

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** *In the world of profit and management for success, strategic communications is an essential element used to move and influence public policy or to promote an agenda. Strategic communication contributes positively and directly to the successful accomplishment of all operations, missions, and activities of an organization through its capacity to build public awareness and understanding of the organizational objectives and mechanisms and consequently, to build support in different audiences for specific activities carried out by the organization.*

**Keywords:** *communication; organization; success, strategies; goals; objectives; results;*

### 1. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION- DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Depending on the nature of an organization, strategic communications can range from marketing to policy. According to Emily Tynes, Director of Communications for ACLU “In the world of nonprofits, strategic communications is an orchestrated use of channels of communication to move and influence public policy or to promote an agenda. By comparison, strategic communications planning in corporations is mainly geared towards the promotion of products” (Bonk Kathy, Henry Griggs, Emily Tynes, 1999).

Strategic communication is a term that in from a general perspective

comprises the activities or, at least, is encountered as a component of several disciplines, including public relations, diplomacy, managerial communication and advertising. It is also a sub-domain within the broader communication field. It aims to sharpen the ability of all organizations - whether they are for-profit or non-profit, state or private - to develop a manner of communication that has a well-established purpose and which presupposes a cause-and-effect relationship through which the strategic objectives and activities of the organization are achieved.

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awareness and understanding of the organizational objectives and mechanisms and consequently, to build support in different audiences for specific activities carried out by the organization.

Communication is considered strategic when it is in line with the organization's mission, vision, values and when it aims and is able to increase the strategic positioning and competitiveness of the organization among its competitors. When understanding the concept of strategic communication we should perceive it from the organization's perspective and not from any other entity's (internal or external) point of view.

Strategic communication results from the organizational communication strategy, „The nature of organizational communication in general and strategic communication in particular is defined as the intentional use of communication by an organization in order to accomplish its mission” (Hallahan et al. 2007). Therefore, Strategic Communication Planning should be developed by aiming at aligning communication objectives with the external and internal environment, stakeholders and personnel.

However, strategic communication is not only about objectives and their translation into words, but also, about actions. Too often we face the situation of „do as I say (as it

is said officially), not as I do”, which is a dangerous situation because actions speak louder than words and are more likely to be mimicked than barren words. Therefore, words that are not matched up by actions will be a source of mistrust and disengagement.

Organizations that take steps to implement strong strategies, which impact the effectiveness of their business communications can achieve important results. According to Mulhern (2009), technology is an important factor of change in businesses as well as and every other social aspect, not only from the production perspective, but also from the strong effect it has upon organizational communication. Now that the speed of information transfers and the volume and area covered by the information expanded, the impact it has upon individuals increased also. Telecommunications, the media and the internet increased the power of communication. „These changes mean that marketing is in a much more challenging competitive environment in trying to meet the desires and needs of customers, while trying to develop long-term relationships” (Mulhern, 2009). The changes that have occurred in the communication domain will help structuring communication, the messages and the channels used and consequently and in the end, the achievement of communication objectives.

The ability of a communication channel is influenced by its ability to transmit different meanings simultaneously, to facilitate feedback, and to concentrate information individually, for each individual agent. Besides these huge change brought by technology, knowing who the public is remains a very important requirement because the channels will be chosen and the message will be tailored according to the public and not the other way around.

## **2. UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

We need to take into consideration many aspects and angles when working with strategic communication (generational, ideological, regional, religious etc.). Organizational communication (strategic communication especially) is an essential element of any business since it functions as the connection among individuals and it can also be an indicator of the future of the business. It is about shaping the individuals with regard to the organization that is why the message should be dynamic and adaptable.

When developing strategic messages the „push” and the „pull” factors play very important roles. „Push” factors are those factors that make the situation prone to instability

like the social conditions (difficult access to training, promotion, marginalization, lack of opportunities etc.). „Pull” factors are the psychological factors that can trigger reactions, for example personal beliefs, cultural, religious elements etc. Along with the „pull” factors we can mention the „facilitators”, people who can influence audiences (formal or informal leaders, famous people). These factors should all be analyzed and used when developing strategic messages in order to match the proper message to the most efficient channel and the right audience thus, obtaining positive results.

The analysis made in order to see whether the target aimed was reached through the message, should present two approaches: analyzing the tangible results on the one hand and the intangible ones on the other hand. For example, the accomplishment of an operation, a merger, is the tangible result, but if the loyalty and trust of the people going through this process are not gained along the way, the intangible results have not been obtained thus, putting in danger the tangible one(s) in the long run.

When communication flows freely in an organization, the chances for its members to understand how the organizational mechanism works increase, it is easier to understand the consequences and impact all actions have upon the entire mechanism and

the level of trust between individuals increases.

The integrated nature of strategic communication enhances the capacity of the internal actors and agents of the organization to participate in achieving the objectives. Communication is the solution through which employees can become more productive, and the interaction created gives management greater credibility with the employees.

The objectives of communication, which are part of the strategic communication program, represent attempts to modify or to develop the level of knowledge of the audience, the way in which the audience receives the matters discussed and the behavior that appears in the aftermath of the words.

The strategic communication model proposed by Argenti (Fig. no.1) (Argenti P.A. 2015) represents a practical and direct application of the real communication.

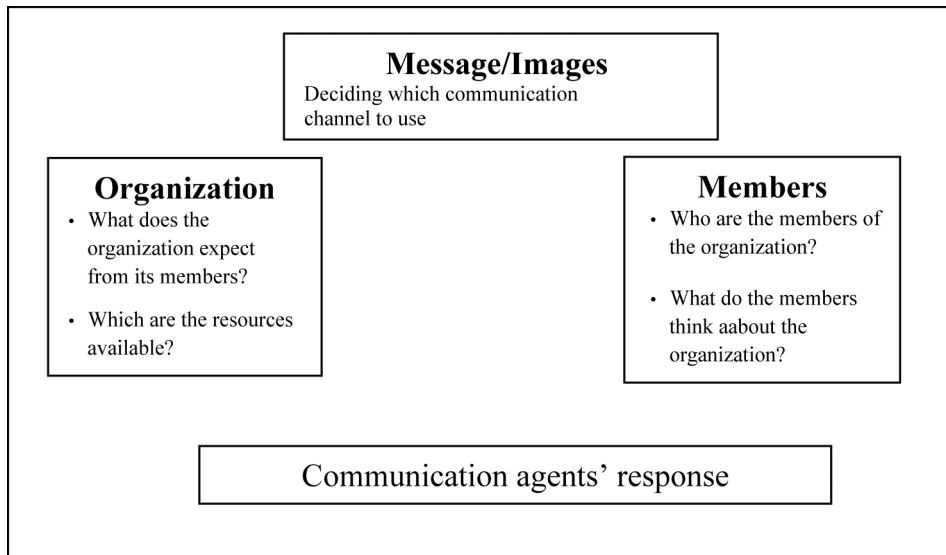


Fig. No 1. *The strategic communication model (Argenti P.A. 2015)*

This model represents a collection of interconnected variables that describe a continuous, cyclical process. The first variable of the process is the organization itself, which has the power to communicate and determine its credibility based on

the perceptions of the various agents. With the help of this information, the organization will communicate the messages together with the desired image. The resources (temporal, financial and human) necessary to achieve these objectives must be

well determined. The message is created taking into account both the intention of the transmitter and the characteristics of the audience or the receivers. Audience analysis is often an ignored variable but which, treated with more attention, can ensure the success of the communication process.

The combination of message and audience analysis allows choosing the appropriate channel and psychology for the communication process.

Other elements such as time, proximity and confidentiality must be taken into account when choosing the transmission channel. Another important decision that must be taken when sending the message refers to the psychology that must be adopted. Direct psychology involves presenting the main idea followed by explanations, while indirect psychology presents the explanations, followed by the main idea.

In Western organizational culture, direct psychology is practiced. After the message is transmitted, the communication process cannot be considered complete without identifying and evaluating the feedback. Depending on the conclusion reached, other messages may be needed.

Strategic communication, through the way it is organized,

influences the business process, which is why, if an organization is successful in implementing strategic communication, it will definitely notice a positive effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of the business process. On the contrary, if a company either does not implement a strategic communication system, or implements it in a way that leaves it to be desired, it will have a negative effect on the business process.

This model supports the existence of an intangible value, associated with the strategic communication system. The basic idea is that within companies there is an intangible value resulting from the communication systems that cannot be caught in the classic accounting, but which influence in a large way the internal and external agents of the company. Trust, loyalty, willingness cannot be measured or counted up however, their intangible value will affect the tangible results. Therefore, it is difficult to obtain positive results in the business process without being aware of the existence and necessity of developing the relational aspects of organizational life.

The creation and maintenance of the relationship between the strategy of the organization and the image of the company on the one hand, and the management of the feedback needed for the organization, on the other are in close relation.

### 3. CONCLUSION

To conclude, strategic communication refers to the manner communication is used in different situations and how the activities get organized, planned, and performed to gain expected results and to promote the image of the organization. These attempts rest on an ambition to identify and develop a general approach to communication and the assumption that there is a way to best practice it based on the abilities of organizations to create and obtain control over their activities. No organization can attain success and progress along their organizational life without good communication strategy.

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