication, public relations, integrated communication) and a field of its own. The statement that had a highest average and modal value (M = 4.25 and D = 4) was defining internal communication a part of communication. IC as a part of human resources followed (M = 3.88) and the idea that internal communication is a field of its own was only third (M = 3.63). Finally, there was a very high level of disagreement that IC should be a part of marketing (M = 1.88).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The Delphi study in internal communication in Europe presented in this article reveals a fuzzy picture of internal communication practice in Europe. It seems to be in adolescence. On one side, respondents describe internal communication as a management function in charge of communication (within organizations), as an interdisciplinary function integrating elements of human resources management, communication and marketing, while on the other side they see it in charge of information dissemination and management and production of internal media. On one side they give precedence to traditional communication skills over business and management skills, while on the other side they see employee engagement, loyalty and motivation, value for money, and trust and credibility as the hottest issues they are dealing with. On one side, as a research filed respondents perceive internal communication as an independent field, but on the other side as a business function as a part of communication department. While they are dealing with engagement, loyalty, motivation, trust and credibility, they give psychology the least amount of influence on their work. There is, however, an agreement on how to call the specialization: it is ‘internal communication’.

7. LIMITATIONS

The Delphi study on internal communication in Europe was done among leaders of the eleven members of the FEIEA. It is therefore a regional study and even as such it is not covering the whole continent. All respondents were from the EU member states and none from any country in Europe that is not a member of the EU. It is also an elite study that reports how representatives of national associations see the practice; it is impossible to generalize from their views to the whole practice.

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Making networks work: themes in the management of internal communication emerging from case studies of a multinational company, a national government department, and the European Commission

Jon White, PhD, FCIPR

ABSTRACT

This paper uses short case studies of internal communication in a multinational company, a national government and one of its departments, and an institution of the European Union to draw out themes regarding the management of internal communication.

Formal organisation structures enable but also close off possibilities for internal communication. Limitations are inherent in structures which can determine relationships, and filter or block communication between levels and divisions within organisations. A number of steps may be taken formally to try to overcome these limitations, through, for example, setting up project teams to work across functional areas within organisations, and suggestion schemes.

Networks – formal and informal -- overlaying or substituting for formal links, may be used to attempt to overcome structural limitations. Advances in the use of social media increase possibilities for networks to develop. However, created and emerging networks raise practical management questions, which this paper will explore before drawing out conclusions about how networks might be managed to achieve better internal communication and some implications for internal communication practice.
MAKING NETWORKS WORK

I have been struck, in work as a consultant, trainer and facilitator with a number of organisations, by the way in which organisations which are elaborate in their formal structure may develop networks to overlay the formal structure and try to overcome some of the barriers to communication inherent in the formal structure.

In this paper, I draw on experience with three organisations, complex in their structure, in which networks have been set up to work through complexity and to enable internal communication. The paper also refers to interviews with senior managers with each of the organisations who are responsible for approaches aiming to improve management of internal communication.

The three organisations are:

- Shell International, a global group of energy and petrochemicals companies with around 93,000 employees in more than 90 countries and territories
- The UK government’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (ministry of foreign affairs), which has 14,400 employees, two-thirds of them locally engaged (nationals of the country in which the UK has representation), in central offices and embassies and posts in 170 countries
- The European Commission, which has a staff of 34,000, working through 40 directorates-general, representations in the European Union’s member states and delegations elsewhere in the world

Their formal organisational structures, as are set out in organisation charts or organigrams, are complex, and their structures create challenges for those concerned with communication within the organisations. These challenges relate to geographical dispersion of parts of the organisation and to barriers which develop between divisions of the organisations and characteristics of the people who make up the organisation.

For example, in Shell International, the organisation is structured into Projects and Technology, Upstream Americas, Upstream International and Downstream business divisions, with support at the centre from Human Resources and Corporate Services, Finance, IT and Legal Services Departments. The company is also divided geographically with activities focussed on the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Africa and the Americas. Internal communication is managed from the centre, from the Human Resources and Corporate Services Unit.

In each organisation, it can be observed – and this is what led to my interest in the topic of this paper – that additional, less formal arrangements are made to enable internal communication and to function alongside and supplement formal arrangements.

All three organisations are working to overcome the difficulties created by the structures and geographical reach of the organisations, and feel that they have made mixed progress in dealing with them. Catherine Morris, head of internal communications at the FCO, says that “in terms of structure for internal communication, we still haven’t got it right” (interview, May 25, 2011), while Norman Jardine, responsible for developing approaches to internal communication for the European Commission from his position in the directorate general responsible for human resources, says that it is a struggle to make the network within the Commission established to guide internal communication “work as a network.”

Resources are allocated to internal communication management: Shell has eleven staff at the centre responsible for coordination of internal communication across the group, with links into human resources management. The moves into human resource management areas are recent, dating from the beginning of 2010. The group at the centre work with staff in hubs or business centres on internal communication, and much depends on the type of person working on internal communication, and the location from which they operate, in refineries or on oil platforms, for example.

The FCO has fifteen people at the centre working on internal communication, over 300 people across the organisation with ‘communication’ in their title, and heads of over 260 posts around the world are expected to take responsibility for internal communication.

At the European Commission, members of a network of internal communicators numbering around 300 meet every two months.

All three organisations are able to use a wide variety of channels – from face-to-face communication, through newsletters, emails and more or less developed intranets, to social media. Use of social media in these organisations has involved a certain amount of ‘play’ (as suggested by Baltatzis et al., 2008). The ‘underground,’ in the European Commission, has played with Yammer, the internal version of Facebook, with some valuable results for the organisation, for example in handling crisis situations. At Shell, experimentation with social media has allowed the group to see the real uses of, and opportunities provided by, social media, for chat – a “coffee corner” use for the exchange of gossip, conversation which is business-driven and of special interest to the group, and collaboration or knowledge-sharing. At the FCO, the office’s intranet is seen as open for development as little use is made of 90% of the intranet’s content. Security concerns can limit uses of social media within the organisation.

INFORMAL NETWORKS

In all three organisations, additional arrangements are made to help in the management of internal communication. The European Commission has a network of internal communicators, which is described as a network in name, where standards of practice differ across the 40 directorates-
general of the commission. An ‘underground’ active in internal communication also exists. Lessons can be learned from observing how this makes use of available communication techniques to achieve results for the organisation – assisting with collaboration and problem-solving.

Shell has formal arrangements in place for internal communication, in which types of channels follow business lines and structure, but to allow for the management of internal communication a network of individuals has been set up to contribute to internal communication, anchored to hub locations to provide a geographically based link to supplement links available through the formal structure.

Similarly, the FCO has tried to establish regional coordination of communication activities around the world, relying on communication experts/advisers in hub locations to give guidance to communication in geographical locations. In a recent development, training in internal communication has been added to the training provided to the office’s communication staff.

CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS
In all three organisations, the importance of internal communication is growing at a time when resources are limited or to be ever more tightly managed, and members of the organisations have to be ‘engaged,’ motivated and encouraged towards achieving more with less.

This leads to a willingness to explore additional organisational forms – groupings of people within the organisation structure (and in spite of it?) brought together to help make internal communication work for the organisation. The challenges of achieving more effective internal communication are recognised and all three organisations are clear-sighted about some of the blocks to more effective internal communication.

Paradoxically, the creation of additional networks to aid in internal communication management adds to the complexity involved. This presents, for those concerned with managing internal communication, some of the most challenging management problems – how, in face of increasing complexity, are modern organisations going to adjust, define and decide on the problems they face, and make progress towards dealing with them.

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Internal communication strategies as a way of restoring trust in organizations after crises?

Christine Hambursin
Catherine Coyette

ABSTRACT
This research focuses on the internal communication strategies put in place by management to influence employee’s organizational trust after crisis situations.

Today, organizations develop in an unpredictable world and regularly go though crises of diverse origins. In these crisis situations, employees are very seldom considered as priority stakeholders. However, these actors are a central pillar of the organization. It is the employee’s constant investment that allows the running of the company to continue during the crisis. This is why this study analyzes the notion of trust and its articulation with internal communication. The aim of this research is to propose an analysis grid taking into account formal methods of communication put in place by organizations in order to rehabilitate distinct types of trust: relational and institutional trust.

The corpus of this study is composed of three organizations from the private sector (with an important hierarchic structure), three organizations from the public sector and three private organizations with small structures (closer to hierarchic structures found in family businesses). All these organizations come from Belgium.

This research results in an analysis grid which summarizes for each type of trust and for each type of organization (from the public or private sector) the formal means of communication which are suitable to restore internal trust after a crisis situation according to those responsible for communication.

In addition, this research opens up an area for a subsequent analysis which would study the effective efficiency of these policies on employee trust in organization and employee’s view on the communication strategies put in place by the organization.

KEY WORDS: Employee trust, internal communication strategies, organizational culture, crisis

1. INTRODUCTION
Today, organizations develop in an unpredictable world and regularly go though crises of diverse origins. The subject of crises has been the object of study and definition by many researchers (such as Lagadec and Libaert). We will follow a step by step approach and define a crisis as a process by which an initial event attracts attention to a set of dysfunctions in the system. It is therefore the interaction of a set of elements that creates the state of crisis (Roux-Dufort, 2003). In crisis situations, employees are very seldom considered as priority stakeholders. However, these actors are a central pillar of the organization. It is the employees’ constant investment that allows the running of the company to continue during the crisis. We find that the trust employees have in their organization’s board and management contributes to the smooth running of the business before, during and after a crisis. As communication has a preponderant role in rehabilitating trust, particularly in crisis situations, we follow the thinking of Visart (2010) when he insists that professionals work on image restoration.

It is for this reason that this particular research focuses on the internal communication strategies put in place by management to influence the employee’s organizational trust after a crisis. Our study is based on the hypothesis that communication strategies developed by Belgian organizations help increase employees’ trust. Our aim is to develop the comprehension of trust mechanisms put in place by organizations from the public and private sector.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
2.1. Different approaches to crises
It is possible to underline two different conceptions of crises: one on the one hand those who define crisis as the emergence of a sudden event (“école évenementielle”) and on the other hand those who apprehend a crisis as a process (“école processuelle”). Our feeling is that the definition of crisis as an unpredictable event, whose probability of appearance is low but whose consequences are not negligible, is a reduced vision of the phenomenon. We thus follow the processual school as defined by Roux-Dufort previously.

Thus crisis are not static, they have alternative periods of long and short phases. We can underline four specific periods (Libaert, 2005). During the first stage (preliminary phase), external early warning signs can emerge. During the second phase (acute), the crisis brutally erupts, this is followed by a “chronic phase” when the crisis reaches its climax and its mediatization is starting to decline gradually. The final phase (healing) sees the disappearance of the crisis in the media coverage. However, crises never totally disappear; periods of appeasement give way to a status quo or a profound mutation of the organization’s structure and/or management.

Researchers have also put in place different typologies. These typologies are often considered as rigid as they reduce the comprehension of the crisis to a certain set of elements. Therefore...
we will only refer to these typologies briefly in the presentation of our results. We have chosen to follow Roux-Dufort’s typology (2003) which is based on triggering factors, with events classified following their nature and origin. Roux-Dufort thus establishes four families of crisis based on their nature. The first category distinguishes crises of technical or economical and social or human nature. The second follows the fact that the crisis’s origin is internal or external to the organization.

2.2. Trust in a complex society

Trust is a concept that can be related not only to a person or an organization but also to the general context in which it is situated. This aligns with Sheppard and Tuchinsky (1996) who emphasize the transition from a society where control use to be vertical to a society where control is exercised horizontally. This means that in network organizations, control is not only based on an authoritative figure. So in exchanges and interactions, individuals are in situations where formal controls and sanctions are no longer present; they have to develop negotiating capacities. This transition from formal to informal social mechanisms leaves a space for trust to emerge.

The apprehension of trust is not easy as it is a complex notion and multi-dimensional concept which has lead to different theoretic developments. In a long term relations, it is linked to a social state prior to the engagement but it can be related to a particular situation linked to a course of action or to an objective of relational nature.

Generally, trust can be defined as «the will of one party to allow itself be vulnerable to the actions of another party, based on the expectation that the other party will follow actions that are important for me [us] without any necessary form of control or supervision» (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). Other more precise definitions have been set, notably by Lewicki and Bunker (1996), who tried to understand the ways in which trust develops. Following an interpersonal vision of trust, they put in place a three stage model of trust: dissuasive trust (calculus-based trust), trust based on knowledge and trust based on identification. “Dissuasive trust” is based on the confidence that a person’s behavior is consistent. People will perform actions as they are afraid of the consequences if they do not follow the given instructions. In this case, the motivating factor is more the fear of punishment than the promise of reward. “Knowledge-based” trust takes its origin from the predictability of another person’s behavior. It is because we know the other person that we can anticipate his subsequent behavior. Here information and communication play an important role (Shapiro, 1992) as it is through the information we have on other people that we can predict their behaviors and actions. However, trust is not ruined if the behavior we anticipated is not correct as we can sometimes explain why it is not coherent with the behavior we initially anticipated (Lewicki, & Bunker, 1995, p.121). Finally, on the level of “Identification-based trust”, trust is possible as individuals understand and appreciate other people. These authors find it is the highest level of trust as it is close to a certain harmony between individuals. Thus, as trust evolves in time, it moves from a calculated-based trust to an identification-based trust.

However, other authors such as the economist Williamson (1993) only consider one of these aspects as they see trust as based on a calculation of interests in a particular situation. Individuals are thus motivated by the perspective of maximizing their benefits.

For Mangematin (1999) this vision is not sufficient as he distinguishes the notion of trust and interest. He finds interest does exist but it does not necessarily exist a priori. He thus postulates that trust is dependent on its mode of construction. He develops two kinds of systems which produce trust; relational and institutional. The first one is based on “background expectations” (Schutz, 1962) common routines which can help us adopt certain attitudes in daily life and help us create a common vision between members of a same community. Secondly, with institutional trust, individuals accept to follow a certain number of defined rules and submit to a form of superior authority. Mangematin also points out two distinct dimensions of trust in coordination. On the one hand, “contractual trust”, where trust rests on the execution of a set of engagements following the signature of a contract. On the other hand, “organizational trust” which is based on an implicit engagement and on “a collective comprehension of engagements which are created through coordination and effective cooperation in work situations” (Thuderoz, 1999, p.50). We must emphasize that these two types of trusts are not mutually exclusive. To manage organizational trust as a system of coordination, implicit and explicit incentives must be put in place. We can say that both contractual and organizational trust are sources of institutional trust. Furthermore, it is possible to highlight the research undertaken by Tyler and Kramer (1995) which is more synthetic as it makes the distinction between two kinds of trust: rational and social. “Rational trust” is based on the calculation of the probability of new cooperation. This is linked to the fact that when trust decreases, individuals do not want to take too many risks and they ask for more protection against potential threats. They can also ask for sanction procedures to defend their interests. However, in the “social” conception of trust, trust dispositions have an important role in collaborative behaviors. Individuals are then capable of cooperating and interacting without exchanges being instrumentalized. Here, it is the identification to the collective group that is important. Individuals are able to help and exchange with each other without necessarily having instrumental thoughts behind their exchanges (Kramer, & Tyler, 1996).
To a certain extent organizational trust can be linked to the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995). Without developing this aspect extensively, we can say that organizational trust can be linked to contractual engagements where rules are established between actors who are meant to collaborate. Signing a contract with another entity (i.e. an organization) can be at the origin of a feeling of trust as the organization also engages itself to what is written in the contract. But it is also linked to a more subtle type of contract, the psychological contract. A psychological contract is defined as “an individual's belief in mutual obligations between that person and another party such as an employer” (Rousseau, & Tioriwalla, 1998, p.679). The employee will feel that if he respects his side of the contract, the organization will, in return, respect its obligations. When this kind of contract is fulfilled it can contribute “independently and more substantially to the prediction of trust” (Rousseau, & Tioriwalla, 1998, p.681).

This particular study will focus on the distinction made between relational and institutional trust (Zucker, 1986). It will be situated at the different levels of trust: to an individual, to a group or to a larger organization. This can be explained as it is possible to link institutional trust to the organization (“macro” level) and relational trust to an individual, a group or the organization itself (“méso” level, as defined by Simmel, 1908 as cited in Pybourdin, 2010, p.60).

However, in times of constant contestation and contradiction (Catellani, 2010) it would not be realistic or conceivable to consider that trust is the prevailing factor in employee and organizational relations. This is why we find it important to present its articulation with distrust.

2.2.1. A step towards the apprehension of distrust in organizations

Distrust is not considered by many authors. However for certain researchers, it is one of the twelve central dimensions that characterize relationships (Welch, 2006). For others, like Gambetta (1988), the concepts of trust and distrust are mutually exclusive. This author does not envisage the possibility that these concepts coexist in a same relationship. However for Lewicki (2003), they can both be present in organizational relations and executives and managers must take them into account. In “La société de la méfiance”, Algan and Cahuc (2007) highlight that trust is an evolving concept, it is not fixed once and for all. So external events can have a significant impact on how it evolves. This concurs with the position of Welch (2006) who defines “zone of approvals” as spaces where levels of trust and distrust evolve and adjust during time and encountered experiences. These concepts can thus be conceptualized at the same time and can exist together in these zones of approval of a relationship (Welch, 2006, p.151).

It is the current general decline in trust which pushes us to take into account distrust, notably as the number of organizations using communications to reassure their public is increasing. This is an important element as we are at the heart of a double movement, on the one hand organizations are interlocked in society which exercises pressure on them and on the other hand there is a movement of contestation coming from internal stakeholders, mainly employees (Charpentier, 2010). Following Mintzberg (1982), the organization is a complex arrangement, open to outside influences and in interaction with this external environment. Thus the structure of the organization itself can be influenced by the environment; we thus qualify the organization as “contingent” (Mintzberg, 1982). This means it is important for management to be able to satisfy internal needs but also adapt to the external environment. This movement can also be linked to the fact that we have moved from an “owner” based communication, mostly based on monologue (Adary, 2010) to an era of dialogue and shared communication. Taking into account the external environment also means that different kinds of social movements should be considered as important. Factors like the transition of communication must be integrated in the management’s strategy. These strategies should integrate a communication based on dialogue to regain employee trust after a crisis situation. Especially as trust is vital in crisis situations and is more vulnerable than in non crisis situations (Kramer, 1996 p.281). This follows Mishra (1996) when he states that trust has an impact on the decentralization of decisions, on undistorted communication and collaboration (Mishra, 1996, p.263). In return, these aspects also exercise an influence on trust. Trust is thus essential in situations where an organization’s procedures and decisions no longer follow formalized procedures. It is also important to coordinate individuals and their actions by reducing the time and costs linked to formal contracts and by favoring the development of free initiatives to face these situations. Moreover, trust can help compensate the lack of available information and help decision making in these situations, it is thus particularly important in crisis situations.

2.3. A theoretical approach of internal communication to establish internal communication strategies

Our theoretic position leads us to establish a link between organizational culture and internal communication. In a systemic approach, de Saint Georges (1993) distinguishes three types of cultures. The first is the “societal culture” which means that the organization “is a social fact and is included in a particular cultural context”. This joins a factor we have already discussed: the organization is influenced by the general social environment. Secondly, the “organizational culture” that is generally known as the organization’s cultural dynamic, “un lieu de régulation du système spécifique de confrontation culturelle que constitue toute entreprise, confrontation qui se manifeiste par des comportements, des actes de communications”. Thirdly the “project-culture” which is the result of the management’s discussions, a set of values and voluntary actions put in place by management with the aim of having an influence on employees. According to Salamanca (2003), a group’s culture is intrinsically related to its communicational dynamic (verbal and nonverbal aspects). Thus culture is not a strategic phenomenon, it is an organizational fact (“un fait organisationnel”) which integrates elements of formal and informal orders. For Sainsaulieu (1977), the culture is defined as the members of the organization’s will to obtain a general coherence even though each member is attached to a particular subgroup. This research focuses on this last aspect, project-culture, by highlighting the different means and strategies created by management to influence organizational culture and try to restore internal trust in crisis situations.
By developing a specific project culture, we presuppose that management tries to act on the internal cultural dynamic (organizational communication), and thus on the existing social and organizational link. It is by acting on the social link that the management can also try to influence relational and institutional trust.

To put in place a specific project culture, management has to follow a particular strategy of communication. In this respect, it is possible to underline three theoretical approaches of internal communication: internal operational communication, integrative communication and organizational communication (De Saint Georges, Dutertre 2002). The operational dimension takes into account the set of informative process and mechanisms whereas the integrative dimension includes the organization’s actions aimed at motivation and maintaining internal cohesion.

These first two aspects are of a more instrumental approach as they are constituted by all the informative procedures and mechanisms such as instructions, orders and directives which also try to motivate and maintain internal cohesion. However, these two distinctions are not sufficient (De Saint Georges, 1993). To be complete, they must be taken into a wider group: organizational communication. This approach leads us to the definition of internal communication proposed by Salamanca (2003, p.58) as “the contextualized behaviors and opinions in interaction, which make the organization a system of communication”.

At this stage, it is important to emphasize that this research is limited to the identification of management strategies, we will not measure the actual impact that these strategies have on workers and their internal trust. We will primarily focus on formal strategies developed in organizations. This includes formal descendant communications which go from the top management to the lower levels of the organization. It includes the transmission of orders but also the creation and communication of the organization’s strategic objectives. As this kind of communication is often abundant and excessive (Lafrance, & Lambotte, 2008) it is important to handle it correctly. This study will also take into account vertical ascendant communications which go from the lower levels of the organization to the top management. When management establishes this kind of communication, they notably try to give value to employees and their objective is to reduce potential internal tension.

When deciding on a strategy of communication, management has to choose the means of communication which will be most adapted to the strategy that needs to be transmitted. Internal communication media can be divided into different categories: oral, written and electronic (Bouckaert, 2011). Managers are the most likely to use oral communications which include different kinds of meetings (informative, dialogue, webconferences, etc.). We follow the distinction between informative meetings which are essentially between services, destined to disseminate collective information and are of “top-down” nature. They are mainly organized to maintain cohesion between employees around a specific project. On the other side, dialogue meetings are of a “bottom-up” nature and aimed at exchanging information, establishing a dialogue between different members and encouraging people to express their views and opinions (Bouckaert et al., 2011). Written supports include in-house journals, flash info or posters and notice boards. Finally, electronic media assemble mails, Intranet, webzines, blogs, wikis, etc. Edelman (2008, as cited in Ruck, 2010, p.49) makes the distinction between blogs which are more open and linked to communication, wikis which are an open mean but linked to collaboration and newsletters which are more controlled. We personally choose to link newsletters to information (rather than communication). Mails are an easy means of communicating but should be used parsimoniously. The aim is not to create an overload which would result in employees receiving more mails than they can actually read (Ruck, 2010, p.129).

We develop these specific categories means of communication in our analysis grid as we will use these different supports as indicators in our study.

To conclude this theoretical setting, we can say that highlighting the relation between organizational culture, project-culture and strategies of internal communication is essential in our study of trust and constitutes the basis of our theoretic and interpretative reasoning. Salamanca (2003, p.58) already proposed a relationship between these concepts by saying that the “organization’s culture can be considered as a regulator of internal communication and thus of collective action”. This theoretical setting leads us to recall our general objective in this research. The aim is to propose an analysis grid taking into account formal methods put in place by the organizations studied in order to re-establish relational and institutional trust.

We will test the following general hypothesis: in the public and private organizations (of different sizes) analyzed, the management puts in place specific strategies of communication after a crisis situation with the aim of restoring internal trust.

To measure the existence of these strategies, we have created a grid of indicators based on the theory and literature presented previously. This grid will help us analyze the different types of organizations and the existence or absence of these specific internal strategies. We use the term “strategy” as referring to the strategies which incorporate the different indicators we present hereafter. These indicators are based on internal strategies of communication but essentially on the communication means used in organizations. Each indicator (i.e. mean of communication) will be used for a particular type of trust (see Appendix - figure 1).
3. METHODS AND GRID OF ANALYSIS

Our corpus is composed of nine Belgian organizations; the selection was limited to companies that had experienced a crisis. Six organizations came from the private sector; three had an important hierarchical structure and three from private organizations with small structures (closer to the hierarchical structures found in family businesses). The final three were from the public sector. All the organizations studied had undergone one or more crises; all these crises did not threaten the existence of the organization but affected its management and functioning.

This methodological preconception in choosing our case studies is justified in this research as we consider the distinction, between small and big structures of the private or public sector, as essential in the analysis of trust. This is because the kind of trust and its variation will also change following the type of structure in which it is situated. For our case study, we made semi-directive interviews with the people responsible for internal communication. All the people contacted did not have the title of “manager of internal communication” (as the function did not always exist in the studied organizations) but in reality they were all responsible for these tasks.

In a second stage, a content analysis (Mucchielli, 2006; Bardin, 2009) of these interviews was undertaken to distinguish the importance given to communication and to internal trust. But also to identify communication strategies put in place in the organizations and the reasons that lead to the creation of these strategies. The entire interviews were transcribed again and were submitted to a content analysis to discern the existence of the different indicators we put in place. It is important to underline that the people interviewed had no knowledge of this grid or the indicators it contained; they were thus not influenced by its structure or components.

We identified six indicators on the basis of our theoretical review. The presence or absence of these indicators lead us to the comprehension of communication strategies existing to restore trust.

To begin the analysis, we found it was important to identify the general context in which the organizations were situated. We pointed out the organization’s sector of activity and the kind of crises they had gone through.

The first indicator, we identified was the existence of a crisis cell. We found that the existence of this cell is a proof that the management considered it important to put in place strategies to manage crisis situations, their consequences and implications.

Our following indicators are linked to the different formal means of communication. We distinguish four subcategories: oral supports, written communications, audiovisual communication and electronic communication.

Our second indicator thus focuses on the oral means of communication which includes group meetings, individual meetings, information meetings, dialogue meetings, seminars and team buildings. Our third indicator regroups written communication such as notices, house-organs, flash info (when printed) and annual and financial reports. Our fourth indicator reflects audiovisual communication: phoned house-organs and corporate videos and internal corporate television. Our fifth indicator refers to electronic communication with emails, the Intranet, newsletters, webzines, organizational blogs, wikis and other internal social media. Our last indicator does not refer to a means of communication but to methods and surveys that assess internal workers’ opinions. During our interviews, we were particularly attentive to the importance managers attach to the results of these surveys. We find that if managers use their employee’s opinion in the elaboration and selection of tools of communication to restore trust, we can more easily advance that formal strategies exist after crisis situations and that they primarily focus on employees.

The structure of our grid justifies itself by the will to discern the internal context (the existence of crisis management measures with the presence of a crisis cell, formal means of communication) and the external environment (sector of activity and general crises) in which it evolves.

These indicators will help to identify the degree of formality of communication in the studied organizations and assess the presence and the use of these supports during the final phase of a crisis (healing phase).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Identifying the general context, sector of activities and crisis situations

Each of the studied organizations had gone through a crisis. We will start by presenting the three organizations of the public sector. The local town council of Namur has had no direct impact from the financial crisis of 2008 but is actually going through a more general crisis which has touched different towns in the South of Belgium (this started four years ago). This means the town of Namur has a recurrent deficit of four million Euros each year. It also experienced strike movements two years ago when it tried to reduce some of its workers’ social privileges. Following Roux-Dufort’s typology, we can thus qualify these crises of economic crises as of external occurrence (budget in deficit) and of social internal crisis (reduction of social privileges).

Secondly, the Namur hospital (CHR) was merged with another entity in 1992. The impact on the employees was clear and required a particular management of internal communication. Following the spokesman, the crises that the hospital has been through were of minor importance and linked to specific changes in the organization and management of daily tasks. We must not forget that crises are inherent to a hospital’s reason of being and thus are incorporated more or less naturally in daily tasks. We can qualify these crises to be of minor importance and of social and human nature.
The third public organization is the group “SNCF” (Belgian public transport) which has seen goods transport decrease since the general economic crisis. There has also been a fall in the number of people taking public transport (from 5.8% to 1.5%). The group also went through an important crisis in February 2010 when two trains collided (commonly known as the “Busigen catastrophe”). This collision was mainly due to a problem of coordination and communication between different entities of the holding. Internal communication played an important role during this period, especially towards the families and friends of the victims who were SNCF workers. The first crisis mentioned is a crisis of economic nature and external occurrence and the second is a human crisis of internal occurrence.

We will now focus on the three organizations of private sector with big structures. The first one is an insurance group, “AG Insurance”, which was directly hit by the economic crisis of 2008. The group was previously linked to a Belgian bank which was bought by a French company during the crisis. The group was thus split and the insurance sector became independent. Following Roux-Dufort, this crisis can be qualified as an economic crisis of external occurrence. AG Insurance also went through an incident which could have built up to become a potential crisis. Indeed the damages caused by recent climatic conditions (storms, flooding, etc) caused an increase in client’s demands and requests. The fact that the group had the finances to repay claimants meant the situation did not turn into a crisis for the company but they had to reassure their clients that they would follow and answer each of their requests. This crisis can be qualified as a social crisis of external occurrence.

The second big private organization is the group “Solvay Information Service” (SIS) who, following the economic crisis, went through a decline in its activities and had to cut its budgets. The group is currently experiencing important internal changes following the sale of its department active in the pharmaceutical sector. This sale forced the group to revalue the workforce it effectively needed. This lead to a significant number of redundancies. SIS had never experienced collective redundancies since its creation; it is thus at an important stage in its existence. We can talk of a crisis of social impact with an external origin.

The second small private company is “Dassy&fils”, active in the industrial sector (coil winding and electricity). They are currently reducing their activities but there have been no redundancies to date. This is also an economic crisis of external occurrence.

The last organization is “Eaton Gembloux”, specialized in global technology in diversified power management solutions. Following the economic crisis, the group had to envisage redundancies on its plants, and also in Gembloux (town in the South of Belgium). Now the group has to watch and reduce expenses and also reduce its reliance on temporary staff. This is also an economic crisis of external occurrence with social consequences.

4.2 The presence of indicators

There is no presence of our first indicator, the existence of a cell of crisis management, in the three organizations of the public sector. It is also the case in the small structures (CEPS, Dassy). However, the crisis management cell does exist in organizations of larger scale (AG, SIS and Caterpillar). Eaton, a small organization linked to a larger group, follows directives put in place by its headquarters but has no cell on the site itself. Thus our first indicator is present in a third of the studied organizations. This result already partially contradicts our initial hypothesis as all the organizations do not have a planned structure of management in view of restoring trust during and after a crisis situation.

Focusing on our second indicator, we can see that oral communication is present after a crisis period in our sample. All organizations put in place reunions (informative or dialogue based). In the small organization, Dassy, most reunions take the form of informal meetings, mostly not planned. Once again, Eaton has a particular way of functioning: their strategy of communication, which is heavily formalized, continues in and after periods of crisis through global reunions (“All employee meetings” four times a year, department reunions: “Employee Roundtable Meetings” and management reunions “Management Staff Meetings”. In the larger organizations, such as AG Insurance, information reunions are put in place to teach managers how to use and channel information and directives during and after crisis situations. We can thus see that following the structure (large or small), and the company to which the organization is attached, reunions are considered in different ways. Oral means of communication linked to new technologies (telerunion, visioconference, web-conference) are used during and after crisis by only two large scale organizations in
the private sector (SIS and Caterpillar) and one private company of smaller size (Eaton). We must note once again that this can be explained by the fact that this organization is linked to a group of larger size. The public sector does not use this means of communication. However, when they are present these tools are not used especially for the community of workers on the site but to communicate and reassure managers, the direction board and external stakeholders. Seminars and team buildings are only used by 1% of our sample. Only the group of public transport, SNCF, mentioned a party organized for employees just after the crisis as a way of maintaining cohesion and to show that the company was maintaining a united stand with regard to the crisis. In the Namur hospital (CHR), conferences and seminars are key moments of the organization’s internal life. These conferences are put in place mainly for doctors but nurses are invited and encouraged to participate. The presence of both these entities is a sign of mutual cohesion and a token of trust in the work accomplished by the hospital’s entire workforce. In the SNCF group, they are diverse tools that we link to the restoration of trust: New Year speeches and gatherings after events like the “Buzingen catastrophe”. After a particular crisis, like this one, the person responsible of each department, addressed a message to the employees of his unit, sent a written message and organized a meeting bringing together the executive manager, the head of departments and the victims’ family and friends. These meetings are vital as they are a way of showing the implication of management and head of units to workers who do not necessarily have access to computers and other electronic messages.

All organizations of larger structure in the private sector organized reunions after crises. At AG Insurance, they took the form of meetings and assemblies of workers in the presence of the CEO and managers, video conference were put in place to help workers keep in touch with these meetings if they could not attend. At SIS, following the announcement of internal reorganization, regional reunions were planned during which workers had the opportunity to talk and give their opinion, ask questions and help clarify questions and doubts. The person interviewed at SIS underlined that regional meetings were an easy and good way of communicating as each worker could express himself in his own language, which facilitates direct dialogue and exchanges between management and workers. In the same vein, Caterpillar mentioned a paradoxical means of communication to restore internal trust: press conferences. As the Charleroi site of Caterpillar (town in the South of Belgium) does not sell any products as it is a pole of production of a larger group, press conferences were aimed less at reassuring potential clients than restoring employee trust. They maintain that employees are their priority target for this kind of communication and not external stakeholders. We can thus say that it is an external means of communication that is used to restore internal trust.

As we have described the presence of our second indicator, we will now show how it can be related to certain type of trust (institutional or relational following Mangematin’s typology). At first, we proposed the hypothesis that the entire means of oral communication contributed to the restoration of relational trust in organizations. However, our interviews and analysis showed that we have to nuance this hypothesis. The reunions put in place, by SNCF or AG Insurance for example, can help restore not only institutional trust but also relational trust. As relational trust is essentially interpersonal it can mainly be restored by interactions between managers and employees. However, the mentioned conferences and regional meetings can also contribute to the restoration of institutional trust.

Regarding our third indicator, written forms of communication, the administration of Namur is the only organization that does not use written communication during “normal” or crisis periods. We must underline that it is not possible to make this generalization to all Belgian town councils. As shown in a previous study (Hamburzin, 2007), town councils in other cities do develop written means of communication and they are used during crisis situations. The hospital, CHR, uses a variety of written communication (house-organs, board notices, leaflets, printed flash info) which is quite different from the public service, SNCF, which communicates mainly through special articles in its house-organ during crisis situations (it does not use board notices at all in these situations). In 2010, it even published a special edition of its house-organ, “Connect”, containing 16 pages on the value of work done by employees and all the departments that had to face the “Buzingen” crisis. The central message was “if technique fails, you can still trust railway workers”. We must underline that the pride of being a railway worker which is profoundly linked to the job was severely undermined following this crisis. This message was a way of enhancing the value of their work again. In the private sector, the two smaller entities (Dassy and CEPS) do not use formal means of written communication which is not the case of Eaton (linked to a multinational group which imposes the adoption of an internal corporate strategy). They do not have their own house-organ and only receive the corporate house-organ from their head office. However, they communicate through notice boards situated at strategic places (a room where many people pass). They sometimes print flash info and put them on notice boards. In the larger private structures, a variety of communication means are used from house-organ to electronic messages.

We can say that during crisis situations, these organizations use the means of communication that exist in their company (mainly house-organs) and insert special articles and messages related to the crisis.

At the beginning of the study, we linked all the formal written means of communication to institutional trust. Following our analysis, we can confirm this hypothesis, as written supports can less easily help to develop relational trust as they are not directly linked to interpersonal exchanges. However, we do not exclude the fact that employees who have just read or become aware of a written message can discuss and exchange on this topic. Moreover these means of communication do not take into account ascendant communication which also reduces the possibility of being in contact with managers and thus potentially developing this kind of trust.
The results of our fourth indicator show us that video based messages were only mentioned by 2% of our sample. A company of the public sector, SNCB, and Eaton, which once again received communication directly from its headquarters who diffuses the same message to all the company’s sites.

Contrarily, electronic based communication is used in 66% of our sample. The two small companies, Dassy and CEPS, do not use this means (they only use mails to communicate), nor does the town council of Namur. The administration justifies this choice by saying that most people employed by the administration would not have access to this kind of information anyway. In their particular sector of activity, they find that using electronic based messages would be a factor of discrimination as most workers do not have access to computers. The other companies mostly refer to the use of Intranet and electronic newsletters. Certain companies even have special inserts for the “News of the day” or “Questions and Answers” where they notably include the results of discussions during general workers assemblies. These spaces are given priority during crisis situations to insert visible and quick information related to the situation. This is an effective use of existing tools as we know that the adjustment of tools to the specificities of the context is an essential factor of their efficacy (Bartoli, 1990, p.103).

The fifth indicator of our grid also underlines that social media such as wikis and blogs are not used by organizations. This can be explained as the acceptance and use of new technologies is inevitably linked to the place and meaning that users give to these technologies (Bobillier, Debois, & Retour, 2006, p.250). We can also put forward the hypothesis that these media are not related or connoted as “serious” media and thus are not used to channel information during crisis situations. Moreover, the organization wants information to be reassuring, transparent and credible, particularly at this time.

These results are contradictory to our hypothesis as they show that Intranet, newsletters and webzines are mostly used by our sample to restore an institutional based trust. In contradiction to blogs and wikis who could contribute, if they were used, to institutional but also relational trust (Klein, 2007). However, these means of communication can still be delicate to handle correctly as they can be seen as an opportunity for some individuals but as a constraint for others (Bobillier et al., 2006, p.261) as they require new procedures and particular skills. It is not only a new mean of communication, it involves a new way of communicating by moving from a diffusion of information strategy to a strategy based more interaction (Libaert, 2008, p112).

Our final indicator points out that 66% of our sample uses methods of evaluation of their workers opinions and satisfaction. At the Namur hospital, these surveys are put in place by a specific service ("Quality service"). According to the person interviewed, they are aimed at "bringing to light the deficiencies in management and finding solutions or bringing a higher quality to the work and work environment". At SNCB, the surveys are mainly qualitative and created by an external firm. However, as the group SNCB is part of a larger entity (which includes the Holding, Infrabel and SNCB) these results are not always well processed and used. In the larger private sector the companies, AG and SIS, have annual opinion surveys including specific questions that can help the communication department assess its performance. Those companies attached to larger groups, such as Caterpillar and Eaton, also use opinion surveys which are the same for all sites and the entire workforce, regardless of the events that certain branches of the company may have experienced. In the companies that set up these methods of evaluation, only Caterpillar and Eaton mentioned that these results could be used to assess employee’s trust (in its institutional form). Once again, this can be linked to the fact that these organizations are part of a larger multinational group. At SNCB, AG and SIS, the results are aimed at changing the strategies of internal communication but not directly the trust related to these strategies. It is interesting to note that at the hospital, the results of the survey are not used or even requested by the communication department as the survey was “independently” put in place by another department. This lack of coordination and communication, if improved, could help enhance the communication strategies present in this public organization. Our hypothesis is thus valid for two organizations of our sample (Caterpillar and Eaton), the two linked to multinational groups, as they are the only ones who use the results of the surveys in view of restoring internal trust.

Following the crisis situations that the company had gone through, AG Insurance received a prize for the positive politic of internal communication they had put in place. After the crisis, Eaton sent a survey to measure internal satisfaction. The results were not good as they showed deterioration in group relations with a significant decrease in management trust even though this is the only company that had a clear and concrete plan of action specifically aimed at increasing organizational trust on their particular Belgian site. We can thus question the effect of this general strategy of communication destined to the entire locations of the company, as it has already been shown that individuals give more value to messages addressed to them personally as opposed to messages destined to a group of “similar” individuals (Shirky, 2008, p.87). The message should thus be adapted locally. Managers should also ensure that the message they are delivering is coherent with their local strategy. This also means choosing an appropriate spokesman who will be referred to during the entire crisis (Helderich, 2010, p.9).

5. DISCUSSION
To conclude, our first indicator, the presence of a crisis management cell, is valid for 44% of our sample, all size and sector considered. Regarding our second indicator, oral based communication, half the organizations use oral reunions (discussion and information) and individual meetings. Meetings via telephone, videoconferences and web conferences are less used (around 33,3% of our sample). However team buildings and seminars have the least success. In our third indicator, we can note that one means of communication was never mentioned in our sample: annual and
financial reports. For our fourth indicator, we can say that flash information and house-organs are the main means of communication used in crisis situations. The use of electronic communication, our fifth indicator, is ambivalent. These results are interesting as usually the Internet is seen as one of the most used tool in public relations (Holtz, 2002, p.xi) and is the media towards which stakeholders will go first to seek information, particularly during a crisis situation (Libaert, 2008, p.128). This must be taken into account as valuable information on the crisis can be available through this media. If used correctly it can decrease a certain pressure for constant need for information coming from the different stakeholders. This tool also enables the organization to deliver immediate communication which is necessary to maintain stakeholder confidence (Perry, Taylor, & Doerfel, 2003, p.223). In our sample, 66% use the Intranet in crisis situations, 56% mention the use of newsletters. The use of the Intranet is interesting in times of crisis as it gives the organization the opportunity to give employees information on the crisis and also include relevant links that give additional content (Holtz, 2002, p.332). However, we find emails may be difficult to use in crisis situation as they are “not the optimal medium for conveying delicate or complicated information” (White et al., p.7). In our sample, wikis, blogs and webzines are totally absent from these strategies. However, wikis can also be an interesting tool as they can develop a space for interaction and discussions on a particular subject. They are not only used to exchange information but to create a relation, this link is as important for employees in crisis situations (Beaudouin, 2002). If wikis and blogs were used, they could enable employees to exchange information and asks for clarifications on the crisis (Cardon, & Level, 2009, p.65). However, these tools are not always easy to control, even if the organization chooses a moderator, they could be a way of exchanging counter or biased-information. As they are not only used by individuals to deliberate but also to publically give an opinion (Flichy, 2008, p.165). These opinions would not necessarily follow or approve the organization’s strategy or actions. Managers must not forget that nothing guarantees that employees will necessarily be on the side of the organization (Bartolomé, 1989, p.137) during a crisis.

Our final indicator, related to methods of evaluation is present in 66% of our sample. However, we find that they are relevant for only two of the nine organizations studied, as only two mention the use of the subsequent results to specifically assess organizational trust. To conclude this study, we will compare organizations of the private and public sector. Half the organizations in our sample have a crisis management cell but we find an important difference between results in the private and public sector. In the public sector, organizations have a formal composition put in place in administrations in general but they cover different kinds of situations and are not specifically created for crisis situations. It is not the case in private organizations where 66% of organizations have a crisis cell. Only the two companies of small size do not have one. This cell exists in the other small organization, linked to a multinational, as it is imposed by the general headquarters.

In formal means of communication, oral communication is predominant. It is used whatever the sector. This can be explained by its advantages, a direct and immediate contact and the possibility of a dialogue with the people present (Libaert, & Westphalen, 2009, p.189). Electronically, the Intranet and the newsletter (56%) are mostly used and in written communications, the house-organs (56%) and the printed flash info (66%) are most apparent. The interest of printing flash information can be explained by the fact that people do not read an entire document when it is on a screen but scan the page and only read a selected part (Holtz, 2002). Written media is also an easy form of communication to use in a crisis when time of action is reduced. Its multiplicity is easy and it can be distributed to a large number of people in different times and locations (Libaert, & Westphalen, 2009, p.189). This is another element that can explain why it is easy for headquarters to send a similar message to its different sites and locations. However, as we have seen it is better for managers to adapt its communication to a specific site.

Generally, these results join the idea that oral media should always be paired with written communication, which can take the form of a preliminary or complementary message (Libaert, & Westphalen, 2009, p.190). The organization will thus choose to combine different means of communication following their richness (Coombs, 2010). Management must consider using rich means such as face to face meetings with lean channels such as press releases.

The lack of interest and use of new media and technologies is predominant in the public sector. This is presumably linked to the rigidity of the task and structure imposed by administrations in general. But we must not forget the triple limitations of time, money and resources which are mostly at the origin of communication problems with audiences (Holtz, 2002, p. xvi). These limitations must be even more present in public structures which have even less available resources than private companies (considering bigger structures).

Only two organizations really use the results of their surveys in a view of restoring trust. The only companies who do not have any kind of survey are the two small private structures (CEPS and Dassy) but also the public Namur administration. However, we must note that the absence of any method of evaluation in this administration is linked to the bad treatment and coordination between different services. The surveys put in place previously were costly and were suspended following the cut in budgets and also because the results of the previous surveys were not implemented. Organizations should consider putting more surveys in place as they can help assess the solidity of their relationships, notably with their employees. Following Delahaye Paine (2003, p.6) “trust measurement and evaluation involves assessing the success or failure of much broader efforts an organization makes to improve and enhance the relationships that organizations maintain with key constituents.”

These findings enable us to reject our general hypothesis as internal communication strategies to restore trust are not put in place in all the studied organizations. The public sector is the one
for which the lack of strategy is evident for all the indicators of our grid. In the private sector, all the companies of big sizes, and the small organizations linked to a multinational, are the ones the closest to a formalized strategy of restoration of internal organizational trust.

We must insist once again that this study only takes into account one part of the communication process, the strategies of communication put in place by the organization and its management. The other part of the communication process, the reception of these transmitted communications, is not taken into account in this study. This part is without doubt of great importance in the study of trust, as oral communication and interactions play an important part in the creation and development of trust. As shown by Jo and Shim (2005, as cited in Rawlins, 2007), employees prefer “interpersonal communication to mediated channels when sharing information that requires trust”. However this should be the focus of an entire subsequent study. The focus put mainly on tools is also important as regardless of the moment it has been shown that “tools play an important role in our process of selection, construction of meaning and management of our engagements” (Chaulet, 2009, p.156). But means of communication are not the only important factors; they must remain tools and not be an end in themselves (Bartoli, 1990, p.73). Communication strategies must always be linked to the means of communication that the organization chooses to use but also and most importantly to the people they are destined to serve.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Following different factors such as a certain disengagement of the state and an increasing pressure of the general public opinion, organizations have seen the perimeter of their communication increase considerably (Libaert, 2009, p.5). It is no longer an option to communicate without a firm strategy and organizations are increasingly advised to choose their means of communication wisely, especially in delicate and difficult situations.

We started this research with the idea that “trust is a central factor in organizational behavior and organizational survival for both public and private organizations (Tyler, & Kramer, 1996, p.282) and that communication is important to maintain and restore trust. With the results of our sample, we can see that, in general, small organizations from the private sector have less formalized communication strategies to restore trust. However, a small structure linked to a larger group has more formalized procedures as it has to follow directives from general headquarters. Even if these directives are not put in place specifically for a particular site, they exercise an influence on what is thought and put in place in the smaller entity. It is thus important for the general headquarters to negotiate their communication model and adapt it to local requirements (Burlat, 2009, p.79). Organizations from the public sector tend to use new communication technologies less. They might find it interesting to consider developing these means. On the one hand, the use of these tools is increasingly rapidly in all sectors of activities. And on the other hand, it has been shown that “people who have access to newer technologies are more likely to characterize their organization as one that is loyal with mutual trust (...)” (Ruck, 2010, p.48).

Generally we can say that organizations prefer a strategy based on information rather than communication in times of crisis. Even though, the length of strategies has been reduced considerably recently (Libaert, 2010), the choice of the strategy and medium must be thought through on a long term basis and not only integrated in the management of the crisis underway, as trust will not be regained through short term strategies (Libaert, 2008, p.204). Organizations have to focus on delivering consistent information through their different means of communication, even if these messages are redundant; they lead to better internal communication (White et al., 2008). Delivering a clear and consistent message is essential to keeping employees “in the know” and creating trust. However, trust is not only linked to communication means and strategies but to behaviors and concrete actions too. As “trust is the outcome of behaviors, such as providing accurate information, giving explanations for decisions and demonstrating sincere appropriate openness (Dela-haye Paine, 2000, p.5). We must thus once more underline that internal communication is present through management’s formalized communication strategies and actions but it is also hugely present in the informal side of exchanges, discussions and interactions (Burlat, 2009, p.76). Thus it is not possible to “overstate the importance of face to face discussion to complement formal channels of information (Lengel, & Daft, 1988, p.231). This informal side of communication must not be put aside, especially in the study of trust as we can see it plays a crucial part in restoring trust.
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APPENDIX

Figure 1 : Grid of Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Aimed Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Context (crisis known by the organization) and crisis cell</td>
<td>Institutional Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Oral Communication: group meetings, individual meetings, information meetings, dialogue meetings, seminars and team buildings</td>
<td>Relational Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Written Communication: notices, house-organs, printed flash information, annual and financial reports</td>
<td>Institutional Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Audiovisual Communication: phoned house organs, corporate videos and internal corporate television</td>
<td>Institutional Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Electronic Communication: emails, Intranet, newsletters, organizational blogs, wikis, internal social media</td>
<td>Institutional Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Internal Surveys</td>
<td>Institutional Trust and Relational Trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.0. LCN, 1, 55-67.
Steve Doswell is a change management and communication consultant, with wide experience in large employer organisations spanning several economic sectors. His key professional communication interests are grouped around three key themes: change, professional development and Europe.

Steve enjoyed several years working in-house in internal and corporate communication management roles in financial services before setting up his own practice in 1995. He also facilitates training sessions, workshops and discussion groups and has written extensively for publication. Prominent clients include Rolls Royce plc, HM Revenue & Customs, the Ministry of Justice, Kingston University, National Grid, the European Investment Bank, Doosan Power Systems and Siemens UK.

A member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (speaking degree-level French and Spanish, and conversational German), Steve is also president of FEIEA, the European federation of internal communication associations, and chief executive-designate of the Institute of Internal Communication (formerly CiB). Steve brought two years of part-time study to a successful conclusion in November 2010 when he was awarded a Master’s degree in European integration by the University of Birmingham.
Whitney Burk is an American communications professional living in Paris. She was born and raised in Texas and then moved to California to pursue a French degree at UCLA, starting a decade-long stay in California. She began her career as a technology consultant for PricewaterhouseCoopers in San Francisco (because they had an office in France… which seemed like a good enough reason at the time). She quickly realized she liked technology but wanted to spend her time talking about it, rather than building it, so she transitioned into public relations. She worked for Applied Communications and Bite Communications in San Francisco, both high tech PR agencies, at the height of the technology boom and during the lean years following the technology bust. She represented clients including HP, Sun Microsystems, Cisco, Oracle and many more in enterprise technology. Whitney moved to Seattle, Washington in 2005 and began working in PR for Microsoft’s Online Services Division. After nearly five years there, she fulfilled her dream to get to France by landing the job as Executive Communications Director for Microsoft International. In this role, she is responsible for PR, internal communications and speech writing for the President of Microsoft International.

John is one of the founding voices of the leader and employee engagement movement. He is a partner of Engage for Change, a consultancy dedicated to advising on engaging leaders and everyone at work to drive change, transform organizations and raise day to day business performance. Our firm’s view is that institutions that cultivate a culture of distributed leadership will create compelling work places and result in much better performance; a view confirmed by independent research commissioned by our firm.

John co-founded SmytheDorwardLambert in 1989, a consultancy which was acknowledged to be the thought leader in organizational communication, change communication/leadership and change management. The firm was sold to Omnicom in a trade sale which was completed in 2000.

His last book – CEO, Chief Engagement Officer; Turning Hierarchy Upside Down To Drive Performance was published by Gower on June 7th 2007. Previously he co-wrote ‘Corporate Reputation; managing the new strategic asset. John speaks widely in many countries.

He is presently working on a second book for Gower on leader & employee engagement - Velvet revolution at work; the rise of employee engagement, the fall of command and control.

John speaks all over the world; in the UK, most other European countries (including Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia), the USA, Canada, Australia, Brazil, South Africa.
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