

# Strategic Communication for Success: An Organizational Perspective

<sup>1</sup>Dr Pavan Mishra & <sup>2</sup>Prof Mahak Balani

<sup>1</sup>Professor, Department of Commerce, Barkatullah University, Bhopal (India)

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Barkatullah University, Bhopal (India)

---

## ARTICLE DETAILS

### Article History

Published Online: 10 December 2018

### Keywords

Strategic Communication,  
Premeditated Communication, Digital  
Environment, Professionalism

### Corresponding Author

Email: mahakbalani03[at]gmail.com

---

## ABSTRACT

Strategic Communication as a management practice has received extensive attention and is being recognized as a structurally integrated function in organizations. Although a large body of research focusses on the strategic communication practices and the role of communication practitioners, there is still scope for new avenues of exploration for strategic communication to be developed as a discipline. Strategic communication involves premeditated communication that works to build professional relationships and builds an environment which is not only productive but maximizes impact. In the precipitously evolving digital environment strategic communication skills are vital in creating a mark in not only facilitating organizations to showcase professionalism in wide-ranging functional areas but also to adapt to a challenging business setting. The present study takes an analytical look at the present state of the field of strategic communication and outlines the various aspects making an attempt to contribute to the unique body of knowledge in strategic communication.

---

## 1. Introduction

Management executives do not have a choice but to communicate however the discretion is to communicate either explicitly or discreetly. This is where the significance of communication strategy comes into picture. Communication strategy is all the more significant in a topsy-turvy business environment characterized by increased global competition, technological breakthrough and the ever changing marketplace where the parameters of quality change very often. An effective communication strategy is the reflection of the company's image. It determines the flow of information, establishes the connect which in turn facilitates business to efficiently reach its ultimate goals. If clarity and connections are maintained each party has an understanding of the message which leads to synchronization thereby resulting in a more productive environment and efficiency in performance. On the other hand insignificant communication strategy leads to information blockages for employees leading to the inability in understanding the purpose of such communication from management making it tough for managers to monitor employee performance. Hence the need for businesses to clearly communicate their values and purpose through strategic communication cannot be underestimated.

## 2. Literature Review

The management literature states that there are associations between discourse and the practice of strategizing. Holtzhausen, D. & Zeffass, A. (2015) state that strategic communication is a divergent approach focusing on the practice of communication which offers corresponding comprehensions which open up new fields for interdisciplinary research.

Steyn, B. and Niemann, L. (2014) stated that communication management plays both a strategic as well as a supportive role in framing enterprise and corporate strategy respectively.

Grunig, J.E. (2013) concluded that a greater value can be derived from a PR function if it is open or relationship building function as far as stakeholders are concerned rather than a closed and buffering communication function.

Nothhaft, H. (2010) provided communication managers with a theoretical framework to have an in-depth understanding of their work. They found that communication management is a function which synchronizes organizational performance by performing the functions of planning, organizing and controlling but it goes a step further and institutionalizes specific concerns in the organization.

Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl (2007) state that strategizing incorporates "actions, interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity"

Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., van Ruler, B., Verčič, D. and Sriramesh, K. (2007) bring out the importance of strategic communication stating that it can be used in a number of ways but still lacks the maturity to be called as a scientific discipline.

## 3. Strategic Communication

The word Communication is Latin in origin from the word 'Communicare' which means to 'make common' or to 'share'. Communication holds much significance in the changing world of work because of globalization but is not an easy feat. Communication plays a crucial role in the formulation, execution and implementation of strategies. The word 'strategy' is derived from the word 'strategos' which means 'generalship'. More often 'strategy' is linked with 'business' than with 'Communication'. Individuals communicate strategically in a variety of ways in different contexts. Strategic Communication encompasses the thoughtful, methodical and cautious use of communicative strategies by organizations that

wish to associate with a particular set of audiences. Strategic communication also has a key role in determining multi-stakeholder activities involving actors like industries, agencies of government as well as local communities. The settings for strategic communication can be local or national, virtual or face to face or with mediated forms of communication. If a wider picture is looked at 'Strategic communication' is a canopy term meant to embrace a variety of communication related professions as public relations, brand communication, advertising and much more.

Hallahan et al. (2007) defines strategic communication as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission" (p. 3). It is multidisciplinary in that it draws from a variety of methods and subject areas.

According to Paul (2011), creating clear goals and understanding "how a certain set of audience attitudes, behaviors, or perceptions will support those objectives" is what makes communication strategic (p. 5).

Argenti, Howell, and Beck (2005) define strategic communication as "aligned with the company's overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning" (p. 83).

Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, and Sriramesh (2007) define it as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission" (p. 3).

Strategic communication requires the development of message with careful thought. Not just this the practice of generating crucial opinions or ideas also necessitates extraordinary levels of scheduling and research. The messages that are developed are directed to a specific audience in cognizance, and supports to position an organization's communication goals with its structural and operational goals. As the world becomes progressively interconnected as a result of new and varied forms and systems of communication, the function of strategic communications is to assist organizations to comprehend how to effectively deliver their message to vital audiences.

#### **4. Increasing popularity of Strategic communication**

Strategic communication has gained popularity over the last two decades. Researchers and experts are of the opinion that Strategic communication is measured against well-considered organizational and communications-specific goals.

One of the factors which gave momentum to strategic communication is the 'innovation in the methods of outreach' which indicates that communication is multi-medial, multi-purpose and cross-medial now. A variety of channels complement each other ensuring a seamless supply of content for all stakeholders. An organization can now choose from a number of options or go for combinations like writing a blog, pitching stories to journalists and posting to facebook, twitter, instagram etc. The approach is integrated as well as precise as the overall result of a communication campaign can be assessed using powerful analytics tools. It is crucial to understand that there is internally there is a need for greater consistency, transparency, clarity and coordination and externally organizations need to strike the right balance

between getting important messages to reach the intended audience and also to influence and attract the audience. Needless to say that there is more professionalism which brings its own set of challenges and opportunities.

#### **5. Tactical excellence does not guarantee strategic success**

Strategy occurs at a higher organizational level and has a long-term orientation which involves thinking at the macro level whereas tactics are the tools of the action plan. Tactics can be described as strategy on wheels. Without a great communication strategy, there can be no tactics. For instance, an organizations communication plan outlines the strategies which would include a good mix of media relations, social media community relations and more. Choosing the appropriate strategies depends on an in-depth knowledge of the audience who you are trying to communicate to, knowing what they care about and what influences them. When it comes to tactics it is the action plan for your specific strategy which will revolve around your daily, weekly and quarterly activities which takes your communication efforts on the right track. For example, if you have media relations as part of your strategy then you need to decide how are you going to pitch your stories, how are you going to make editorial coverage and make announcements etc.

The distinction between strategy and tactics is not always crystal clear and strategies may be iterative in nature. Therefore, it is suggestive that there should be some room in an executive's timeline to manage the level of accomplishment or disappointment and to understand that tactical excellence does not guarantee strategic success.

#### **6. Communication strategies available to Executives**

Executives have to face a number of issues and still carefully deal with communication resources available to them. A comprehensive communication strategy provides not just a great tool to deal with issues but also creates an innovative work environment. A comprehensive communication strategy ensures that all communication policies and practices are channelized in the right direction. Executives spend more time in daily communication activities like conducting meetings, doing most of the talking, responding to mails, reporting etc. If Communication strategy is carefully planned here it is likely to answer the question about who is going to talk about what as employees are curious to know the organization's plans about future and executives cannot always divulge information. Executives also need to set communication priorities and decide on the reasons for communication.

In some cases executives adopt the strategy 'more is better'. This means that management should give all sorts of information and executives hope that the sieving of information will be undertaken by employees.

In other situations the aim of management is to provide information which is 'just enough'. This means that managers give limited information addressing basic organizational issues. It carries an underlying message that employees are just passive receivers of information and that their feedback is not necessary.

There is another set of executives who give out information about issues linked to organizational success but allow employees to know the implications of those messages in their own way.

Then comes a strategy which focuses on concerns of employees. The key objective of the executives here is making sense and responding to critical issues.

Sometimes executives use the strategy 'withhold till necessary'. Such executives rely on maintaining control and secrecy.

Executives argue in a convincing way stating that any one or more strategies might work depending on the situation.

### 7. Making a communication strategy effective

The most crucial elements of an effective communication strategy vary depending on the requirements of a specific project and the specific goals of the campaign. Having specified this successful strategies revolve around the information about your target audience, careful analysis of executives' communication needs and the concerns of the employees. This can facilitate an organization to make appropriate choices with regard to designing strategies with meaningful actions.

Communication strategy should be linked to the goals of the organization. Since organizations have different objectives strategies have to be designed with careful thought. Strategies that are aligned to organizational goals have a positive impact

on productivity whereas misaligned strategies tend to act as a hindrance to organizational performance.

Communication strategy should change with the change in organizational objectives and the employees. Moreover strategies need to evolve with the changing expectations of the customers. Continuous evaluation and feedback about the various communication practices and initiatives help in this process.

Communication strategy should be designed in such a way that it helps to choose potentially useful information from a vast array of information which might be ambiguous.

Thus Communication strategy defines the way in which an organization meets its own requirements and those of its employees.

### 8. Conclusion

It can be concluded that communication strategy is crucial for defining the success of an organization. Having stated this, looking at the complexity of an organization it is not only a difficult task to set up a communication strategy in place but to precisely define what may prove relevant and what will fail. Therefore the communication strategists need to identify the goals of executives, the challenges faced by organization, the opportunities that can be optimized and the intricacies of the current communication system. The present study provides both explicit and implicit knowledge which provides a basic foundation for a sound communication strategy.

### References

1. Argenti, P., Howell, R., & Beck, K. (2005): The strategic communication imperative. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 46(3), 82-89.
2. Grunig, J.E. (2013): Furnishing the Edifice: Ongoing Research on Public Relations as a Strategic Management Function. In *Public Relations And Communication Management: Current Trends and Emerging Topics*. Sriramesh, K., Zerfass, A., and Kim, J-M. (Eds). New York; Routledge.
3. Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., van Ruler, B., Verčič, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007): Defining strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1, 3-35.
4. Holtzhausen, D. & Zerfass, A. (2015). Strategic Communication: Opportunities and Challenges of the Research Area. In Holtzhausen, D. & Zerfass, A. (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*. New York; Taylor & Francis.
5. Jarzabkowski, P., J. Balogun & D. Seidl. (2007): 'Strategizing: The challenges of a practice perspective'. *Human Relations*, 60.1: 5-27.
6. Nothhaft, H. (2010): Communication Management as a Second-Order Management Function: Roles and Functions of the Communication Executive – Results from a Shadowing Study. *Journal of Communication Management*. 14; 2, 127-140.
7. Steyn, B. and Niemann, L. (2014). Strategic role of public relations in enterprise strategy, governance and sustainability: A normative framework. *Public Relations Review* 40: 171–183.