

Part-time Executive International  
Master of Science in Corporate Communication

**BOOK OF GRADUATES'**  
**RESEARCH ABSTRACTS 2011**

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**JUMP TO**

Najoua Achboune  
Jacqueline van den Bergen  
Ina Catrinescu  
Katrin Gülden Le Maire  
Pauline Kamphuis  
Cornelia Köhn  
Carola van Peursen  
Marije Scholma  
Hakan Tandogdu

**LIST OF GRADUATES**

■ **Najoua Achboune**

“Issue ownership and corporate reputation management”  
A grounded theory-research

■ **Jacqueline van den Bergen**

“Leadership, Communications and Reputation”  
How the three interfere and what the CCO could learn from peers to make a difference for their organisation – in a transparent world full of expectations – by harnessing challenging opportunities that lie in wait within the collaboration with the CEO

■ **Ina Catrinescu**

“Intelligence 2.0”  
Managing Stakeholders' Opinions on Social Media

■ **Ina Dijstelbloem**

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A Management, Organization and Communication challenge

■ **Katrin Gülden Le Maire**

“Regular communication about risk and/or particular risks to their various stakeholders makes a company or organization less vulnerable when crises occur”

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■ **Cornelia Köhn**

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■ **Carola van Peursen**

“Multi-generational workforce: implications for the Internal Communication department”  
Analysis focussed on unfolding the consequences of an increasing multi-generational workforce for the internal communication challenges of an organization in the year 2011

■ **Marije Scholma**

“Thought Leadership”

■ **Hakan Tandogdu**

“A case study from Turkey: Alignment around “Drive the Change” strategy of Renault in Turkish business unit Oyak Renault”

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**PREFACE**

This year we celebrated the 13th graduation of the Part-time Executive International Master of Science Programme in Corporate Communication. Here we are proud to present the abstracts of the 10 theses that have been written by the Graduates of the Executive International MSc Programme Corporate Communication of the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University in The Netherlands.

In this year, we are able to allow ten new graduates to become Master of Science in Corporate Communication. This means that we now have a total of 192 MCC graduates. Most of these MCC's made a substantial career move after their graduation. I sincerely hope (but also expect) that the same will happen to the Graduates of this year. This year 10 representatives of the business world and non-profit organizations can celebrate their graduation of a programme they participated in during two years of intense courses where they presented assignments, discussed the most recent academic theory and applied this to their daily life problems in their businesses. The participants graduating this year are:  
Najoua Aachboune (FNV), Jacqueline van den Bergen (Schellekens + van den Bergen Communicatie), Ina Catrinescu (Europol), Ina Dijstelbloem (TU Delft), Katrin Gülден Le Maire (Gülден Communications), Pauline Kamphuis (The Alignment Factory), Cornelia Köhn, Carola van Peursen, Marije Scholma (ING), Hakan Tandogdu (Oyak Renault).

I hope they have learned a lot during the courses we offered them in the past years. The least I could say, also on behalf of all the teaching staff that worked with them, is that we have learned a lot from them too. Their willingness to discuss practical problems in their own organizations and to relate these to the issues we discussed in the classroom were inspiring and exciting.

In the fourteen years of the Master of Science in Corporate Communication Programme we succeeded in creating an international programme that presents all leading experts in a teaching role. I would like to thank the following people (teaching staff) who contributed tremendously to the success of this programme:

Paul Argenti of the Dartmouth College U.S.A.; John Balmer of Bradford University UK; Tom Brown of Oklahoma State University U.S.A.; Kevin Corley of the Pennsylvania State University; Charles Fombrun of the Stern Business School, New York; Janet Dukerich of Texas University in Austin, USA; Joan Hemels, Universiteit van Amsterdam; Jan Kleinnijenhuis, VU University Amsterdam; Michael Pratt of University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign; Davide

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Ravasi of Bocconi University; John Rossiter of the University of Wollongong, Australia, Majken Schultz of Copenhagen Business School, Denmark; and from our Faculty: Frans van den Bosch, Dirk Brounen, Gerrit van Bruggen, Pursey Heugens, Muel Kaptein, Slavek Magala, Gerard Mertens, Lucas Meijs, Erik Waarts, all working at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam.

It's also with great pride that we welcome Herman Kievits of Royal Dutch Shell, who will present the 'Shell Netherlands Stimulation Award for Excellence in Corporate Communication' to the author of the 'best thesis' of 2011. 'The Boer & Croon Innovation in Communication Award' will be announced by Mrs. Inge Kauer, Partner of Boer & Croon Corporate Communication. The winners of both awards will be announced at the Graduation Day on November 25, 2011.

***Prof. dr. Cees B. M. van Riel***

Director Corporate Communication Centre

Programme director of the Part-time Executive International Master of Science in Corporate Communication

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# "Issue ownership and corporate reputation management"

*A grounded theory-research*



**Najoua Achboune**

**Najoua Achboune (32)** is senior communication advisor and spokeswoman of the executive Board of the FNV vakcentrale. The FNV is the biggest trade union confederation in The Netherlands, with 1.4 million members. She is responsible for the corporate communication of several issues. One of the corporate issues in her portfolio is the pension issue. Najoua studied public administration at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam (completed in 2005).

Before joining the FNV, Najoua worked for more than 5 years as an advisor European Affairs/Public Affairs in Brussels. She started at a consultancy. Then, she switched to the Brussels representation of a Dutch regional cooperation network, Regio Randstad. Two years later, she moved to the trade union representation, as the advisor European Affairs of the president of the FNV. She moved back to The Netherlands in 2008. She started the executive programme in Corporate Communications at the Rotterdam School of Management in January 2009. She successfully completed this study in November 2011.

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**THESIS INTRODUCTION**

Although scholars have studied issue ownership for decades, fewer research studies have examined the strategic actions that are needed to create (positive) issue ownership, with measurable positive results on the corporate reputation.

The primary goal of this research is to examine the strategic messaging actions that are needed to create positive ownership on important issues by the FNV, of which we assume that this may enable them to enhance their corporate reputation and to attain more positive support from stakeholders.

This thesis puts the creation of issue ownership at the centre of research on corporate reputation development.

**RESEARCH PROBLEM**

***‘What kind of messaging actions should the fnv adopt to create ownership on important issues in order to improve her corporate reputation?’***

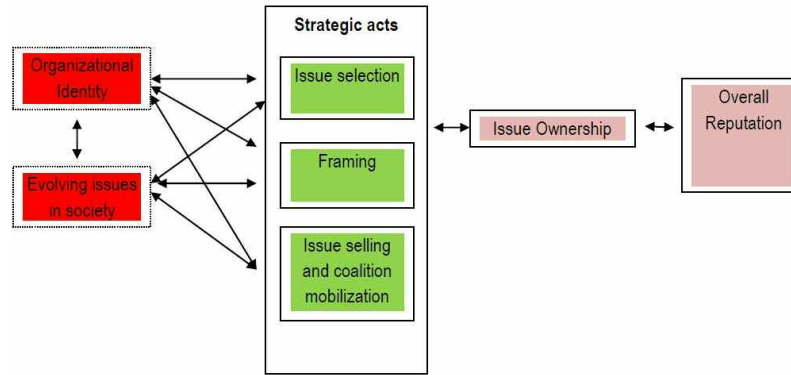
**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What is issue ownership? And to what extent can a corporate reputation be enhanced through the management of issue ownership?
- Which issues do the FNV aim to own?
- What kind of strategic messaging actions should the FNV adopt to create positive issue ownership?

The research methods used for this research (literature research, case study, archival research, interviews and grounded theory techniques) have resulted in the following conceptual lens. This lens represents the different strategic messaging actions that affects issue ownership and in the end, as prior research suggest, also the overall corporate reputation of an organization.

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### MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This thesis puts the creation of issue ownership at the centre of research on corporate reputation development. I have examined the underlying strategic actions that are needed to create issue ownership of which I assume that this may enable to enhance the corporate reputation of the FNV. Issue ownership is defined as: 'emphasizing those issues where an organization feels they have a good reputation and de-emphasize other topics' (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007).

Previous research has shown that issue ownership and reputation can influence each other. If an organization handle and issue effectively, their reputation on this issue will improve. That leads to positive ownership. If an organization has a good reputation on a certain issue, they are considered to be better able to handle that issue. According issue ownership theory, organizations are associated with issues. Issue ownership focuses on the relationship in the public mind between issue and 'owner'.

Ownership is created on the one hand through communication (deliberate external communication) and on the other hand through behavioral actions (problem solving capabilities). This research has focused on the messaging actions. The research methods used in this study have resulted in the identification of three main messaging actions that needs to be adopted by the FNV in order to create issues ownership: (1) issue selection, (2) issue framing and (3) issue selling. Each action includes a number of related (sub) actions.

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**Issue selection; selection of a restricted number of issues on basis of the identity of the organization or evolving issues in society.**

- Action 1: Selection of a restricted number of topics, matching with the identity of the FNV: careful planning and clear choices.
- Action 2: Topic selection on basis of: potential to communicate, visibility, appealing, realistic and agenda setting.
- Action 3: Long-term strategy, endurance and control.
- Action 4: Identity, leadership and vision.

**Framing; selection of some aspects of the perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicative context and messages in order to shape public opinion. That requires selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration.**

- Action 5: Identifying the audience(s) to influence.
- Action 6: Making a choice: state the problem and determine position and attitude to engage audience(s).
- Action 7: Effective language: credibility, consistency, sound and texture, providing context and explaining relevance.
- Action 8: Identity: organizational identity provides a foundation for framing.

**Issue selling and issue mobilization; decisions about packaging (presentation), communication channels, involvement (individuals, group level actions or coalition) and selling tactics.**

- Action 9: Framing: linguistic frame and presentation of an issue.
- Action 10: Control: tighter control on communication.
- Action 11: Broad involvement: between unions and within a single union organization.
- Action 12: Common message and shared expression between unions.
- Action 13: Story telling: the story needs to be renewed in a way that it corresponds with new dominant values.

The way to make an issue salient to the public is through mass media. Issues that receive prominent attention in the mass media through a prominent position on the media agenda become the topics that the viewing public considers to be important. It determines the saliency on the public and policy agenda. Framing is an influential activity to shape the media agenda.



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This research has shown that framing is also an indispensable action in the creation of issue ownership. Framing is 'about the selection of some aspects of the perceived reality and to make them more salient in a communicative context in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation' (Entman, 1993).

Issue interpretation, action and emotion are related to organizational identity and image. The organization's identity directs or limits issue interpretation and actions. Creating issue ownership requires, therefore, strategic understanding of the organizational identity and the dominant values in both the organization and in society.

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**Jacqueline  
van den Bergen**

# Leadership, Communications and Reputation

*How the three interfere and what the CCO could learn from peers to make the collaboration with their CEO work. It's all about: Giving Trust and Getting Trust! Step by step you can achieve anything you want!*

**Step by step you can achieve anything you want!**

Jacqueline van den Bergen (1963) is a communications professional who founded a communications agency with Rinske Schellekens in 2008. As communication architects their focus, under the name "Vrouwen die Bouwen" (Women who Build) is on strategic communication issues whereby the identity of the organisation is always the point at which they begin and also their point of reference when working on building the reputations of remarkable organisations in the profit and non-profit sectors.

Jacqueline has over 20 years experience in communications, which she has gained at Fortis Bank, PCM Publishers / Algemeen Dagblad, Axioma Group, KPN and Dockwise among others. After fulfilling all the communication roles that were on her wish list, the time had come to help clients optimise their reputation, which is the company's greatest asset, from her own consultancy and with a communications vision that was by now professionally well developed. From the beginning of her career Jacqueline has worked for CEOs and from the

start she was fascinated by the forces that keep a CEO in his or her place. That is the reason why her thesis, among other things, is about that relationship with the CEO.

From the conviction that everything communicates with everything, Jacqueline has developed a passion for all forms of communications. The International Executive Master of Corporate Communications study is the culmination of her passion for and education in (corporate) communication.

She studied French Language and Literature with 'Public Relations and Mass Communications' and Law in Leiden. After her studies she completed her NIMA-C studies. Although Jacqueline is a firm believer in communications, she finds it important to place communication strategies and solutions in a marketing context, because most CEOs converse in the (financial) marketing speak and communications solutions wrapped in marketing terms speak more to the imagination and therefore land better.

Curious? [www.vrouwendiebouwen.nl](http://www.vrouwendiebouwen.nl)

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**PREFACE**

Each Chief Executive Officer (CEO<sup>1</sup>) I worked for had his own way of working and peculiarities. Writing this thesis gave me the opportunity to dive into my burning question: how to get hold of the X-factor that makes the relationship between the CEO and the Chief Communications Officer (CCO<sup>2</sup>) work in order to achieve a good reputation? One of the reputation drivers within the RepTrak (Van Riel, Reputation Institute) is leadership and it is in leadership where the three, CEO-CCO-Reputation, meet. I have worked with much pleasure in finding the answers to the question: How to influence the realisation of a good reputation from the CCO point of view?

**INTRODUCTION**

CEOs make things happen based on their own convictions, on what they read and hear. In the end the things that CEOs make happen are reflected in the organisation's reputation, an important asset on the balance sheet and immediately related to the CEO's performance. Therefore, sooner or later, a moment arrives in which the CEO needs advice and a sounding-board to optimise his influence on the organisation's reputation. Showing the effect of a professional communications strategy on reputation performance is of vital importance as the organisation's reputation is directly connected to his personal image!

Of course communications is not the only thing that influences the organisation's reputation. But as everything communicates with everything, certainly nowadays, it should not be underestimated as a strategic tool. This is exactly where CCOs add value.

During the years I found out that a lot of CCOs try to convince their CEO, as the decisionmaker, with their communications knowledge only (figure 1, path 1). Of course this professional knowledge is of sine qua non importance but the importance of walking the other way, which is to reach the CEO via the road called 'relationship' or more popularly said: 'the click', is another indispensable condition for success (figure 1, path 2). It is not always easy to put a finger on this condition because this is the X-factor. In the following model I show this field of force.

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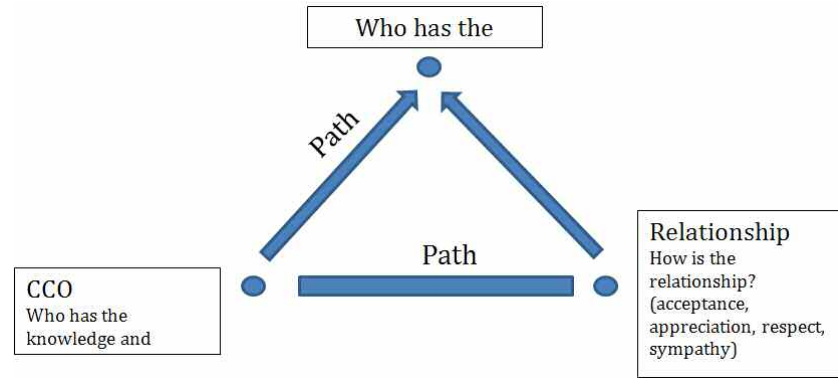


Figure 1: Starting Position, Convincing Model

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I was inspired by two research studies. One is by Ron van der Jagt, Boer & Croon (*Senior business executives see communications and reputation as a crucial part of their leadership role*, 2005) and the other one is by Koenraad van Hasselt, *Reputation Matters (Brand and Reputation in the Boardroom*, 2010). Their main conclusions in relationship to communications professionals were:

- Chairman sees corporate communications and reputation management as an extremely relevant field and as an important part of their own responsibility and leadership role.
- In addition to that ' they were generally not very impressed with the quality, professionalism or precision with regard to the abilities of professionals in the communication profession' ('insufficient background and stock-in-trade and too many cases of professional amateurism'). They expected 'well founded advice', which is more suitable and fit for use.
- The interviewed CEOs stated that they and they alone are responsible for the reputation of the company.
- CEOs are convinced of the importance of corporate reputation, but see the role of the communications department mainly as that of protectors of the company reputation, especially in (potential) crisis situations.

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- Communications Managers would do well to analyse and understand the “typology” of their own CEO and his mission. It is also wise to speak the language of the Boardroom: objectively, based on facts and supported with figures. The communications function should contribute measurably to the achievement of company objectives.
- Most CEOs believe that reputation is something that happens to you.

I was triggered and mainly the second conclusion bothered me as a communications professional and lead me to discover what was happening here. This is quite a summary of the profession and their communications professionals so these conclusions scream for an explanation based on research.

## RESEARCH

My research focused on the relationship between personal characteristics of the CEO and his leadership style, the CCO's communication style and the organisation's reputation. Communication style (figure 2) is the way the CCO thinks by nature about effective internal and external communications strategies; the way his natural view is adapted to the CEO as a leader with his own convictions I call it 'applied communication style'. 44 participants of visible Dutch organisations shared their opinions and convictions with me.

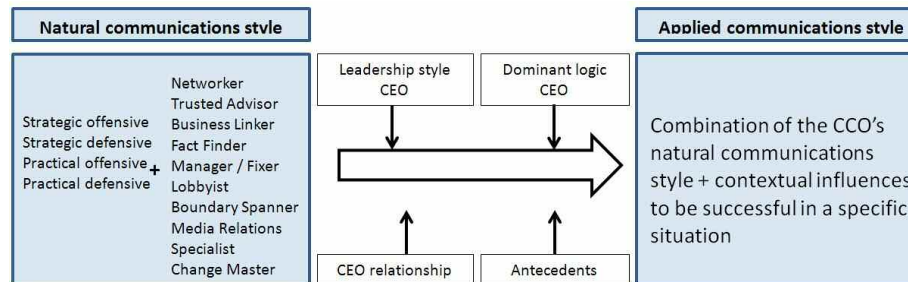


Figure 2: Change of Communications styles

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I was looking for a typification that enables the subdivision of CCOs into groups that are characterised for their professional skills, their focus and their behavior (figure 3). This insight could be helpful if an organisation is looking for a CCO that fits perfectly with the CEO leadership style, company mission and company culture. I got the opportunity to think with Cees van Riel about the following communication styles. This set-up is work in progress, Van Riel and his team are still working on developing the characteristics of the selected communication roles based on research with a representative group of CCOs.

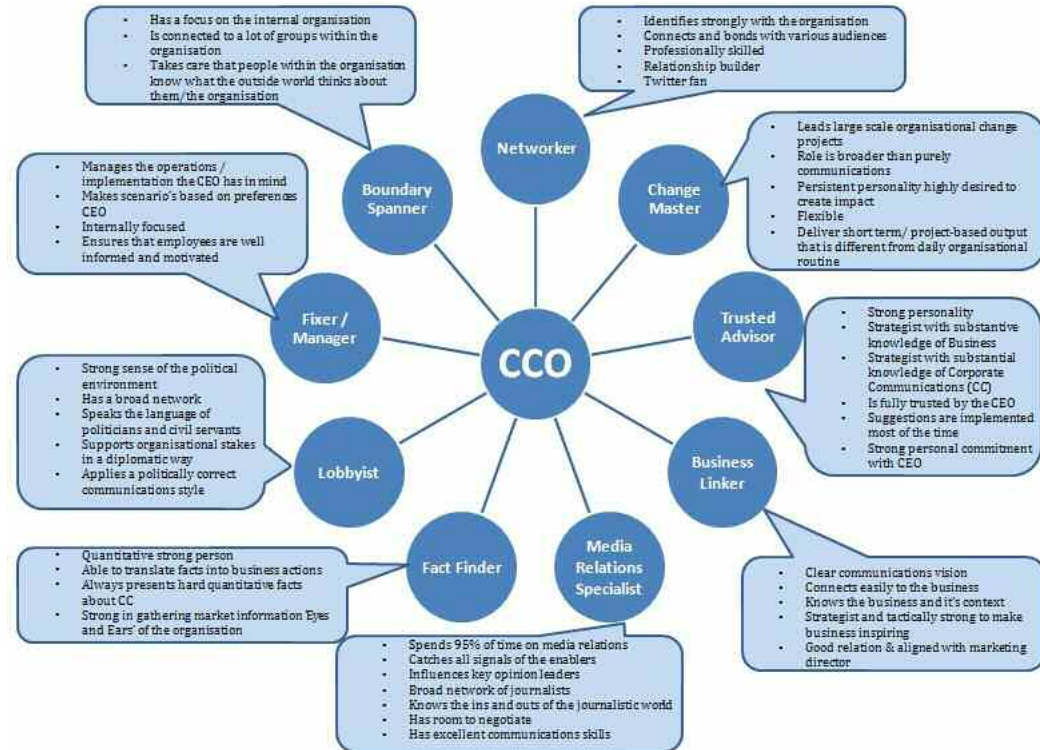


Figure 3: CCO Communications roles

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**THE SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTION IS:**

How is the CCO able to influence the company reputation positively seen from the point of view of the collaboration with the CEO (figure 4)? I specifically looked at this relationship which is mainly influenced by the CEO's leadership style and his dominant logic<sup>3</sup>, the dominant communications logic<sup>4</sup> and the communications styles of the CCO.

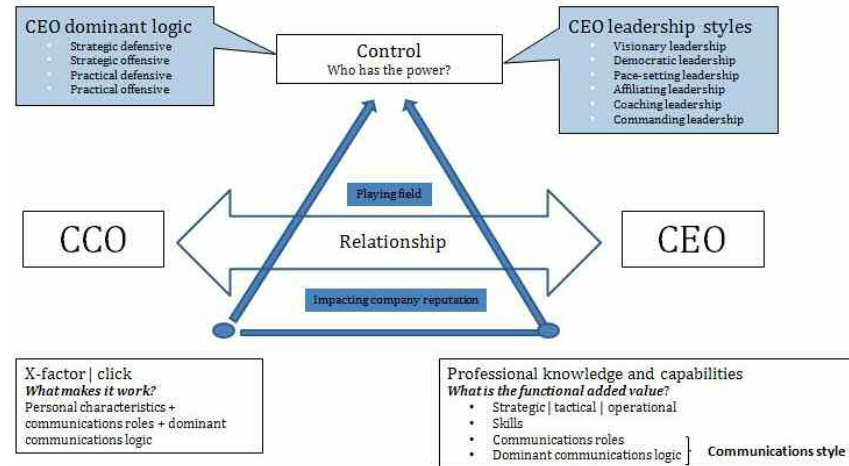


Figure 4: Relationship CEO and CCO

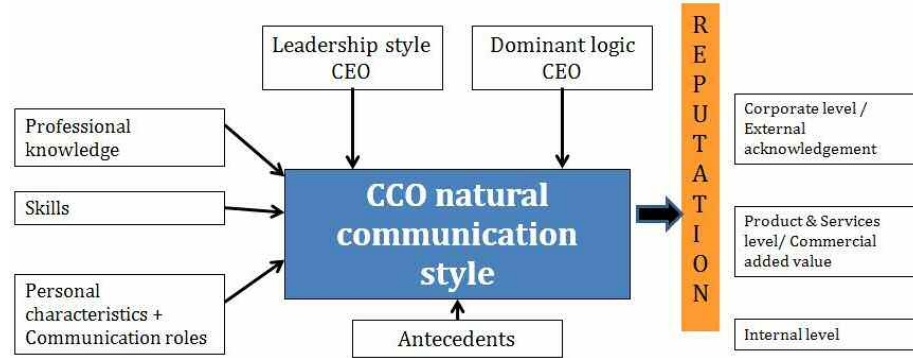
**SUB QUESTIONS:**

- What kind of a person is the CCO to be successful as a CCO (personal factors, skills, professional knowledge, communications styles, dominant communications logic)
- Where does the CCO have impact on company reputation?
- What is needed in the relationship between CCO and CEO in order to become a dominant communications coalition (winning team)?

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In the next figure the influence on reputation via the CCO is shown:



*Figure 5: CCO Impact on Reputation*

## CONCLUSIONS

It is obvious that there is a relation between the CCO and impact on reputation, be it direct or indirect. Mostly on the 'Leadership pillar' from the RepTrak. Of course there are many other factors that play a role but in this thesis I focused on the impact of the CCO on reputation with a special interest in the impact of the working relationship between CEO and CCO. The main conclusions are:

- The CCO is a passionate and professional educated communications lover who certainly has a strong vision on the effectiveness of communications but who is also willing to be flexible in his working relationship with the CEO to make things work for the company reputation. A good sense of humour, enthusiasm, resilience and the art of moderating helps them through the change of their communications convictions in case the CEO, the leader who has the power in the end, decides different from the CCO's advice. Most of the time the CCO is the Trusted Advisor and after that the Networker and the Business Linker follow. These three roles are the most strategic and corporate ones. CCOs play most of the time 4-5 out of nine communications roles and are therefore multifunctional.



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- CCOs do influence the company reputation through 3 ways (figure 6):  
Direct by contacting company stakeholders  
Indirect by profiling the CEO  
Indirect-direct by fixing an issue started at CEO level and finished at CCO level
- The CEO-CCO coalition needs having a click which is a key driver for success. The X-factor that explained the click had mostly to do, next to the values of trust, loyalty and respect, with sharing the same personality characteristics (energy, passion, inspiration, convictions, dominant logics, interest, values and beliefs). It is in fact the only way to fully reach the CEO, not only by knowledge but also by inspiration that brings content alive all of a sudden.  
The click is therefore an important indication during a recruitment procedure which an assessment will never totally reveal. The advice to recruiters would be to do the CEO-CCO talk first, before the assessment. After that it is of vital importance for the new coming CCOs to turn the functional relationship at the start as soon as possible into a relational connection to become a dominant communications coalition with the CEO because the first one won't last.

***The X-factor is in the click- factor!*** For the sake of reputation.

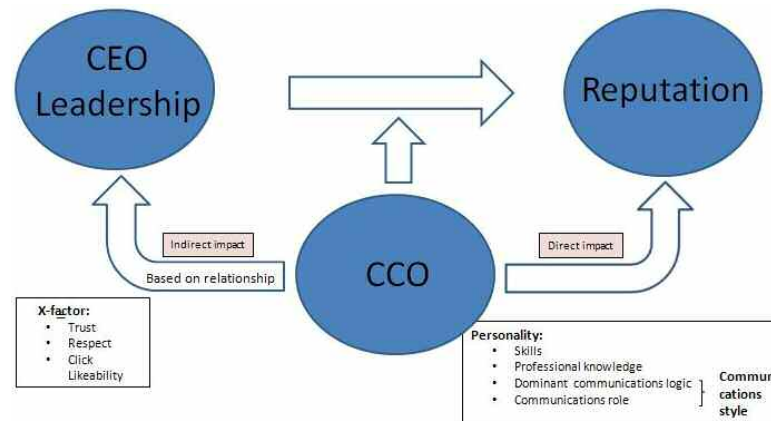


Figure 6: (In)direct impact CCO on Reputation

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## THE DISCUSSIONS

I have been looking into the subject from the point of view of the CCO, based on different communications roles (Van Riel 2011), as opposed to other studies in which the subject was researched from the point of view of the CEO.

In that way I gave more insights in the X-factors that make the relation between CEO and CCO work. Also by asking the biggest compliment they received ever from their CEO I discovered that although CEOs expect their CCOs to have a better eye for content, to make things clear and quantifiable, at the end of the day they want their CCOs to fix things. Either strategic or at times very operational.

The position of Trusted Advisor is actually a special one. In 'Executives on reputation'(2005) CEOs state that if CCOs lose position because of lack of background, 'they will then not appoint professionals but rather managers with a line background, as staff directors for communication'. Research showed that most of the time the CCO's communications colleagues within the communications department are the ones who do the daily operational work. So this means that it could be an idea to not let them manage a department but create a position of a real Trusted-and-totally-dedicated-to-the- CEO-Advisor. In this special position as a sounding-board, conscience, trustee and 'exhaust-valve' CCOs can apply their outside-in view and read through the financial lines. Their added value lies, in my opinion, in this line and not in talking in numbers as there are a lot of other colleagues to do so.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Doing research within a bigger group of CCOs, preferably accompanied by their CEO, would give a better validation of the results. It would be interesting then to look at the type of leadership that fits with specific communications styles. Also would it be interesting to do research on the difference between male and female CCOs and the difference in outcomes in the following combinations: male CEO-male CCO, male CEO-female CCO, female CEO-male CCO, female CEO-female CCO. Not only in the Netherlands but on an international level also to see how CCOs deal with their 'Natural and Applied Communication Style' in a broader context.

## FINALLY

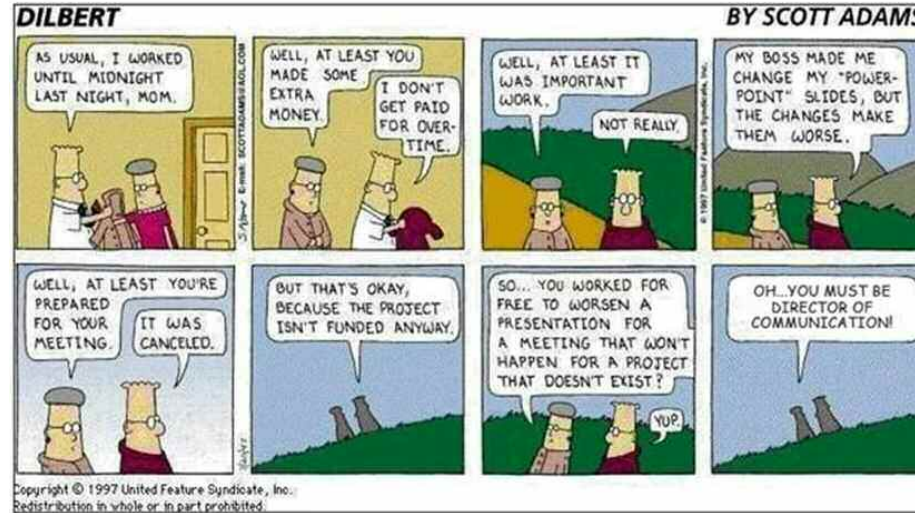
Going back to my triggers, the research of Van der Jagt and Van Hasselt, I note there is much inherent knowledge and science at the CCO top. Of course I don't want to cast doubt on the research results but apparently something happens in the transfer of knowledge from the CCO to the CEO. Is it about perception? I have looked into what

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happens to the CCO's baggage on the way from the communications challenges to the final destination – the CEO. Whatever happens we have to deal with his perception. How do you change a perception? By showing that it is different. By doing it. In our wonderful profession by converting proactive deeds in understandable CEO language into tangible results and impact. To achieve that you need access to the CEO, in many variations. So there's work to do, looking for your X-factor; preferably with a click! We have to think about our powers!



*CCOs think that humor is an indispensable personal quality; they better do ;-)*

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**ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> The word CEO will be used in this thesis in male form; it goes without saying that all the references to the CEO apply to female CEOs as well.
- <sup>2</sup> The word CCO will be used in this thesis in male form; again, all references also apply to female CCOs.
- <sup>3</sup> In the research 'Executives on Reputation', Van der Jagt brought back the different visions of participating CEOs to 4 dominant ways of reasoning: strategic offensive, strategic defensive, practical offensive and practical defensive
- <sup>4</sup> On the analogy of Van der Jagt's 'CEO dominant logics' I added 'dominant communications logics' to the CCO communications style (figure 2). These logics are about visions on communications strategies that can be set up on a strategic offensive, strategic defensive, practical offensive or practical defensive basis.

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# "Intelligence 2.0"

*Managing Stakeholders' Opinions on Social Media*



**Ina Catrinescu**

A corporate communication professional with a strong background of over 10 years in organizational web-presence, branding and project management, Ina Catrinescu (1980) is currently employed at Europol, the European Law Enforcement agency, where she managed the agency's corporate rebranding, the development of a new corporate website and Social Media strategy.

In her former job, on behalf of the Social Affairs and Employment division of the municipality of Rotterdam, she has been contributing to the web-presence of over 25 Volunteer organizations yearly. The Corporate Communications Master thesis, served as the binding agent between her practical experience and academic, and empirical insight into Social Media, and online reputation management.

She has enjoyed studying at Erasmus and is looking forward to applying the vast theoretical knowledge gained during this degree into improving communication practices for businesses.

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## INTRODUCTION

Although Social Media is currently an “en vogue” trend in business, little academic theory combining empirical research exists regarding the mechanisms of Social Media that can impact corporate reputations and help firms effectively manage stakeholder opinions online. This gap is not insignificant, for academia could help ground Social Media practices into substantiated theory, thereby giving firms a better understanding into the successful engagement practices with this channel. This thesis was aimed at making a contribution towards bridging that gap.

## STUDY APPROACH

The research comprised a blend of qualitative and quantitative research methods, drawing on data gathered from 104 archival materials, 2112 Social media mentions and the practical experiences of seven organisations, mainly the European Commission, the European Patent Office, the Dutch Safety Board, Europol, FBI, CIA and Interpol.

The research was conducted in four stages: 1) Literature review, 2) interviews, 3) data mining and 4) comparison analysis. Below are the main findings of each of the stages.

### Stage 1: Literature Review

This stage was aimed at finding associations for Social Media from the very widely studied *Media Effects* tenet. This scholarly perspective, a relevant precursor for “Social Media Effects” research, served as the bases for formulating the following propositions, based on the study of the influence of mass media on corporate reputations (McCombs & Carroll, 2003):

- Proposition 1: To increase public awareness on the Social media it is important that a firm is frequently mentioned on the channels. Therefore, the more an organization shares its news on the Social Media channels the more the chances are that the news, and subsequently the organization itself will gain importance in the public opinion.
- Proposition 2: The more a set of particular attributes about a firm are mentioned on Social media, the higher the chances are that the public will define the firm by those attributes. It is therefore important for firms to increase the amount of Social Media communication efforts around the attributes that they desire to be perceived by.

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Proposition 3: The sentiment around a particular attribute on the Social Media, will define the sentiment with which Social Media users will perceive that attribute. For an effective Social Media engagement in order to improve reputation it is therefore of great importance to increase the amount of positive mentions and lower the amount of negative ones.

Proposition 4: The agenda of the Social Media users' attitude and opinions about a firm are formed based on the substantive and affective attributes associated with a firm covered on the Social Media. Meaning that when users express opinions, rather than basing them on the total "picture", they commonly draw upon the bits of information that are particularly frequently mentioned and have the strongest sentiment at the time.

Proposition 5: Transparent communication practices, by purposefully and strategically communicating a corporate agenda on the Social Media will result in a significant degree of correspondence between the attribute agenda of the firm and the attribute agenda on the Social Media.

**Stage 2: Interviews**

To understand what drives firms to engage this medium and what the benefits are that they gain from their efforts three organizations that are already effectively deploying Social Media, and mainly the European Commission (EC), the Dutch Safety Board (OVV) and the European Patent Office (EPO), have been interviewed, aiming to gain insight based on their practical experiences. The following benefits have been identified: Building brand awareness and attractiveness; Building transparency and trust; Gathering business and law enforcement intelligence.

**Stage 3: Data mining**

Social Media monitoring tools were used to collect stakeholder opinions from the social media channels for four Intelligence giants, such as: the FBI, the CIA, Interpol and Europol. 3 hypotheses were formulated to design the tests for the above mentioned propositions:

- H1: More frequent engagement efforts will incrementally build stakeholders' awareness of a firm on Social Media.
- H2: Social Media engagement positively impacts stakeholder opinions online.
- H3: The most frequently used keywords by which an agency is referred to online will correspond to the top attributes that the agency wishes to be perceived by.

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**Stage 4: Comparison analysis**

In this stage a comparison of the results was conducted and various engagement strategies and effectiveness levels were identified. The various engagement strategies have been mapped according to the levels of effort (Activity) and the results of engagement (Effectiveness) over four categories: 1) Inactive & Effective (low activity, high effectiveness); 2) Inactive & Ineffective (low activity, low effectiveness); 3) Active & Effective (high activity, high effectiveness); and 4) Active & Ineffective (high activity, low effectiveness).

**CONCLUSION**

Social media users have transitioned from being *influenced*, to being the *influencers*, which is making “corporate reputations profoundly vulnerable to the whims of empowered stakeholders” (Reputation Institute, 2010). Social media is therefore no longer an optional, “appendix” channel for marketing. It may very well be the most influential channel for Reputation Management today. If approached strategically, linking business and communication objectives, Social Media offers a very accessible platform for firms to successfully manage stakeholder opinions online, which will indisputably have resonance offline as well.

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**Ina Dijstelbloem**

# "Creating alignment"

*A Management, Organization and Communication challenge*

Ina Dijstelbloem works as Marketing & Communications manager at the TU Delft. In this function she is responsible for all internal and external communications of the Civil Engineering and Geosciences faculty. In the last years her attention has moved from recruiting students, in which she has been very successful, to corporate communications and relations with new business partners. Her interest is the organization in the dynamic and changing environment: learn about the changing environment, see opportunities, create strategies and improve the organization and the overall performance by improving management, organization and communication. Her focus is always on innovation and developing creative concepts.

Ina studied Communication management and Public Administration, followed by additional courses in sales, consultancy and communication management. She started her career at IBM where she was responsible for sales and marketing of HR-systems and learning services, in Amsterdam and in Paris, where she worked mainly with British and French clients.

Today, Ina is also an active volunteer consultant at Women on Wings ([womenonwings.nl](http://womenonwings.nl)). This organization has a mission to create employment for women in rural India. This is done through advising companies in the areas of management, marketing, communication and finance. By being more economically independent, the children of the women gain access to education and additional development opportunities. In this way entire families have better chances for the future and the cycle of poverty can be broken. The last years Ina spent time in India to work on several projects. Currently she is occupied with brand research and management for the sanitary napkins program, a program in collaboration with Unicef, UNDP and IKEA Foundation.

Ina is also an active photographer and won in 2010 the award for her portfolio called 'daily life of 2 year old' at the Breda Photo festival. She further loves outdoor life and sports - running, biking and skiing - and has a great passion for traveling, meeting new people and learning about different cultures. Most of all, she wants to spend time with her 3 year old daughter, her husband, family and with friends.

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**CONTEXT**

Higher education has experienced significant shifts in recent years. Where universities first were operating in an environment of predictable funding and student enrolment with little competition among institutions, recent economic, demographic and political changes have cast universities into an ambiguous arena that looks more and more like a competitive marketplace. Such a dynamic environment calls for institutions to change to meet these new conditions. Therefore, many academic institutions are trying to adopt a more business-like orientation to accomplish intended changes (Milliken, 1990).

Also the TU Delft operates nowadays in a dynamic and highly competitive international area where national and international partnership agreements have become more and more important: from small-scale national peer-to-peer contacts to large-scale international research programs, to partnerships with small to large businesses and valorization of research with the purpose to conduct its research activities and be able to offer top education programs to the best students world-wide.

This changed environment and changed strategic focus creates new challenges for the organization in how to adapt the organization and how to find internal support for this new focus. In other words: 'how to align the internal organization for this new strategic approach?' In terms of strategic alignment, the research question will be the following:

***What is the best way to create internal alignment for the new strategic approach in one faculty?***

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The research objective is to gain new insights in the changing organization of the university: is the university capable of adapting itself to the new environment with more competition and less government support, where a more entrepreneurial spirit is demanded. In this case the question is if this one faculty was capable of changing. Objective here is to gain insights in the factors that influence the alignment in an organization like this. Since Van Riel (2007) has formulated three factors of influence – information, motivation and capability development – my aim was to find out how these were important in this organization and if there were other factors of influence on creating alignment in an organization like the faculty.

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## **FINDINGS IN LITERATURE**

Gagnon and Michael (2003) define 'strategic aligned behavior' as the degree to which employees understand, buy into and are able to enact their organizations strategic objectives. In other words: Employees will only buy into the new strategy if they are aware and familiar with it, express positive feelings about the intents, completely understand what the strategy means and have the capabilities to implement it (Van Riel et al., 2007). Although these factors (information, motivation, capability development) are of major influence on alignment, I found other factors of influence, which need to be taken into account. These factors are (1) Management, (2) Organization and (3) Communication.

### **(1) Management**

Strategic implementation does not only involve adjusting organizational structures and control systems, but requires complex interaction processes between managers and employees (Skivington and Daft, 1991). Management forms the 'dominant logic' in the organization and has great influence on the way in which the organization performs. The role of management can be divided in (a) management characteristics; the characteristics of one manager or of the guiding coalition (Kotter, 1996), (b) the management's vision for the future that clarifies the general direction for change, motivates people to take action in the right direction and helps coordinate the actions of different people, and (c) management efforts or communications (Van Riel, 2007) which can be divided into: information, motivation, capability development and tracking & tracing of results.

### **(2) Organization**

Generating internal support for new strategic objectives requires having full understanding of the internal organizational context (Van Riel, 2012). Van Riel distinguishes two types of identity: overall identity and specific identity. Where overall identity is based on the degree of external pressure to which organizations are exposed, combined with the nature – centralization and formalization – of the internal organization, specific identity traits are specific characteristics of the organization as seen by its members. Management should gather information about these identity traits of the organization to decide (1) which type of organization they are today, (2) which type is desired, given the demands that are linked to the nature of the strategic objectives and (3) which identity traits best fit the requirements of the strategic objectives (Van Riel, 2012).

I chose the following elements as an abstract of the theories of Van Riel (2012), Mintzberg (1979) and Argenti (2009), that based on first interviews with members of the faculty seemed important to be able to define the current and desired organization. These elements are:

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- External turbulence: used as reason for change. If the environment changes, the organization needs to adapt itself. For alignment, the environment and degree of turbulence can be used to create a case of urgency to provide the big picture to employees and a rationale for change.
- Intent/strategy: clarifies the direction for change (Kotter, 1996)
- Centralization and formalization of processes and rules. The more informal and flexible, the easier the change.
- Management coordination: if coordination is centralized, it requires a different kind of creating alignment than when coordination is decentralized.
- People's interest and motivation has a direct impact on alignment (Van Riel, 2007)
- Identification with the organization: influences the motivation of people. Important are to know with which part of the organization people identify themselves so the message can be customized.
- Recognition and rewards, to motivate people.

Specific organizational identity can be defined as 'characteristics of the organization that are taken by organizational members to be central to the organization, that make the organization distinctive from other organizations in the eyes of the beholding members, and that are perceived by the members to be enduring or continuing linking the present with the past and presumably the future' (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

The larger the organization becomes, the more likely it is that the organization has multiple identities (van Riel, 2007). Not only because sub-identities will emerge that decrease identification with the corporate identity, but also because of the different visions in the organization about the most typical characteristics. These characteristics therefore usually fall into three perspectives (Balmer 1997; Balmer and Wilson, 1998):

- Perceived identity: the collection of attributes seen as typical for the continuity, centrality and uniqueness of the organization in the eyes of its members;
- Projected identity: the self-presentation of the organization's attributes to internal and external stakeholders usually through communications and the use of symbols/logo;
- Desired identity: the idealized picture that leadership believes the organization could evolve to under their leadership.

Especially a desired identity seems crucial here: in the research of Gioia (et al, 1996) presenting an alternative perspective of what the organization could be, the top management team was able to destabilize current perceptions of who the organization was and create support for the desired strategic change effort.

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**(3) Communication**

Communication is the third factor of influence on internal alignment. Reason is that in the first place, internal communication has a positive effect on organizational identification (Van Riel et al., 2007). People who identify strongly with the organization are more likely to show a supportive attitude toward them (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) and make decisions that are consistent with the organizational objectives (Simon, 1997). Identification can lead to greater efforts of employees to implement the organization's strategy (Lee and Miller, 1999). People identify with organizations to meet self-esteem needs: self-enhancement and self-consistency are important factors of influence to identification (Elstak et al., 2008).

In internal communication three instruments – informing, motivating and capability development – and four process dimensions are used: structure, flow, contents and climate (Van Riel, 2000).

**RESEARCH MODEL**

Gagnon and Michael (2003) define 'strategic aligned behavior' as the degree to which employees understand, buy into and are able to enact their organizations strategic objectives. Van Riel (2011) sees it as a mutual rewarding relationship that can be reached by consultation and confrontation and by informing, motivating and capability development.

In this thesis I see alignment more as a responsibility of management, organization and communication. Only by influencing management, communication and organization, it is possible to influence information, motivation and capability development and therefore strategic alignment. Therefore I have designed the following model:

***What is the best way to create internal alignment for the new strategic approach in one faculty?***

**RESEARCH METHOD: EXPLORATIVE DESIGN**

For this thesis I used the 'explorative research design'. This method is helpful in breaking large, vague problem statements into smaller, more precise sub problem statements, ideally in the form of specific hypotheses (Jacobucci et al., 2010). Exploratory research means that hardly anything is known about the matter at the outset of the project. The researcher begins with a rather vague impression of what to study, and cannot make a detailed work plan in advance. It is common that in the beginning of exploratory study the researcher needs to take a holistic look at the objects. It means that the researcher starts by gathering as much information about the objects as possible, and postpone the task of cutting away unnecessary data until he or she get a better picture about

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what is necessary. During the exploratory research project, these provisional concepts then gradually gain precision. Then, the researcher needs to specify the viewpoint of the study and explain how the object is understood.

This is what I did in my research. I started with the strategic alignment theory of Gagnon and Michael (2003). And although this theory plays an important role in creating alignment in an organization, I also learned, when analyzing the faculty, that deeper understanding of management, organization and communication was needed to be able to develop the right strategy and create alignment. In the organization I saw that management efforts, communication (flow, structure, content, climate) and organization (people, structure, processes) all were interdependent and needed to be in balance for the organization to be successful. That's why I started using and combining more theories about management, organization and communication to use for this research and gain a deeper understanding of creating alignment in the faculty.

In my thesis I interviewed in total 30 members of the different departments (5 of each department) and the supporting staff (4 members). These interviews were semi-structured one-to-one interviews. These interviewees were mostly scientists, some were supporting staff in the departments. I also interviewed some of the department heads and made observations of management meetings, town hall meetings and other meetings. During the interviews the respondents all gave their opinions to open questions. The open questions formed the basis for an open conversation. I analyzed the responses and structured them and then gave my general findings back to test if they could find themselves in my findings. I also did shorter interviews (only about alignment with another 20 employees) to get an overview of the existing alignment and identity of the organization.

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**FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

Mintzberg (1979) mentioned the professional bureaucracy as a very common structure for universities, where specialized professionals demand control of their own work and decision-making is decentralized. This organization never changes dramatically and is hard to change by senior management, which has a lack of control and power. To be able to survive in the new dynamic, complex and highly competitive environment, a new strategy was needed for which alignment is required to achieve the goals. Looking at the designed research model, the following factors have a significant impact on aligning the organization for the new strategy:

- A strong guiding coalition, with the right composition, level of trust and shared objective to guide the change in the organization.
- A vision to clarify the general direction for change, to motivate people to take action in the right direction and to help coordinate the actions of different people. A vision would help people to contribute to the new strategy.
- A move from a professional bureaucracy to an adhocracy with accountability and shared meaning elements.
- A clear desired identity since people need to be able to imagine and visualize how work and life can be when the change has been achieved.
- A long-term communications strategy: internal and external.
- A communication structure, flow, content and climate that supports the new overall organizational identity.

In the thesis I have explained my findings, conclusions and recommendations in detail.

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**Katrin Gülden Le Maire**

*“Regular communication  
about risk and/or particular risks to their various  
stakeholders makes a company or organization  
less vulnerable when crises occur”*

Katrin Gülden Le Maire is Managing Director of Gülden Communications, a strategic communications consultancy focusing on communicating market entries in Germany, Austria and France as well company positionings and reputation management. The company has got particular expertise in supporting financial service providers, real estate and commodity companies and offers comprehensive communication solutions for its clients

Katrin has more than twelve years experience in both owner led and network agencies as well as international companies. Prior to founding the company in 2007, she worked as a director for Citigate Dewe Rogerson and set up the Frankfurt office with a colleague in 2005. Katrin has over the term of her career advised a number of high profile international companies on their IPOs as well managing numerous market entries, mergers and acquisitions most notably in asset management and real estate.

Internationality shapes her career: she spent eight years in London (1995 – 2003) and six years in Frankfurt (2003 – 2009) while nowing living in Paris. Katrin is a trained Theologian (Brunel University 1999), has a further qualification in Financial Management (Westminster Business School 2003) and strategy management. She is experienced in both moderating and rhetorics and sometimes writes for a German magazine on theological topics.

Katrin is happily married to a wonderful French man. She loves sports, is polishing up her French and currently thinking about writing a book on theology for her yet unborn daughter.

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**THESIS SUMMARY**

“Regular communication about risk and / or particular risks to their various stakeholders makes a company or organization less vulnerable when crises occur.”

Risk communication is virtually unknown in its role and value to the larger corporate world in Europe and has mainly been confined to industries such as the health or environmental arena in the US, where large hazards and catastrophes were and are likely to occur and official bodies such as governments and federal organizations had been forced to rely on increasingly informing and cooperating with the wider public to induce a change of public behaviour (such as in food / safety / viruses / medication / disease control / natural disaster preparation and prevention).

It does not come as a surprise since risk measurement, risk assessment and risk management have also often been neglected in boardroom level activities. This rings particular true for the banking sector where large scandals have repeatedly affected the whole industry in the last few years such as the huge worldwide bailout of several of the largest banks in the world, after the downfall of the American bank Lehman Brothers in 2008 and now the 2011 Euro crisis. But also the energy sector, governments themselves and especially nuclear energy as well as IT issues (Wikileaks and several hacking incidents) have featured widely in the media in 2011, highlighting severe mismanagement and failure to not only not communicating about risks involving business and operations to stakeholders but also generally failing on an overall risk assessment level.

Instead, in recent years crisis communication – both strategically and technically – has been much more in the corporate foreground as natural disasters, catastrophes or human error have wrecked havoc and received increased worldwide attention due to the increased growth and acceptance of digital media formats that spread news instantly. The thesis argues for the necessity of solid risk communication as a pre-requisite and basis to all forms of company communication in order to build up and preserve its reputation and, furthermore as a financial and reputational necessity in order to make future crisis communication less costly and prevent future damage. Both areas are interrelated as “crisis is a risk manifested”. The overall hypothesis will therefore be “regular communication about risk and / or particular risks to their various stakeholders makes a company or organization less vulnerable when crises occur”. The paper goes further to state that risk communication needs to be lifted out of its niche existence in limited sectors and brought to more prominent light in the wider corporate arena – modified and adapted to suit company requirements and regulations but nevertheless as a prominent part of overall corporate communications.

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**Pauline Kamphuis**

# How To Get Your (External) Stakeholders Strategically Aligned

(And why it matters)

With a broad background in service level management, industry analysis, marketing communications and strategy, Pauline has discovered the profession that she actually loves most: (corporate) communications, 'the new style': "The communications profession is a cross point for practically all disciplines in an organisation: we have (a chance) to look across the full spectrum and must creative and down-to-earth at the same time".

Pauline is experienced in strategic, tactical as well as operational elements of the communications profession: from initiating social media tactics up to the design and management of (change) communication programs; and from below-the-line marketing communication up to internal alignment strategies for large organisations (more than 10,000 FTE). Pauline believes that many organisations still have a narrow scope where it concerns their attention for external stakeholders: "While today, with an unlimited amount of communication channels, they have the opportunity to enhance alignment with a broad set of external and even latent stakeholders. Besides proactive risk management, this may bring them competitive

advantage". Not surprisingly, Pauline has chosen strategic stakeholder alignment as subject for her thesis for the Master of Science in Corporate Communication. In her current employment as interim Head of Marketing and Communications Pauline is member of the general management team of Chamber of Commerce The Hague. She is responsible for in- and external communications of the eight local branches of this organisation. Additionally, she has been appointed member of the communications steering group of all 12 Chambers of Commerce in The Netherlands.

Previously she was Manager Corporate Communication at KPN, where she led a team of communication consultants and acted as senior advisor for the Board of Directors with respect to in- and external communication for the business-to-business and operations divisions.

Pauline has recently founded the 'Alignment Factory'. Starting 2012, her company will offer (corporate) communications consultancy and (interim) management.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Today, any organisations' managers and employees are active on the internet. Whether they are a blogger or participate in social media: they communicate with customers, media, (potential and ex-) colleagues, shareholders, politicians, pressure groups, consumer organisations, and so on. Every employee in fact has changed into a press officer, service representative or account manager. And stakeholders of a firm collaborate between themselves around shared interests. Using social media they can reach enormous audiences at short notice.

In this new reality, strategic alignment with in- and external stakeholders becomes increasingly important. That requires that companies –amongst other things- organise consistent messaging across all stakeholder groups. Within their organisation companies enhance strategic alignment by a number of initiatives. I asked myself: are these initiatives applicable for strategic alignment of external stakeholders too? And if so, is it possible to develop a model that provides organisations an overview of what needs to be organised in order to enhance strategic alignment with key stakeholders, both in- and externally?

This thesis is a quest for the relevance of external strategic alignment as well as the way in which organisations (can) enhance it. Up till now, there does not seem to be a holistic view on strategic alignment with (in- and) external stakeholders. My thesis is based on the information gathered from a large amount of studies in (among others) the fields of reputation management, stakeholder management, marketing and corporate social responsibility. In addition to the literature study I conducted four interviews with communication directors at large (international) companies: KPN, Philips, Siemens and Rabobank.

**INTERNAL STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

Strategically aligned behaviour of employees is of vital importance to companies. It requires that employees understand the firm's strategic goals and that they are willing to support them. The degree of success in implementing a company's strategy is influenced by the capability of an organisation to align activities and results throughout the organisation. From a communications perspective, organisations can enhance internal strategic alignment by:

- having the right media in place to provide organisation members with strategic messages
- by organising or optimising the internal cascade
- by stimulating dialogue (about strategy implementation)
- by ensuring that employees (feel that they) have the capability to perform strategically desired behaviour
- by taking employees' thoughts and concerns seriously and ensuring that reward systems are in line with the organisation's strategic intents

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## EXTERNAL STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

In this thesis, I suggest that strategic alignment is indeed relevant for external stakeholders and that organisations can apply accelerators of internal alignment to external stakeholders as well. The more important a stakeholder is for (and the more interest the stakeholder shows in) a company, the greater the relevance of strategic alignment with that stakeholder. The company should increase its alignment efforts accordingly. Which stakeholders an organisation should select in their pursuit for external strategic alignment differs per organisation, per topic and over time. Stakeholder power is dynamic: using social media any individual can be powerful or create powerful stakeholder groups at very short notice. Monitoring the interests of all kinds of stakeholders is the minimum an organisation should do. Better is to actively build extensive stakeholder intelligence, answering questions such as: to what extent are stakeholders aligned with our strategic intents? How does the strategy impact them? What influence do they have in society? What are (developments in) their beliefs about issues that may impact our firm now and in future?

Organisations can enhance external strategic alignment by initiating the following activities:

Media & messaging	Cascading	Dialogue	Capability development	Recognition & reward
<b>Theoretic support?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Theoretic support?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Theoretic support?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Theoretic support?</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Theoretic support?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Scholars:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Van Halderen (2008)</li> <li>• Ketelaar &amp; van der Laan (2009)</li> <li>• Scholes &amp; James (1997)</li> <li>• Dyer &amp; Singh (1998)</li> <li>• Ting Li (2009)</li> <li>• Duncan &amp; Moriarty (1998)</li> <li>• Campbell, Papania, Parent &amp; Cyr (2008)</li> <li>• Workman, Homburg, Jensen (2003)</li> <li>• Sen and Bhattacharaya (2001)</li> <li>• Eisbach (2003)</li> <li>• Morsing, Schultz, Nielsen (2008)</li> </ul>	<b>Scholars:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholes &amp; James (1997)</li> <li>• Heugens, Van den Bosch, van Riel (2002)</li> <li>• Argenti (2009)</li> <li>• Innes &amp; Booher (2003)</li> <li>• Morsing &amp; Schultz (2006)</li> </ul>	<b>Scholars:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Van Halderen (2008)</li> <li>• Bhattacharya &amp; Sen (2003)</li> <li>• Ayuso, Rodriguez, Ricart (2006)</li> <li>• Kaptein &amp; van Tulder (2003)</li> <li>• Morsing &amp; Schultz (2006)</li> <li>• Argenti (2009)</li> <li>• Duncan &amp; Moriarty (1998)</li> <li>• Scholes &amp; James (1997)</li> <li>• Innes &amp; Booher (2003)</li> </ul>	<b>Scholars:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso, Rodriguez &amp; Ricart (2006)</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples in practice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alex Bank (2011)</li> <li>• Philips (2011)</li> <li>• Siemens (2011)</li> </ul>	<b>Scholars:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workman, Homburg, Jensen (2003)</li> <li>• Westphal &amp; Zajac (2008)</li> <li>• Campbell, Papania, Parent &amp; Cyr (2008)</li> <li>• Westphal &amp; Deephouse (2011)</li> </ul>

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### **Media & Messaging**

Messaging is the basis for aligning external stakeholders: an organisation's messaging should be distinctive, sincere, transparent and above all consistent. Organisational identity expressions are a powerful way through which stakeholders can be aligned. Messaging includes more than words: images, behaviour and symbolism are just as important. The choice of media can be symbolic and needs careful consideration. Media appear in countless variations: from people (CEO, employees, influencers) to technology (social media, web conferencing), from printed media and packaging to events. There is no single best channel to communicate with stakeholders. Instead, an organisation should define which channels suit each relevant stakeholder (group) best and then adapt the central message in such a way that it fits the communication channel.

### **Cascade**

In the light of decreasing hierarchical order of businesses to a more horizontal network of relationships, I have interpreted 'cascade' broader than just a 'top-down' mechanism. By interacting with stakeholders at all organisational levels, management and employees can be a powerful medium to align stakeholders with a company's strategic intents. The cascade would then start internally (by aligning organisational members) and then expand externally, via the relationships of the organisation members with their peers outside the company. In parallel, companies can start a cascade by engaging with influential external stakeholders directly.

### **Dialogue**

The need for dialogue seems to be undisputed. Stakeholder dialogue allows the organisation and the stakeholder to gain a better understanding of each others' interests and dilemma's, and creates broader support for the decisions companies make. It can also create a basis for joint projects, alliances and partnerships. The aim of dialogue should be to be willing to change or adapt nuances of the strategy during implementation.

### **Capability Development**

Hardly any research has been found on projects that aim at capability development of external stakeholders. Practical examples, however, show that companies do initiate activities in order to develop stakeholders' capabilities, with the aim to enhance their supportive behaviour for strategic projects or services. In particular for stakeholders with either high interest in the company or of high importance to the company (or a combination of both).

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**Recognition & reward**

Finally, recognition & reward refers mainly to reciprocity between stakeholders in a relationship, in particular with individual stakeholders of high importance to (and high interest in) an organisation. Recent studies indicate that corporate leaders can influence the behaviour of financial analysts by using favour rendering as social influence tactic. Similarly, top executives can actively influence their own and their firms' reputation, by engaging in interpersonal influence processes towards journalists.

**MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Organisations are no longer in control. Communication leaders can help companies to adapt to new realities:

- start internally, by stimulating strategically aligned behaviour of organisation members;
- stimulate the enterprise to build relationships with stakeholders, and lead by example;
- stimulate the company to share strategic intents with external stakeholders;
- enable information intermediaries to communicate the firm's strategic intents
- ensure that message consistency is coordinated –in words, media, symbolism and behaviour.

The 'Strategic Stakeholder Alignment Matrix' that I developed for this thesis can be a practical tool to provide overview of the (communication) activities that organisations need to align in their pursuit for in- and external strategic alignment.

**LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This thesis is a literature study in the first place. The model was put into practice on a limited scale, with large enterprises. In order to find out if the matrix is 'reality proof', it should be tested on a larger group of companies and in an international context. Further research could also provide insight into whether 'capability development' of external stakeholders contributes to strategic alignment. In existing literature there is not much support, however examples in practice show that companies do invest in these activities. Investigation on the effectiveness of different types of dialogue tactics would be interesting; for example to find out if investments in community platforms contribute to strategic alignment of external stakeholders.



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**Cornelia Köhn**

# *"It begins with us"*

## *Employee strategic alignment challenges at a telecommunication company*

Cornelia Köhn was born in Germany and has spent a substantial part of her professional career in international business development, marketing and advertising. The central role that communication plays in any change management process has been a theme that she has encountered many times in these various assignments. This was a key reason that she decided to supplement her earlier education in Business Administration and to join the Master programme in international corporate communication at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam. Cornelia has 10 years working experience in marketing, communication and advertising in various European countries (among others Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands). There were numerous situations, in which she was "thrown into" a new situation and had to quickly learn how to swim. This allowed her to sharpen her sense of what is necessary and what is possible, and helped her develop her instincts on how to influence group dynamics in order to help the team to succeed. Learning six European languages along the way was of course beneficial in gaining acceptance and contributing quickly to each new working environment.

The ability to cope with new situations is certainly something that characterizes Cornelia. In her teens she embarked on travels to the four corners of the world, which put her into the desert of Namibia or the catwalk of a Kimono modeling show in Japan. Cornelia opens her preface in the master thesis with, "We all encounter changes, which we have to tackle in life", and it is fair to say that the change management aspect of strategic alignment has been a strong driving force behind the selection of the topic for her master thesis.

To Cornelia facing up to new situations and new challenges have come naturally. Elements such as building trust in light of cultural specialties, metaphors, stories or anecdotes have long fascinated Cornelia, and she was grateful to be given the opportunity to analyze a telecommunication company's situation in a new country, with all of the hidden gems imaginable waiting to be discovered.

Cornelia is married and lives now in Southern Sweden, where she is currently on the lookout for new business opportunities.

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**INTRODUCTION**

“Employee strategic alignment” has become a high priority topic with academics and consultants in the fields of both strategic management and corporate communication. The reason for this lies in the experience, that even good strategies can fail, and one of the most common issues identified is a poor implementation (for example Gagnon, Jansen, Michael 2008). Strategies can only claim to be implemented once they have penetrated the whole organization, a certain ‘sense of urgency’ is created and the majority of the employees both know and understand the strategy will be discussed. An emotional bond to the strategy should be established and integrated into the employee everyday actions. According to these standards, more than half of the strategies devised by organizations are actually never implemented. Some companies fail because they do not have the perseverance, which is needed to successfully implement a new strategy and align all people. Other strategies fail because the level of complacency is too high (for example Kotter 1996). But especially in a time of increasing competition and globalization, reduced lead-times for projects and processes as well as increased customer sophistication, the effectiveness of strategy implementation becomes even more important. The researched company, a world-leading provider of telecommunications equipment and services, is navigating in such a constantly changing business environment. A timely successful implementation of the strategy is critical to success, and a passive “giving it time to grow” approach is not an option. The challenge of change can best be managed when all employees converge their understanding of the direction and join in the action towards a shared goal.

This paper will start by give an overview of the current research on strategic alignment, summarized in a strategic alignment framework that will be applied to analyze the company's case. In a second step, the situation the strategic implementation will be described to set the stage of the case study. This will be followed by an outline of the chosen qualitative research approach, with semi-structured interviews as a primary source of information. The outcome of the interviews will be used to describe the state of implementation of the company's strategy, and the strategy based on the theoretical framework. This will be followed by a summary of the learning's which can be derived from the case to provide further advances in academic research on strategic alignment by proposing a “3-step model of strategic alignment (3-MoSA)”. The paper will be concluded with a summary of the findings, an indication of how the “3-MoSA” can be applied to further drive the strategic implementation process, and an indication of the limitations of the study, and suggestions on further research focus areas.

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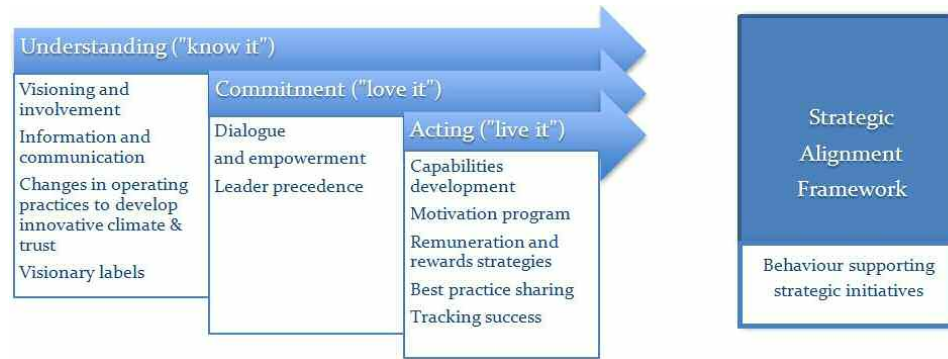
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## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A central finding in academic research, on which most authors agree is that strategic alignment is a process, which consists of three requirements: 1. understanding of the strategy, 2. commitment to the strategy and 3. the manifestation of the strategy in the activities of the employees (ability to act). Put differently, first people have to understand what the strategy is all about and what it means to them. Only then can they fully commit to the strategy, which is a second prerequisite of the ultimate goal of strategic implementation (that is the employees adjust their behavior and gain a better alignment of activities and orientation towards the goals). People need to have a proper understanding and commitment towards the strategy, that they are able to actually “live it”.



*Figure 1: Strategic alignment framework (own illustration, inspired from van Riels EcQ® strategic alignment monitor (van Riel 2008; van Riel & Fombrun 2007))*

The “strategic alignment framework” (figure 1) was developed based of findings from the literature reviews and inspired by existing models. The basic concept of the framework is that if the three requirements with their respective managerial activities are respected, this should lead to supportive actions of strategic alignment processes. The “strategic alignment framework” depicted is the condensed outcome of the literature review and will be used as guidance for the applied qualitative research on the implementation of the company’s ‘it begins with us’ strategy

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**ABOUT THE COMPANY'S 'IT BEGINS WITH US' STRATEGY**

In 2008 a newly appointed CEO and president introduced the corporate strategy 'it begins with us'. This strategy builds a bridge to the historic heritage of the company by keeping the 'old' values, but gives them a new spirit and interpretation that oriented the company toward further future opportunities. Different sources (for example employees, print material, internet) indicated that the communication that revolved around 'it begins with us' was very direct and inspiring, so that people felt personally approached. With a fresh and direct communication style the CEO gives central stage to the motivation of people and further directs the focus to innovation, performance and growth. He is convinced that with the right mind-set and people who work together ("create a winning team spirit") the company can achieve its goals. The CEO is striving for the company to be recognized as a thought leader in its field and to be respected as a bold innovator that is consistently delivering tremendous products with value, speed and high quality to its customers, shareholders and employees. Moreover, he is fostering the right conditions for innovation and is leading the company to become a knowledge-creating company. Some employees are also comparing the CEO's leadership style to his passion for handball – a quick game, which is played in a team and where creative and precise attacks are needed in order to win.

The 'it begins with us' strategy is communicated worldwide and is only one part of the activities around a 'new way of thinking'. Most of the activities are customized to the specific needs of each company site and are dependent upon factors such as resources, field work and product range. The case study at hand focuses on a local site, and will discuss how a new strategy can be successfully implemented.

**RESEARCH APPROACH**

The qualitative data collection was applied according to the principles of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "Grounded theory". The primary data resource was a qualitative research, which was based on a semi-structured in-depth interview with 20 respondents in various hierarchical positions primarily within the local site. The interviews focused on the personal views of the respondents regarding facilitating and impeding factors of the strategic alignment process according to the three requirements understanding, commitment and the ability to act.

**FINDINGS**

The findings of the primary data resource focused on facilitating or impeding factors currently perceived by employees in creating understanding, commitment and the actions in accordance with the strategy. The main

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facilitating factors in the “understanding” phase were well-prepared communication and information, paired with inspirational visioning. Factors that are seen to impede the process were the lack of understanding, of how corporate strategy could have an impact on the employee’s daily life. Also, the meaning of the terms used is not 100% understood by everybody.

The key facilitating factors in the “commitment” phase were selective examples of employee participation and leading by example. Some examples of impeding factors were improvement of trust building as part of empowerment and an increase in employee participation during the implementation phase. The main facilitating factor in the “acting” phase was the shared vision that motivated people is easier to align and add value to the company. Impeding factors are the lack of resources and missing prioritization. Finally, it was noted that an improved and timelier tracking of the success of the implementation process would be approved by the employees.

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The overall evaluation of the introduction of ‘it begins with us’ was very positive. The CEO and president is highly respected by the employees and considered as the right leader at the right time. There is a lot of support for the ‘it begins with us’ strategy. Top management was praised in the interviews for of “walking the talk”. Finally the strategy is generally thought to be appropriate and common sense. This does, however, not mean that there is no room for improvement. While respondents almost unanimously affirm their knowledge of the strategy and can relate to the symbols and core statements, understanding clearly isn’t complete. This may start with rather straightforward issues such as language or understanding the exact meaning of prominent buzzwords employed. The lack of relevance to the employees’ own working environment seems to be a common theme and one of utmost importance. Since strategic issues are perceived as “nice to have” and which often takes second stage to daily operational issues. It is clear that the field of “what is in it for me?” and “how can the strategy be applied to my everyday working life in order to enable me to do a better job?” is a field that deserves further attention. It is to some extent this disconnectedness with the close at hand working reality, which prevents more people from really “loving” the ‘it begins with us’ strategy. Ultimately, the same limitations can be applied to the “living”-part of the implementation.

Concrete recommendations are developed on how ‘it begins with us’ can be further enhanced throughout the organization. Following the strategic alignment framework recommendations focus firstly on the understanding of the strategy. Breaking down the strategy to what is relevant in the individual working environment is one central aspect. Others revolve around the questions: “what can be done to make the strategy easy accessible to everybody

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in the company?” and “how can we increase the interaction level during the strategic discussion?” The following list shows the practical recommendations for understanding (“know it”):

- Make sure all employees understand what is in it for them and create a “sense of urgency”.
- Keep the language, in which you communicate the strategy simple and straightforward.
- Onboarding of new employees should include an introduction to the company’s strategy.
- Narrative approaches and the use of labels/symbols improves understanding.
- Information management and prioritization.
- Follow-up is an inherent part of strategic alignment processes.

The practical recommendations on commitment (“love it”) to the strategy focus on participation, responsibility and interaction, but also the positive contributions of short-cycle implementation measurement tools on the creation of a positive momentum and a “can do”-mentality. The recommendations are as follows:

- Allow employees to participate in the change processes.
- Leaders should be aware about their driving role in strategic alignment processes.
- Assign a strategic alignment team.
- Build up “(informal) ambassadors”.
- Use strategy pro-actively in communications with customers and involve them in internal strategic discussions.
- Follow-up is an inherent part of strategic alignment processes.

The practical recommendations concerning how to increase the ability to act (“live it”) aspect of the implementation are personal development opportunities, a call for alignment of reward systems and strategy (including best practice transfer). The complete list of recommendations includes:

- Actively engaging employees through best practice sharing.
- Overcome potential obstacles through capability development.
- Ensure alignment of reward and measurement programs with the strategy and pro-actively communicate the relationship.
- Follow-up is an inherent part of strategic alignment processes.

In connection with a new model of strategic alignment (“3-step model of strategic alignment”) developed as a result of this research and discussed in the next section, it was noted that all practical recommendations can also be related to information, interaction and follow-up activities with the involved participants of the alignment processes.

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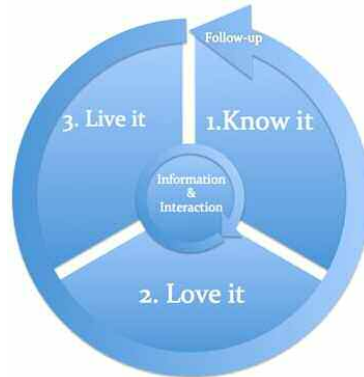
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## CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY OF STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

After analyzing the research findings and comparing them to the existing literature, it was concluded that the academic theories around strategic alignment also hold true for the practical case. Hence, the first “strategic alignment framework” (which is derived from the literature) can be recommended for use in practice. However, the company’s case also revealed some limitations of the framework. These are threefold: Firstly, strategic alignment implementations are on-going processes that are circular, not linear as suggested in the first model. Secondly, follow-up loops and feedback are fundamental elements of the implementation process and need to be promoted to become an explicit and inherent part of the alignment process. Thirdly, there are similarities between the facilitating and impeding managerial activities that allow a simplified model to be used by leaders during the strategy implementation process.



Consequently, the “3-step model of strategic alignment (3-MoSA)” was developed, which takes into account the limitations of the first framework into account and offers a contribution to academic theory by deriving the observations of the implementation of ‘it begins with us’ at the local site. The framework offers a comprehensive yet simple way of identifying and applying the leverage points that guide the strategic alignment process. A central aspect of the framework are the drivers “information” and “interaction”, which should be considered in addition to the three phases of strategic implementations, “know it” (understanding), “love it” (commitment) and “live it” (ability to act). A third driver concerns regular “follow-up” loops along each step of the process.

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The “3-step model of strategic alignment” emphasizes the continuous, iterative character of the process and offers a further simplification of the recommended managerial actions. The model gives freedom for managers to individualize and focus on the managerial activities, they seem to consider as most important for their specific team or department. It is also possible to use both frameworks (the literature derived one and the one developed based on the company’s case) in combination. One is more detailed and adequate for in-depth analysis (in cases where a status quo of the progress of the implementation progress needs to be evaluated). The second is a simplified model, which is more suitable in guiding leaders through their daily progress of disseminating the strategy throughout the organization and driving business success.

**CONCLUSION**

The case study shows that the researched company has done a very good job with the communication around ‘it begins with us’, including well-prepared set-up, information material and an inspiring CEO, who walks the talk. The case further proves that good communication, where people feel personally approached, can act as a promoter and enabler for strategic alignment. Nevertheless, potential remains to further align employee behavior to the strategy and to ignite the spark for employees to really embrace the strategy on a large scale and incorporate it in their everyday work. Strategic alignment is a change process, which is rooted in human social behavior and is therefore considered to be a collective process, where it is crucial that people inform and interact with each other. In addition to that follow-up loops are recommended and feedback should be given which reflects the current fields of action. Missing follow-up loops and no knowledge of the degree to which employees “live” the strategy are considered to be the main reasons why some employees have not adopted the strategy. Hence, the recommendations given are different attempts to lure employees out of a passive or consumptive attitude towards strategy and instead mobilize them to drive it from their own perspective. Siding efforts are suggestions to reduce potential barriers, for example the full understanding of the strategy, personal development, and a more structured approach driving the implementation process including dedicated resources (i.e. by establish the 3-MoSA with line-managers). In the long run employees who are aligned to the strategy will contribute positively to the performance of an organization. The case study comes to the positive outlook that in talking the next step in strategic alignment positive contributions to the performance of the organization can be expected.



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**Carola van Peursen**

# Multi-generational workforce: Implications for the Internal Communication department

*Analysis focused on unfolding the consequences of an increasing multi-generational workforce for the internal communication challenges of an organization in the year 2011*

Carola van Peursen (1969) is an energetic communication professional with experience in the areas of public relations, leadership communication and internal communication. Carola has held positions in various national and international companies in The Netherlands.

She worked in Shell's Corporate Affairs department as Global Internal and Management Communications Coordinator from January 2007 till end 2010, where she delivered a range of activities, training and tools to professionalize the Internal Communications Function worldwide.

Prior to this she has worked five years in Shell's Exploration & Production business, where she was responsible for Leadership Communication, writing speeches and other communications for the Executive Vice President Exploration for internal and external audiences.

Carola was trained in Public Relations and Media Training. Carola also gained experience through her work for Royal Dutch KPN. Working for the Chief Technology Officer, she liaised with a wide range of stakeholders regarding national and international communication issues, involving audiences

as diverse as investors, media, politicians and the Royal Family. Prior to her work for Royal Dutch KPN, she worked for Deloitte. She also holds experience on the agency side, gained through her work for Winkelman & Van Hessen and Public Relations / Public Affairs agency J.P.M. van Santen.

Before returning to the Netherlands to study and work, she lived in Athens, Greece, after completing high school. Carola is passionate about people. This, in combination with her natural inquisitiveness, explains her thesis topic; exploring the generations that live and work in today's society. Another passion of hers is writing. As a young adult she wrote poems, making both her parents and school teachers believe she would become a poet when growing up. Today, she still likes to write and has the desire to write a book within the next few years. In her spare time Carola loves to cook (and eat) and to spend quality time with her family and friends. She also likes art and is keen on discovering the latest novelties in this area.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever been aware of the fact that you are born in an era, which makes that you belong to a certain generation? We all know that people are unique, but how does our generational diversity influences us, what bonds people in a certain age-group, what makes them different from people in other age-groups and what is the effect of that on working life?

It is evident, that there are differences between the various generations. Not only differences in ways of thinking, values, beliefs, expectations, behaviors, attitudes and communication styles, but also differences when it comes to getting and acting upon information, and preferences in receiving and accessing information. Each generation seems to use other communication channels, tools and technologies, they feel most comfortable with and that they use in their own way.

Today, organizations face the challenge to deal with an increasingly generational diverse workforce, and with the differences that live among them. The 'one size fits all' approach still seems to be used by the majority of companies when it comes to communicating to their workforce. However, more and more companies seem to understand that this approach is not sufficient anymore, and are starting to see the benefits of knowing their audience, but do they know their generations?

Generational diversity is being discussed for several years. However, there is not much serious research done on the topic of communicating to diverse generations in organizations, which seems a missed opportunity from an Internal Communication perspective. This was a strong motivation to investigate the generations and their distinct characteristics and communication preferences.

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**PROBLEM DEFINITION**

**Research topic**

This research paper is taking a look at the different generations. How do they differ in characteristics? And what can be learnt from that when it comes to communication? Specifically, this paper investigates how should organizations adapt their internal communications to respond to the needs of a multi-generational workforce, in ways that it will facilitate all generations?

Sub questions:

- What defines a generation?
- What are diverse generations?
- Which generations can be identified and what are their distinct characteristics?
- How do generations differ in terms of values, expectations, motivations, types of behavior and attitudes, and how are these differences reflected in the workplace?
- What kind of challenges do organizations face in meeting the communication needs of the diverse generations in today's workforce?
- How should organizations adapt their communication efforts to respond to the preferences of each generation, in ways that improve employee engagement and that allows an inclusive working environment?

**Research approach and data collection**

For the literature part of this paper, books, articles, studies and surveys were reviewed that are published on generational diversity to offer a theoretically grounded framework.

For the research part of this paper and data collection, qualitative, explorative research was conducted, via semi-structured interviews with five members of each of the identified age-groups working for an International company in The Netherlands.

However, it needs to be noted that in this particular company the Veterans, aged between 66 and 89, have all retired. Therefore research focused on members of the Baby Boom generation, Generation X and Generation Y. Interview questions were clustered around the four dimensions of the Internal Communications process, namely Structure, Flow, Content and Climate. In addition, employee engagement across generations was measured by raising five typical engagement measurement questions.

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## EXISTING RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

### What defines a generation?

Generally, the concept of a 'generation' is attributed to social scientist Karl Mannheim (1928). He defined a generation as: "A group of people of the same age in a similar social location experiencing similar social events".

Notter (2000) uses the following definition: "A generation is a group of people defined by age boundaries - those who were born during a certain era. They share similar experiences growing up and their values and attitudes, particularly about work-related topics, tend to be similar, based on their shared experiences during their formative years." Hammill (2005) adds to this that: "each generation has distinct attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits and motivational buttons".

Penna et al. (2008) point out in their study that: "Each generation creates its own traditions and cultures through shared attitudes, preferences and dispositions. These differences can be lifelong and are influenced by a combination of the following:

- societal trends around raising and educating children,
- traumatic social events,
- a significant change in the economic cycle,
- the influence of significant leaders and entrepreneurs, or
- a dramatic demographic shift which influences the distribution of resources in a society."

### Which generations can be identified?

GENERATION TIMELINE			
1922–1945	1946–1964	1965–1980	1981–2000
Veterans, Silent, Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Generation X, Gen X, Xers	Generation Y, Gen Y, Millennial, Echo Boomers

*Hammill (2005) captures the four generations that can be identified in his "generation timeline".*

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**Veterans (1922 – 1945)**

This generation is marked by the following core values: “dedication, sacrifice, hard work, conformity, law and order, respect for authority, patience, delayed reward, duty before pleasure and adherence to rules (Notter, 2000)”. Their view on family is that of a traditional one. “They are the classic ‘keepers of the grail’ and an irreplaceable repository of lore and wisdom, practical willness and more than a few extra-organizational contacts (Filipczak et al., 1999).” They are dedicated, committed and will not likely take risks. Veterans are raised to view their elders and authority figures with respect and are not likely to complain or question things, they simply follow orders (Hammill, 2005; Lancaster and Stillman, 2002; Scheid, 2010).

**Baby Boomers (1946-1964)**

Baby Boomers are the product of the post-World War II baby boom (Smola and Sutton, 2002). Core values of this generation are: “optimism, team orientation, personal gratification, health and wellness, personal growth, youth, work and involvement (Notter, 2000)”. “Baby Boomers saw the beginning of change in the family structure, from the traditional viewpoint of the Veterans to increased number of divorces and single-parent families (Filipczak et al., 1999; Hammill, 2005).” Boomers are passionate, hard workers, the first generation to choose work over personal life. They were the ones that invented the 60-hour work week (Filipczak et al., 1999). Baby Boomers desire financial success and personal gratification (Hammill, 2005). Boomers’ strengths include consensus-building and mentoring (Smola and Sutton, 2002).

**Generation X (1965-1980)**

Generation X are smaller in number than the Baby Boomers. Notter (2000) describes the core values of this generation as: “diversity, thinking globally, balance, techno-literacy, fun, informality, self-reliance and pragmatism.” Generation X is referred to as the ‘latch-key generation’ (Filipczak et al., 1999; Notter, 2000; Hammill, 2005), meaning that growing up they had their own keys to let themselves in, since both parents were working. Or they only had one parent, due to the increase in divorces. This Generation turned to friends for support (Smola and Sutton, 2002). At work, they want flexibility and dislike close supervision, and they will express concerns to authority figures directly (Filipczak et al., 1999; Hammill, 2005). This generation values work-life balance, and feels comfortable with change and diversity. They bring to the workplace practical approaches to problem-solving (Smola and Sutton, 2002).

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**Generation Y (1981-2002)**

Notter (2000) identifies the following core values for Generation Y: “optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement, sociability, morality, street smarts and diversity.” This generation is smart, clever, curious, goal-oriented and loyal (Filipczak et al., 1999; Hammill, 2005). Generation Y grew up during the rapid growth of the internet and advanced new technologies, and feels comfortable with its frequent changes. They are connected 24-hours a day, which has broadened their view on the world (Notter, 2000; Smola and Sutton, 2002). The gains in technology and the increase in possibilities in education during the nineties make them the most educated of workers today (AMA, 2007). This generation has an appetite for work and voices their opinions (Smola and Sutton, 2002). They are most resilient in dealing with change and they have deepened their appreciation for diversity and inclusion (Notter, 2000; Filipczak et al., 1999; AMA, 2007).

**Employee engagement across generations**

Employee engagement is typically measured by raising questions along the lines of:

- I am proud when I tell others I work for (organization).
- I would recommend the organization as a great place to work.
- I feel a strong personal attachment to (the organization).
- Working for the organization inspires me to put in extra effort.
- The organization motivates me to help it achieve its objective.
- I intend to leave (organization) in the next 12 months.

After the initial data collection, that in total lead to a so called ‘employee engagement index’, an analysis needs to identify key drivers of engagement. These will differ per company and will be influenced by generational demographics and other factors such as industry and culture.

**The Employee Communication process**

Employee Communication is the process through which organizations share information, build commitment and manage change. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) point out that there are four dimensions that can be applied in the employee communication process, namely;

- Structure - (in)formal channels through which internal messages are conveyed,
- Flow - the process through which internal communications move in an organization,
- Content - the specific content of the communication, and
- Climate - the emotional environment of the organization.

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**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Findings per generation in preference in structure, flow, content and climate are outlined below.

**Communication preferences Baby Boomers**

Findings	Example of quotes
<p><b>Structure</b></p> <p>Face to Face most preferred (the non-verbal is important) Channel choice depends on message type Multiple channel use (filter channel towards personal preference) Prefer email over phone Limited interest in Social Media</p> <p>Turn-off(s): - technical problems - wrong use of channel - Social Media</p>	<p>“Non-verbal communications is important to me – I want to see the emotions, the body language” “To me, the message sets the medium” “In that case you can find info in different ways, people communicate differently (other level of depth)” I find phones intrusive, I rather answer email at my own pace” “I have no time, nor interest to look into new technologies, and to be frank, I do not miss it, I can do without” “It is annoying when technical equipment does not work” “ We need to avoid a certain ‘death by PowerPoint’” “Wiki’s and the video channel turn me off, it is annoying”</p>
<p><b>Flow</b></p> <p>All information flow is important Leadership info important Turn off(s): - wrong route for info - too much flow (and repetition)</p>	<p>“All flow is important, it depends what you are working on” “Downward flow might be the most important” “I do not like hearing things in the press, and later officially” “Too much flow and repetition of messages annoys me”</p>

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**Findings**

**Content**

Balance between 'Me' and 'We'

Expect segmentation regarding personal information

Success stories, remuneration and recognition for contribution  
is motivator

Direct and logical communication style

Turn-off(s):

- lengthy emails
- inconcrete or illogical information
- buzz words

**Climate**

Open/functional/flexible work climate

Leadership: collaboration, people person

Respectful view of authority

Balance work and private life difficult

Individual interactive style, but like sharing ideas with others

Values: respect, honesty, integrity

Turn-off(s):

- hierarchy and culture of fear
- solving the same problems

**Example of quotes**

"We is important to work efficiently, Me for me personally"

"Personal info is necessary, for instance specifically for expats  
or about remuneration"

"I like to see success stories, receive feedback for a job well done"

"Remuneration is a personal motivator for me"

"I prefer direct and logical communications"

"I prefer condense, short sentenced messages that are clear"

"I dislike information that is not clear or illogical"

"I do not like information that includes buzz words"

"I prefer an open climate, that is functional and flexible"

"I value a leader that is servant and has strong social skills"

"I am respectful towards authority, but it does not necessarily  
depend on the position someone holds"

"Work/life balance is sometimes difficult, it is busy at work"

"I work independently, but I also like sharing creativity and  
ideas with others"

"My own values are honesty, integrity, respect for people  
and reliability"

"I dislike hierarchy and not being able to speak freely"

"I don't like to solve the same problem over and over again"



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**Communication preferences Generation X**

**Findings**

**Example of quotes**

**Structure**

Face to face most preferred (the visual is important)  
Channel choice depends on message type  
Multiple channel use  
Social Media interest and use to a certain degree  
(relevance clear/no early adopter)  
Learn new technologies by doing  
Turn off(s):  
- wrong channel for message type  
- when info can not be found

“For me visual contact (physical or virtual) is important”  
“Visual is powerful”  
“My preference in channel depends on the type of message,  
if it is confidential, general info, personal or urgent”  
“The use of multiple channels is good”  
“I keep informed about the latest technologies that are relevant  
to me - if relevant for work I expect them at work”  
“To me it is a matter of doing to understand how Social Media  
technologies work, no training is necessary”  
“Hearing personal information in the grapevine is a turn off”  
“Not being able to find information I need is frustrating”

**Flow**

All information flow is important  
Downward flow most preferred  
Turn off(s):  
- wrong route for personal info  
- too much flow (and repetition)

“All directions of information flow serves a different purpose”  
“I prefer downward flow the most, because goals and structure  
are important to me”  
“I don't like hearing personal info in the corridors”  
“There is simply too much information flow”

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**Findings**

**Example of quotes**

**Content**

Useful information (for work) with a balance between 'Me' and 'We'

Helicopter-view

Storytelling and constructive feedback is motivator

Direct, logical and positive style

Turn-off(s):

- lengthy emails
- irrelevant information
- belittling tone

"I wish to see information that is useful in my daily job"

"I want to receive more information that matters to me"

"I like information that allows me a helicopter-view"

"Storytelling is important to me" "Success stories motivate"

"Feedback for a job well done motivates me"

"I prefer a direct, logical, personable and positive tone"

"Messages that are too long I often decide not to read"

"Information that I cannot use in my work is a turn-off"

"I don't like that the tone of messages can be belittling"

**Climate**

Open/vision-driven working environment

Leadership: People person, competent

Respectful view of authority

Balance work and private life

Flexible interactive style, but mainly individual

Values: respect, honesty, integrity

Turn-off(s):

- hierarchy
- bureaucracy

"I like an open, vision-driven climate where tasks are clear"

"A leader should be competent and also a people person"

"I respect people in general, it does not depend on position"

"I value my private life as much as my working life"

"I work mainly individual, but change my style to a situation"

"My own values are respect, integrity, honesty and fairness"

"Hierarchy influences the openness"

"The tendency to have a process for everything is a turn-off"

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**Communication preferences Generation Y**

**Findings**

**Example of quotes**

**Structure**

Face to face most preferred channel (the social factor is important)

Channel choice depends on message topic, time, level of 'Me' content

Multiple channel use

Social Media interest/use (relevance), and learn new technologies by doing

Turn off(s):

- too much channels
- when info can not be found
- technical problems

"Contact with people is, the social factor and the verbal is important to me when communicating"

"Channel choice depends on the topic, the available time and if the content is personal or not"

"In my opinion every channel serves a different purpose"

"I like Social Media and are curious about them, but I test the personal relevance"

"I train myself, or I ask a friend- expert to help out, I do not need formal training"

"There are too much channels, it is just too much to handle"

"The intranet search engine really sucks"

"Technical problems can really slow you down"

**Flow**

All information flow is important

Lateral flow most preferred, but would like to see more downward flow

Turn off(s):

- wrong route for info
- too much flow
- when flow is vague and not timely

"I value all types of flow"

"Lateral flow is the most important for me, but I would like more downward flow to know what leaders think"

"It is a turn-off when info reaches you via the wrong route"

"There is too much flow to handle"

"I find it difficult when flow is vague and too late"

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**Findings**

**Example of quotes**

**Contents**

Balance between 'Me' and 'We', 'We' content need to include strategy info

Why question is important

Expect segmentation (filter)

Positive, logical and inspirational style

CSR and positive feedback is motivator

Turn-off(s):

- lengthy emails (and not fit for purpose)
- when info can not be found
- negative tone

"I like a balance between 'Me' and 'We' content"

"Strategy information needs to be communicated more"

"I want to understand why business decisions are made"

"There is so much information, I expect a segmentation towards select groups, serving as a filter"

"I want logical, positive information that is inspirational"

"I would like to see more stories about the good causes we as a company participate in"

"I dislike messages that are too long and not fit for purpose"

"It takes a lot of time to find certain information needed"

"It does not work for me to bring a message negatively"

**Climate**

Open/fun/flexible working environment

Leadership: motivational, mentor

Relaxed and polite view of authority

Balance work and private life important

Interactive style: participative

Values: respect, honesty, diversity

Turn-off(s):

- hierarchy and non-flexible
- no diversity

"I want to work in an open and flexible organization, but I also find the fun-factor important"

"I prefer a motivational leader that is a mentor as well"

"I am impressed, but relaxed and polite towards authorities"

"Work is as much important as my private life is"

"I am the participative kind, I want to be involved in things"

"My values include honesty, integrity, respect for people and diversity and inclusiveness, despite job or culture"

"Hierarchy non-flexibility make it hard to get things done"

"No diversity means I will not chose for this company"

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Findings of employee engagement levels per generations are outlined below.

**Employee engagement index Baby Boomers**

Employee engagement measurement questions	Yes	Neutral	No
I am proud when I tell others I work for (organization)	80%	20%	
I would recommend the organization as a great place to work	80%	20%	
I feel a strong personal attachment to (the organization)	80%		20%
Working for the organization inspires me to put in extra effort	40%	20%	40%
The organization motivates me to help it achieve its objective	20%	20%	60%
Total	60%	16%	24%

**Employee engagement index Generation X**

Employee engagement measurement questions	Yes	Neutral	No
I am proud when I tell others I work for (organization)	100%		
I would recommend the organization as a great place to work	100%		
I feel a strong personal attachment to (the organization)	60%		40%
Working for the organization inspires me to put in extra effort	80%		20%
The organization motivates me to help it achieve its objective	80%		20%
Total	84%		16%

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**Employee engagement index Generation Y**

Employee engagement measurement questions	Yes	Neutral	No
I am proud when I tell others I work for (organization)	80%		20%
I would recommend the organization as a great place to work	80%		20%
I feel a strong personal attachment to (the organization)	80%		20%
Working for the organization inspires me to put in extra effort	60%		40%
The organization motivates me to help it achieve its objective	60%		40%
Total	72%		28%

These findings suggest that Generation X is overall more engaged than the Baby Boomers and Generation Y, when considering pride in the company and whether they would recommend their organizations as a place to work. When it comes to the personal band with the organization, the Baby Boomers are most connected, which seems understandable since many of them work 30+ years for the company. However, interestingly enough Gen Y exhibits the same level of engagement in this area, even though most of them work less than 1,5 year for the organization. Gen X seems less bonded to the organization.

Gen X is most engaged considering feeling inspired by working for the organization to put in extra effort, while Baby Boomer and Gen Y exhibit a lower level of engagement in this area. Finally, considering the motivation to help the company achieve its objective, Gen X is again most engaged, Gen Y is less engaged and Baby Boomers exhibit a low engagement level in this area.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### General identified generational trends

☞ *Generational build up of a workforce is distinct to an organization*

**Strategic recommendation: Explore the generational build up of the organization's workforce**

The generational build up is distinct for each organization. Therefore organizations should explore the generational build up of their workforce to understand their audience. If desired further segmentation towards a company's Businesses, Departments or teams could be explored.

☞ *Age bands have no hard stop*

**Strategic recommendation: Explore generational differences considering age bands**

There is a 'softer stop' to the age bands that mark each generation. The concept of the 'tweeners', i.e. people born at the beginning or end of a generation era and the fact that these people can exhibit values and attitudes from two different generations, make it difficult to capture true generational characteristics and specific communication preferences. Therefore it is recommended that when exploring generational characteristics in workforce, to consider the fact that age-bands do not have a hard stop. In essence, people that are born close to another age-band, might exhibit the characteristics of that particular generation, or a combination of that generation and their own.

☞ *Further cultural differences exist within age-groups*

**Strategic recommendation: Explore generational characteristics considering cultural differences**

Cultural differences seem to have an influence on age-groups or more specifically on people in general. This can influence the values, expectations, motivations, types of behaviors and attitudes, but it also influences the generational preferences in structure, flow content and climate. Therefore cultural differences within age-groups need to be considered when exploring generational communication preferences and specific characteristics in workforce.

☞ *Generational characteristics are influenced by personal experiences*

**Strategic recommendation: Explore generational characteristics, but use the knowledge indicative**

In addition to age, values, expectations, motivations, types of behaviors, attitudes and also engagement level at work are influenced by the experience someone has with the organization and in personal life. Therefore it should be taken into consideration that when exploring generational characteristics in workforce, this may not tell the whole story. There are more influencers than age that define people. In other words, belonging to a specific

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generation does not necessarily mean that all people behave the same - differences within age-groups exist. Therefore it is important using gained generational knowledge indicative and not seeing generations as something static. In essence, stereotyping and labeling of people need to be avoided. An additional idea might be to survey age-groups or samples of it about issues that might vary with age.



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## COMMUNICATING TO ALL GENERATIONS

☞ *All generations prefer face to face communication the most, differences in preferences lie in the next levels of channel use*

**Strategic recommendation: Emphasize face to face communication, but leverage different media to facilitate all generations in workforce in the next levels of channel use**

All generation prefer face to face communication the most - every type of it. The differences in channel preference lie in the next levels of channel use. Therefore it is recommended to emphasize face to face communication, but to use multiple channels to facilitate all generations at work.

**Strategic recommendation: Offer clear guidelines on the appropriate use of channels at work - in particular about newer technologies and offer training if necessary**

When using multiple channels for communicating it is necessary to offer clear guidelines on the appropriate use of each channel - in particularly for newer technologies. Training should be made available when introducing a new channel/technology for those who want an in-depth knowledge.

☞ *All generations prefer to receive all types of information flow*

☞ *All generations value downward flow*

**Strategic recommendation: Use flow in all directions to spread information through the organization and emphasize downward flow to facilitate all generations**

All generations prefer to receive information flow in all directions and value downward flow to give a sense of direction and to work efficiently. Therefore use flow in all directions to spread messages through the organization and emphasize downward flow to facilitate all generations.

☞ *All generations prefer a balance between the 'Me' and the 'We' content, expect some type of segmentation towards personal relevance of messages and all generations like to hear success stories, it motivates them*

**Strategic recommendation: Balance 'Me' and 'We' content to facilitate all generations, tailor messages towards segmented target group and use success stories to motivate and unite them**

All generation prefer a balance between 'Me' and 'We' content and desire some type of segmentation towards personal relevance of messages. Therefore content needs to be balanced and offer personal information, as well as information about the organization. Messages need to be tailored for specific target audiences to serve as a first filter for employees. In addition, success stories about the company need to be communicated to motivate and unite generations.

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**☞ All generations prefer short messages, that are relevant and in a logical style**

**Strategic recommendation: Communicate consistently in short, relevant messages in a logical style**

All generations prefer short messages, that are relevant and in a logical style. Therefore it is recommended communicating consistently throughout the organization (one voice) and to offer content of messages in a short, relevant and logical style.

**☞ All generations prefer an open climate in an organization and recognition, and all generations prefer to be part of or to share ideas within a team**

**Strategic recommendation: Create an open climate that promotes dialogue and recognition**

All generation prefer an open climate in an organization, where they are free to speak their minds and express their opinions and where there is reward for delivery. It is recommended creating an open climate that promotes dialogue, encourages free exchange of opinions, ideas and suggestions, and that facilitates recognition for a job well done. This is a strong motivator for all generations.

**Strategic recommendation: Leverage team relationships to encourage creative thinking**

All generations value to be part of or to share ideas within a team. Therefore it is important leveraging team relationships to encourage team working and creative thinking across generations.

Concluding, considering the above similarities that seem to exist among generations there is one more strategic recommendation that can be highlighted for communicating to all generations.

**Strategic recommendation: Use similarities among generations as communication building blocks**

It is important for the Internal Communications Department to build on generational similarities when communicating to a multi-generational workforce - it can serve as a starting point.

In addition to the recommendations with regard to generational similarities in communication preferences described, there are some age-group specific preferences and characteristics that require different recommendations that are highlighted below.

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## COMMUNICATING TO BABY BOOMERS

☞ *Baby Boomers have no interest in Social Media technologies; they will refuse to use them, unless they really have to*

### **Strategic recommendation: Offer multiple channel options to facilitate Baby Boomers**

It is important to understand the channel preferences of each age-group and to act upon it. It is critical making sure that generational differences in channel preference are covered and multiple channels are used for communicating to offer options that facilitate all generations. For example, Baby Boomers do not like to use Social Media technologies; it is a turn off for them, acknowledging this is important in channel choice when addressing this specific age-group.

☞ *Strategic recommendation: Facilitate dialogue among generations to encourage learning moments*

There may come a time in the near future that Baby Boomers have no choice and will have to use certain Social Media technologies or other new communication systems if the organization requires it. Facilitating dialogue among the generations can encourage cross-learning opportunities and knowledge transfer. For example, when it comes to Social Media usage, Generation Y, known to be 'experts in the field', can help older workers to use certain technologies.

☞ *A specific working environment preference of the Baby Boomers is that of an organization, where they are heard*

### **Strategic recommendation: Accommodate personal preferences in the work place - specifically use the wisdom of these experienced workers**

Baby Boomers want to be heard and to be valued - they want to make a difference. Use their knowledge and experience either as 'authority' on a certain topic in a project or give them someone to mentor in their working life. In addition, Baby Boomers have an overall critical attitude; use their feedback to discover and implement improvements.

☞ *Baby Boomers interactive style is mainly individual*

### **Strategic recommendation: Accommodate typical characteristics as strengths in the work place - specifically use the individualistic style of Baby Boomers for fulfilling solo roles or tasks**

Baby Boomers have a mainly individual interactive style, even though they like sharing ideas with others and within their team. It is recommended using this type of typical characteristics to the company's benefit and to allow diversity in teams. For instance, offer Baby Boomers jobs or tasks within a team that can thrive with an individualistic interactive style.

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## COMMUNICATING TO GENERATION X

☞ *Generation X has an interest in Social Media technologies to a certain degree, when the relevance is clear, but they are not early adopters*

**Strategic recommendation: Actively promote the use of Social Media technologies among Generation X, but offer multiple channel options to facilitate them**

There is an appetite for Social Media among Generation X, but they are not early adopters. To encourage Social Media technology usage it is recommended to actively promoting these types of media among Generation X. Currently they find their information elsewhere, meaning that communicating via multiple channels to offer options to them is also of importance.

**Strategic recommendation: Facilitate dialogue among generations to encourage learning moments**

To promote the use of Social Media technologies or other new communication systems, facilitating dialogue among the generations can encourage cross-learning opportunities and knowledge transfer. For example, when it comes to Social Media usage, Generation Y is known to be 'experts in the field', they can help other generations to use certain technologies.

☞ *A specific working environment preference of Generation X is that of an informal and vision-driven organization*

**Strategic recommendation: Accommodate typical preferences in the work place - create an informal work climate with easy access to stakeholders and senior leaders**

Generation X feels comfortable in an informal work climate, where they can participate in decision making and feel that they are taken seriously and included. Therefore it is important creating an informal climate, where Gen X has easy access to stakeholders and senior leaders.

☞ *Generation X interactive style is mainly individual, but they are flexible to adjust to situations*

**Strategic recommendation: Accommodate typical characteristics as strengths in the work place - specifically use the flexible interactive style of Generation X**

Generation X has a flexible component to their interactive style. They basically adjust their style to the situation. It is recommended encouraging this kind of typical characteristics to allow diversity of styles in teams. This might also give an opportunity to highlight the benefits of age diversity in teams.

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## COMMUNICATING TO GENERATION Y

☞ *Generation Y is interested in Social Media technologies, they look for the personal relevance and the fun of a tool*

**Strategic recommendation: Actively promote the use of Social Media technologies among Generation Y and make them ambassadors, but offer multiple channel options to facilitate them**

Generation Y is the most interested among the generations in Social Media technologies. They are the early adopters among the generations. To encourage Social Media technology usage it is recommended to actively promote these types of media among Generation Y and make them ambassadors for other generations and 'experts in the field'. Their appetite for all sorts of new Social Media technologies does not mean that they do not use other channels to find information, because they do. Often they use specific types of channels for instance to find information that they need in their daily work. Therefore it is important to offer multiple channel options to facilitate them.

☞ *A specific working environment preference of Generation Y is that of a, challenging, diverse and inclusive, flexible organization, where positivity and fun is!*

**Strategic recommendation: Accommodate typical preferences in the work place**

Generation Y needs a challenging working environment, they value diversity and inclusiveness and look for positivity and fun in the workplace. Accommodate these types of typical characteristics. Give them a challenge, allow diversity and inclusiveness, flexibility and positivity. One could argue if the content of communication messages should be adjusted for this generation to allow the 'fun-element' that they like to see in the work place, for instance by incorporating humor in messages that are meant specifically for them.

**Strategic recommendation: Facilitate dialogue among generations to encourage learning moments**

Facilitating dialogue among the generations can encourage cross-learning opportunities and knowledge transfer. For example, when it comes to specific topics that are still new to Generation Y, e.g. work processes, ways of working or knowledge about certain projects, creating dialogue with Baby Boomers with their many years of experience can guide them in these areas.

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☞ *Generation X seeks in leadership some kind of mentorship*

**Strategic recommendation: Accommodate typical preferences in the work place - use members of the Baby Boom generation to serve as a mentor for Generation Y**

When it comes to leadership style preference Generation Y seeks in a leader some sort of mentorship. They want to learn from senior members in the organization and are inspired by leaders that make a difference. Therefore it is recommended using members of the Baby Boom generation as mentor for this young generation at work.

☞ *Generation Y interactive style is participative, they like to multi-task,*

**Strategic recommendation: Facilitate typical characteristics and strengths in the work place - specifically use the fresh perspective of the young and their participative interactive style**

Generation Y is the participative kind when it comes to their interactive style and they like to multi-task. They want to be involved! Therefore it is recommended using the fresh perspective of this generation and their willingness to participate - it is an opportunity to prosper. An idea is to consider assigning a project to a group of Generation Y members and let them use their creative thinking to reach a certain goal. The outcome might be positively surprising.

Considering the above leads to the final recommendation for communicating to a multi-generational workforce; age should be added to the list of segmentation types for internal audiences.

**Strategic recommendation: Include generational differences in Internal Communications strategy - specifically add age to the list of segmentation types for internal audiences**

Segmenting audiences is typically done by country, business division, grade, location, job type, country and language, to name a few. It is important to add age to the list of segmentation types to allow effective communication to generations.

Concluding, when communicating to a multi-generational workforce, specific preferences in communication structure, content, flow and climate, as well as typical age-group characteristics need to be considered. Overall, 'over-communication' via multiple channels might do the trick, offering options to facilitate all generations to allow an inclusive workplace. However, when communicating to a targeted age-group their distinct communication preferences and characteristics should be taken into account.

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## ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACROSS GENERATIONS

Internal Communications is recognized as one of the key drivers of employee engagement. As such, employee engagement plays an increasingly important role in the Internal Communications Function. To drive employee engagement across generations the following is recommended.

### **Strategic recommendation: Define employee engagement for the organization as a starting point**

There is no standardized, clear-cut definition of the term employee engagement for businesses. Often the term is interchangeably used with commitment, loyalty, morale, satisfaction and alignment, as if they are all the same. Therefore an organization needs to start with defining employee engagement for the organization, considering all employees.

### **Strategic recommendation: Conduct a key driver analysis to identify key drivers of engagement**

Based on the initial data, a key driver analysis needs to be conducted to identify key drivers of engagement for the organization. These will be partly influenced by age, but also by other factors such as industry and culture.

☞ *All generations are highly engaged when it comes to pride in the company, and whether they would recommend the company as a place to work*

### **Strategic recommendation: Build on generational similarities and strengths to drive engagement**

It is important to build on generational similarities and strengths. For example, all generations value the same personal motivator hearing or reading about success stories. An idea would be to celebrate achievements and highlight best practices in the company.

☞ *All generations have a strong to medium personal attachment with the organization, and exhibit a strong to medium engagement level considering whether they feel inspired by working for the company to put in extra effort*

☞ *All generations exhibit a low to medium level of engagement considering the motivation of the organization to help it achieve its objective*

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**Strategic recommendation: Communicate consistently, timely and foster dialogue, and include creating line of sight in Internal Communications strategy to drive engagement and alignment**

To drive engagement among generations it is important to communicate consistently and timely, allow employee involvement, foster dialogue and customize communications for different target groups. In order to drive alignment a themed messaging around company mission and strategic goals needs to be developed and communicated. Both are recognized to be key drivers of employee engagement. Additionally, leaders need to be trained in communication skills to allow effective leadership communication across age-groups.

**Strategic recommendation: Involve leadership in delivering generational employee engagement**

Leadership must be involved in delivering employee engagement. More specifically, they need to make sure that their staff knows the organization's strategic direction, operating sensitivities and day-to-day priorities, in order to build focus and make people aware of how their own and department's work contributes to the overall success of the organization. In addition, leaders need to create an open climate that encourages collaboration and the free exchange of opinions and ideas and that facilitates recognition for a job well done. These are strong motivators for the generations that were interviewed. Both are also recognized key drivers of employee engagement.

**Strategic recommendation: Measure employee engagement across generations annually**

Measure employee engagement across generations annually to test if the Internal Communications strategy and the identified engagement drivers are sufficient.

In addition, the next few paragraphs highlight a specific recommendation to drive employee engagement among a certain age-group, and the distinct personal motivators for each of the generations that came out of this research that can be used as typical employee engagement drivers for these age-groups.

**Strategic recommendation: Allow a segmentation of targeted age-groups by employee engagement level if levels of engagement differ a lot and identify key engagement drivers for each age-group**

Allow a segmentation of targeted age-groups and their employee engagement levels, if these engagement levels per generation differ a lot. For example, this research suggests that Baby Boomers are the least engaged compared to Generation X and Generation Y. Target the Baby Boomers as age-group with specific key engagement drivers identified for them.



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## ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG BABY BOOMERS

☞ *A personal motivator for the Baby Boom generation is remuneration*

**Strategic recommendation: Allow personal generational motivators to drive employee engagement**

A specific personal motivator for Baby Boomers is remuneration. Allow personal motivators such as these to thrive. For example, implement a system that rewards contributions that fall outside the regular salary system e.g. contributions to a project or for a job well done.

## ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG GENERATION X

☞ *A personal motivator for Generation X is storytelling*

**Strategic recommendation: Allow personal generational motivators to drive employee engagement**

A specific personal motivator for Generation X is storytelling. Allow these types of personal motivators in the workplace. For example, tell stories about the company successes and best practices, both by employer-employee communication as well as by employee-employee communication - let staff tell their own stories about company successes.

## ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG GENERATION Y

☞ *A personal motivator for Generation Y is an answer to the 'Why' question*

**Strategic recommendation: Allow personal generational motivators to drive employee engagement**

As mentioned Generation Y finds it important to understand why the company makes certain business decisions. It is a personal motivator for them to get the answer to that question. Allow personal motivators such as these to thrive. For example, by incorporating the why question into stories about the company featured on the intranet.

Concluding, when encouraging employee engagement across generations it is important to develop an understanding of message and channel preferences of age-groups, and of personal motivators, to allow an effective employee communication process in the organization. Measuring levels of engagement can identify key engagement drivers that can help to create a working environment that allows all generations to contribute to their fullest potential.

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## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH

### Research limitations

Some aspects of this research may pose limitations regarding the conclusions that were drawn from it. One aspect is that the people who were interviewed are working for one particular international organization in The Netherlands. It can be expected that the four dimensions of the employee communication process may vary across different types of organizations, which may influence the findings and conclusions. More specifically, the structure and climate of a company are specific to an organization and changes in people's expectations and preferences are linked to changes in technology usage and work culture. For example, considering the preferences of each age-group in communication channels, if a company does not have a certain channel, people will focus on and probably prefer other available channels. Another example, climate is influenced by cultural differences, if a company operates internationally it will undoubtedly have an effect on climate preferences.

### Follow-up research

The results of this study may encourage a re-conceptualization of the characteristics for the generations in work-force. The current trend is that generations are distinct and static, meaning that they are likely to continue the characteristics they exhibit. However, that may not be completely true. During their lives people face challenges in various age levels that can influence these distinct characteristics.

A trend that could be of further interest for researchers is the expected retirement of large amounts of Baby Boomers and the flow of Generation Y into the workplace over the next few years, and the impact this will impose on the working environment.

Of particular interest to future research may be potential additional similarities to exist in communication preferences among the various generations. For example the fact that all generations value feedback and recognition for a job well done, a strong motivator for all of them, could be of interest for driving employee engagement across generations.

Finally, if available, more research into newer academic theory regarding distinct generational characteristics and preferences, as well as research that investigates 'the next generation' and its distinctions should be included in further research, to allow a more funded overall theory. In addition, research regarding generations in countries outside of the Western World would be of interest, to allow comparison of generational differences worldwide and to allow an assessment of cultural influences on generations.

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**Marije Scholma**

# Thought Leadership: to pursue or not to pursue

*An explorative research on the influence of Thought Leadership  
on Corporate Reputation*

Marije Scholma (1979) started as a consultant in the Automotive industry in 2003 after finishing her master in Business Administration at the University of Nijmegen. In 2005 she joined Nationale-Nederlanden, one of Netherlands largest insurance companies. There she held several positions as marketing developer, business manager to the CEO and program manager communications. In 2007 she followed her passion: moving and touching people during large organizational change processes. This is one of her main areas of attention now as Head of Internal Communications at Nationale-Nederlanden, Her favorite project was the Internal Branding program, following the merger program for all Dutch ING insurance activities into the Nationale-Nederlanden brand. In a 'fittest' executed by IG&H end of 2009, the internal communications strategy was judged as one of the strengths of this change program. Also they won several prizes with this program, like a FEIEA 2010 award (Federation of European business communications associations) in the category 'best internal communication strategy' and a second place in the NIMA Internal Branding Awards 2011.

Her interest in the topic of Thought Leadership emerged during the MCC program at Erasmus, where she heard several organizations trying to pursue it, but all with different purposes. Marije is living in the Hague, together with her boyfriend Harold. In her free time, she really loves photography and she is addicted to do sports like running and bootcamp. Also she has a passion for Canada, where she hopes to live one day.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Today's environment is rapidly changing. Markets are becoming more and more competitive and knowledge driven. Society is getting more and more sophisticated. Industries are getting saturated and companies are trying hard to be heard and seen. They need to differentiate themselves from the competition. To create this competitive advantage, traditional marketing methods like branding and advertising are no longer sufficient. Thought Leadership is an upcoming strategy that organizations pursue to differentiate themselves from their competition. Organizations increasingly talk about pursuing a Thought Leadership position. Despite this enthusiasm, it is far from clear if and how Thought Leadership can benefit an organization.

How effective is a Thought Leadership position? Does it really help in improving an organization's Corporate Reputation and stakeholders behavior towards the company? In my thesis, I aimed to answer these questions.

## **RESEARCH APPROACH**

The general question raised in my thesis is "Under which conditions does a Thought Leadership position influence Corporate Reputation?"

To answer this question, I conducted explorative research. This is a method often used when the problem is unclear or the subject is relatively new. My objective was not to provide input for decision-making about Thought Leadership and Corporate Reputation, but to provide significant insight into these concepts and their practical and theoretical relevance.

## **THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE REPUTATION**

Thought Leadership can be defined as 'The action of introducing and promoting convention-breaking ideas that cause people to change how they think about marketplace or societal issues' (Kettler & Van Halderen, 2011). It is built on two theoretical pillars: Novelty & Trust. In order to be likely to succeed in pursuing a Thought Leadership strategy, organizations need to have insight in society/market forces, have the intellectual capacity and expertise to build a Thought Leadership strategy.

Thought Leadership can manifest itself in two arenas: market / industry prominence and social relevance. This can also be called Corporate Ability (CA) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Brown & Dacin, 1997). In pursuing a Thought Leadership position, organizations can choose to focus on either CA or CSR.

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Thought Leadership is not likely to attract all stakeholders in the same way: different stakeholders can have a different view regarding the company's Thought Leadership position.

Involvement and Need for Cognition can influence the possibility that stakeholders develop Thought Leader perceptions about an organization.

Corporate Reputation is 'a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. It gauges a firm's relative standing both internally with employees and externally with its stakeholders, in both its competitive and institutional environments.' (Fombrun & Rindova, 1996). Outcome variables (supportive behavior) of Corporate Reputation can be product purchase, customer satisfaction, loyalty, trust and positive word of mouth. An organization can have multiple Reputations, with a different set of attributes per stakeholder group.

In my thesis, the signaling theory is used to explain how Reputation can be formed. Stakeholders construct Reputation through internal (company) or external (outside company) signals (antecedents) about an organization. Signals are actions that parties take to reveal the skills of their or another organisation, in part designed to communicate in order to reduce information asymmetry. As with Thought Leadership, CA and CSR can both be seen as signals through which Reputations can be formed. These signals may vary in the degree to which they carry Thought Leadership in them.

Reputation and Thought Leadership can be seen as quite similar concepts, but they really are different with an expected cause-result relationship: Reputation can be build with Thought Leadership associations.

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**RESEARCH MODEL AND METHOD**

The following research model was constructed:

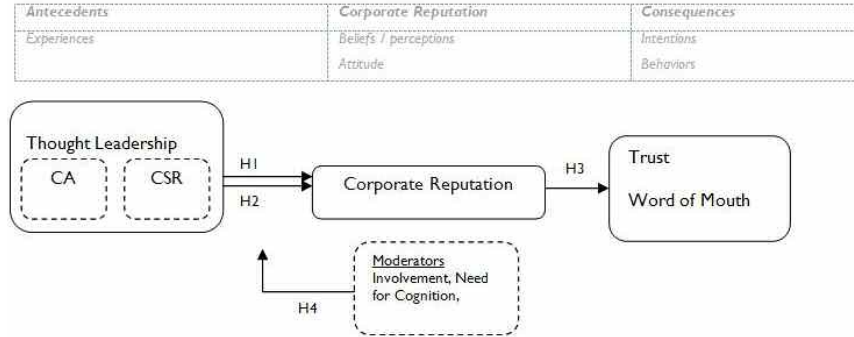


Figure 1: Research model

Four hypotheses can be defined following this model:

- Hypothesis 1: The more that stakeholders perceive the organization as a Thought leader on its Corporate Ability, the higher the organization's Corporate Reputation.
- Hypothesis 2: The more that stakeholders perceive the organization as a Thought leader on its organization's Corporate Responsibility, the higher the organization's Corporate Reputation.
- Hypothesis 3a: The impact of stakeholder's perceptions of an organization's CA Thought Leadership position on supportive behavior is mediated by Corporate Reputation.
- Hypothesis 3b: The impact of stakeholder's perceptions of an organization's CSR Thought Leadership position on supportive behavior is mediated by Corporate Reputation.
- Hypothesis 4a: The influence of a Thought Leadership position on Corporate Reputation is positively moderated by stakeholders' involvement in the company.
- Hypothesis 4b: The influence of a Thought Leadership position on Reputation is positively moderated by stakeholders' need for cognition.

To start the research, an internet based questionnaire is sent out using LinkedIn and Twitter. 300 respondents filled in the questionnaire. The internal validity of the measurement scale is high with a Cronbachs of 0,861, which means analyses can be done based on this research.

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that Thought Leadership does indeed influence Corporate Reputation. And stakeholder behavior through Corporate Reputation. But, the extent of this influence is not very high.

In this highly competitive marketplace where in all branches organizations are constantly seeking for new ways to differentiate themselves from competition, Thought Leadership can benefit these organizations. But it is not the Holy Grail some organizations think it is. When pursuing a Thought Leadership strategy, organizations should embed it in their Corporate strategy. Just Thought Leadership alone appears not to be enough. Also, they can better think of a Thought Leadership strategy based on their knowledge and competences as we have seen that CA based Thought Leadership is more effective than CSR based Thought Leadership. An finally when deciding to build a CSR TL strategy, creating involvement among employees and customers should be the first step.

This thesis doesn't close the book for research on Thought Leadership. Based on the model used and the outcomes from this model, I recommend future researchers to take the following into account. These recommendations are based on limitations in my own research:

- Instead of measuring Corporate Reputation with the well-known RepTrak™ method, it was measured directly. This was done because of the expected correlation of the method with the concept of Thought Leadership. But this correlation though is never proven. I advise to use a stronger measurement for Reputation in future research and also to research if there really is a correlation between RepTrak™ and the concept of Thought Leadership.
- This research showed that Thought Leadership has a small impact on Corporate Reputation and stakeholder behavior. To assess the real impact, other organizational-, branding- and Reputation strategies can be taken into account. For example advertising, innovation, brand equity etc. This way, the different between Thought Leadership and other concepts can be made clear, as well as the relative impact of Thought Leadership on Reputation, combined with other (additional) strategies.
- The concept of novelty in this research, the core of Thought Leadership, appeared to be difficult for people to understand. Measurement on this concept was very subjective? Developing a measurement scale on Novelty and also measuring stakeholder's involvement on this concept can strengthen the definition of Thought Leadership.
- The research was sent out using LinkedIn and Twitter. Because of this, the respondents were very random. Also, the groups of stakeholders that were big enough for analysis were customers and employees. Although that there did not appear to be any difference between these stakeholder groups (expect on involvement) it



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could be interesting to see if this is also the case for other stakeholders. This can be done by selecting possible respondents and create research groups before sending out the questionnaire.

- Also, the branches or organizations can be grouped before sending out the questionnaire. For example research only the Fast Moving industry, or Financial / Insurance industry. This gives more insight in the (difference in the extent of) impact of Thought Leadership on Corporate Reputation per branch or market.
- Involvement and Need for Cognition where the only moderating variables chosen in this research. Their impact was not proven. Of course there is possibility that other variables have do a moderating impact. Think of e.g. brand awareness (extent to which a brand is recognized by potential customers) or identification (sense of belonging with particular groups / organizations).
- Besides researching the impact of Thought Leadership on Reputation and finally stakeholder behavioral outcomes, Thought Leadership can have more impact on organizational performance (directly or mediated through Reputation). E.g. sales, brand value, stock price etc.
- It is worth researching this possible impact of Thought Leadership in order to assess the real value of this concept for an organization.
- Finally, the concept of Trust is interesting for further research. Trust is said to be highly related to Reputation (o.a. Berens & Van Riel, 2004). But as described, I think that Thought Leadership adds to cognition-based trust and Reputation more to affect-based trust. Measuring these two concepts more specifically related to Thought Leadership and Reputation is worth a try.

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**Hakan Tandogdu**

# "A case study from Turkey: Alignment around "Drive The Change" strategy of Renault in Turkish business unit Oyak Renault."

Hakan Tandogdu has been working for Public Affairs of Oyak Renault, in Turkey for two years. Oyak Renault is a joint investment of Renault and Oyak (Pension Fund of Turkish Army), where Renault is the majority stockholder. He is representing his firm in different NGOs and attending to seminars about automobile sector as a speaker. In his anterior life, he studied mechanical engineering and worked in various positions in engineering division.

He began his career in a paper mill as a production engineer in Ankara and after his military service; he was hired by FIAT where he has been involved by automobile industry appeal. He has been working for the current employer for more than nineteen years. His major reason of attending this program is to digest the radical transformation.

Nowadays, his awareness about communication, emotions and irrationality soared considerably, he likes observing the world from emotional point of view, and he loves executing new and modern tools of communication in his job. He believes there are plenty of rooms in communication domain that can help to build distinctiveness, both in individual and corporate level in Turkey

Hakan is married with Gülbin and they have a daughter Ayışığı. They live in Bursa, a hub of automobile industry in Turkey. He enjoys running, playing tennis, skiing and playing guitars. He will attend to his first semi marathon in march 2012.

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**ABSTRACT**

The companies offering the product or service, which fit the best, customers' expectations, such as value for money, innovative product or service, quality, reliability, easy-of-use, environmentally friendly, style, taste, colour, customer oriented, after sales service penetration and energy consumption, dominate the market. While responding to customers' expectations, firms are chasing distinctiveness for competitive advantage. The one, which's proposal is unique in the market, differentiating from the rivals appeals more customers, and can charge a premium for its product or service.

In a turbulent and mercurial environment, the raison d'être of a leader is to designate the strategy, the path he or she wants to pursue with his organization and bring them to a new challenge and to high performance goals. A well-structured, well-adapted and visionary strategy is crucial for organizations to be one jump ahead of their competitors. Building a strategy is a dreadfully critical task requiring a lot of work, starting from analysis of the current position, including product, market, and performance, short and long-term statement of financial condition, the innovative and intellectual capacity, the management, human resources characters and the identity of the organization. The connection between present and the desired future position should be realistic, continuous, without breakthrough.

Sustainability and thought leadership which nurtures corporate social responsibility, are two principal discipline in corporate communication. Most of the NGO's main deal is sustainability, to stop wastefulness, increase the life quality without sacrificing the nature. Climate change became a real issue during the last two decades, firms paying no attention to the carbon footprint will be dismissed soon or late, and fair trade becomes a substantial criterion for licence to operate. Nowadays no one is interrogating the fact of climate change; the principal deal is to determine the measure to be taken in order to avert irreversible consequences. Every industry is contributing to the climate change; the automotive industry, 125years old, a giant industry of the world economy with more than 70 millions of vehicles annually produced, is in the leading group.

Renault recently revealed its strategy towards sustainable mobility and crystallized their intention by investing more than 4billion\$ with its alliance Nissan for electric vehicles (EV). The first model, Nissan Leaf has been launched at the end of 2010, Renault will launch tree models this year.

The new slogan of Renault "Drive the change" is my source of inspiration. Change is the essence of the progress. This thesis topic inquires the relationship between the overall organizational identity, specific organizational

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identity and the strategic employee alignment in Renault and in Oyak Renault. The thesis research question is What are the success criteria of alignment around “Drive the change” strategy of Renault in Turkish business unit Oyak Renault.

In my thesis, as an insider and having 19 years of experience in Oyak Renault, I focused on critical points of transformation in Oyak Renault and identified the roots of resistance to change and sources of phase difference between Oyak Renault and parent company, while driving the change

### **LITERARY FINDINGS**

The widely accepted definition of organizational identity proposed by Albert and Whetten (1985) is a useful starting point. They defined organization identity as that which is most central, enduring and distinctive about an organization<sup>1</sup>.

Scholars suggest arrays of proposals concerning the relationship among identity, image and reputation. At the broadest level, some authors have used these concepts as if they are synonymous ( William & Barrett, 2000), whereas others have implied that they are independent but closely related (Bromley, 2000 schultz,Hatch, & Larsen, 2000; Whetten, 1997). More specifically scholars have argued that (a) reputation is a combination of identity and image( Davies, Chun,Vinhas da Silva, & Roper, 2001);Wartick, 2002); (b) identity leads to image, which leads to reputation (Dutton et al,1994); (c) image is the equivalent of what some define as reputation (Wartick, 2002); and (d) identity is the equivalent of what some define as reputation, (Wartick,2002).

Reputation is essentially the external assessment of a company or any other organization held by external stakeholders. Reputation includes several dimensions, including an organization's perceived capacity to meet those stakeholders expectations, the rational attachments that a stakeholder form with an organization, and the overall “net image” that stakeholders have of the organization.. (Waddock, 2000)

The emphasis of uniqueness in conceptual treatises on organizational reputation is most evident in the identity-related explanations of corporate social performance and corporate reputation, as exemplified by the resource based view of the firm (Barney, 1986). According to this orientation, the key to sustainable competitive advantages the possession of value producing, intangible resources and capabilities that are rare, valuable, non-substitutable, and inimitable. These unique capabilities are considered to be manifestations of organization's unique history or

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network of relationship (Olivier, 1997). Intangible resources and capabilities, including intellectual capital, organizational culture, and organizational reputation, are frequently cited as prototypical organizational competencies (Barney, 1986, Fombrun, Gardberg & Barnett, 2000) <sup>2</sup>

Competitive advantage can be reached if the firm creates a superior value for customers. The first requirement of a successful business is a superior value proposition. A major player in the market is the one whose product or service fit the customer needs better than its rivals. They offer a set of superior mix of attributes such as price, availability, reliability, image, colour, taste, easy of use. These companies have a capacity of developing superior product or services by their authentic activity system and they maintain the appropriate resources for the value adding activities.

Distinctiveness is a core asset of a company in the competitiveness. However, in our era, rivals quickly copy the new service, product or marketing style, if the distinctiveness is so static. A new dimension has to be injected to the distinctiveness in order to make the imitation difficult. A competitive advantage is said to be sustainable if it can not be copied, substituted by the actions of the rivals, and is not made redundant by development in environment.<sup>3</sup> As claimed by scholars, a company can outperform rivals only if it can establish a difference that it can preserve. It must deliver greater value to customers or create comparable value at a lower cost, or do both. The arithmetic of superior profitability then follows: delivering greater value allows a company to charge higher average unit prices; greater efficiency results in lower average unit cost<sup>4</sup>.

The main issue in defining and deploying a strategy is the concordance of it with the identity of organization. In case of harmony, one can concentrate on the other half of issue. Nonetheless, if the strategy doesn't comply with organizational identity, one should first designate the new identity and implement it throughout the organization mainly by using communication tools.

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**CASE STUDY**

**H1: The success of a strategy is explicitly depending on the concordance of it, with the identity, values and the culture of the organization.**

Electric vehicles project crystallised under the slogan of “sustainable mobility for everyone” has been inspired by the enduring, central and distinctive trait of Renault. A brand known for popular people’s car for century, lays affordability at the heart of its strategy seems quite rational as a starting point. Investing in electric vehicles, a real breakthrough, replacing internal combustion engines, which has dominated vehicle power train, reveals the innovation trait of Renault. Especially for country where electric energy is produced with low CO<sub>2</sub>, environment friendly aspect of electric vehicles, both in emission and in noise, is revolutionary.

The new strategy of Renault “drive the change” imposes a shift from “bureaucracy” to “shared meaning” overall organizational identity. The strategy gives the chance to experience leadership and the vision is more inspiring, stimulating the organization for performance. The overall organizational intent is strong identification with the CEO and the dominant logic he articulates about the organization’s unique values and trust into the future<sup>5</sup>.

**H2: The longer the term of office of a senior manager, the higher the eventuality of manager identity’s penetration into the division, differing from organizational identity.**

Dissonance and disharmony between organizational evolution and leadership engenders period of fall which is accompanied by transformation of leadership style and shift towards autocratic leadership. Typical followers defending the same ideology in the same manner mostly encircle autocratic leaders. Autocratic leaders, during the fall period, impose their identity, their values, their norms and their standards even if the organization is moving towards another direction and can be a real barrier to change the organizational identity. Another bottleneck of this kind of management is the lack of transformational leadership, which is sine qua non of innovations.

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**H3: Multiple identity in an organization, differing from division to division creates heterogeneous values engendering barriers to employee alignments.**

The principle objective is the bottom lines and in default whereof crisis, the senior managers keeps their position. Ultimately, the good results strengthen and empower senior managers and incrementally, micro organizations with its own identity, deviating from the organization identity appear. In some cases, the dissimilarity between the divisions and distribution of power generates different identity, crystallized in heterogeneous, inconsistent and incoherent management styles. This type of governance can work for “accountability” organizations to some extent. In “accountability” organizations has a clear rewards structure for professionals, with either short or extremely long careers.

**H4: Accountability renders an organization more transparent and discourage germinal of micro identity in divisions**

Actually, accountability goes beyond administrative accountability. Accountability involves expectation of account giving behaviour. In managerial roles, accountability is the acknowledgment of responsibility for actions and decisions, and encompasses obligation to report and explain for resulting consequences. Ethical and governance accountability rise transparency in organizations and prompt sustainable development.

**CONCLUSION**

In this thesis, I overviewed the case of my organization for which I have been working for nineteen years. It has two objectives, first one is to graduate from Master of Corporate Communication and second is to give an analytical insight for the future of Oyak Renault. I have focused on organizational identity change in Oyak Renault conformably to parent company shift towards “shared meaning”. I posited four hypotheses that I judged relevant with the case and claimed the relation between the hypothesis and Oyak Renault’s case.

Whether in individuals or in organizations, I acknowledge that change, is the most austere process. It demands sorely involvement, determination, perseverance and energy.



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**END NOTES**

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