

**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION
MANAGEMENT: CURRENT TRENDS AND EMERGING
TOPICS**

**FESTSCHRIFT TO HONOR PROFESSORS JIM AND LAURI GRUNIG
FOR 40 YEARS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS SCHOLARSHIP**

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The Pretoria School of Thought:

From Strategy to Governance and Sustainability

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THE *PRETORIA SCHOOL OF THOUGHT*:
FROM STRATEGY TO GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

1. INTRODUCTION

Spurred by the movement in the early 1980s to search for the characteristics of excellently managed corporations (Peters & Waterman, 1982), the Excellence Study in Public Relations and Communication Management was launched in 1985 (Grunig, 1992). The resultant Excellence Theory (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995) provided the impetus for a global search for excellence in communication management that started in the 1990s and still continues.

South Africa (SA) contributed to this movement by further exploring the value-added contribution that communication management could make to the organization. The worldview that resulted has come to be known as the *Pretoria School of Thought* (De Beer, 2010) – a paradigm that focuses on the conceptualization of communication management in the strategic context of the organization. A significant early contribution has been the differentiation between ‘strategic communication management’ and ‘communication management’ taking place on different organizational levels (Steyn, in Toth, 2007, pp. 139-141) – as manifested in the conceptualization and empirical

verification of the corporate communication¹ ‘strategist’ role at the top management (macro/environmental) level, and the redefinition of the historic ‘manager’ as a role played at the middle management (meso/functional) level (Steyn, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c).

The strategic positioning of communication management in the organization has gained momentum with the latest research in the field (Gregory & Willis, 2012; Grunig, 2006, 2009; Invernizzi, 2008; Steyn & De Beer, 2011). The institutionalization of strategic communication management within the triple context environment – people, planet and profit – is a seminal perspective that is shaping the theoretical and pragmatic thinking in the field of communication management (De Beer & Rensburg, 2011a, 2011b; Muzi Falconi, 2010; Rensburg & De Beer, 2003; Steyn, 2009; Steyn, in Şatir, 2011; Steyn & De Beer, 2011; Steyn & Niemann, 2008, 2010; Stockholm Accords, 2010).

The practice of including stakeholders in the organization’s decision making processes has highlighted the role of strategic communication management in identifying the legitimate expectations of organizational stakeholders through research; providing this information to the strategic management team and the board; and giving feedback to stakeholders in the integrated report (IoD, 2009; Steyn & De Beer, 2011).

¹ ‘Corporate communication’ and ‘communication management’ are used in this chapter because of the negative connotation of the term ‘public relations.’ Most communication professionals in Europe favor *corporate communication*, *strategic communication* and *communication management* as labels for the profession, a trend also prevalent in other countries (Zerfass et al., 2011).

2. EARLY BEGINNINGS OF THE *PRETORIA SCHOOL OF THOUGHT*

Communication science as a discipline has been offered at various SA universities in the humanities since 1968, with public relations and organizational communication as specialization areas. However, at the University of Pretoria (UP) only Marketing has been taught (since 1970), as a field of study within the Department of Business Economics (now Business Management).

When decision makers at UP announced at the beginning of the 1990s that a degree in corporate communication was to be initiated, Gustav Puth drove the positioning debate towards the management sciences (as advocated by Argenti, 1996). The reasoning was that corporate communication is a functional terrain similar to marketing, finance and human resources, and a broad management background would enable practitioners to better understand the business world and the ‘language it speaks’ (Hatfield, 1994).

At the time, this perspective on the academic roots of corporate communication was in contrast to most academic views, not only in SA but worldwide (Argenti, 1996; Botan & Hazleton, 1989; Brody, 1991; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). It was however the view of Puth that the positioning in the humanities did not produce the unique body of knowledge necessary for the advancement of the profession. Corporate communication was therefore to be regarded as a management discipline and students at UP were to be prepared for management positions.

In 1993, the first undergraduate students enrolled in the degree BCom (Communication Management) at UP. It was a separate field of study in the newly formed Department of Marketing and Communication Management, situated in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. Puth, first head of the Department, can be considered as the ‘father’ of communication management in South Africa. Ronél Rensburg, head of the Department from 2000–2009, was instrumental in arranging an international evaluation of the Communication Management division by Larissa Grunig in 2000. The various text books authored/edited by Puth and by Rensburg are still widely used in SA.

The first Honors and Master’s degrees in Communication Management were offered at UP in 1995, the emphasis being on the management and strategic perspective of corporate communication (rather than the technician or skills-oriented perspective common to the field). The textbooks *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (Grunig, 1992) and *Manager’s Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (Dozier et al., 1995) were core sources in the postgraduate courses in Communication Management.

3. FOUNDATIONS OF THE *PRETORIA SCHOOL OF THOUGHT*

The Excellence Study (Grunig, 1992) created intense interest and discussions in the Master’s classes in Communication Management at UP, especially the concept of

communication excellence. The Excellence Study's empirical findings indicate two prerequisites for an organization to practice 'excellent' communication (Dozier et al., 1995, pp. 11-17):

- The corporate communication manager must have the *knowledge* to play a managerial role, especially knowledge of strategic management and two-way symmetrical communication; and in addition
- there must be *shared expectations* between the corporate communication function and top management on the role that communication should play in the organization.

These findings triggered a two-phase research project in Communication Excellence at UP in 1997, conducted by three staff members namely Groenewald (1998), Steyn (2000a) and De Beer (2001).

Phase 1: Knowledge base of corporate communication managers

Groenewald (1998) determined that communication *managers* in SA organizations perceived management, strategic communication and management communication skills to be significantly more important in their positions than technical communication skills. However, the effectiveness of their training in the former was significantly lower than their training in technical communication skills. Based on her empirical findings, Groenewald (1998) developed a model for Communication Management training and suggested further research on a strategic role for corporate communication.

Steyn addressed the lack of strategic communication and management skills amongst corporate communication managers by:

- (i) conceptualizing the role of the corporate communication ‘strategist’ and redefining the historical roles of the ‘manager’ and ‘technician’ (2000a); and
- (ii) conceptualizing corporate communication strategy and developing a model for its implementation (2000a, 2000c; Steyn & Puth, 2000).

Phase 2: Shared expectations between top management and the corporate communication manager

De Beer (2001) determined communication managers’ perceptions of senior management’s expectations of excellent communication in SA organizations. A major finding was that it is the perception of communication managers that senior management expect of them to make a strategic contribution to organizational decision making, by playing the corporate communication manager role.

Steyn (2000b) furthermore quantitatively determined ‘CEO normative role expectations’ as well as ‘CEO perceptions of the role performance’ of the most senior corporate communication practitioner, with regards to the ‘strategist’, ‘manager’ and ‘technician’ roles.

4. THEORETICAL PILLARS OF THE *PRETORIA SCHOOL OF THOUGHT*: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT PARADIGM

In 2000, a research program in the fledgling field of Strategic Communication Management was initiated by Steyn. Various staff members and students contributed during the next decade, planting the seeds that eventually became known as the *Pretoria School of Thought*.

Teaching and research at UP represents a ‘Strategic Communication Management’ paradigm (scientific worldview), its central concepts being **‘role’** (specifically the strategist), and **‘levels of strategy formulation’** (specifically the contribution of corporate communication to the development of the enterprise strategy at top management level).

Strategic Communication Management² assumes corporate communication to be a strategic management function with a mandate to function at the strategic (macro or societal or environmental) level. In its strategic role, corporate communication assists an organization (or institution) to adapt to its societal and stakeholder environment by

² Strategic Communication Management principles are as relevant to government and NGO communication as they are to corporate communication.

feeding intelligence with regards to strategic stakeholders³ (and their concerns/expectations), societal issues and the publics⁴/interest groups that emerge around the issues, into the organization's strategy formulation processes (Steyn, in Toth, 2007). According to Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002, pp. 143, 383), this is the 'full-participation' approach to strategic corporate communication where the function is 'empowered,' i.e. involved *before* strategic decisions are made.

4.1 Three roles for corporate communication: Differentiating strategist from manager and technician

Steyn's (2000a) initial conceptualization of three roles was based on Van Riel's mirror and window function of corporate communication (1995, p. 2).

- Steyn broadened the **mirror** function to the 'monitoring of relevant environmental developments and the anticipation of their consequences for the *organization's policies and strategies, especially with regard to relationships with stakeholders and other interest groups in society*'. These activities constitute the role of the **strategist** (Steyn, 2000a; Steyn & Puth, 2000).
- The **window** function was broadened to 'the preparation and execution of a communication policy *and strategy*, resulting in messages that portray *all facets of the*

³ People or groups are **stakeholders** when they are affected by the decisions/behavior of an organization or when their decisions/behavior affect the organization (Grunig & Repper, in Grunig, 1992, p. 125).

⁴ **Publics** form when stakeholders (or other interest groups) recognize one of more of the consequences of organizational behavior as a problem and organize to do something about it (Grunig & Repper, in Grunig, 1992, p. 124).

organization in a transparent way' (Steyn, 2000a; Steyn & Puth, 2000). The **manager** develops a corporate communication strategy and strategic plan while the **technician** implements it through plans and programs.

In order to contribute the most to organizational effectiveness, Grunig (in Grunig, 1992, p. 3) sees corporate communication as being practiced on the **macro** (strategic/societal/environmental) level (the strategist); the **meso** (functional/divisional) level (the manager); and the **micro** (implementation/operational) level (the technician).

Meta-theoretical framework: Three roles for corporate communication

The meta-theoretical framework for three roles (strategist, manager and technician) was constructed from a synthesis of seven approaches (Steyn, 2003a):

- **Dialogic approach** (Gadamer, 1985), a dialogue or conversation between organization and stakeholders/societal interest groups.
- **Open systems approach** to organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992). The strategist acquires information from the environment to facilitate organizational adaptation to stakeholder views/societal norms; the manager and technician disseminate (provide) information on organizational positions/policies/strategies.
- **Ecological (boundary spanning) approach** (Everett, 1993). The strategist scans the environment and provides intelligence for strategic decision making processes and adaptation. The manager develops core themes/messages (corporate communication

strategy) to address strategic issues and stakeholder expectations/values, which the technician communicates to strategic stakeholders/relevant societal interest groups.

- **Corporate social responsibility/responsiveness approach** (Sethi, in Carroll, 1996) (issues management). The strategist identifies strategic, social and other issues for consideration in strategy development. The manager identifies the consequences on stakeholders/societal interest groups, and decides what must be communicated. The technician implements the strategy by developing communication plans and activities.
- **Corporate community approach** (Halal, 2000), where management facilitates joint problem solving/collaboration with stakeholders. The strategist keeps top management informed of stakeholder expectations/values – enabling mutually beneficial relationship building.
- **New institutional approach** to the organization (Rumelt, Schendel & Teece, 1994) where society is viewed as the source of rules, standards, expectations, et cetera. The strategist brings societal values/norms to attention in order to adapt organizational strategies. The manager and technician communicate the identity of the ‘adapted’ organization to stakeholders/interest groups --obtaining legitimacy and a license to operate.
- **Excellence approach** to communication management (Dozier et al., 1995; Grunig, 1992) -- stabilizing relationships with strategic stakeholders; identifying/managing interest groups and activists; and reducing conflict/uncertainty in strategic decision making.

The meta-theoretical framework for the three corporate communication roles mentioned was mainly constructed based on US literature and did not include European approaches to corporate communication (which were subsequently included).

4.2 A societal approach to corporate communication

The BledCom 2002 Symposium (Slovenia) on the theme ‘The Status of Public Relations Knowledge in Europe and Around the World’ highlighted theoretical developments in corporate communication *outside* the USA. A contribution by Rensburg on an African perspective on the Bled Manifesto culminated in a chapter in the first edition of *The Global Public Relations Handbook* (Rensburg, in Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003).

This conference had a major influence on the *Pretoria School of Thought*. The *Bled Manifesto* (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002, p.16) explicated the European societal approach to corporate communication as a strategic process of viewing an organization from an ‘outside’ perspective, showing a special concern for broader societal issues. Legitimacy and public trust in the organization are central concepts in this approach and an organization’s inclusiveness, preserving its ‘license to operate’, is of primary concern (Verčič, Van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin, 2001, p. 382).

4.2.1 Four roles/dimensions for corporate communication

The Bled Manifesto also highlighted the four dimensions/roles that emerged from the European Body of Knowledge (EBOK) project (Verčič et al., 2001). Considered to be the most important, the reflective role has to do with analyzing changing standards, values and norms in society and pointing these out to organizational decision makers so that they can adjust the standards and values of the organization regarding social responsibility and legitimacy. The other three European roles were the managerial, operational and educational roles (Verčič et al., 2001).

Although an undefined concept in Europe, the reflective role appeared to be similar to the strategist role conceptualized and verified in SA.

4.2.2 Comparative analysis: SA strategist role versus European reflective role

In a comparative analysis conducted by Steyn and Bütschi (2003), the three SA roles (strategist, manager and technician) were found to be theoretically similar and practically identical to three of the EBOK roles (reflective, managerial and operational).

Based on the four EBOK roles and the comparative analysis which found Steyn's three roles similar to three of the EBOK roles, Steyn and Green (2006) reconceptualized the strategist role to include a reflective dimension; developed measurement items for

EBOK's four roles; and subsequently empirically verified four roles in SA. In Table 1, the purified items for the role of the PR strategist/reflectionist that resulted from this research can be viewed. The four items in boldface are from Steyn's original strategist index (Steyn, 2000b).

Table 1: PURIFIED ITEMS FOR THE ROLE OF THE PR 'STRATEGIST/ REFLECTIONIST'

Factor loadings	PR 'STRATEGIST/ REFLECTIONIST' = FACTOR 2 (CRONBACH ALPHA 0.91)
0.78	*Advise top management of societal values/ norms so that company strategies can be adjusted accordingly.
0.77	*Enlighten top management on societal expectations for socially responsible behavior.
0.74	*Make top management aware of the importance of accommodating perspectives (in society) different from their own.
0.73	Act as an 'early warning system' to top management before issues in the societal environment erupt into crises for our company.
0.70	*Influence top management's decisions to ensure that our company is regarded by society as being trustworthy.
0.69	*Ensure a balance between organizational goals and the well-being of society.
0.64	Initiate dialogue with pressure groups in the societal environment that are limiting the company's autonomy (e.g. environmentalists/ consumer advocates/ legislators.)
0.64	*Ensure that top management balances the quest for the realisation of organizational goals with respect for the natural environment (the planet).
0.62	Explain to top management the impact of their behavior (obtained through research) on key stakeholders (e.g. the media/ investors/ customers).
0.59	Act as an advocate for key stakeholders by explaining their views to top management.

*New items that added a reflective dimension to Steyn's PR 'Strategist' index

Source: Steyn and Green (2006)

Between 2003 and 2009, various postgraduate studies were conducted on the role of the strategist (Le Roux & Steyn, 2006; Steyn & Everett, 2009) -- some of them including the reflective dimension (Van Heerden & Rensburg, 2005; Steyn & Green, 2006).

4.3 The reflective paradigm for corporate communication

Another European scholar also influenced the *Pretoria School of Thought* considerably. Anchored in social systems theory, Holmström (1996) developed a reflective paradigm for corporate communication with **mutual reflection** as its core concept and social responsibility at the core of its practice. In this approach, the organization sees itself in the larger societal context, the ultimate objective being to generate social trust.

4.3.1 Reflective and expressive task for corporate communication

Mutual reflection consists of a reflective and expressive task for corporate communication (Holmström, 1996, pp. 97-98):

- The **reflective** task is inward communication -- selecting information on what is considered socially responsible behavior in society and encouraging organizational members to balance their behavior in accordance with expectations.
- The **expressive** task is outward communication, providing regular, widely distributed information (based on reflection) on the organization to help strengthen public trust in it.

4.3.2 Comparative analysis: SA mirror/window function versus European reflective/expressive task

In a comparative analysis conducted by Steyn and Bütschi (2003), the South African **mirror** function was found to be very similar to the European **reflective** task and the **window** function also shared similarity with the **expressive** task.

4.3.3 Reflective paradigm added to the meta-theoretical framework for the three SA roles

Based on the comparative analyses outlined and the assumptions of the reflective paradigm, the latter was selected as the overarching paradigm for the research on Strategic Communication Management conducted in the *Pretoria School of Thought*.

4.4 Levels of strategy formulation

Another important pillar of the *Pretoria School of Thought* is the explication of corporate communication's contribution to organizational strategy formulation -- described in detail in Steyn (2000c, 2003b); Steyn (in Toth, 2007); and Steyn and Niemann (2008; 2010). This contribution can be summarized as making inputs to the enterprise strategy at top management level (role of the strategist); developing corporate communication strategy

at the middle management level (role of the manager); and developing operational strategy at the implementation level (role of the technician).

4.4.1 Corporate communication strategy

In response to requests from industry, Steyn conceptualized corporate communication strategy (2000a) and developed a model for its implementation (2000c) through a longitudinal action research project conducted from 1999 to 2003 at UP. It was also based on findings of her research amongst chief executives (CEOs), *inter alia* that the development of corporate communication strategy supporting the corporate strategy was CEOs' highest expectation of the function (2000b). The model formed the core of *Corporate Communication Strategy*, the first textbook devoted solely to the strategic management of corporate communication (Steyn & Puth, 2000).

Between 2000 and 2006, the model for developing corporate communication strategy was applied to different contexts by postgraduate students at UP -- for example, community development (Steyn & Nunes, 2001); government (Steyn & Green, 2001); the Internet (Steyn, Grobler & Cilliers, 2005); and banking (Prinsloo, 2004; Worrall, 2005).

The conceptualization and operationalization of corporate communication strategy are discussed in detail in Steyn (2003b). It is further elaborated upon by Steyn (in Toth,

2007), where the concepts of ‘deliberate’ and ‘emergent’ communication strategy are introduced.

4.4.2 Enterprise strategy

The role of the communication strategist includes co-responsibility for developing the enterprise strategy (Steyn & Niemann, 2010) which addresses the organization’s relationship with society as well as its political and social legitimacy. The enterprise strategy answers the question of what the organization *should* be doing (Freeman, 1984) and acts as a framework within which other, more specific types of strategies operate. It is also known as a societal role strategy (Freeman, 1984); bridging strategy; social strategy; institutional strategy; and the strategy level that achieves non-financial goals (Steyn & Niemann, 2008, 2010). The authors regard enterprise strategy as being similar to Botan’s concept of integrative grand strategy (in Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p. 234).

In the corporate communication literature, the concept of enterprise strategy was introduced as the strategy level at which corporate communication practitioners could or should make a strategic contribution at the top management level, i.e. in Steyn (2000a, 2003a, 2009, in Toth, 2007); Steyn and Puth (2000); Prinsloo (2004); Worrall (2005); and Steyn and Niemann (2008).

Although the enterprise strategy is often not formally stated in organizations, it manifests by way of mission and vision statements, codes of conduct or ethics, approach to stakeholders, multi-stakeholder dialogue, ethical conduct, symmetrical communication, committees on social audits, and corporate philanthropy.

4.5 Strategic reflection as the core concept of a strategic communication management paradigm

The findings of an analysis of the various roles studies conducted in the *Pretoria School of Thought* since the beginning of the decade (Steyn, 2009) indicated the purpose of corporate communication as being *reciprocal strategic reflection*, consisting of both a reflective and expressive task (as conceptualized by Holmström, 1996). The strategic role of corporate communication (as the reflective task/ mirror function) is therefore *strategic reflection*. Based on this finding, Steyn (2009) relabeled her original PR ‘strategist’ role (which now includes a reflective dimension) to the ‘reflective strategist’.

The ‘reflective strategist’ acts as an advocate for key stakeholders by explaining their views to management; makes the latter aware of the impact of their behavior/ organizational policies and strategies on key stakeholders and societal interest groups; and acts as an early warning system before issues in the environment erupt into crises.

Furthermore, the 'reflective strategist' influences management to adapt strategies to societal/stakeholder values, norms and expectations, balancing the quest for the realization of organizational goals with respect for the natural environment (the planet) and its inhabitants (the people). Management is made to understand that public trust is not earned by simply changing outward communication to signify responsibility -- an organization has to behave accordingly.

4.6 Strategic role of corporate communication: Contributing to enterprise strategy development, governance and sustainability

Steyn and Niemann (2008) conducted a study with the aim of developing a model for enterprise strategy development. Their normative model (based on the empirical findings), indicate that the *enterprise strategy* is developed at the macro organizational level within the context of *enterprise governance* (including *enterprise relationship* and *enterprise risk* governance), as well as social/environmental *sustainability and responsibility*.

From this perspective, the reflective strategist:

- brings about shifts in organizational thinking necessary for implementation of a **triple bottom line** approach, and provides social and environmental intelligence.
- obtains input about/conveys concern and sensitivity to, **societal responsibility, sustainability and good governance**; and assists with its achievement.

- employs a reflective perspective to corporate reputation by **monitoring the environment** to identify **reputation and other strategic risks**, and addresses them through **communication strategies**.
- assists senior management to identify **strategic goals and stakeholder/societally responsive strategies**.
- oversees the **communication** strategy development process with **stakeholders** and other societal interest groups so that it is transparent and ethical; assists in **building relationships** with stakeholders; obtains legitimacy; and fosters social cohesion between business and society.

5. THEORETICAL PILLARS OF THE *PRETORIA SCHOOL OF THOUGHT*: A SUSTAINABILITY AND GOVERNANCE APPROACH TO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

Early research by De Beer (2001) and Steyn (2000b) focused on ‘shared expectations’, the middle sphere of the Communication Excellence Factor identified in the Excellence Study (Dozier, et al., 1995, p. 7). The concept of shared expectations (consisting of *departmental power*, the *demand-delivery loop* and the *manager/adviser roles*), initiated questions about the level at which corporate communication has value for the organization.

The *demand-delivery loop* construct remains of interest to De Beer, particularly the demands of top management in a changing triple context environment and the ability of the communication function to deliver on those demands. Previous research indicated that, apart from top management's demands for communication excellence, there was also a clear demand for communication practitioners to have *business knowledge* (Groenewald, 1998; Steyn, 2000b, 2003a). These are important variables in De Beer's research on the conceptualization of communication management in a strategic organizational context. It started in 2003 with a research paper at the BledCom Conference (Rensburg & De Beer, 2003) titled "Reputation management and stakeholder engagement: An integrated approach to future corporate governance in South Africa".

Delivering on the demands of top management requires new thinking in the field of communication management. A suggested point of departure is Van Riel and Fombrun's concepts of the *business and communication cycle* (2007, p. 60). It is imperative for communication professionals to understand the *business cycle* (the corporate strategy, business activities and financial performance) as well as the *communication cycle* (corporate communication, corporate reputation and supportive behavior towards the organization). In contemporary organizations, the business cycle has been extended to include the triple bottom line of environmental, social and financial considerations.

De Beer and Rensburg (2011b) state that an increasing number of organizations view *corporate responsibility* as integral to their systems of governance. It is their contention

that a new approach to (strategic) communication management is needed to support the triple context domain in which contemporary business, government and civil society have to operate. A fundamental element of sustainability is the phenomenon of communication in all its manifestations.

5.1 The triple context: A next wave of thinking

Measuring organizational performance against the triple bottom line has inevitable implications for communication management. If the organization is held accountable by its stakeholders for how it reaches its strategic goals in this environment, then the communication management function must also perform against those expectations.

As part of a qualitative research study (De Beer, in progress) on how communication should be managed on a macro level, De Beer became part of the research team for the King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa (IoD, 2009), also known as King III. The King Committee, with its ten subcommittees, was led by Prof Mervyn King SC. With its three pillars of sustainability, governance and strategy, King III (IoD, 2009) provides guidance on governance to companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) and also serves as an example of best practice for the government and NGO sectors.

The first meetings of the King III Committee took place in 2007. De Beer was part of the Committee for Compliance and Stakeholder Relationships, which was responsible for writing King III's Chapter 6: Compliance with Laws, Rules, Codes and Standards, as well as Chapter 8: Governing Stakeholder Relationships. She also served briefly on the Committee for Integrated Reporting and Disclosure, which wrote Chapter 9: Integrated Reporting and Disclosure.

With the Excellence Theory as a foundation for her research, De Beer explored the demand-delivery loop of expectations for the duration of the writing of the report and was confronted with the typical business and communication demands of top management, in practice and in theory. Intense deliberations on the inclusive stakeholder approach to corporate governance culminated in a separate chapter in King III on the governing of stakeholder relationships – its core concepts being corporate reputation, stakeholder and shareholder relationships and communication. During the public comment phase of the King III draft, the conceptualization of Chapter 8 was confirmed by Toni Muzi Falconi of Italy -- an academic and communication professional with a specific interest in the 'governing of stakeholder relationships' (see Muzi Falconi, 2010).

After the launch of King III in 2009, Muzi Falconi brought together a team of academics and practitioners from around the world (including the authors of this chapter) to compile the Stockholm Accords (2010) -- a guiding document for the profession that contains concepts from King III. De Beer facilitated one of the six virtual groups namely the

governance working group, while Rensburg co-facilitated a session on communicators' contribution to sustainability during the Global Alliance's World Public Relations Forum in Stockholm where the final text of the Accords was approved. The Accords considered the business concepts of sustainability, governance and management; the communication concepts of internal and external communication; and the coordination of internal and external communication.

5.2 Sustainability and governance: Two new perspectives in the communication management domain

Sustainability and governance, as it appears in King III and in the Stockholm Accords, can be considered as two new approaches to strategic communication management. The terminology of sustainability is mostly used with respect to *corporate responsibilities* such as corporate environmental responsibility, corporate social responsibility, corporate business responsibility and corporate governance (Campbell & Mollica, 2009, pp. xv-xvi). Responsible business behavior furthermore constitutes the consciousness that an organization can do well in the long run by paying attention to the environment and the society in which it operates. Other similar concepts include corporate social responsibility/investment/performance (CSR/CSI/CSP) and corporate citizenship (CC). John Elkington's (1999) concept of triple bottom line (TBL) – people, planet and profit - captures this idea.

Rensburg, De Beer and Coetzee (in Zerfass, Van Ruler & Sriramesh, 2008) address the abovementioned perspective in referring to public relations strategy as the nexus that binds stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation, to work towards corporate sustainability -- a core focus of the *Pretoria School of Thought*. This should be supported by an integration and alignment of communication activities, processes and systems in organizations.

Van Tulder and Van der Zwart's (2006, p. 142) view on the shift of CSR from a largely instrumental and managerial approach to one aimed at managing *strategic networks* (where longer-term relationships with stakeholders are prominent in strategic decision making), also influenced the *Pretoria School of Thought* because of its similarity to the inclusive stakeholder approach to corporate governance -- a dominant principle in King III. From this perspective organizations can stay in touch with the new responsibilities of 'legitimacy' and a 'license to operate' only through the systematic and structural exchange of facts, opinions and values through *strategic stakeholder dialogue* and a process that has clear accountability mechanisms (O'Brien, 2009, p. xviii).

During the drafting of King III (IoD, 2009), it became clear that top management expects the communication management function to contribute to the governing of stakeholder relationships and to assist in reporting in the integrated report on how the legitimate expectations of stakeholders are addressed. Gao and Zhang's (2006) argument that genuine *dialogue* concerns a two-way process where stakeholders are not merely

consulted or 'listened to' but also 'responded to' guided further research in the field of communication management. Stakeholder engagement is about organizations using leadership to build relationships with stakeholders and hence improve their overall performance, accountability and sustainability.

The *Pretoria School of Thought* supports the view that corporate governance deals with managing and being accountable for the full range of corporate responsibilities as stated by Campbell and Mollica (2009, p. xiv). As such it provides guidance for the corporate communication function when developing its strategies, policies and activities. Furthermore, Katsoulakos and Katsoulacos (2006, pp. 356, 359) state that corporate governance reflects the way companies specifically address legal responsibilities and provides the foundations upon which CSR and corporate sustainability practices can be built to enhance responsible business operations. They argue for the integration of corporate responsibility principles and stakeholder approaches into mainstream strategy.

According to King III (IoD, 2009), the ultimate compliance officer is the organization's stakeholders who will let the board know by their continued support whether they accept the departure from a recommended practice (IoD, 2009, pp. 7-9; Friedman & Miles, 2006, pp. 1-2). Against this background, the board is ultimately responsible to its *stakeholders*. This *inclusive stakeholder approach to governance* considers, weighs and promotes the interests of all the organization's stakeholders, thus ensuring their cooperation and support. In this way, the organization creates trust between itself and its

internal and external stakeholders, without whom it cannot operate sustainably (IoD, 2009, pp. 20-21). If the organization is run ethically, it earns the necessary approval – its *license to operate* – from those affected by and affecting its operations (IoD, 2009, p. 21). This approach could contribute to a positive corporate character, corporate personality and corporate identity, culminating in a positive brand image and corporate reputation.

5.3 Meta-theoretical framework for strategic communication management in a triple context environment

De Beer's theoretical framework for *responsible strategic communication management*, with specific reference to the governing of stakeholder relationships, contributes to the debate about the institutionalization of strategic communication management in the organization (De Beer, in progress; De Beer & Rensburg, 2011b, p. 211). She suggests that communication management approaches, such as stakeholder relationship management, can assist an organization in achieving its objectives -- even to a point of becoming objectives in themselves. The major concepts of her framework are sustainability, governance, strategy, communication, stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation.

Based on the shared expectations between managers and communicators (as identified in the Excellence Study) and the *inclusive stakeholder approach to governance*, De Beer (in De Beer & Rensburg 2011b, p. 214) suggests sustainability and governance as two new

approaches to the strategic management of communication at the macro level in a triple context environment which ultimately result in the governing of stakeholder relationships.

6. PRAGMATIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REFLECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIST

In a strategic context (the environmental/societal level of the organization), decisions are taken that could influence the organization and its role in society. Success in the interaction between the organization and society typically ensures the long-term survival of the organization. The communication management function is particularly suited to play the role of boundary spanning. Conducting environmental scanning and obtaining information about the legitimate expectations of stakeholders and the publics/interest groups that develop around issues (through formal and informal research) are some of the main value-added contributions that the function, and in particular the reflective communication strategist, can make in the contemporary organization. Providing communication intelligence to top management and the board before top level strategies are developed and then reporting in the integrated report on how stakeholder expectations have been addressed, can be considered as the current demand that top management has of the communication function and on which the latter should deliver (Steyn & De Beer, 2011).

In its strategic role, corporate communication represents the needs, interests and desires of the organization's various stakeholders to management and explains management's perspectives to the stakeholders -- opening a dialogue between an organization and its stakeholders, as well as the societal advocacy groups it affects. This perspective alludes to the demand from top management for the communication management function to determine the legitimate expectations of stakeholders through formal and informal research, and to report about it to top management for consideration in top level strategies. The results of the mutual adjustments between the organization and its stakeholders/publics are reported on in the organization's integrated report to stakeholders.

7. CONCLUSION

Scholars and postgraduate students at UP, who contributed to the *Pretoria School of Thought*, have not only influenced the communication management domain on a national level but have also made significant contributions on an international level. The focus on the management and governance of communication on the strategic level of the organization provides a research area within which answers to contemporary scientific and pragmatic questions can be addressed.

As the research agenda of this scientific worldview (paradigm) is extended to include business perspectives, theoretical and practical applications will manifest that could

benefit communication professionals on all levels in the organization. Conveying this scientific knowledge in classrooms and boardrooms has become an imperative for scholars in the field. The newly established Centre for Communication and Reputation Management (CCRM) at UP is also an instrument for the dissemination of this knowledge.

The triple context environment will influence strategic communication management in its broadest sense. Not only will it influence its conceptualization in the strategic organizational context, but it will also challenge the paradigms and theories of contemporary public relations. The inclusion of multidisciplinary concepts such as sustainability and corporate governance in the institutionalization debate in the field could, amongst others, assist with determining the level at which communication management has value – a core focus in the search for excellence in communication management. It is the view of the *Pretoria School of Thought* that the calls made by boards and top management for the communication management function to play a more strategic role in business and society could lead to a spiral of excellence in the demand-delivery loop of shared expectations, resulting in a function and discipline that could create value in all dimensions of the triple context environment.

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