



Introduction to Corporate Communication

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Lecture Objectives

- Understand the evolution of corporate communication
- Define key concepts and functions
- Examine the three clusters of corporate communication
- Discuss stakeholders, trust, and reputation
- Reflect critically on coherence and authenticity

Communication as a Managerial Process

- Communication is the process through which organizations exist.
- Key points:
 - Strategy becomes meaningful only when communicated.
 - Leadership exists through communicative performance.
 - Corporate identity is constructed in language, symbol, and practice.
- Communication reflects power, ideology, and culture.

Historical Evolution (PR → Corporate Communication)

- Pre-1980s: Public Relations (PR) – external communication, reactive, tactical and media-focused
- 1980s+: Rise of corporate communication
- Key drivers:
 - Stakeholder pluralism
 - Mediatization and digitalization
 - Reputation as a strategic asset
 - Integration and profesionalization

Stakeholder Pluralism

- Organizations operate within interdependent networks.
- Stakeholder groups: customers, employees, investors, regulators, NGOs, communities.
- Communication must be transparent, continuous, dialogic.

Mediatization of society

- 24-hour news cycles & social media create complex environments.
- Reciprocal visibility: stakeholders respond, remix, critique.
- Shift from tactical message management → strategic meaning management.

Reputation as an asset

- Reputation affects financial performance, investor confidence, employee retention.
- Communication elevated from support function → strategic resource.

Integration & Professionalization

- Corporate communication departments unify:
PR, marketing communication, investor relations, internal communication, crisis management
- Goal: coherence and "one voice principle"
- Tension: coherence vs. authenticity

Defining Corporate Communication

- *"A management function that provides a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favorable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent."*
(Cornelissen, 2020)
- Emphasis:
 - Management responsibility
 - Coordination of communication
 - Reputation as measure of effectiveness

Functions of Corporate Communication

Function	Purpose
Corporate Design	Visual & symbolic identity
Corporate Advertising	Promote corporate image
Internal Communication	Employee alignment & engagement
Issues & Crisis Management	Protect legitimacy
Investor Relations	Maintain shareholder trust
Public Affairs	Engage policymakers & regulators
Media Relations	Manage press interactions

Functions of Corporate Communication

- Integration builds corporate narrative.
- Challenge: strategic coherence vs. social complexity.

Three Clusters of Corporate Communication

- 1) Management Communication
 - 2) Marketing Communication
 - 3) Organizational Communication
- Integration ensures effective corporate messaging

Management Communication

- Conducted by managers/executives.
- Examples: speeches, CEO letters, stakeholder dialogues.
- Purpose: translate goals into shared meaning.
- Ethical considerations: transparency, integrity, avoiding manipulative rhetoric.

Marketing Communication

- Focus: customers & markets.
- Includes: advertising, branding, digital campaigns.
- Operates at intersection of identity & ethics.
- Links commercial objectives with ethical and social narratives

Organizational Communication

- Broadest cluster: internal & external meaning-making.
- Includes: internal communication, CSR, sustainability reporting, employee engagement.
- Not neutral: involves negotiation, power, cultural interpretation.
- Listening transforms communication from persuasion → dialogue.

Integration, Coherence & Authenticity

- Effective communication = integration of 3 clusters.
- "One Voice Principle"
- Polyphonic coherence: unified identity + diversity of perspectives.

Stakeholders, Trust & Reputation

- Stakeholder relationships are central.
- Trust: built on consistency, transparency, responsiveness
- Reputation: outcome of what organizations do, say, and how they are perceived.
- Corporate communication inseparable from ethics.
- Transparent but unethical = credibility lost; ethical but silent = invisible.
- Stakeholders as co-authors of meaning.

Role of the Corporate Communicator

- Strategic intermediary: analyst, diplomat, ethicist.
- Responsibilities:
 - Stakeholder analysis & environmental scanning
 - Advise management on message strategy
 - Craft coherent narratives
 - Foster two-way communication & listening
 - Ensure ethical integrity

Communication: The Language of Leadership

- Communication defines purpose, engages stakeholders, sustains trust.
- Evolution: PR → strategic management integrating leadership, marketing, identity.
- Effective communication = persuasion + ethical awareness + reflexivity + authenticity.
- Leadership = ability to connect; connection begins with communication.

Closing Reflections

- Communication is not what follows action; it is how action becomes meaningful.
- To communicate well is to lead responsibly, think critically, and act with integrity.

Self-Assessment Exercises (non-graded)

- Provide the definition for Corporate Communication
- Identify a recent corporate communication case (e.g., crisis response, campaign, or CEO statement).
 - Analyze it using the three-cluster model
 - Reflect on how coherence and authenticity were managed.