

22723C

Corporate Communication Strategies

Unit code: M/602/2086

QCF Level 7: BTEC Professional

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 30

Unit aim

This unit provides the learner with the understanding and skills to support active engagement in the process of developing corporate communication strategies.

Unit introduction

Organisations today need to plan their communication systems to ensure up-to-date information, knowledge and awareness are always available to all who need them. A corporate communication strategy is the outcome of a strategic thinking process where senior communicators and managers take strategic decisions to identify and manage corporate communications and communicate them to stakeholders.

With or without a formal communication strategy, every organisation communicates with its audience in one way or another. However, to ensure effective relationships with key stakeholders, every corporate organisation requires a dynamic plan that allows it to strategically relate with its customers as well as other key internal and external stakeholders.

Communication is crucial to organisational effectiveness as it is the basis for maintaining pace and of ensuring that change can happen at all levels. It is through the management of sound and coordinated systems of communication that an organisation can integrate its various parts to ensure workforce harmonisation and achieve awareness of its performance.

Effective corporate communication is closely related to the success of the organisation. An organisation's reputation, survival and success rests on its ability to communicate with the public as well as its own employees and stakeholders. When effective corporate communications strategies are incorporated into a business structure, regardless of the size of the organisation, the ability to achieve global communication will be strengthened.

Corporate communication is closely linked to business objectives and strategies. It is the processes an organisation uses to communicate all its messages to key stakeholders. It encodes and promotes a strong corporate culture, a coherent corporate identity, an appropriate and professional relationship with the media, and quick, responsible ways of communicating in a crisis. It is essential if organisations

are to inform and influence external stakeholders, including their customers, and harness the efforts of all internal stakeholders towards the successful accomplishment of organisational objectives.

This unit gives learners an opportunity to look into the design of a communication system within an organisation such as their own workplace, one to which they are seconded, or through an appropriate case study.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria determine the standard required to achieve the unit.

On completion of this unit a learner should:

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
1 Understand the importance of corporate communication	1.1 discuss the purpose of corporate communication strategies 1.2 assess how corporate communications link to corporate objectives 1.3 analyse the relationship between corporate communication and corporate branding
2 Be able to conduct an internal corporate communications audit	2.1 plan an internal corporate communications audit 2.2 conduct an internal corporate communications audit 2.3 critically evaluate the effectiveness of current levels of practice
3 Be able to conduct an external corporate communications audit	3.1 plan an external corporate communications audit 3.2 conduct an external corporate communications audit 3.3 critically evaluate the effectiveness of current levels of practice
4 Be able to plan the development of a corporate communication strategy	4.1 plan the objectives of a corporate communication strategy 4.2 select the audiences to influence with a corporate communications strategy 4.3 plan appropriate measures to monitor a planned corporate communications strategy

Unit content

1 **Understand the importance of corporate communication**

Purpose: creates an effective bridge between the organisation and the public; creates and reinforces a positive image about an organisation; effective and timely dissemination of information; smooth and affirmative relationship with all stakeholders (internally and externally); allows all employees to understand the vision and direction of an organisation; encodes understanding of communication tools and techniques; encodes sophisticated approaches to global communication; the importance of two-way communication

Links to corporate objectives: supports strategic goals and objectives; supports management and human resources initiatives; helps employees understand organisational strategic goals and objectives and the reasons behind them; promotes strong corporate culture, company loyalty, corporate philosophy, corporate citizenship; promotes transparency and accountability; focuses efforts and resources on the activities and audiences most likely to have the biggest impact on the organisation

Links to corporate branding: communicates the essence of the organisation; promotes confidence in the quality and performance of the organisation's products or services; ensures adherence to corporate brand guidelines; minimises discrepancies between the organisation's desired identity and brand features; clarifies and embeds the brand strategy, brand position, brand identity and brand message

2 **Be able to conduct an internal corporate communications audit**

Methods: eg planning and launching, surveys, questionnaires, panels, interviews, critical incident analysis, network analysis, participant observation, document review, focus groups; survey participants, channels for distributing survey questions, how to receive completed questionnaires, evaluating and reporting

Internal communication processes: efficient and effective, integrated and coordinated systems; communication channels and flows; the grapevine, networking, conferences, newsletters and company magazines, video conferencing, email and websites, roadshows, seminars, training and appraisals, team meetings, team briefing processes, updating systems, vertical teams, action sets; lateral, downward and upward communication systems; interdepartmental/divisional; information as power; confidentiality and data protection; testing and evaluating information; primary and secondary data; organisational structure and culture; listening skills; megaphone management; unfreezing and selling change; developing synergy; evaluation processes; participation levels; types of strategy; systems thinking; connectivity; learning organisation; intellectual capital and knowledge management; strategic intelligence; decision making and taking

3 Be able to conduct an external corporate communications audit

Methods: eg planning and launching, surveys, questionnaires, panels, interviews, critical incident analysis, network analysis, participant observation, document review, focus groups; online methods eg online surveys, questionnaires, video conferencing; survey participants, channels for distributing survey questions, how to receive completed questionnaires, evaluating and reporting

External communication processes: efficient and effective, integrated and coordinated systems; networking, conferences, partnerships, joint ventures, customer and business forums, action sets; stakeholder inclusiveness and integration; communication channels and flows eg news releases, reports, advertising, online communications, speeches, interviews, websites, social network advertising and discussions eg Facebook, Twitter; developing relationships of trust, creating synergy, connectivity, systems thinking, inter-organisational participation processes, research processes, websites, expert institution linkage; breaking down barriers; information exchange and negotiation; intellectual capital and knowledge management; strategic intelligence; decision making and taking; collaborative advantage; collaborative capability; 'boundaryless' organisations; virtual communications; incrementalism; scenario building; win-win and zero-sum theory

4 Be able to plan the development of a corporate communication strategy

Strategy for effective communications: communications as infrastructure; strategic objectives; strategic implementation; planned and emergent strategies; strategic drift; monitoring versus evaluation; feedback processes; setting and measuring outcomes; action planning; agreeing timescales; cost-benefit analysis; feedback systems; control loop; target revision; regular and exception reporting; surveys and interviews; iterative processes; formal and informal knowledge channels; measuring inputs; processes; outputs and outcomes; quantitative and qualitative measures; 80/20 rule; disseminating awareness; sustainability

Essential resources

There are no essential resources required for this unit.

Indicative resource materials

Textbooks

Argenti P A – *Strategic Corporate Communication: A Global Approach for Doing Business in the New India* (McGraw-Hill Professional, 2008) ISBN 0071549919

Avgerou C – *Information Systems and Global Diversity* (Oxford University Press, 2003) ISBN 0199263426

Beyerlein M M and Harris C L – *Guiding the Journey to Collaborative Work Systems: A Strategic Design Workbook* (Jossey-Bass, 2003) ISBN 0787967882

Clarke S – *Information Systems Strategic Management: An Integrated Approach* (Routledge, 2006) ISBN 041538186X

Clutterbuck D and Hirst S – *Talking Business: Making Communication Work* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003) ISBN 0750654996

Dawson R – *Living Networks: Leading Your Company, Customers and Partners in the Hyper-Connected Economy* (Financial Times/Prentice Hall, 2002) ISBN 0130353337

Galliers R and Leidner D E – *Strategic Information Management: Challenges and Strategies in Managing Information Systems, 3rd Edition* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002) ISBN 0750656190

Holtz S – *Corporate Conversations: A Guide to Crafting Effective and Appropriate Internal Communications* (Amacom, 2003) ISBN 0814407706

Little S E, Quintas P and Ray T (Eds) – *Managing Knowledge* (Sage Publications, 2001) ISBN 0761972137

McKenzie J and van Winkelen C – *Understanding the Knowledgeable Organization: Nurturing Knowledge Competence* (Thomson Learning, 2003) ISBN 1861528957

O Hair D, Friedrich G W and Dixon L D – *Strategic Communication in Business and the Professions, 5th Edition* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004) ISBN 0618432493

Ormeno M – *Managing Corporate Brands: A New Approach to Corporate Communication* (duv, 2007) ISBN 3835007815

Journals/magazines

Most general management journals will contain some relevant articles and these are listed together with more specialised journals.

Academy of Management Journal (Academy of Management)

British Journal of Management (John Wiley and Sons)

California Management Review (University of California, Berkeley)

European Management Journal (Elsevier)

Harvard Business Review (Harvard Business Publishing)

Information Age (Vitesse Media Plc)

Information Management (SourceMedia)

Information Technology and People (Emerald)

Inside Knowledge (Waterlow Legal and Regulatory Limited)

Journal of Communication Management (Emerald)

International Journal of Information Management (Elsevier)

Journal of Information Technology (Palgrave Macmillan)

Journal of Management Studies (John Wiley and Sons)

Management Today (Haymarket Business Media)

MIT Sloan Management Review (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Organization (Sage Publications)

Organization Studies (Sage Publications)

Strategic Communication Management (Melcrum)

Websites

en.wikipedia.org

Article on strategic communication and further links

www.idea.gov.uk

Local Government Improvement and Development – developing a strategic communication strategy in the public sector which equally applies to the private sector

www.managementhelp.com

Articles on strategic planning

www.odi.org.uk

Overseas Development Institute – how to write a communications strategy

www.tomorrowscompany.com

A research organisation – a useful source for articles