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Introductory Chapter: Changing Panorama of Digital Communication Management

Beatriz Peña Acuña and Alejandro Formanchuk

Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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1. Introduction

The need for the management of communication in the company, that there is a Department, a communication manager (DirCom) prepared in Communication, that depends on the executive command or that is even in the executive control, is understood for a decade in the Communication trend in Europe.

Companies have understood that an intelligent communication direction is translated into a value for the company where the asset, that is, people can be involved and flow in production processes with higher quality, the culture and values of the company are strengthened. The company and, of course, directly affects the productivity and economic performance of it. The most successful companies are those that have a human fabric and a consolidated business culture.

The data of the study on DirCom in Spain 2015, for example, offer us the following data. The role of Communication grows. More than 80% of the respondents estimate that the Communication of the companies has increased its importance and its role, which are located in first executive level. The Communication Department is consolidated as an area of relevance in companies, depending on the first executive level. The dependence of the Marketing Management is progressively reduced. The management of companies is more involved in defining the communication strategy of the companies.

The director of communication is a profession that is very zealous to discover which strategies are the best and the most intelligent. There are few manuals and there are some that offer general and little updated information about the change that new technologies imply. We find literature isolated from big data, from social media that can be directly useful. The consultants prefer to give training to employers, and extended to middle managers and employees on

site. These usually publish little, except for some, who diffuses what are their formulas or approaches or their models. However, we will say that there is no single recipe for DirCom or Communication consultants. Each one will offer models according to the variables or factors that seem to them to be able to rectify the direction of a company or the preparation in communication of a CEO according to his personal mood. After dedicating many years of study to business cases, we think that communication strategies must be sought for each company, planned and executed for each one. In this way, the adaptation can be more adjusted. Even so, we emphasise the importance of internal communication strategies, a strategy that may not involve economic investment.

2. Trends in the digital communication management

The European Communication Monitor 2017 (by Ansgar Zerfass et al.) is titled *How Strategic Communication Deals with the Challenges of Visualisation, Social Bots and Hypermodernity*.

This study highlights what we have pointed out above on the strategic business question: The long-term development of strategic issues for communication management in Europe, consisting of two main issues at the top of the list: linking business strategy and communication; coping with the digital evolution and the social web.

This study tells us about external communication that across Europe, social media and social networks are considered by far the most important channel to address stakeholders, gatekeepers and audiences. Indeed, coping with the digital evolution and the social web has been voted as the single most important issue for communication management over the next 3 years. It also points this interesting fact about internal communication: the communications function emerging as a key supporter for daily management and the operations of other departments.

It also says that an overwhelming 94.4% of European communication professionals believe that visual communications will gain in importance for organisations, only 1 out of 10 communicators rate themselves as highly skilled in visual communications. Strategic communication has always involved a range of media platforms and visualisation has been frequently at the centre of message transfer. As technology continues to evolve visual support for communication, messaging has increased and diversified. The rapid growth of social networks such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram has inevitably created an increase in the use and application of visual stimuli in these formats.

One trending area in communication management is the use and application of software robots, or what we most frequently refer to as 'social bots'. Social bots have been heavily used and probably influenced political election outcomes such as during the United States presidential campaign in 2016 as well as during the BREXIT vote in the United Kingdom.

Theoretically, the current global society can be labelled as a hypermodern society. Hypermodernity is a concept introduced by the French social theorist. A hypermodern society is a society in overdrive, characterised by a culture of hyper consumption, hyper change and

hyper individualism. This study, for the first time, asked European practitioners about aspects of hypermodernity and how this influences their organisation(s) and their work. About 43.5% of the organisations are already changing from postmodern to hypermodern with characteristics such as continuous change, decentralised IT, rapid adjustments of the workforce, creativity and ethics of perceived responsibility.

The Direction of communication is a profession that increasingly requires an update because it is a scenario with a rapid change due to the demands of new technologies and the predominance of these compared to traditional media. This changing picture is shown by the latest studies of the European Communication Monitor since 2013. So, we can speak today of the Digital Communication Management.

Author details

Beatriz Peña Acuña^{1*} and Alejandro Formanchuk²

*Address all correspondence to: bpena@uhu.es

1 University of Huelva, Spain

2 Formanchuk and Associates, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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