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Internal Communication in Ireland Before and During the Economic Recession from the Perspective of Communication Practice, Technology, and Ethics

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Internal communication in Ireland before and during the economic recession from the perspective of communication practice, technology, and ethics.

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now this for assessment on the programmeme of study leading to the award of Ph.D is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited in acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed:

Date:

ABSTRACT

Internal communication in Ireland from the 'celtic tiger' era through to the economic recession from the perspective of: communication practice, technology and ethics.

This thesis examines the practice of internal communication in Irish public and private sector organisations during 2007/8 and 2010. This period spans the end of Ireland's 'celtic tiger' economy and the development of a major recession. All the case study organisations have been affected by the credit crunch and are experiencing economic, financial and ethical challenges.

The practices of internal communication in Ireland has evaded in depth academic examination in communications literature. Therefore, the contribution to knowledge in this work is the clarification of the internal communication practices in Ireland and also the illumination of the changes in internal communication practices during this turbulent economic period. It provides insights into how internal communication practices deal with changes in organisational structure and employee engagement.

The thesis also examines the role that ethics plays in internal communication. This is particularly relevant as the economic downturn has led many to question the ethics of business and society. The findings of the research in relation to ethics are complex and provide significant insights and new developments in this area of research. The results are in contrast to many other research studies on communication ethics. It is anticipated that the results will contribute to the debate on the role of ethics in the profession.

The thesis elucidates the role internal communication practitioners should play in order to deliver bottom line results for their organisation. It provides clarity around the elements of effective internal communication. It also demonstrates how internal communication practitioners can market and brand their work for senior management. Given the research that demonstrates the importance of internal communication in organisational success, it is somewhat surprising that a model for the effective

development and measurement of the practice has not been proposed previously in published research.

This thesis closes this gap by proposing a organisational communications audit tool that is grounded in practice, and uses a question based system, to assist organisations to develop an effective internal communication structure. Through a step-wise process the audit tool works to find a balance between strategy, leadership, communication tools and measurement.

This thesis provides unique insights into internal communication practitioner's dilemmas and challenges; highlights a number of important themes and conceptual issues that have not received attention to date; and offers a model for practice.

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DEDICATION

To Damien and Jack

ABBREVIATIONS

HSE	Health Service Executive
BOI	Bank of Ireland
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
IC	Internal communication
IHI	Institute for Healthcare Improvement
IPRA	International Public Relations Association
PRII	Public Relations Institute of Ireland
CIPR	Chartered Institute of Public Relations Internal Communication Alliance
IABC	International Association of Business Communicators

GLOSSARY

Dominant Coalition: The dominant coalition is the group of decision makers within an organisation.

Communication Department: A communication department is responsible for the overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organisation's communication with both external and internal publics.

Internal Communication: Internal communications is the strategic, measurable development of mutually beneficial relationships with all employee stakeholders, at all levels in the organisation, on whom the organisation's success depends.

Excellence Study: A $400,000 research project that sought to explain why communication has value to an organisation and to identify the characteristics of an organisational communication function that increased its value.

Public Sector Organisation: A public sector company is sometimes referred to as a government company. It is part of the state and it provides services on behalf of the government for citizens.

Burning Platform: The motivational forces that initiate and sustain transformation and change are referred to as the 'burning platform.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Laoise O'Murchú, the author of this study, is currently working as the Communications and Public Relations Manager for Tallaght Hospital, Dublin, Ireland. She has over 14 years' experience working in the communications industry both in-house and in consultancy. In 2006, she undertook an MPhil in communication in Dublin Institute of Technology. As part of her fulfilment of the requirements of that course she completed a thesis on internal communication in Ireland. This work sparked her interest in further aspects of internal communication including the role of ethics in internal communication. At the suggestion of her supervisor and the Head of the School of Media, she applied to Dublin Institute of Technology to expand her research further for the award of PhD.

Laoise has widened the focus of her study to include detailed examination of change communication, organisational culture and the role of ethics within internal communication.

CHAPTER 1

A NEW ERA: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICE, TECHNOLOGY AND ETHICS

1.0   Rationale

This research sets out to identify whether internal communication is given adequate attention in the strategic framework of Irish organisations, seen as 'indispensable for organisational learning, corporate cohesion and the achievement of business objectives' (Tourish & Hargie, 2004: 304) or whether internal communication is 'taken for granted' (White 1991: 3) and 'not given sufficient attention' (Marchington et al.'s ,1992). Literature searches reveal little specific research into the standard of internal communication practised in Ireland. Bearing this in mind the thesis aims to maximize what could be learned by examining the internal communication practises in both the public and private sector in Ireland. The research topic is of particular interest to researcher as she has worked in the area of internal communication for 14 years and is currently working in one of Ireland's leading healthcare institutions. Prior to this appointment she worked in a public relations consultancy representing public and private sector clients. The researcher's scholarly interest is focused on discovering whether IC practises in Ireland meet best international standards and whether the decline in the Irish economy impacted on IC practices and on the role that ethics plays in IC. This research aims to contribute to knowledge on three levels. Firstly, it aims to provide a detailed examination of the IC practices within public and private sector organisations in Ireland. Secondly, it aims to contribute to provide further insight into the role of ethics in internal communications. Thirdly, it reveals how organisations utilise IC during significant times of change and turbulence.

The thesis aims also to build a base of communication knowledge so that organisations will be able to take advantage of this research in order to improve their IC programmemes and reap the best possible results for their efforts.

The thesis consists of ten chapters. The first chapter is a very brief outline of the thesis and an account of the motivation for the research. Chapter two gives a detailed account of the methodology used to conduct the research. The method chapter explores the qualitative and quantitative nature of the study and elaborates on the techniques employed. These consisted mainly of in-depth interview, quantitative analyses and documentary and policy analysis of documents supplied by the case study organisations.

Chapter three provides an account of the theoretical perspective of the study. It incorporates within it a literature review in the form of an analysis of best practice in IC, an examination of organisational change and the important role of IC and a study of the role of ethics in communication. The chapter contains a definition of IC which functions as a diagnostic tool for the study in assessing the IC practices within the public and private sector. The chapter does not limit itself to communication research and theory. Bearing in mind that IC is about winning the hearts and minds of employees the thesis turns to behavioural science theorists and practitioners and draws from their knowledge to further enhance the perspective on effective IC. Similarly, the thesis draws on popular culture and business management when exploring the role of ethics. Chapter three resonates through subsequent chapters.

Chapters four to nine form the main focus of the thesis. These chapters provide a detailed analysis of the IC practices in public and private sector organisations in Ireland in terms of relationships (chapter four), strategy (chapter five), communication tools (chapter six), culture (chapter seven), change (chapter eight) and ethics (chapter nine). Use is made throughout these chapters of data gathered from both qualitative and quantitative data, cultural analysis incorporating observation of the case study organisations, simple content analysis and documentary analysis. The data, gathered by the methods described in chapter two, are critically examined and provide the empirical evidence, which forms the basis for the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter ten consists of a conclusion which sums up the findings of the thesis and details the 'organisation communication matrix' which is developed in response to the findings of the study. This chapter also outlines area of further study based on the findings presented in this research. Throughout the thesis, the challenges faced by IC

as a profession are examined within the theoretical framework established at the beginning of the study. To this end quotes from other research are cited throughout the research.

1.2 The Research Objectives

1   To examine existing theories and opinions regarding internal communication.

2   To establish and define the internal communication practices of four Irish organisations across the public and private sector, and compare their internal communication practises with the generic benchmark developed by Grunig et al. (2002: 6) in the excellence study. The excellence study was headed **by** James E. Grunig and funded by the Foundation of the **I**nternational Association of Business Communicators IABC) in 1985. Constructed upon a number of middle-range theories, it provides a "theoretical and empirical benchmark" for Communication units.

3   To establish whether internal communications is developing equally in both the public and private sector in Ireland.

4   To identify if the participants believe ethics has a role in internal communications and if so, what type of role?

1.3 Theoretical framework of the study

The literature review provides the reader with a theoretical profile of internal communications by examining research that provides a theoretical benchmark for best practise. This review is of vital importance to this research as it a theoretical lens, a framework for developing an analytical model.

The study is partly pragmatic as one of its objectives is to develop a practical outcome. If the research demonstrates that there is room for improvement it will also outline how improvements in IC performance can be achieved.

3

The method of primary data collection is qualitative and the strategy chosen to fulfil the research objectives is the use of case studies. Case studies are an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991: 39). This research is supplemented with quantitative analysis and with cultural and documentary analysis.

1.4 Organisations Involved

Health Service Executive (HSE)

Founded in 2005 the Health Service Executive (HSE) is a public sector company. A public sector company is sometimes referred to as a government company. It is part of the state and it provides services on behalf of the government for citizens. The HSE provides health and personal social services nationally through medical professionals and hospitals throughout the state. The HSE employs approximately 112,000 people. The HSE has divided responsibility for the provision of health and personal social services into three offices;

- National Hospitals Office (NHO) which provides public hospital and ambulance services
- Primary, Community and Continuing Care which provides care in the community
- Population Health which promotes and protects the health of the population.

The Department of Health and Children formally sets out a statement of national priorities for health, which is then addressed by the HSE in preparing its individual service plans.

Electricity Supply Board (ESB)

Founded in 1927, the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), also a public sector company, employs approximately 7,800 people. It is the leading Irish company in the energy utility sector. The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) is a statutory corporation in the Republic of Ireland. It is 95 per cent owned by the Government of Ireland, with the remaining shares held by an employee share option trust. ESB is a vertically integrated utility and it includes a number of divisions, which are ringfenced and operate independently in the electricity market.

Bank of Ireland (BOI)

Bank of Ireland, a private sector company, has been central to the Irish economy since 1783. It employs 16,000 staff groupwide. Once the unofficial bank of the Irish state, Bank of Ireland now provides financial services for consumers and businesses, operating over 250 retail branches in Ireland and the UK, where it offers traditional services such as deposits, loans, mortgages and insurance. It also offers asset management, corporate finance, and capital markets services at home and abroad. Its Subsidiary, Burdale Financial, provides asset-based financing to middle-market businesses in Europe.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is the largest professional services firm in Ireland and provides integrated assurance, taxation and advisory services across industries in Ireland and internationally. In Ireland, PwC employs over 2,100 people in seven locations - Dublin, Cork, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, Waterford and Wexford. Their culture centres around what they call 'Connected Thinking', a process of teamwork and collaboration that draws on the collective knowledge of the firm to benefit its clients and staff.

1.5   Chapter Summary

This thesis aims to examine the internal communication practices in each of these four organisations. It will use the criteria set out in the excellence study as a benchmark for best practice. The research will establish if there are discernable differences between the internal communication practices in both the public and private sector. It will determine the most effective internal communications tools being used in both the public and private sector in Ireland. It will identify if there are areas where improvements in internal communication could be implemented.

It will also examine the ethical framework for communication that exists in each of the organisations and whether internal communicators see themselves as the ethical conscience of their organisation. It will establish what training internal

communicators receive on ethics and whether Irish internal communicators believe that one ethical model can be used as a one-size-fits-all to ethical communication.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

This chapter defines and explores a theoretical profile of internal communications by examining existing research and investigating debates on best practice.

The excellence study, which examines the 'ideal practice' in communication, is described in detail in this chapter and is used as a framework to explore the area of internal communication. The four categories of best practice in communication according to the excellence study (Gillis, 2006: 5) are

(1) The relationship of communication to the management of the organisation,

(2) The organisation and purpose of the communication function,

(3) The management of individual communication programmemes, and

(4) The organisational context that supports the best communication practices.

The controversial aspects of ethics in communication are explored within an organisational context, as they are very closely bound to organisational culture. Although ethics is not usually regarded as a characteristic of excellence, Bowen (2004: 65) argues that it should be the tenth generic principle of excellence and should, as Bowen and Heath (2006: 35) suggest be a vital role for the communicator in executive decision making.

The review is structured in the following manner: Section 2.1 charts the growth of internal communication; Section 2.2 presents a definition of internal communication; Sections 2.3 examines The excellence study, Sections 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7chart the four categories of best practise in communication as defined in The excellence study; Section 2.8 examines the role of ethics in IC; Section 2.9 explores the benefits of effective internal communications on the organisation's bottom line.

One of the interesting findings of this literature review is the lack of uniformity in the labelling of internal communication. The labels used include internal communication, organisational communication, corporate communication, strategic communication, business communication and public relations. For consistency, the term communication and internal communication is used interchangeably to describe the research on this topic.

2.1 Growth of Internal Communication

According to Lewis cited in Smith, Lyn, (2008:09), internal communication dates back to the apple debate in the Garden of Eden. Scholes' (1997: xxv) findings provide a shorter life-cycle demonstrating that 'more than half the internal communication departments surveyed were five years old or less, many of them less than two years old'. This finding is supported by Clutterbuck (1997: xvii) who claims that there is evidence of the emergence of internal communication 'as a distinct management discipline'.

Scholes (1997: 26) provides an explanation for the growth in internal communication, claiming that it is the key to the success of an organisation's overall wellbeing. Despite the evidence that effective communication is an essential element of an organisation's development, Marchington et al. (1992: 2) claim that communication skills are still seen as 'soft management' by practising managers, and those skills are not given sufficient attention in programmemes of management education and development.

Morrison (2004: 120) points out that 'internal communications is an afterthought to external communication priorities such as advertising, media relations, sponsorship and government and investor relations'. According to White (1997: 3), 'Many studies have pointed to areas where communication is vital to the success of organisations, yet it is still infrequently singled out for specific attention, and is often taken for granted'. Carty (1992:84) concurs with this opinion stating that internal communications is often seen as the 'cinderella' of public relations.

The divergence of opinions outlined above is of central importance to this study as this research aims to establish the extent to which internal communication is developed in the public and private sector in Ireland. By exploring the above hypotheses, this research aims to establish whether internal communications is becoming a significant corporate discipline in the strategic framework of Irish companies or whether it is still 'taken for granted' (White, 1997: 3) or 'not given sufficient attention' (Marchington et al., 1992: 2).

2.2   Definition of Internal Communication

At this point, it is beneficial define internal communication. Gregory's (2000: 8) definition of communication focuses on the need for communication to be measurable and grounded in scientific research: 'Public relations is more than a tactical tool used purely to 'communicate' information or add gloss to information. It is an integral part of the strategic development process grounded on thorough going research and skilled, objective analysis'.

Welch and Jackson's (2007: 182) definition, 'Internal communication is the strategic management of communication and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within an organisation', highlights the importance of strategically planning communication. However, it fails to make any reference to evaluating and measuring communication.

Tench and Yeomans (2009: 318) point to the stakeholders' role in internal communications stating that 'internal communication is the managed communication system where employees are regarded as a public stakeholder group.' The reference to employees as a stakeholders group is a significant one as organisations spend much time, effort, and money communicating with external stakeholders but often fail to put the same effort into communicating with their staff.

Kalla (2005: 302) highlights the multi-disciplinary interest in internal communication and defines integrated internal communications as 'all formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of the organisation.' Cornelissen's

(2004: 189) glossary definition of internal communication takes a simple perspective, focussing primarily on methods: 'all methods used by the firm to communicate with its employees.' Both these definitions lack the sense that communication is part of strategic management.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000: 289) also make reference to building relationships and recognise the central role that employees play in the success of an organisation: 'The goal of employee communication is to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the employees on whom its success or failure depends.'

Scholes (1997: XVIII) takes a stakeholder perspective and defines internal communications as 'the professional management of interactions between all those with an interest - or 'a stake in' a particular organisation'. Scholes' definition lacks a focus on relationships, which needs to be included in any definition as the establishment of a relationship is the ultimate outcome of internal communication.

The above definitions fall short in bringing all the elements of effective internal communication into a single definition. In order to address all elements, the author presents the following definition.

> Internal communications is the strategic, measurable development
> of mutually beneficial relationships with all employee stakeholders,
> at all levels in the organisation, on whom the organisation's
> success depends.

This definition notes L'Etang's (2006: 295) concerns that employees are not necessarily a single entity and that different tools may have to be used to communicate effectively with all employees.

2.3 Characteristics of Best Organisational Communication Practise

According to Toth (2009: 48) there are three primary theories in organisational communication: Rhetorical, Excellence, and Critical. All three theories challenge internal communication practice. Rhetorical theory emphasises the nature of the dialogue that takes place, the quality of arguments and counter –arguments made and the meaning that emerges. Excellence theory focuses on how asymmetric and symmetric communication can result in mutual understanding. Critical theory emphasises power relations and inequalities in the communication between an organisation and its stakeholder groups. It is oriented towards the interests of activists rather than corporations.

According to Holtzhausen and Voto (2002: 60) the dominant, modernist, excellence theory, privileges management discourse and takes organisational goals for granted whereas Toth (2009: 53) outlines that critical theory is focused more on whose interests are being served through communication. Excellence theory has been identified by Pieczka (1996: 143) as the 'dominant paradigm' of public relations internationally. Excellence theory has however, come under fire from some critical scholars. Critical theorists have criticised it as idealistic and too linked to organisational interests (McKie and Munshi, 2007: 36). Berger (2005: 6) also states that the dominance of organisational interests in the excellence theory means that the concept of who has power in dialogue/communication is not addressed. Berger (2005: 6) argues that dialogue with employees cannot be excellent if employees have little meaningful input.

L'Etang and Pieczka (2006: 17) also find fault with excellence theory. They believe that the research questions posed in the study put answers before questions and in that sense, limited the possible answers. L'Etang and Pieczka (1996: 17) also warn that excellence theory has grown into a way of thinking that excludes other ways of thinking and that public relations would benefit from a greater range of research interest and perspectives, thus leading to more theoretical variety. Although critical approaches to communication identify weaknesses in the excellence theory and

11

articulate the socio-cultural concerns within and surrounding the communication profession, they fall short of providing solutions toward these concerns.

Despite the critique of the excellence theory, participation, collaboration and two-way communication are key elements of rhetorical, excellence, and critical. As Botan and Taylor (2004: 652) highlight, critical theorists, rhetorical theorists and excellence theorists are all interested in the communication between groups and organisations and how this is negotiated during change - and the most co-creational theory is symmetrical/excellence theory.

This research marries elements from each of the theories. As Toth (2009: 48) states all the theories can work together to solve public relations problems. Toth calls for 'pluralistic studies' that can make theoretical advances for the understanding of and application of public relations. This research therefore uses all theoretical approaches to construct and engage current communication practices not simply critique previous, public relations practices. The research accomplishes this by viewing the excellence theory as both a normative and constructive public relations theory.

Research for the excellence study, undertaken by Grunig et al., began in 1985.

> The research resulted from a $400,000 grant from the IABC Research Foundation for a research project to explain why communication has value to an organisation and to identify the characteristics of an organisational communication function that increased its value. This study, titled Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management, generally is known as the excellence study. In its request for proposals, the foundation asked for a study of 'how, why and to what extent communication affects the achievement of organisational objectives'.
> (Gillis, 2006: 3)

Gillis (2006: 5) indicates that there are four categories into which the characteristics of excellence fall. They are

> (1) The relationship of communication to the management of the organisation,
>
> (2) The organisation and purpose of the communication function,
>
> (3) The management of individual communication programmes, and
>
> (4) The organisational context that supports the best communication practices.

The excellence study developed what Fleisher (1995: 29) called a generic benchmark of critical success factors and best practices in communication management. Repper (1992: 112) explains how the study can be used to audit communication programmemes:

> One thing communicators never have been able to do is to compare our communication programmemes with a programmeme that is considered the best and most effective. However, ...[the excellence study]... gives us an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of our communication programmemes against that of an ideal programmeme.

According to Gillis (2006: 4), the excellence study found 'that a few organisations exemplified most of the best practices, many exemplified some, and others had few of these characteristics'.

2.4 The Relationship of Communication to the Management of the Organisation

The first category into which the excellence criteria fall is 'the relationship of communication to the management of the organisation' (Gillis, 2006: 5)

The secondary data is persented under three headings:

1. The role of the communicator in the dominant coalition. The dominant coalition is the decision makers within an organisation.

2. Support of the CEO and senior management for communication.

3. Support of middle management for communication.

2.4.1 The role of the communicator in the dominant coalition

Grunig et al. (2002: 222) outline that in a majority of excellent communication departments, the communicator is a member of the dominant coalition or has ready access to and influence with the dominant coalition. A communication department is responsible for the overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organisation's communication with both external and internal publics. The excellence study (Grunig et al., 2002: 191) also shows that top communicators earn a close working

relationship with their CEOs as a result of extensive knowledge of the business or industry, a record of successful performance in the organisation, expertise in strategic planning and managerial decision making, and a shared worldview of the value of two-way symmetrical communications. Reinertsen et al. (2008: 6) demonstrates that 'leaders often say that they as the leaders of the organisation are pretty clear about what they should be working on, but they are less clear about how they should go about that work'. This is particularly true of communication, so the effective Internal Communications Manager needs to provide a roadmap for leaders, demonstrating how to improve communication with their stakeholders.

2.4.2 Support of the CEO for IC

Quirke (2008: 137), Gray (2004: 26) Gerstner, (2003: 50) and D'Aprix (1999: 9) all stress that a CEO's commitment to communication impacts employee satisfaction, motivation, and the ability of the organisation to embrace change. Grunig et al. (1997: 291) state that 'the power of the communication department comes from the dominant coalition—that powerful elite that sets missions and goals and calls the shots in the organisation.' Haywood (2005: 17) maintains that good communication does not come solely from the communication professional; it comes from the Chairman, the Chief Executive and the Directors. It is not an after-thought or a bolt-on extra.

For this reason, the support of the CEO for communication must be evident within the organisation to staff at all levels from managers to front-line employees. Reinertsen et al. (2008: 17) acknowledge that 'what leaders pay attention to tends to get the attention of the entire organisation'. It is therefore not surprising that the excellence study details support from the CEO as a characteristic of excellence communication.

2.4.3 Support of middle management

As Ruck (2010: 86), Argenti & Forman (2002: 18) and Green & Pietri (1988: 33) communication is part of every manager's essential toolkit, a habit shared by leadership and understood at every level of management. James cited in Scholes (1997: 261) indicates that 'surveys all over the world bear the same message: People

trust their frontline managers and believe what they tell them, in preference to any other source—and by a very big margin'. Larkin and Larkin (1997: 65) argue that managers need to be given the confidence to communicate. The effective communicator can help by providing messages, structure, training, and coaching for supervisors and managers to build their communications prowess and effectiveness, but they need the full support of the dominant coalition to achieve success in this endeavour. This concept of showing middle management that communication is an integral part of a manager's job as front-line managers is highlighted in Larkin and Larkin (1994: 14) when they explain that manager communication 'increases both the satisfaction and performance of employees'. Young and Post (1993: 31- 43) explain that support from the highest level in the organisation is necessary to show middle management that communicating effectively is something that is the most important managerial activity in the company.

Yet as Gillis (2006: 206) points out, 'Organisations generally have done a poor job of telling supervisors about their communication responsibilities, training them to communicate effectively, measuring how well they communicate and rewarding the ones who do it well'. The problem this oversight creates is outlined by White (Scholes, 1997: 9), who stresses that managers seem to concentrate on feeding themselves and each other with information, neglecting the important task of taking their staff and organisation with them.

This study examines: the role the Internal Communication Manager plays in the dominant coalition, how the case study organisations rate the support of their CEO and middle managers for communication and how that commitment manifests itself. The study will also investigate whether the organisations examined view effective internal communication as a key performance indicator for their managers.

2.5   *Organisation and Purpose of the Communication Function*

The second category into which the characteristics of excellence fall is 'the organisation and purpose of the public relations function'. The review of this category will be under the following headings:

- **Internal communication as a management function**
- **Developing strategic objectives**
- **Undertaking evaluation**

2.5.1 Internal communication as a management function

Steyn (cited in Troth, 2007: 141) states that

> The PR strategist functions at the top management level of an
> organisation.…By means of environmental scanning, the PR
> strategist gathers information regarding stakeholder concerns and
> expectations, identifies societal issues and the publics that arise
> around the issues, interprets the information with respect to
> consequences for organisational strategies (pointing out reputation
> risks and/or other strategic issues), and feeds the intelligence into
> the enterprise and/or other organisational strategies.

And Grunig et al. (2002: 209) suggest the communicator 'must act as eyes and ears
for their organisation'. Shaffer (1999: 275) agrees, stating that the effective internal
communicator must be able to provide 'solid counsel on major business issues that are
on the forefront of the CEO's mind.' Oliver (1997: 36) argues that excellent
communication professionals 'act as specialist counsel to the corporate boardroom'.

Grunig et al.'s (1994: 14) research maintains that communication managers 'are
responsible for organising and administering the communication function and
participating in organisation wide decisions'.

> In less excellent departments, however, all the communication
> practitioners-including the senior practitioner are technicians. If the
> senior communicator is not a manager, it is not possible for public
> relations to be empowered as a management function. (Grunig et
> al., 1994: 14)

Grunig et al. (1995: 55) also point out that crucially, even the most strategically
managed department must possess technical expertise and that 'the best laid plans of
the dominant coalition and top communicators mean nothing without traditional
communication skills to implement them'. Excellent communication departments are
established when the communicator marries technical expertise with strategic
knowledge in the pursuit of organisational goals.

Schramm (1988: 309) maintains an alternative view, seeing the role of the communicator as purely technical explaining that

> the duties of the communicator involve a great variety of communication tasks including 'preparing news releases, writing speeches, issuing publications, planning special events, answering correspondence, maintaining friendly relations with the media, arranging publicity for persons or products – in fact, anything that has to do with the image presented by the employing organisations to persons whose opinions it cares about.

2.5.2 Developing strategic communication objectives

Grunig et al. (2002: 253) emphasise that when communication strategies are strategically managed the benefits accrue, 'top management come to accept you when they see work coming out of your department that meets their strategic objectives'. Steyn (2000: 142) reinforces this observation when stating that 'the development of a PR strategy makes the PR function relevant in the organisation's strategic management process.' Nicholas Ind (1997: 80) and D'Aprix (1996:49) agree, pointing out that the excellent communication manager has the ability to develop communications strategies, derived from research and analysis that have specific and quantifiable communication objectives.

Cutlip et al. (1994:406), Pavlik (1987: 79) and Grunig (1984: 7) all reinforce the need to have SMART (strategic, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed) communication objectives. Otherwise, as MacNamara (1993: 57) explains, it is impossible to measure success. According to Mintzberg, cited in Kiechel (1984: 8), communication activities that are not strategically planned are more difficult to implement with 'only 10 per cent of strategies getting implemented'. A 10 per cent success rate is not what an excellent department would aim to achieve. Given these figures, it is easy to see why strategic communication is a characteristic of excellence.

2.5.3 Undertaking evaluation

Although some public relations textbooks do stress the importance of measurement and evaluation in communication, Macnamara (1999: 109) states that the reality on the ground is that evaluation is still not fully embraced.

Lindenmann (2003: 7) argues that evaluation is the 'key to any successful public relations communications efforts'. Hehir quoted in (CW, Oct, 2003: 32) agrees, stating that 'public relations professionals who complain about the low status accorded them but don't try to give their proposals a scientific platform, continue to bite the hand that starves them'. Similar sentiments are echoed by Jack Koten, Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications at Ameritech in Chicago, also cited in (CW, Oct, 2003:19), when he argues that 'a lack of evaluation dooms communication to a low-status, technical support function that must be managed by others'.

Blair C Jackson, senior Vice President of Rogers and Cowen cited in Broom and Dozier, (1995: 414) explains that

> The most compelling reason for using research is to make sure that your programmeme is the best it can be. ….Evaluating research will tell you whether or not it works. …On the other hand, research is the way to prove that you are doing the job, to make sure the programmeme is continued, or to get the budget increase

Gray (1999: 1) also explains the rationale behind being able to measure the effectives of communication activities stating,

> Imagine a business concern that didn't examine its profits or return on investment.
> Imagine a job where no-one looked at how well or poorly you've performed.
> Imagine paying someone to perform a service but not being able to tell how valuable that service had been.
> If you can imagine these things - then you can imagine what communication is like without measurement of effectiveness

Despite these soundly argued premises Watson (1993: 297) explains that 'cost, lack of time, and lack of knowledge were the main reasons claimed for not evaluating'. Broom and Dozier (1990: 414) suggest that the majority of practitioners ... still prefer

to 'fly by the seat of their pants' and use intuition rather than intellectual procedures to solve public relations problems.

The thesis aims to investigate if the case study organisations measure and evaluate their communication activities.

2.6 Management of Individual Communication Programmemes

The third category into which the characteristics of excellence fall is 'the management of individual communication programmemes' (Gillis, 2006:5). The excellence study states that communication programmemes (or activities) organised by excellent departments should be managed strategically and should use two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models of communication. The management of individual communication programmemes will be examined under the following headings:

- Communication models
- Communication flow
- Communication tools
- Barriers to communication

2.6.1 Communication models

Internal communication has evolved as the theories of communication have evolved. The excellence study stresses the importance of using two-way communication (both symmetrical and asymmetrical); however, in order to establish the communication models used in the case study organisations it is necessary to have an understanding of all possible communication models.

Aristole's seminal work on rhetoric defined communication in a linear model (Larson, 2012: 80). Shannon and Weaver (1949: 3) and Gerbner (1956: 180) used a similar one-way mechanical flow of information in their communication models. They assume that if the message is sent correctly, it will be received correctly. It also assumes that changes in knowledge would automatically lead to changes in attitudes.

19

The flaw in this model is that the receiver is considered passive and the effect of 'noise' in the system is not taken into account. Corson et al. (2000: 147) defines noise as 'any bit of information that increases uncertainty in communication'.

Dover (1964: 63) describes three types of communications: entertaining, informing and persuading. Grunig and Hunt (1984) added two-way symmetrical communication to facilitate feedback and mutual understanding. Grunig (1995: 13) outlines four typical ways in which communication can take place in an organisation.

1. **Press agentry:** the internal logic of this model implies the proactive dissemination of information to catch attention and to promote.

2. **Public information:** involves sending out favourable information about your organisation.

Both these models are closed systems of communication with information coming outward from the organisation to their publics. At no point in this communication process does the organisation intend to change its behaviour and no dialogue is sought with the public.

3**. Two-way asymmetrical:** involves gathering information about the organisation's publics in order to help management's decision-making process. This model came to attention with Bernay's writing in the 1920s. (Bernay: 2004: 101)

4. **Two-way symmetrical:** involves managing conflict and promoting mutual understanding with key publics. According to Grunig et al. (1995: 13) 'communicators practicing the two-way symmetrical model seek 'win-win' solutions to conflict with publics'.

Two-way asymmetric and symmetric models of public relations seek to achieve persuasion and understanding rather than simply disseminate information. Therefore, they rely on feedback, evaluation and research to gauge results.

Grunig et al. (1995: 357) explain that

'excellent' communication departments use both two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models in a mixed-motive model.

At times, organisations attempt to persuade publics to change, without making corresponding changes in organisational behaviour. At other times, organisations negotiate and seek to resolve disputes by moving both organisations and publics toward a common ground, what we called the 'win-win' zone'.

Grunig et al. (2006: 87) agree stating that 'the mixed motive version of the two-way symmetrical model might better describe what is happening in the actual practice of public relations, because it incorporates both asymmetrical and symmetrical strategies'. Dozier (1987: 666) believes that 'symmetrical public relations has not emerged as an observable, operating model in contemporary practice'.

From an internal communications perspective the Hedging and Wedging communications theory, developed by Professors Keith Stamm and James Grunig (1984: 131), is also worth noting as it outlines that when a person has a firmly held view, they will at best hedge their views when faced with information contrary to their viewpoints. They argue that it may be improbable or impossible for attitudes to be changed diametrically from negative to positive—or vice versa. It is important for a communications professional to understand the hedging and wedging theory in order to set realistic achievable targets and objectives for internal communication activities. It is important that the communications professional does not set overly optimistic objectives for internal communication activities, otherwise measurement will be difficult and the results disappointing.

The above research demonstrates the range of communication models available to the communications practitioner. The excellence study stresses the importance of using two-way communication (both symmetrical and asymmetrical) and in this study aims to establish what models of communication the case study organisations use and which model of communication is the most practised.

2.6.2 Communication flow

According to Sengupta (2011: 198) there are three types of communication in any organisation: formal, semi-formal (non verbal behaviour which does not match the message being given) and informal, e.g. the grapevine. Only when all of these

channels are sending much the same message will the organisation reach its full potential. If semi-formal and informal communication prevail over formal, then a lack of integrity is perceived and thus a lack of leadership. Employees need to see, hear, and feel a consistent unifying message, and the environment needs to be conducive for them to stand up and speak, and be heard, thereby engendering mutual respect and aligning behaviour with strategy.

D'Aprix (1996:39-40) developed a SAY/DO matrix—managers say one thing but do another—as a key explanation of how informal/formal communication issues can arise. He locates ideal organisational communication in the High Say/High Do quadrant—indicating that there is sufficient communication and that management actions match their communications. An organisation in the High Say/Low Do quadrant is most likely to have a culture in which informal and formal communications conflict.

2.6.2.1 *Informal*

Every organisation has an informal communication network—a grapevine—that supplements official channels. Kushal (2008: 72), Mangan and Mulholland (2005, online), Haris and Hartman (2001: 331), and Rodriques (1992: 88) all emphasise the importance of using the grapevine to develop organisational intelligence and identify problems before they escalate.

Hewlett-Packard (cited in Kandula, 2004: 132) trains its managers in Management by Walking Around (MBWA), encouraging them to know what is being said on the grapevine and to build stronger relationships with their employees. Hewlett-Packard has found that this has a demonstrable effect on employee's emotional commitment to their organisation, which is far more valuable and long lasting than rational commitment that only lasts as long as the employee sees advantages for themselves within the organisation.

DiFonzo and Bordia's (2000: 292) research on the grapevine highlights the topics discussed on the grapevine. Interestingly, they discovered that the main topics talked about on the grapevine were 'job security, job-satisfaction, personnel changes, gossip

or other'. The fact that work-related issues dominate chatter on the grapevine outlines why it is important for management to tap into this information channel. As Thill and Bovee (1997: 832) claim, climate suffers when management distort or ignore information from the grapevine.

With the grapevine an important source of information for so many employees, it is no wonder that successful managers tap into the grapevine to avoid being isolated from what's really happening. For that reason, the advice given by Griffin (2007: 368) is worth observing; 'attempts to eliminate the grapevine are fruitless'; however to improve corporate communication every effort should be made to ensure that official communication channels match.

Drafke and Kossen (2002: 221) also highlight that in the absence of real information 'grapevine communication fills in the gaps' and employees fill in the blanks with their own information and 'rumours tend to fly through the informal organisation'. Fuelled by fear, uncertainty, and doubt, the answers that employees create are invariably far worse than the reality that awaits them. Cutlip et al. (1985: 90) agree that 'the grapevine will fill the information gaps left by inadequate communication programmemes'.

This study examines how the case study organisations view the grapevine, deal with it, and whether or not they have methods of tapping into it.

2.6.2.2 *Formal*
Thill and Bovee (2010: 157) outline that information may travel up, down, and across an organisation's formal hierarchy. The following communication flows exist within formal communication:

Downward communication
In most organisations, decisions are made at the top and then flow down to the people who carry them out. Downs and Adrian (2002: 292) found that 'downward communication refers to those message systems that proceed vertically down the chain of command from managers to subordinates'.

Farace, Monge and Russell (1997: 149) found that 'managers are more likely than...workers to think that downward communication is taking place' (Farace, Monge and Russell (1997: 149).

This highlights the need for downward communication to have a feedback loop built in. Downward communication that has no feedback loop built into it is one-way communication. It does not meet the excellence criteria and it is not the preferred method of communication.

Interestingly, Larkin and Larkin (1994: 7) point out that 'if you count on information cascading down the organisation, you can count on being disappointed'. They therefore stress the need to empower front-line managers to be the main vehicles for information delivery.

Upward communication

Upward communication is just as vital as downward communication. Executives can use upward communication as a means of getting lower-level employees to furnish them with accurate, timely reports on problems, emerging trends, opportunities for improvement, grievances and performance.

A survey by HR consultancy, Rightcoutts, highlights some alarming statistics: almost half of 2000 UK workers they surveyed had never had a conversation with a senior leader and this apparent anonymity 'is hindering business growth and damaging staff motivation' (Amble, 2006: online). One of the methods to encourage upward communication is to make communication and feedback a priority that is encouraged and valued.

The concept of the iceberg of ignorance also illustrates just how much beneficial information rank and file employees can provide to management. The internationally acclaimed study by Sidney Yoshida (Harrington, & Harrington, 1995: 292), demonstrates how only 4 per cent of problems are known to senior managers, 9 per cent are known to general supervisors, 7 per cent are known to supervisors and 100 per cent of problems are known to rank and file employees. This reinforces the need

for upward communication, as management cannot solve problems they know nothing about.

Horizontal communication

Denton (1991: 42) explains that in horizontal communication information flows from one department to another, whether laterally or diagonally. Companies that encourage horizontal communication report dramatic increases in productivity, largely because of cooperation between employees from various departments. The case study of Federal Express is one such example. Since they started emphasising horizontal communication, service problems have declined (*Intranet Blog*, Blogwave.com).

This study will establish how communication flows within the case study organisations and how the organisation manages this information flow.

2.6.3 Communication tools

The third element to be aware of when examining the management of individual communication programmemes is the communication tools themselves. Holtz (2004: 245) and Lin Grensing-Pophal (1991: 29) argue that when it comes to employee communications, organisations face no shortage of mediums or tools. But these tools should be used strategically. Haywood (2002:207) stresses that prior to deciding which tools to use an organisation should first assess its communication needs. Russell et al (2004: 49) concurs stressing that strategy should come first and tactics second.

D'Aprix (2008: 98), Gillis (2011: 275) and Davenport (2009: 32) all stress that the strategic management of communication will ensure effective communication and eliminate the possibility of communication being fraught with confusion and cluttered with irrelevant information.

Bearing in mind the above advice about the use and selection of tools, the study examines the numerous tools used by the case study organisations. The tools are

simply listed when they are self-explanatory and short explanations or interesting commentaries made by previous researchers are outlined beside some of the tools.

2.6.3.1 *Face-to-face communication*

According to Farrant (2003: 85) the best employee communications need to be 'innovative, entertaining and face-to-face'. According to Voss (cited in CW, Jan/Feb 2007) 'face-to-face interaction builds a deeper rapport among colleagues' and Fairlie and Ogg. (1998: 7) caution organisations not to neglect face-to-face communication, stating that 'no other variable has as strong and consistent an effect on results as face-to-face communication'.

Face-to-face communication tools which are more often two-way include focus groups, management meetings with staff, team briefings and walking the talk (this involves managers scheduling time to walk around the workplace, talking to their team members). Done well, these tools can build an atmosphere of trust and strengthen relationships.

Larkin and Larkin (1994: 86) state that, 'communication has become the production of stuff, instead of preparing supervisors for face-to-face encounters with their staff'. They claim that communication professionals have turned a blind eye to the evidence showing a strong preference for face-to-face communication.

2.6.3.2 *Print communication*

These tools tend to be one-way unless they have built-in feedback mechanisms. Interestingly, Parkes (cited in CW, July 2004) points out that employee publications are still the main methods of communicating with employees.

2.6.3.3 *Technological communication*

Cornelissen (2001: 164) argues that email is frequently used for employee communications, but they warn of the danger of email overload rendering the tool useless. It is also worth noting that Randstad's 2003 employee review (online and cited in CW) indicates that 'email is far behind face-to-face meetings as the means of

communication most preferred by employees'. In short they say 'everyone wants face time'.

The intranet has also become a popular tool, but as Holtz (2003: 97) warns 'despite wonderful features, the intranet is not a panacea' and it should only be used as part of an integrated communication programmeme and should not become the sole source of information. Ruck (2010: 86) also describes the significance of the intranet to organisations. However, both Holtz and Ruck also point out that one should not make the mistake of assuming that using technology as a communication medium can replace a face-to-face meeting. Ruck (2010: 86) states that 'despite their popularity and acceptance, alternative communication technologies can't replace the richness or effectiveness of face-to-face communication.' Keenan and Hazelton (2006: 314) point out that organisations need to balance 'technological concerns and the humanity of employees'.

2.6.3.4   *Research tools*
Scholes (1997:42) points out that internal research is often left until external research is concluded. Given the importance of strategically planning communication, it is essential that the effective communicator uses research tools. Many communicators fail to use research to set communications targets, and as Clutterback (in Scholes, 1997: 273) emphasises, 'You can't manage what you can't measure'.

2.6.3.5   *Overview of communication tools*
The thesis will investigate what communication tools the case study organisations use and if the tools used correlate with best practice.

2.7   The Organisational Context that Supports Best Communication Practice

The fourth category that the excellence criteria fall into is 'the organisational context that supports best communication practices' (Gillis, 2006: 5). The excellence study (Gillis, 2006: 546) searched systematically for contextual conditions within an

organisation and in its environment that might explain why some public relations functions are more excellent than others. Their research shows that the organisational characteristics of structure, culture and communication systems all provide a supportive context for excellent communication. Although these conditions alone cannot produce excellent communication, they do provide a hospitable environment. For this reason, organisational context is listed as a characteristic of excellence.

The structure and communication systems within an organisation are often closely aligned to the culture of the organisation. Therefore, it is vital for the IC practitioner to be able to analyse and understand the organisation's corporate culture, particularly in a large organisations where the culture is often more complex. Peters and Waterman (1982: 104) drew a lot of attention to the importance of culture to achieving high levels of organisational effectiveness stating the organisations 'whose only articulated goals were financial did not do nearly as well financially as companies that have broader sets of values'. Alvesson agrees (2002: 3), arguing that organisational culture plays an important role in the understanding of organisational behaviour'. Indeed, Collins and Porras' (1994: 8) research of visionary companies claims that

> a visionary company almost religiously preserves its core ideology
> — changing it seldom, if ever. Core values ... form a rock-solid
> foundation and do not drift with the trends and fashions of the day.

The old truth, 'Culture eats strategy for lunch' (Reinertsen, 2008: 12), still holds true and

> patterns of behaviour that are driven by underlying values, habits,
> and beliefs—the organisation's culture—will dominate every other
> possible driver and may jeopardise success unless they are
> explicitly addressed.

In this section, the theories of organisational culture will be examined as an understanding of the framework of organisational culture informs the development of effective IC practices.

2.7.1 What is organisational culture?

Thesiss have long attempted to find consensus on the definition of organisational culture; however, this has proven troublesome because the concept has many different and competing definitions (Barney, 1986: 657). Organisational culture is a complicated and broad meaning phenomenon. According to Brown (1995: 7) even by 1952 the anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn had isolated 164 different definitions of culture. However, Brown (1995: 32) summarises the term organisational culture as

> the pattern of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organisation's history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangements and in the behaviours of its members.

Similarly, Deal (1982: 25) states that corporate culture is the complex set of values, principles, attitudes, and ways of viewing and relating to the world that are shared by members of an organisation. Daly, Teague, and Kitchen (2003: 158) and Sanchez (2011: 29) offer a more practical definition of the term, explaining that it is everything a company does to achieve its mission and objectives. They state that organisational culture embodies the common saying 'the way we do things around here'. Dozier et al. (1995: 11) describe organisational culture as 'the sum total of shared values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that organise and integrate a group of people who work together'. They believe that organisational culture is an element of excellence in organisational communication.

According to Denison (1984:19), 'strong' organisational cultures bear direct influence on individual attitudes and performance as well as that of sub-groups within the organisation. Klein (2008: 6) agrees stating that culture is a factor in 'enhancing the effectiveness of individuals, groups and organisations'. Schermerhorn et al (2011: 348) explain that there are different levels of culture and at the deepest level, where values, assumptions, and beliefs are held, culture has a strong impact in the way the organisation performs.

The beliefs and values of an organisation often have their roots in the organisations' history. It is for this reason that Brown (1995: 26) claims that 'culture can only be

fully understood as the product of historical process'. History is also an important origin of other elements of organisational culture (norms, artefacts, behaviour patterns, symbols, basic assumptions etc.). For example, the argument 'we have always done this or that way' is often heard in mature companies, but rarely in start-ups. History cannot be changed, but its patterns are likely to reflect the way the organisation will most probably react towards change efforts. Understanding the history of the organisation is an important tool for IC practitioners—as history is a tool to understand, evaluate, and manage organisational culture. Understanding the past enables the IC practitioner to approach a challenge fully informed, increasing the possibility of influencing the future.

Being able to manage organisational culture is a business imperative when we look as it from Barney's (1986: 656) perspective. He states that financial performance is linked to strong management values that translate into the way the business operates. He argues, however, that for culture to be a source of competitive advantage, it must fulfil three conditions: being valuable, rare, and imperfectly inimitable. This argument suggests that if such conditions do not exist in an organisation, then culture cannot be a source of competitive advantage. Cognisant of this critique, the thesis disagrees with Barney and instead supports the views of Sanchez (2011: 30) who argues that culture determines how an organisation responds to its business environment, its daily activities, its social interactions, and how it uses employees' skills and talents; culture then is likely to be a key factor to determine competitiveness in all organisations.

This thesis will examine culture in each of the case study organisations and identify if there is a correlation between culture and IC practices.

2.7.2 Organisational culture theory

Theories of organisational culture commonly focus on its integrative function within an organisation—put simply, culture brings people together. According to Schein (1992: 12), culture is

> a pattern of shared basic assumptions, invented, discovered or
> developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems
> of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked

well enough to be considered valid and therefore is taught to new
members of the group as the correct way to perceive, think and
feel in relation to those problems.

Schein (1992: 12) explains the culture of organisation as something which is learned from experiences of a group and to a large extent it is unconscious. According to him organisational culture is a three layer phenomena, including artefacts, espoused values and basic assumptions.

TABLE 1: SCHEIN'S (1992) MODEL OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Artefacts	Visible organisational structures and processes
Espoused Values	Strategies, goals, philosophies (espoused justifications)
Underlying assumptions	Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (the ultimate source of values and action)
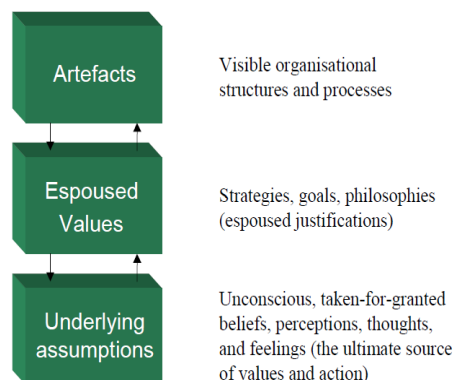
Artefacts are the tangible products of an organisation that are heard, seen and felt. Artefacts consist of (a) material artefacts like corporate logos, mission statements and corporate architecture; (b) linguistic artefacts such as metaphors, stories and myths; (c) behavioural artefacts such as rites, rituals, ceremonies and indicators such as sick leave and; (d) miscellaneous artefacts such as various organisational symbols. Artefacts can give an indication of the culture of an organisation even at a first glance. How are the offices laid out? Are they tidy? Is there a uniform? What is the dress code? Do people work with their door open or closed? How are people dressed? How do people treat one another? How meetings are conducted? How are disagreements or conflicts handled and so on? Brown (1995: 10) argues that on occasion artefacts can hold the essence of an organisation's whole social system. He argues that sometimes changing some of these artefacts such as the layout of office space can help facilitate the implementation of a change. The artefacts of the case study organisations will by examined through observation during the on-site interviews.

According to Watkins and Leigh (2009: 103), espoused values are at least partially visible. They are the strategies and goals of an organisation that are open to debate or challenge. Espoused values of the organisation include the operating philosophy, official objectives, and declared norms of the organisation. They are not necessarily acted upon. They may be consistent or inconsistent with the actions of the organisation. Basic assumptions are beliefs, thoughts, or behaviours that are so firmly entrenched in an organisation that they are never questioned. According to Schein (2010: 28) 'Basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebatable, and hence are extremely difficult to change'. In fact, if basic assumptions come to be strongly held in a group, members will find behaviour based on any other premise inconceivable.

Echoing similarities with Schein's theory, Deal and Kennedy (1982: 15-16) outline four elements of organisational culture. They are (1) values, (2) heroes, (3) rites and rituals, and (4) the cultural network. They state that by understanding and cultivating these elements, an organisation creates a strong culture and gains 'a powerful lever for guiding behaviour' that helps their 'employees feel better about what they do', both of which increase productivity and reduce employee uncertainty. According to Deal and Kennedy (1982: 21) values provide common goals and directions to guide behaviour. Heroes personify these values—they are the visionaries and leaders who 'show every employee "here's what you have to do to succeed around here"'. Rites and rituals are the most 'visible and pervasive influence' on organisational culture. These are the daily routines and the special events and celebrations endorsed by the organisation. Rites and rituals serve to regulate expected behaviour and represent the ethos of the organisation. The final element, the cultural network, (Deal & Kennedy 1982: 14-15) refers to the storytellers, priests, spies, whisperers, and cabals within an organisation who are the 'carriers of corporate values and heroic mythology'. There are several commonalities between the cultural elements identified by Schein and Deal and Kennedy. Schein's basic assumptions and Deal and Kennedy's values both refer to the beliefs held by an organisation. Schein's artefacts and deal and Kennedy's rites and rituals both refer to the tangible products of an organisation.

The discussion so far has focussed upon organisational culture as if all organisations have one culture. But do they? Willcoxson and Millett (2000: 95) argue that 'although

some researchers suggest that organisational cultures are unitary and integrated, others argue for the existence of pluralism or differentiated sub-cultures in the one organisation'. Frost et al. (1991:8) claim that 'consensus fails to coalesce on an organisation-wide or subcultural basis, except in transient, issue-specific ways'. Willcoxson and Millett (2000: 95) outline that those who 'recognise the existence within organisations of diverse sub-cultures argue that organisational success springs from the effective leadership and management of diversity, and that cultural change or maintenance efforts have to be undertaken through programmes specifically designed for different segments of the organisation'. This is of relevance to the IC practitioner as it indicates that different communication approaches may be required for different internal audiences.

Dozier et al.'s (1995: 11) work identifies two spheres of communication excellence that sit within a wider notion of organisational culture. The first sphere, the knowledge core, represents the communication department's knowledge base. This sphere sits within the second sphere, shared expectations, that represents the view of communications as shared by the Communications Department and the leaders and decision makers within the organisation. These two spheres are ultimately embedded in a larger sphere of organisational culture. According to Dozier et al. (1995: 17-18), organisational culture differs between participative and authoritarian. A participative culture promotes teamwork, cooperation and a shared mission, employee input and two-way symmetrical communication, whereas an authoritarian culture stresses tradition, centralised decision making, and authority. Kouzes and Posner (1995: 152) report that organisations with a participative culture and a climate that recognises people's efforts, provides autonomy and a chance for employees to participate in activities, is a far more successful organisation. Dozier et al. (1995: 12-13) also believe that two-way symmetrical communication, 'a tool for negotiation and compromise' is more common in a participative culture, whilst asymmetrical communication, which attempts to persuade people to think and feel how the organisation wants, is more common in an authoritarian culture.

There are several commonalities between the works of Schein, Deal and Kennedy, and Dozier et al. as they all identify specific types of culture with unique characteristics—a more quantitative distinction. The three works provide a varied

view of organisational culture theory and the findings of one do not invalidate the findings of the other. The elements and attributes of culture they examine combine to provide useful tools for communicators when determining how to target communicationns within organisations and they will be examined during the course of the research.

2.7.3 The impact of culture on IC

Hickman and Silva (1984: 85-86) make an interesting point proposing that 'to unite strategy with culture you first need to develop a vision of the firm's future and then, in order to implement strategy and make that vision a reality, you need to nurture a corporate culture that is motivated by and dedicated to the vision'. This statement points out, as Paul Sanchez (Gillis, 2006: 41) does, that communication alone will not change organisational culture, but the culture will be improved and is 'ultimately dependent on' effective communication.

Dozier et al. (1995: 148) outline that organisational culture is one of the elements of an excellent communications department. An organisation's culture is formed, shaped, and reinforced through the interplay of strategy, structure, people and process. A hierarchical, authoritarian, mechanical and inflexible corporate culture can hinder internal communication. The excellence study (Gillis, 2006: 15) found that symmetrical communication is not likely in an organisation with a mechanical structure and authoritarian culture. A mechanical structure is characterised by centralised decision making, formal rules and procedures and limited participation in decision making by employees throughout the organisation.

The differing cultures of organisations are often evident by how employees are treated and how employees behave in work. Reinertsen et al. (2008: 13) offer some examples how negative culture can present itself:

> We undertake the [briefing sessions] with our staff, as laid out in the communication strategy... unless we're really busy.

> The tools to be used to [communicate] with staff are good, but they really don't apply to me.

A participative culture emerges when organic structure and symmetrical communication interact. A participative culture contributes strongly to employee satisfaction with the organisation. Gillis (2006: 15) explains that

> Symmetrical communication has a strong role in creating and implementing organic structure, but a communicator cannot step into any organisation alone and establish an organic structure or symmetrical system of communication. The top communicator must work with the dominant coalition to develop an organic structure.

According to Suzan Foreman in Scholes (1997:19) 'The organisational context of the communication and the ambience of the business as a whole influence how we communicate and how the messages are received'. Paul Sanchez in Gillis (2006: 33) reinforces this notion when stating that 'culture has a pervasive influence on how an organisation functions'.

While the IC practitioner must be aware of the organisation's culture and must select communication methods that suit the culture. It is also important for the IC practitioner to understand that although culture is persistent, it is not necessarily permanent. Like a person's habits, with concerted effort, an organisation's culture can be changed. Brown (1995: 33) states that cultures are not static and they evolve over time—organisational culture is subject to continuous process of development and change because of organisational learning which occurs as employees seek answers to problems of external adaption and internal integration.

According to Alvesson (2002: 180), the culture in an organisation can be changed through 'everyday re-framing' driven by one or a few senior actors, frequently a manager but also informal authorities, and small groups of people may be central'. Examples of this type of culture change are seen in top-managers autobiographies, where the organisation's behaviour heavily aligns to its leader(s). Louis Gerstner's book, about the transformation of IBM is one such example. This demonstrates that if senior managers strongly support a value, their personal example seems to have an effect on broader patterns in the organisation. Alvesson (2002:180) states that everyday re-framing is 'mainly an informal culture shaping agenda, involving pedagogical leadership in which an actor exercises a subtle influence through the re-negotiation of meaning' concluding that 'the everyday re-framing is for many

managers a more appropriate option of cultural change than being mobilised as an implementer of a grand project'. Schein (2004: 245) agrees that there are managers who create an organisation and develop an organisational culture by using such personal characteristics as charisma.

The importance of the organisational leader in shaping the organisations culture is of significance to the IC practitioner because they must ensure that the dominant coalition 'walk the talk', that they demonstrate the behaviours that they want their employees to embody. If what the dominant coalition does is at odds with what it wants others to do the behaviour will not be embedded into the organisation.

It is also important for the IC practitioner to compare the organisation's external brand with the organisation's internal culture. This is done by asking, Are the values of the organisation's external brand communicated to, and reflected by the internal behaviour of its employees? Is it reflected in how the employees are treated and are they aware that they are an important force in shaping this brand? These are the essential questions that an effective communicator should be able to answer in order to ensure effective internal communication. If there is a mismatch between the organisational culture and the external brand of the company the organisation is unlikely to develop organisational ambassadors which can deliver significant bottom line results for the organisation. The importance of understanding culture is reaffirmed by Wright's (2009: 343) argument that understanding the organisation's culture is essential in developing effective communication because if disregarded, all [IC] campaigns will be undermined.

2.7.4 Culture and the management of change

The period of this research is one of growing uncertainty for organisations and in response to a changing environment and business crises. Between the first interviews in 2007/2008 and the second interviews in 2010 according to the National Economic and Social Development Office (2011: 1) The Irish economy experienced a dramatic reversal.

Examined on any measure there has been unprecedented change. In most cases, indicators have returned to levels last seen in the early to middle part of the previous decade. Income measures per head are down almost 15 per cent. …Between 2007 and 2010, domestic demand declined in volume terms by over one-fifth, which is a huge decline. This was dominated by the fall in investment in building and construction which fell by 57 per cent in volume terms between 2007 and 2010.

Ireland experienced the largest fall in employment in the OECD, with numbers employed down over 13 per cent between 2007 and 2010. Ireland's unemployment rate was around 4 per cent in 2007; in 2011 it is over 14 per cent.

The change in public finances and the indebtedness of the Irish economy has also been severe. The sharp fall in the economy and the property market led to a fall between 2007 and 2010 of 23.5 per cent in total general government revenue. Prior to the crisis, government debt was 25 per cent of GDP. It is projected to peak at 118 per cent of GDP in 2013.
(NESDO: 2011: 1-2)

In this economic climate, all of the case study organisations faced considerable challenges. All of the organisations undertook significant reform and change. As IC plays a role in helping organisational cultures adapt and be responsive to change, it is important to examine the role that culture plays in the implementation of organisational change. From this analysis, areas of significance for IC will be identified.

Ruck (2010: 29) identifies that communication is vital for change to be successful. Daly et al. (2003: 154) and Yates (2006: 79) claim that IC can actually be the answer to managing change effectively. Unfortunately, as Harkness, (2000: 67) points out IC 'has a dismal record' with companies still failing to recognise the role it can play in increasing the likelihood of change being successful. For this reason, this section explores the array of strategies that IC managers can use to facilitate organisational change. These insights will help identify if the IC practices of the case study organisations influence organisational culture.

Findlay (2009: 73) and Sanchez (2011: 31) explain that there is no right or wrong culture. However, Jones' research (1995: 71) concludes that a participative style and 'a culture of open communication' opens people to change, whereas an authoritarian

culture with asymmetrical communication 'will engender fear and resistance to change'. Quirke (2008: 156) explains that 'the deeper the change the greater the disturbance' in culture. According to Nelson and Coxhead, (1997: 33), when implementing change, organisations must change their culture as well as their processes and technology if change is to be successful. According to Schein (1990: 10), 'culture matters' and organisations cannot afford to ignore the power that cultural forces can inflict on the organisation's business performance. Brown (1995: 33) states that 'different elements of a culture are likely to be differentially resistant to change'. Paradoxically, Sanchez (2011: 29) states that culture can be a potential advantage or on the other hand a 'curse' depending on how organisations operate their cultural influences. Schein (1990: 112) also points out that culture is considered the most difficult attribute to change as to do so one must modify basic assumptions which are deeply rooted in the history and personality of the organisation. Additionally, Alvesson (2002:179) highlights in order for organisational change to occur a critical mass of people have to feel disaffected with the existing beliefs, practices, and organisational culture to be willing to adapt a new set of ideas. Given the body of evidence that culture needs to be addressed as part of any successful change effort the research will now examine change theories and the role that IC communication plays within them to influence organisational culture and therefore implement successful change.

2.7.5 Change theory

Kotter (2007: 4) defines eight stages in change adaptation and organisational transformation: '(Stage 1) establish a sense of urgency; (Stage 2) form a powerful guiding coalition; (Stage 3) create a vision; (Stage 4) communicate the vision; (Stage 5) empower others to act on the vision; (Stage 6) plan for and create short term wins; (Stage 7) consolidate improvements and produce more change; (Stage 8) institutionalise new approaches'.

Kotter (1995: 4) states that 'skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfactory result'. In Stage 1, 'Create urgency', the questions that an IC manager needs to ensure they have the answers to include: Why must we change?

Change to what? What do you expect? How will we do it? The answers to these questions will enable the building of what Kotter calls, a 'burning platform'. Kotter explains that 50% of change strategies fail at this first stage because, too often, senior management feel that time spent explaining the need for change is time wasted. They believe that the organisation must simply begin undertaking the change rather than spend time talking about why the change is needed. However, if participants do not have a compelling vision, realistic expectation, and a road map for change, they are very unlikely to participate fully in the change.

Kim and Mauborgne (HBR: 2011: 82) claim that often 'the hardest battle is simply getting people to agree on the causes of the current problems and the need for change'. Developing the vision for the change and ensuring that management communicate this vision effectively to staff is a key role for the IC practitioner. Proctor and Doukakis (2003: 275) explain,

> Before one should think about implementing change one needs to
> create a readiness for change within an organisation. One needs
> to think of the organisation as an internal market for change
> initiatives where ideas have to be marketing. …Commitment to
> change can be instigated by helping people develop a shared
> diagnosis of what is wrong in an organisation arid what can and
> must be improved.

This also links back to Schein's (2004: 320) observations on process theory that 'there must be sufficient disconfirming data to create discomfort/ imbalance' and Alvesson's (2002:179) statement that critical mass of people must want to change. Put another way, if the burning platform is not hot enough, people will be unwilling to get off it. It is the role of the IC practitioner to ensure that this sense of urgency is effectively communicated.

Bridges (2003: 53) outlines a similar significant role for IC in what he calls the Four P's of effective change: purpose, picture, plan, and part to play. Bridges (2003: 53)

Purpose: explain the basic purpose behind the outcome you seek.

Picture: paint a picture of how the outcome will look and feel.

Plan: layout the step-by-step plan for phasing in the outcome.

Part: give each person a part to play in both the plan and the outcome itself.

Kotter's (2007: 4) Stage 2, 'form a powerful guiding coalition' links back to Alvesson's (2002:179) statement that critical mass of people must want to change. Kotter explains that sometimes organisation's move through this phase without engaging a sufficient number of employees behind the change. This can often result in failure of the change at a later stage. Kotter explains (20007:4) that at least '75% of managers must believe the status quo is more dangerous than the unknown [change]'. Establishing a guiding coalition is essential as managers carry the most impact in generating change management success. From communicating the vision, modelling new behaviours, and signalling support for change, to rewarding employees for innovation and improvisation, to building employee engagement—managers carry the keys to unlock the benefits of transformational change. Organisational development professionals, including the IC managers, should devote considerable energy to the design of corporate-wide development tools and measures that proactively develop core change management competencies. Rosen (1996: 7) also demonstrates the importance of having a strong guiding coalition. He finds that people want to be led and yearn for positive inspiration during times of change. They want to be led not in an authoritarian style, but by leaders with deeply held human values who respect people's unique talents and contributions. They want leaders who will create and an environment that nurtures excellence, risk taking, and creativity.

In his work, Rosen (1996: 21) identifies trust as one of the major principles in leading people. He says, 'Trust binds people together, creating a strong, resilient organisation. To build trust, leaders must share information and power. Their goal must be a culture of candour'. Wellins, Byham and Wilson (1991: 208) states that through working together, trust is built up as the team members 'accept diversity, personal style, and the need for different skills and talents in getting the entire job done.' Trust takes two forms: that of trusting and being trustworthy. Building trust starts at the top of the organisation with the leader telling people the truth about all aspects, both positive and negative, of the organisational change. Through this process, information about the whole organisation can be shared at all levels. Leaders need to be honest, speak directly and have empathy with people and be consistent in their actions and communications. Shockley- Zalabak (2010: 182) also notes that to build trust a leader needs to get a greater understanding of an organisation by listening, clarifying issues, and getting different perspectives. The IC manager can play a vital role in facilitating

this. Adair (1983:12) sees an important ingredient in building trust as leader integrity, honesty and sincerity. Bardwick (1996:137) agrees that 'without integrity trust is never achieved'. She sees that apart from being honest, one of the best ways for leaders to achieve a trusting relationship, is to be transparent and to act in line with the values that they espouse.

An organisational wide change effort will not have the support of a guiding coalition, if the heart and mind of the top management is not coherent to the change, if principal characters of the change are not mentally wedded to the change goal, then the extent of change will most probably be close to nil. Senior management will not be able to affect change if they are not changing themselves or if their own personal beliefs, values and attitudes are not conforming to the desired objective.

Another interesting research finding comes from Alvesson (2002: 185), who explains that it is especially difficult to implement specific practices if top managers stay only a few years in their positions, as the successor may have completely different ideas, approaches and/or tools to try to put one's own imprint on the business. Alvesson states (2002: 185) that 'a lot of change initiatives are coupled with management fashions and hype, frequently leading to half-serious efforts that are seldom carried through'. The result (2002: 186) is resistance from people to managerial change initiatives with the declaration of 'again a new mission statement'. This finding is of particular relevance to one of the case study organisation's which has seen considerable change in senior management at the top of the organisation within a short number of years.

Research conducted by Downs and Adrrian (2004: 122) also provides useful insights for this research. Downs and Adrian explored how employees react to change during an economic downturn. They outline that three elements effect employee commitment during an economic downturn. Those three elements are: job insecurity, the organisation loyalty to staff and a lack of potential for personal groth and training. Kamoche's (2003: 199) research outlines why employees may feel these pressures as an economic downturn presents 'dichotomous pressures of tightening structure, and managerial control, on the one hand, and the need to permit flexibiloity to facilitate change on the other'. This can lead to distrust within an organisation as outlined by

Mishra (1996: 1). Mishra states that distrust is a critical factor that affects the functioning of an organisation during an economic downturn. Interestingly, according to Cascio (1993: 98) this distrust may be well founded as Cascio's research demonstrates that 50% of the companies surveyed indicated that the downsizing they undertook during the economic recession had nothing to do with the economic downturn but it was a convenient cover. In this study the trust levels within the organisations will be examined.

Kotters's Stage 3 and 4 'create and communicate the vision' outlines the importance of having a clear compelling statement about where the change is leading. Kotter (1995: 9) states that a lack of a compelling statement leaves employees confused or alienated. Bridges (1995: 32) states that the 'single biggest reason organisational changes fail is that no one thought about the ending or planned to manage the impact on people'. Gavin and Roberto in (HRB, 2011: 18) state, 'The trick in [change strategies] is to show employees precisely how [the changes proposed] differ from that of their predecessors'. They explain (HRB, 2011: 18-30) that doing this calls for a 'four part communication strategy' which includes (1) setting the stage, (2) creating the frame (3) managing the emotional state of employees, and (4) reinforcing that the changes are working.

Kemp and Low (2008: 231) also stress that communication plays a vital role the change process, as it helps to reduce resistance to change by communicating the benefits of the change, the process, and the implementation of the change. Jones (1995: 72) explains that alongside traditional communication, training and education are also important communication tools within the change management process, as they provide participants with confidence in their ability to cope with the change.

Brower et al. (2007: 69) suggest using 'building up' and 'breaking down' language to generate understanding and commitment, where establishing understanding is the first priority. Breaking down language means negating information no longer relevant or functional, then promoting disengagement from outdated commitments. Building up language includes emphasising information directly relevant to the new vision, then 'affirrm[ing] the [company's] mission and inspir[ing] commitment to it'.

Interestingly, Bridges also stresses the need for effective change communication and at one point (1991: 38) he explains that on occasion it may be necessary for the IC manager to redefine a picture that staff have in their mind of the change. He uses the example of staff thinking about change as a 'sinking ship' being redefined by stressing the positive elements of the change and how staff's concerns are being addressed. This enables a new picture of a 'final voyage' to replace the image of the 'sinking ship'. He explains (1991:38) that in the new metaphor of a ship reaching its port, enables everyone to envisage themselves 'disembarking' in a planned fashion, feeling better for having stayed aboard and feeling a sense of pride in a difficult job well done. This example demonstrates how one metaphor gives meaning to the situation, while the other leaves people feeling hopeless. In this example, we can also see a direct role for effective IC.

Kotter's Stage 5 'empower others to act on the vision' again has a significant element of communication within it. Bridges (2003: 5) details this element of the change as the transition phase. He explains (2003: 5) that individuals begin a change process with a certain sense of loss and feelings of discomfort, they then move through a period of 'psychological realignments and re-patternings', and they come through the transition with a 'new identity… new energy… and new sense of purpose that make the change begin to work'. Empowering people to act during this phase means answering their questions and reducing the ambiguity they are experiencing. Bridges explains that many senior executive expect to be able to move straight from the old to the new, but as it is a journey, for most participants, from one identity to another it takes time and careful communication. The IC manager can play a significant role during this phase by identifying the ambiguity that participants feel and bringing it to management's attention so that the issues can be successfully addressed. Bridges (2003: 40) states that it is imperative to address staff's anxieties and to talk openly about staff's worries as not talking about them and 'pretending that they don't exist stirs up trouble'.

Bridges also stresses the importance of helping senior executives and front-line managers, who are key in implementing change, to understand the process that participants go through when it comes to change. It is important that they understand two key elements: (1) People 'overreact' to a change (Bridges, 2003: 26) and (2)

People adjust to change at differing speeds. Bridges' change theory involves a three-phase process of (1) Ending, Losing, Letting Go, (2) The Neutral Zone, and (3) The New Beginning.

TABLE 2: BRIDGES' MARATHON CHANGE MODEL (1992: 65)
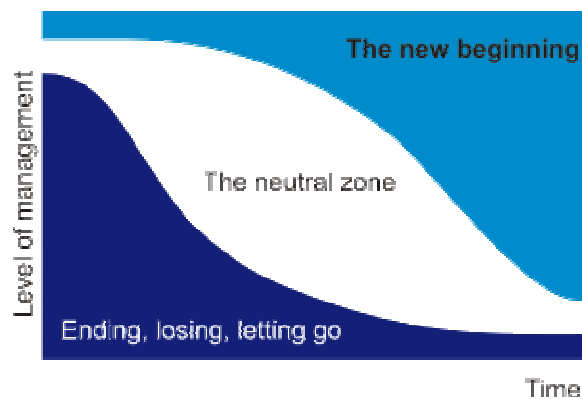
Bridges explains (2003: 57) that people move through these phases at different paces. He likens it to a marathon.

> The from runners take off like rabbits, then the second rank (who are a little slower anyway) start running and then the middle ranks (who are nowhere near as fast), get underway. By the time the leaders are well out on the course, the Sunday runners in the rear, who were too far back even to hear the starting gun (and who only hope to be able to finish the race) are beginning to stir.

The company executives are the front runners and often they forget that their followers are still struggling in the race when they are finished. The IC manager has a role to keep top management informed about how employees are managing and coping with the changes.

Kotter's Stage 6 'plan for and create short term wins', Stage 7 'consolidate improvements and produce more change', and Stage 8 'institutionalise new approaches also incorporate a large element of communication and are key to ensuring the change stays on track and becomes part of the new culture of the organisation. Kotter explains (HBR, 2011: 15) that when a change 'seeps into the corporate bloodstream' and becomes rooted in the social norms and shared values of the organisation the change is then complete.

All the change research examined emphasises the need for open and two-way communication. This is echoed by Smythe (2007: 41) who urges managers to learn a new more inclusive approach to communication to replace the management style of command and control. He emphasises the need for a more cooperative way of working with employees as his research indicates that they will add value if included in the process of change. Smythe (2007: 46) supports a co-creation approach to communication where 'value-rich employees' are involved in decision-making, change and strategy. Smythe (2005: 5) stresses that now more than ever it is important to engage 'the hearts and minds' of people and building trust in the change process. Van Dam et al. (2008: 315) echo these sentiments explaining that it is important to develop high-quality 'leader member exchange relationships', to increase employee receptivity to change. High quality relationships exist when the leader communicates relevant information frequently, follows through on actions to build trust, and empowers employees to participate in decisions, especially those relating to the change process. Lauer (1998: 32) expresses similar sentiments claiming that to have the best possible chance of commitment and success, communication must allow employees the time to understand and embrace the process through active participation. Mintzberg (2009: 2) emphasises that communication during times of change should not be limited to top down or bottom up communication only but should be more lateral, from the 'middle out'. He stresses that as organisations are social entities, effective two-way communication makes people feel a sense of belonging and acts as 'the social glue that bind us together for the greater good'.

The Watson Wyatt Hierarchy of effective communication is also a valid guide to establishing effective IC during times of change. It too draws on the notion of inclusion, two-way communications, creating a vision and developing a plan. It also demonstrates the important role that IC plays in facilitating interaction at all levels of the organisation. It also helps to identify the key internal factors, organisations need to address in order to attain significant business results.

TABLE 3: HIERARCHY OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (COPYRIGHT© 2004 WATSON WYATT)
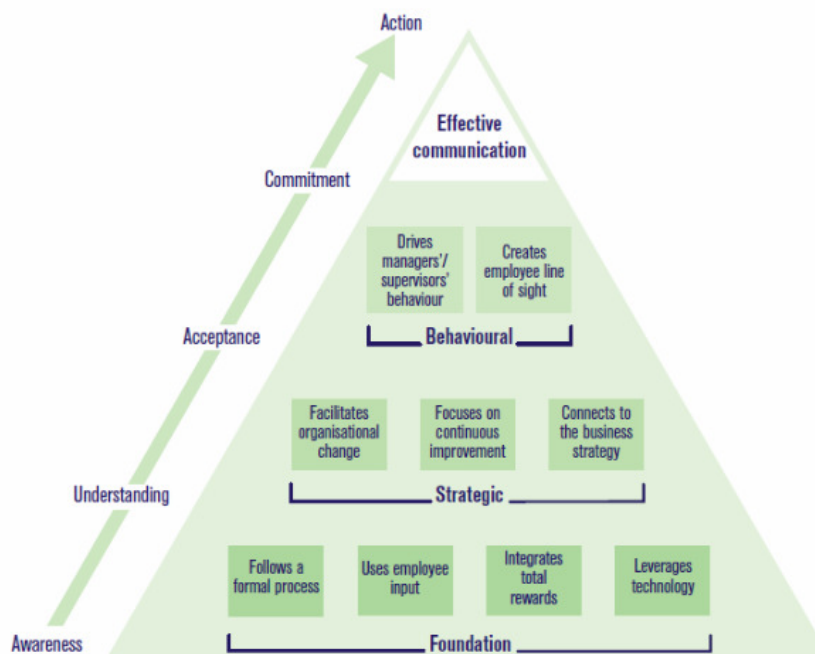
2.7.6 Communication tactics: change through influence and persuasion

Alvesson (2002: 52) argues that the most difficult and vital aspect of an organisation's change process is convincing human beings with deeply rooted complexities, assumptions and behavioural patterns to change the way they operate. Culture and organisational change are outcomes only of human activity. Without people there is no culture, organisation, or change. Culture reflects the ingrained and automatic behaviours of a person and a group which is built during a sustained period of time. As Kotter (HBR, 2011: 12) explains the steps taken to change culture are nearly always met with individuals resisting change by 'pursuing their own self-interest' over the organisational need. In an organisation's cultural context it is the people's reaction, whether to hold on to the existing paradigm and resist change or whether to embrace and accept the change that determines the success of that change. Persuasion is, therefore, a part of IC during a change process. As Proctor and Doukakis (2003:

46

275) explain 'persuading people to view new ideas in a favourable light when they are not readily disposed to do so essentially involves influencing and changing attitudes'.

Indeed, Fawkes (2007: 315) highlights that the 'dominance of systems theory and its reluctance to engage with persuasion has created a vacuum' in communication practice. Indeed, Messina (2007:31) reports that 'prolific and influential writers on public relations such as US academic, James Grunig, have evaded its role as a persuasive discipline except to derogate persuasion'.

Yet, the study of persuasion in IC is an important one as the similarities between effective IC and persuasion are strong. Fawkes (2007: 320) believes that 'persuasion should be brought to the centre of discussion about what public relations is, not marginalised'. The researcher agrees with Fawkes and bearing in mind that winning the hearts and minds of participants is central to change management behavioural science theorists and practitioners are examined to establish how they use persuasion. They have much to offer the communication practitioner. It is for this reason, that this section explores some of the strategies that successful influencers use to change the habits and culture of organisations to bring about successful change. The research will later assess if any of these proven influence techniques are deployed in the case study organisations.

Although it may be easier to see persuasion working in a one-way 'tell them' approach, for example senior managers trying to persuade workers to do, or not do something, such is the ambivalent nature of persuasion that it also feeds into other forms of communications. Smythe (2007: 42) identifies that even in the seemingly most engaging form of communications, co-creationism, management have to convince employees that they mean what they say and that they will be part of the communication process. He believes that even in the most engaged organisations, employees will need to be persuaded by others that their proposals are best. Perloff, (2008: 16) states that we should not be afraid to use persuasion where appropriate because 'persuasion matters and strikes to the core of our life as human beings'.

Another argument to support the use of persuasion is the fact that internal messages are or will be tested to the extreme if external influences are acting contrarily.

According to Smythe (2007: 20), 'The credibility of much internal media in the eyes of staff is questioned'. Indeed, as Perloff himself (2008: 14) acknowledges 'bombarded by communications promoted as truth but actually misleading, as well as by blogs that dissect institutional messages, consumers have grown wary of the truthfulness of persuaders' claims.' It is not unexpected that our internal audience has become equally cynical of the credibility of their employers messages. This in a sense holds internal communicators to a higher standard when persuading their audience. They must ensure that they are using persuasion in the interests of employees and the organisation; otherwise, they are likely to be found out.

2.7.6.1 Verbal persuasion

Patterson et al. (2008) stray from the traditional way of thinking about how to exert influence by suggesting that we steer clear of verbal persuasion. They explain (2008: 50) that 'we employ verbal persuasion as our first influence tool because not only is it enormously convenient (we carry our mouths with us everywhere), but it also serves us well a great deal of the time'. However, they explain (2008: 5) that it is a rare leader who through verbal persuasion 'alone changes behaviour in any noticeable way'. According to Patterson et al. (2008: 5), 'Influence requires a lot more than the right combination of words.' This is an interesting viewpoint as many IC practitioners rely heavily on verbal persuasion. To support their claims, Patterson et al. draw on the work of Albert Bandura. His research in the mid-1970s demonstrated how powerfully our behaviour is shaped by observing others. After a group of children watched Bandura's research assistant modelled novel aggressive behaviour against an inflatable plastic toy, the children unprompted reinacted the behaviour. This research indicates that humans are influenced by watching the behaviour of others. This reinforces the importance of the guiding coalition discussed earlier in this chapter. It reinforces the fact that the guiding coalition must be positive, visible role models, offering proactive explanations to illustrate the connection between new approaches and improved organisational performance of the change.

2.7.6.2 Find Vital Behaviours

Patterson et al. (2008: 23) also state that 'influence geniuses focus on behaviours', in particular vital behaviours. They explain (2008: 27) that often those involved in

change confuse 'outcomes with behaviours'. Patterson et al. draw on the work of Dr Wiwat in Thailand to demonstrate the success of identifying vital behaviours. At the beginning of Dr. Wiwat's campaign to combat AIDS, he told people about the disease, how it was transmitted, how dangerous it was etc. However, the number of people infected in Thailand continued to rise. Patterson et al. highlight (2008: 24) how at one point 'health experts worldwide estimated that in just a few years Thailand would lead the world with infections per capita'. However, when the campaign turned to clarifying what people were actually supposed to do—what specific behaviour they needed to change, i.e. wear condoms, the numbers of those infected began to decline. Dr Wiwat had discovered and communicated the vital behaviour. This was the key to toppling the house of cards. This example reinforces, in a stark manner, Bridges' message that we need to show people the 'role they play' in the change. What we learn from Dr Wiwat, however, is that we can't succeed by trying to change 20 things at the same time. We must identify the behaviours that are vital to our change plan and focus our attention on these high leverage actions.

2.7.6.3 *Personal experience*

Albert Bandura's research discussed under verbal persuasion demonstrated that people learn by watching others but Bandura realised that for some people watching wasn't enough to make them change their minds. They had to experience the change themselves. Patterson et al. (2008: 49) explain that 'people choose their behaviours based on what they think will happen to them as a result'. They also explain that it is important to note that people's interpretation of events trump the facts of any situation because the final judge exists in their head. They therefore state (2008: 51) that personal experience is the 'mother of all cognitive map changers'. Kim and Mauborgne (HBR, 2011: 82) describe how William Bratton used this technique to shatter the complacency of New York Transit Police about the hazards of travelling on public transport. He was aware that messages communicated through numbers seldom stick so he made all his officers, including himself, commute via the subway. When he put his officers face to face with the operational problems, things started to change. This influence technique of personal experience could be used by IC practitioners in a number of change management steps but perhaps the most obvious

would be in convincing people why the status quo is no longer acceptable, Kotter's Stage 1 'create a sense of urgency'.

2.7.6.4   Use stories to change minds

Patterson et al. (2008: 57) state that 'we can use words to persuade others to come around to our way of thinking by telling a story rather than firing off a lecture. Stories can create touching moments that help people view the world in new ways.' Stories are different from verbal persuasion in that they are told with vivid detail rather then terse summaries used in verbal persuasion. Too often when we want to demonstrate the importance of a situation we bundle a number of stories together into facts and figures. Although we believe that this will have more impact, the result is exactly the opposite. For example, a hospital talks about the number of drug administration errors in the hospital over a 12 month period. It is 300, which is an impressive figure that will surely move people to change, right? Probably not. The figure dehumanises the significance of these errors. If, however, an individual case detailing the significant effect that just one medication error had on a single patient and her family was accompanied with the facts and figures, the chances of influencing the necessary stakeholders would be far greater.

Denning (2010: 120) explains that some psychologists have suggested that the underlying mechanism for stories that spark change is what they call 'transportation'. This means, according to Denning (2010: 120), that when the reader follows the story, they go on a kind of journey; they are transported—virtually—by the storyteller into a different world. When the story is powerful, the listeners may return to their real world as changed persons. Denning (2010: 120) also explains that 'stories have been hugely important throughout human history as tools for changing people's minds. It is notorious that the great religions have been built, and the great wars have been launched, using story as the principal communication tool'.

Aid agencies use this influence technique very successfully. They use the story of an individual child or an individual family to create an emotional connection with us. They have realised that the startling facts and figures alone don't work. They must appeal to their target audience on an emotional level because, for the most part, we

make our decisions based on our emotional reaction rather than our intellectual reasoning.

Patterson et al. (2008: 59) explain that stories present plausible, touching and memorable flow of cause and effect that people can identify with. Good stories vicariously create real experiences which change people's minds because they identify with the individuals in the story. Vicarious experiences have been used for decades to address social change successfully. Patterson et al. (2008: 56) explain that the impact of vicarious models has been proven through research conducted in Tanzania, where 'the first national field experiment in the history of the world' took place. A radio play ran over several weeks and was aired to part of the population. It addressed issues such as spousal abuse, family planning and safe sex. One fourth of the population in the broadcast areas modified their behaviour in critical ways after the play. 'The impact was so remarkable that the experiment had to be stopped after two years in order to make the intervention available to everyone.' This finding is significant to IC practitioners because they can emulate the success by using stories that the change participants can personally relate to. In an organisational context this includes using the personal stories of staff who have already gone through the change or who are going through the change themselves. It is important when using stories to make sure that the narrative has clear links between the characters current behaviour and the negative results they are creating or will create in the future. By telling the employees stories of those partaking in the change or stories of other similar change initiatives employees realise that they are not alone in the challenges they are facing. The difficulties along the road are not a huge surprise and they are therefore easier to deal with and address. Creating this sense of empathy with and understanding of the change process and painting a picture of change facilitates change more than the use of facts and figures. As Patterson et al. (2008: 60) state, we can use stories to help 'alter people's mental maps of cause and effect'. This relates back to Bridges notion of re-defining the picture from 'sinking ship' to one of a successful 'final voyage'.

2.7.6.5 *Harness group power*
Patterson et al. (2008: 138) state that influencers 'appreciate the amazing power humans hold over one another...and they enlist it'. This reinforces the research of

psychologist Stanley Milgram (1963: 375) who identified that humans place a very high premium on the approval of others—even strangers. His research demonstrated that one respected individual can set in train a healthy or unhealthy change. His research experiment involved people being paid $4.50 to administer electric stocks (participants believed) to fellow research participants, with whom they had recently had a conversation. Despite the cries of pain (audio recordings) of the other participants, it took only the affirmation by the researcher that the participants needed to continue the research, for the participants to deliver very significant volts to their fellow participants. According to the research 65% of participants delivered electric shocks until they could hear no further cries of pain from the other participant. They did not take pleasure in the task, but significantly they did not stop. However, when participants witnessed an individual refuse to administer the shocks before they had to administer the shocks the percentage of those who completed the task fell to just 10%.

Research conducted by Rogers (1983: 33) indicates that over 85% of the [employees] will not adopt new practices until opinion leaders do. Given this research is it imperative for IC practitioners to get opinion leaders on board. But how can opinion leaders be identified? Patterson et al (2011 143) says the answer is simple,

> Since opinion leaders are employees who are most admired and connected in the organisation, simple ask people to make a list of the employees who they believe are the most influential and respected. Then gather the lists and identify those who are named most frequently. …These are you opinion leaders.

The notion of enlisting the support of opinion leaders provides us with a technique to realise both Kotter's suggestion to build a guiding coalition and Bridge's suggestion that a transition management team be developed to help facilitate the change process by engaging staff in the change.

2.7.6.6 *Motivate*

Another powerful tool in the persuasion and influence repertoire is the use of motivation. Pink (2011: 19) states that the bedrock assumption of motivation is that 'the way to improve performance. .is to reward good behaviour and punish bad'. Pink believes this assumption to be flawed. He claims that people have higher drives than this and if business leaders respected these drives they would deliver significant

benefits for the organisation. He states (2011: 138) that the carrot and stick approach to performance is an 'if-then' approach to reward which requires a person to forfeit some of the autonomy. 'And that can spring a hole in the bottom of their motivation bucket, draining any activity of its enjoyment'. He explains (2011: 138) that 'people use rewards expecting to gain the benefit of increasing the other person's motivation and behaviour, but in so doing, they can often incur the unintentional cost of undermining that person's intrinsic motivation towards that activity'. Pink proffers research conducted in Sweden to support his theory. In a Swedish experiment when people were paid to give blood the amount of blood they gave decreased. The rationale for this was that the money tainted an altruistic act and 'crowded out' the intrinsic desire to do something good. This notion of is reinforced by Patterson et al. (2008: 194) who state that in a well-balanced change effort reward is the third step. The first step is to ensure vital behaviours are linked to personal intrinsic motivation. The second step is to ensure support from opinion leaders or the guiding coalition. Then, the third step can be reward, if it is carefully used.

It is important that when we choose to use incentives that we choose them wisely. Patterson et al. (2008: 217) have some useful suggestions. They advise that rewards should reinforce the vital behaviour we want to see. They suggest there is no point in wanted to encourage teamwork if your reward system is still based on individual performance. They also suggest that heartfelt tokens of appreciation can be far more effective than high monitory rewards. The suggestion that heartfelt tokens and praise can be more powerful than money links back to the research of the behaviourist Skinner. Skinner (1974: 54) identified that behaviour is more likely to recur if it is positively reinforced with praise. Jellison (2006: 123) agrees with the use of praise and explains that 'despite its obvious importance, and the fact that it takes little time and money, people are still very stingy with their praise'. However, he states (2006: 122) that praise reinforces an act, letting employees know you'd like them to repeat it. Personalising your praise magnifies the power of your words. 'Workers will be motivated to do even more than they did in the past in order to garner more of your personal attention.' Praise is therefore a very powerful motivational aid that should be embraced by IC practitioners.

Pink explores further dangers of rewards suggesting that rewards for goals can on occasion lead to unethical behaviour and short term thinking. Both these issues are particularly relevant to the economic period being studied in this research. Pink (2011: 51) states 'when an extrinsic goal is paramount – particularly a short-term, measurable one whose achievements delivers a big payoff' it can encourage unethical behaviour and short term thinking. He provides the example of when Sears imposed a sales quota on its auto repair staff. He explains (2011: 51) those workers responded by overcharging customers and completing unnecessary repairs.

Pink (2011: 57), Patterson et al. (2008: 59), and Leeper (1973: 132) all stress that the problem occurs when an extrinsic reward is the only destination that matters. When this is the case, people will often choose the quickest route to achieve the gaol. Pink concludes that this is why athletes inject themselves with steroids to post better performance times to receive lucrative bonuses. He states that they do this without thought for the long-term effect this could have on their bodies. They are completely focused on short-term goals. When this happens with organisations, the consequences can be very significant. When organisations fail to look past the next quarter or the end of the year, there can be a steep price to pay. Pink (2011: 57) suggests that

> Nowhere is this clearer than in the economic calamity that gripped the world economy in 2008 and 2009. Each player in the system focused on only the short-term reward …and ignored the long term effects of their actions. …When the music stopped the entire system nearly collapsed.

In this section the elements of influence and motivation have been identified. The thesis will investigate if any of the case study organisations use influence and persuasion techniques to facilitate change in their organisations.

This example leads us to the next section of this literature review which includes the role that ethics should play in IC.

2.8   Ethics and Culture

Ethics and culture are linked. Bowen (2005: 93) demonstrates how the culture of Enron, one of the world's largest commodities companies which went bankrupt on December 2, 2001, contributed to the unethical and illegal behaviour of the company.

Bowen in her research outlines that '[employees] who did question [the practices within Enron] were fired, ignored or experienced other negative repercussions while trying to maintain ethical standards'. Broughton (2002, online) also captures the essence of Enron's culture as, expressed by employees of the company: 'There were no rules for people (in Enron), even in our personal lives. Everything was about the company and everything was supposed to be on the edge—sex, money, all of it'.

Williams (2006: 48) explores the link between culture and ethics from another perspective explaining that

> the organisation's vision, value, mission and strategy have to become part of its corporate culture and they have to be sold to employees. Ethics isn't a PR tool that business communicators dust off in case of emergency. If you're in business for the long term, your code of ethics must be an integral part of who you are and what you do.

Discussions surrounding organisational culture and ethical communication led Parsons (2008: 152) to state that ethical communication is key to building an organisations' positive reputation both internally and externally. Bowen and Health (2006: 35) agree that ethical consideration should be a vital part of the executive decision making and that practitioners should advise management on ethical matters rather than merely communication the decisions of others. Bowen (2004: 65) argues that ethics should be a generic principle of excellence. This assertion has engendered much debate, and as this thesis is examining excellent internal communication, it is necessary to explore the elements of this ethical argument further in order to inform the research questions for this paper.

2.8.1 Is ethics an issue in communication?

Devin (2007: 34) believes that corporate communications is facing a credibility crisis, and internal communications practitioners are 'especially vulnerable'. Dinan, (2007: 212) explains that the public relations profession, including internal communication has lost much of its reputation during the turbulence of recent years. The term 'spin doctor' is now often used to describe the profession (Radcliffe, 2009: 65). 'Spin' [is] communicating with the intention of influencing an audience's attitudes by giving a

selective interpretation of events, and has gone hand-in-hand with many corporate controversies (Stauber, 1995: ix). The profession's poor public image and a perceived wider crisis of trust in contemporary capitalism (Galloway and Harrison, 2005: 1; Jempson, 2005: 271; Skinner et al, 2008: 14) has led to what Parsons (2004, p.xiii) outlines as 'persistent rumblings of integrity in the practice of public relations' and has forced the profession to examine its ethics. The rhetorical perspective of public relations focuses particularly on the role of ethics in communication. As Heath outlines in Toth (2006: 2) the communications industry is 'an unseen power' and therefore practitioners have a duty to be reflective and judicious in how they plan and execute their professional skills.

2.8.2 Ethical Communication: its impact internally and externally

Internal and external communication is often inextricably linked when it comes to ethical communication because many of the most challenging ethical dilemmas faced by communicators appear during times of crisis. Yvonne Hunt, Vice President for worldwide internal communication at Hewlett-Packard, (cited in Hoover 2005:25) explains that

> When companies spin internally, it is very difficult to build credibility, since most news delivered to an internal audience (especially difficult news) is often communicated externally. Then there is a disparity between what employees hear from their manager and what they see in the media and it leads to distracted, de-motivated employees who feel a lack of trust caused by a lack of transparency—whether that is real or perceived.

As Kambarangwe (2009:134) states, 'Poorly managed communication may lead to personal reputation damage and corporate crisis.'

Parsons (2008: 152) states that ethical communication is key to building an organisation's positive reputation both internally and externally. Hood (2010: 39) argues that unethical communication 'spin' leads to 'a backlash of cynicism, reduced trust and a tendency for scandals to drag out more than they would otherwise have done'.

Unethical communication can also impact significantly on staff morale. Eitel, VP of corporate responsibility with Nike (cited in Williams, 2006: 48) explains that when serious questions arose as to the ethical use of child labour by Nike, the negative public perceptions impacted not just Nike's external stakeholders but also their internal audience: 'The criticism hurt Nike's business because it hurt our people. Individual employees at Nike started to wonder what kind of company they were working for and what message was being sent out about the people who worked there'.

Another notorious example of communication impacting on both internal and external stakeholders happened in 2001, when Jo Moore, then a special advisor to Transport Secretary, Stephen Byers, in the UK declared in an email on the day the World Trade Center was attacked, that today was 'a good day to bury bad news'. Hood (2010: 57) explains that, 'The "bury bad news" email became legendary and indeed it was wholly counterproductive in that it sparked a strong reaction against the spin of the Blair government'.

These examples demonstrate the reputation damage and negative impact that unethical communication on internal and external stakeholders, and as Bergman (2005:18) states it heightens the 'urgency of re-evaluating the ethics of business communication'.

2.8.3 How the communication profession is perceived from an ethical viewpoint?

Bowen and Heath (2006: 34) explain that public opinion surveys on honesty and ethics revealed that journalists, advertising personnel and public relations people scored near the bottom—alongside used car salespeople—on such polls. According to Parsons (2004: 5), the public relations field holds 'a tarnished history'. Bowen (2007: 3) reports that critics argue that there can be no such thing as ethical public relations (PR) because the practice itself is akin to manipulation and propaganda.

Stauber and Rampton (1995: 173) detail how the notable Hill and Knowlton discredited the profession. In this case, Hill and Knowlton created false testimony

delivered to the Congressional Human Rights Caucus about Iranian atrocities. The false testimony included the emotional testimony from a young woman that recounted how soldiers took babies out of their incubators and left them to die on the cold floor. It was eventually established that the publicity was devised by a government-funded front group formed in order to convince the US to enter the 1992 Gulf War.

While the unethical practices of Hill and Knowlton were designed to remain uncovered, Turney (cited in Devin, 2007: 35) assigns responsibility for the negative view of the profession to certain practitioners who are in the 'habit of publicly bragging about what they can accomplish, and how they can spin, and turn things around'. Max Clifford the self-proclaimed PR guru to the stars is testament to Turney's assertion. In an interview with the *Guardian* newspaper in February 2009 he likened what he did to 'playing 15 games of chess a day' (Moss, 2009: online) and implied that occasionally his manipulation of the press came close to bribery.

It is not just public relations that has been tarnished. Schumann (2004: 28) outlines that internal communication is also tarnished. He cites Towers Perrin 2002, where 'employees are hungry for the truth from their companies, but are not satisfied with what they're being fed'. Gray (2004: 26) supports this assertion in his research outlining that employee opinion surveys commonly reveal low satisfaction scores with communication.

2.7.4 Power and persuasion: the role of ethics in communication

As communicators, we have the power to make people think about particular issues in a particular way. Seib and Fitzpatrick (1995: 55) agree, stating that PR is powerful and influential and these qualities bring with them an obligation on practitioners to be as professional and ethical as possible. O'Neill (2010: 519) explains that communicators are in the business of words, and as Lord Byron wrote, 'Words are things, and a small drop of ink, falling like dew upon a thought, produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think'. Grunig's (Avenarius, 2007: 109) insistence that persuasion is 'morally contestable has come under fire from Porter

58

(2002:128), Messina (2007:30), and Fawkes (2007:316), who argue that communicators are hired to influence behaviour and their work is therefore inherently persuasive. Communicators, they argue, attempt to persuade a public a topic is worthy of their attention merely by addressing it. It is this perceived impossibility of disentangling communication and persuasion that leads Fawkes to cite and agree with Jaska and Pritchard (1994: 128), arguing, 'It cannot be seriously maintained that all persuasion is bad or undesirable.'

Smith et al. (2005: 23) argue that the role of the internal communicator is to be the 'honest broker' between the organisation and staff. They contend that communicators should be 'semi-detached' from all sides in order to be trusted at all levels. They promote the role as an ostensibly neutral one, with communicators operating with autonomy. Mersham et al. (2003: 26) hold strongly to the notion that practitioners are ethical in their work and disagree with the description that they are 'the robot agent of his master's voice'.

Porter (2010: 128) argues that the challenge is to persuade ethically. Messina (2007: 30) agrees contending that the debate should focus on how we can ethically persuade. Grunig and Hunt (1992: 532) see the symmetrical model of communication, using two-way communication, as generating understanding and as being an inherently ethical manner of practicing public relations. But it is worth considering an argument presented by Welch (2006:142) that states that people automatically discount organisational messages by between 30 and 50 per cent with Tobin (2004: 57) pointing to similar cynicism in the results of the Edelman Trust Barometer. Fawkes (2007: 320) argues that since the public is automatically adjusting their trust in messages to compensate, it could perhaps be argued that persuasion is not inherently ethical or unethical – but the stuff of human interaction.

L'Etang (2008: 132) disagrees with the discussion in this area arguing that public relations practitioners are 'hired advocates' who will defend 'whichever sectional interest employs them'. L'Etang contends that being paid by one party automatically infers bias. Lieber (2003:43) echoes similar sentiments explaining that public relations practitioners are 'amoral sheep that blindly service their clients with reckless ethical abandon.'

In order to establish which argument is valid, it is necessary to have an understanding of ethics and it is a matter of some concern (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:274) that although professional communicators are frequently faced with ethical decisions and are asked to represent organisations, when there are ethical problems, very few have formal ethics training or can articulate the processes they go through when arriving at difficult ethical decisions.

2.8.5 Ethics training in communication

When defining ethics, care is often taken to distinguish between ethics and morals. The latter are said to be values or principles held by the individual. (Gregory, 2009: 274), and as such are not universal. Ethics, on the other hand, encourages consistent behaviour and sees moral principles formally studied and codified into systematic frameworks. They are not relativist, and allow for decisions to be made about what is right and wrong in a reasoned and structured way, with others able to understand why such decisions have been made even if they do not agree with them (Gregory, 2009: 274; L'Etang, 2003: 59 ; Mullins, 2002: 902).

As business communication is increasingly regarded as a professional activity that carries with it significant social responsibility, most public relations associations have developed codes of ethics. However, as L'Etang (2003:65) highlights, the difficulties with them is that they are not compulsory. Merrina (2007:34 outlines that they are vague and lack a framework for audit or enforcement, and Mersham et al (2003:20) Bowen and Heath (2006: 36) contend that the current education and training of communications professionals does not effectively arm [internal communicators] with an understanding of ethical frameworks. Bowen et al.'s (2006: 20) research indicates that only 20% of public relations practitioners had completed a course on ethics and only one third of respondents indicated that their current employer provided any study or training in ethics. Bowen and Heath (2006: 36) suggest that PR practitioners should receive the appropriate educational qualifications in ethics. Additionally, (Devin, (2007: 36) and Hattori (2006, online) suggests that public relations associations and education institutions reform the PR education system to teach standards of practice,

including ethics. Bergman, (2005: 18) agrees stating that if as individuals and a profession, we seek a higher standard, it is time we started asking some hard questions about what we are teaching others. Devin (2007: 36) states that as long as PR's house is not in order, PR's credibility is suspect.

To address the calls for professional leadership in ethics, most public relations associations have developed codes of ethics. However, the difficulty with the code of ethics is that they are (L'Etang, 2003: 65) not compulsory, (Messina 2007: 34), vague, and (Mersham et al 2003: 20) lacking a framework for audit and enforcement. An examination of a variety of codes of ethics reveals a uniformity in style and provision and led Bowen et al (2006: xi) to describe them as impotent, and L'Etang (2003: 65) to describe them as purely symbolic.

2.8.6 The role of ethics: the ethical conscience

Bowen and Heath (2006: 35) agree that ethical considerations should be a vital part of the executive decision making and that practitioners should advise management on ethical matters rather than merely communicate the decisions of others. Ryan and Martinson (1983: 21) agree that 'public relations officers are uniquely suited to serve as corporate conscience'.

Bowen and Heath (2006: 36) argue that 'leaders and clients will come to rely on their communicators for ethical guidance, council and day-to-day management of core values.' Bowen (2008:288) also argues 'that public relations practitioners should and often do play the role of ethics counsellor in their organisations'. Bowen (2008:274) suggests that 'the public relations practitioners might sometimes be the only managers in an organisation who understand the beliefs, interests, and values of publics enough to represent them and include those in strategic decision-making and planning.' But we must consider if such conjecture goes too far. Gonring cited in Williams (2002: 27) argues that setting ourselves up as the conscience of an organisation 'would not be healthy for the organisation or ourselves'. L'Etang (2001: 51) asserts that the notion of ethical guardian is becoming a key occupational myth.

Parsons (2004: 10) doesn't disagree to the same extent as L'Etang, but limits the role of the communicator in ethics stating that 'We can think of public relations ethics as the application of knowledge, understanding and reasoning to questions of right or wrong behaviour in the professional practice of public relations'. Williams (2002: 27) agrees with Parsons explaining that as chief communication people, we have access to a broader array of information from a greater variety of sources, and as a consequence, we have a broader frame of reference that can be used to the benefit of the organisation when complemented with ethical decision making but he does not believe the sole burden of ethics should be borne by the communicator.

2.8.7 The importance of distinguishing between 'the' and 'an' ethical conscience in a research setting

Bowen (2008: 292) outlines that, 'public relations practitioners should, and often do, play the role of ethics counsellor in their organisations'; however, later in the same page she states that, 'acting as an ethical conscience advances not only the mutual interests of publics and the organisations that serve them, but also advances the stature of public relations as a management function.' What is of particular interest here is the interchange of the words 'the ethical conscience' and 'an ethical conscience'. The importance of distinguishing between 'the ethical conscience' and 'an ethical conscience' may have had a significant effect on Bowen's 2008 research. Bowen's research concluded that communicators were divided into two camps when it came to the question of ethics in communication; the pro-ethics group and the anti-ethics group. The question posed in Bowen's research was, "Do public relations professionals believe that they should act as the ethical conscience of the organisation?" (Bowen 2008: 277). The results may have been considerably different if the question had read, Do public relations professionals believe that they should act as an ethical conscience within the organisation working in concert with other dominant coalition partners on ethical decisions?

Given the wide variety of views on ethics considered here, surely an explicit distinction needs to be made between 'the ethical conscience' and 'an ethical conscience' in this research. It is believed that this distinction will help establish if more than two categories (pro-ethics or anti-ethics) exist in the Irish public and private sector. The thesis proposes to establish if communicators/ senior managers and employees in the case study organisations believe that the communicator should be 'the ethical conscience' or 'an ethical conscience' of their organisation. If not, do they believe that ethics has a role to play in communication? The thesis also seeks to establish if there are more who believe ethics has a role to play in internal communication and will also seek to establish how internal communicators currently deal with ethical issues.

2.9   Benefits of Effective Internal Communication

With an increasing recognition that evaluation of internal communication activities is an essential element of excellence, the benefits of effective internal communications are examined.

2.9.1 Company performance

Tourish and Hargie (2000: 294) state that there is a 'great deal of evidence to show that high quality communication is a crucial indicator of organisational health'. Building on the concept of organisational health, Macleod and Clarke (2009: 18) and Rucci, Kirn and Quinn (1998: 84) demonstrate a link between how employees feel about their organisation and how the organisation fares. Frohlich (1996:) states that 'the methods used to inform and consult employees are often regarded as one of the critical factors for organisational effectiveness'. Collins and Porras (1995: 86) demonstrate that companies that are consistently clear in their communications…outperform the U.S. stock market average by fifteen times. Snyder and Morris (1984: 461) 'found positive correlations between employee perceptions of communication and job satisfaction, which was in turn correlated with overall

organisational effectiveness', and Walton (1969: 108) outlines that communication is the 'most significant factor accounting for the total behaviour of the organisation.'

Yet, according to Wagner and Harter (2006: 201) 'in over forty Gallup polls, approximately 75 per cent of employees are disengaged from their jobs. Gallup estimates that 'actively disengaged' workers are costing U.S. businesses 300 billion dollars a year in productivity losses'. Equally, according to Gay et al. (2005: 20) only about one in three companies has been successful in motivating employees to understand, be committed to, and carry out their employer's business strategy. Research from Powers Perrin (2008: online) reinforces this, indicating that only 31% of employees feel that their senior managers communicate openly and honestly. Profile (2006: 4) concludes that 'poor internal communication is a major concern for organisations since it can result in workplace inefficiency.'

This thesis will examine whether the case study organisations view effective internal communication as important to their company's performance and whether they have undertaken any research to demonstrate a link between their communication and the company's bottom line.

2.9.2 Improved morale and motivation

Dozier et al.'s, (1995: 11) research demonstrates that

> Inside the organisation, excellent public relations increases the level of satisfaction that employees have with the organisation which in turn saves money that might be wasted on the consequences of bad relationships with company employees – strikes, absenteeism, low motivation and turnover of staff.

The impact of effective communication on organisational behaviour and motivation is powerfully reinforced by Gallup's (Wagner et al., 2006: xi) Q12 questions. Using feedback from over 1 million employees, the Gallup organisation established 12 elements of work they believe lead to a productive and motivated workforce. Best practice in internal communications has a direct positive impact on nine of these elements.

The 12 Elements of Great Managing that emerged from the research are as follows:

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My Superior, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinion seems to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best fiend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

(Wagner et al., 2006: xi)

These findings are echoed by Frey (2002: 237) who regard internal communication as the basis for successful management and motivation. Rauch (2005: 7) and Peters and Watermans (1982: 218) also point to a correlation between internal communications and motivational levels of employees. As McLagan and Krembs (1995: 3) state,

> In the contemporary workplace, inadequate communication has many bad consequences. For instance, if people don't communicate, they can't be aligned, which wastes resources and leads to working at cross-purposes. If people aren't told how well they're doing or are unable to learn quickly from mistakes and successes, productivity suffers. Without effective communication, good ideas don't come to the fore, problems don't get immediate attention, and decision making doesn't consider important information. Poor communication prevents development of a competitive advantage and erodes the advantage where it exists.

Blinder (1990:21) investigated the type of information employees appreciate being consulted on and discovered that employees want to be involved in decisions that affect them. Anderson and Edmiston (*CW*, 2006: online) examined a similar area and concluded that on a scale of 1–10, (10 being the most important), employees ranked the importance of understanding strategic direction to my day-to-day job at 9 on their

list of needs. These findings are interesting as they demonstrate that employees want hard information from management and they want to be consulted and informed about strategic decisions.

By establishing what information each organisation communicates to its employees the study will be able to establish what type of communication increases staff morale and motivation. The study will also examine how and if improvements in staff morale and motivation are evaluated and measured.

2.9.3 Organisational ambassadors

Varey (2001: 226) points out that every company's future depends on its ability to unite employees behind an effective leader or leadership team. Theaker (2001: 131) states that 'our people are our most important resource' and that 'an informed workforce is more likely to be motivated to work productively, and reinforce the company's license to operate in its community'. Williams (1998: 39) also reflects this thinking in his research stating that

> In any service organisation, employees are the product—they deliver the service directly, and interact with the customer. All front line employees, whatever their day to day role, are permanent ambassadors and communicators for their organisation with external audiences.

According to Robbins (2008: 245)and Haywood (2002:136) the people who make up an organisation are also its representatives: their behaviour, what they say about their organisation to others, and their stated attitudes to the organisation, all reflect on it. For this reason, it is essential that employees believe in their organisation and can act as ambassadors for the company. Haywood (2002:269) reiterates this point when he says that

> the company's reputation is everyone's responsibility. Whatever his or her role in the organisation, each employee has some personal responsibility for its reputation. Employees should be enthusiastic ambassadors for the company, if they are not then there is something seriously wrong.

Burkholder et al. (1991: 285) point out 'each and every day, every employee is an ambassador for a company among customers, business colleagues, professional

associations and even friends and families.' This is an important point as it means that communication must take place at all levels in an organisation not just at a managerial level.

The notion of employees being ambassadors who can directly affect company performance is significant and understanding how employees have so much power is clear when we examine Gregory's (2000: 80) analysis, 'First-hand knowledge is a very powerful attitude former. Second hand knowledge: insights you gain from a friend, trusted colleague or an authority of some kind is also very powerful'. It is for this reason that many companies are now looking to strengthen their relationships with their employees and develop them as ambassadors. Employee engagement and ambassador building were keys to Gerstner's (2003: 77) work in creating a new IBM.

Branham (1993: 45) emphasises that employee are assets, while Reicheld (1993: 87) points out the benefits of ambassadors from a marketing perspective, explaining that efforts to build customer loyalty must take into account that customers form relationships with loyal employees, not executives and 'by building a loyal base of employees (turnover is less than 5 percent).'

Internal communication is key to developing a cohesive team and as Carty (1992:85) argues, 'No matter how excellent the product, or the service, nor how large and enthusiastic the market, one can do nothing without a good team.'

This study will investigate whether Irish companies recognise the development of organisational ambassadors as a benefit of effective internal communication.

2.9.4 Support in a crisis

This benefit is linked closely to creating ambassadors, but this benefit focuses on being able to use those ambassadors in times of crisis. Gillis (2006: 12) indicates that organisations are most likely to empower the communication function when in crisis. As Tamara L Gillis (2006: 206) points out,

When employees leave the corporate campus and rejoin the community each day, employee communication has a direct impact on external relationships with customers and the public. The better informed employees are about company policies, news and events, the less likely they are to spread damaging misinformation within the organisation and externally through family and friends.

Grossman (cited in CW, Dec 2005: 25) states that the more leaders cultivate trust when times are good, the more they will reap the benefits when there are problems.

Having an internal communications practitioner in an organisation means that there is someone employed to ensure delivery of this information in a timely, efficient, and effective manner, ensuring that this essential work is not left as an afterthought.

The study will examine whether internal communications in the case study organisations were set up to respond to a crisis and whether dealing with employees during a crisis is considered a significant role of internal communications.

2.9.5 Staff retention and recruitment

Capodagli and Jackson (2006: 204) explain that 'money spent (on communication) is returned in customer satisfaction and employee loyalty'. Holtz (2004: 297) suggests that developing a strategic internal communication process can lead to positive return on investment for a company's retention and recruitment efforts.

According to Shaffer (2000: 35), 'communication can lead to building and retaining a workforce'. Effective communication is an important issue as employee turnover is a significant issue for organisations. And Peters and Waterman (1982:37) report on a case study that identified how Japanese companies like Sony and Honda increased staff retention by treating employees as a natural resource and not merely as money machines or knowledge.

The study will examine if the case study organisations view staff retention and recruitment as an objective of their communication strategy.

2.9.6 Help in implementing change

Quirke (2008: 137), Gerstner (2003: 50), and D'Aprix (1996: 9) argue that changes confronting organisations have made organisational communication increasingly important. According to Gazier et al. (2008: 326), in an era of globalisation, change is a constant, and companies need to be able to implement changes quickly and effectively. Systems that facilitate this process are highly valued. According to Guffey (2005: 28), 'people who have input into making decisions are less hostile, aggressive and resistant to change' and having effective internal communication is key to this. Equally a study by Allen Consulting Group cited in Gray (2004: 26) identifies that a key element of effective change management is strong communication between the CEO and divisional executives.

The study will examine whether the case studies have used internal communication to help manage change.

2.9.7 Cost benefit

Another benefit of effective internal communication is that the returns far exceed the investment involved. Grunig (1997: 298) argues that communication when practised effectively by organisations is highly valued and, 'returns more than it costs to implement—on average 185 per cent return on investment (ROI).'

Weiner (2003: 1) argues that the demand for ROI "is fuelled by management's desire for meaningful results". And the Institute of Public Relations in the UK defined ROI as "a ratio of how much profit or cost saving is realised from an activity, as against its actual cost, which is often expressed as a percentage" (Institute of Public Relations & Communication Directors Forum, 2004: 15)

The concept of ROI is challenged within the field of communications. Researchers such as Sheldrake (2011:117) argue that 'accountants know what ROI means, and they can only view any softening or redirection or substitution of its meaning by

marketers [communicators] trying to validate their investment plans as smoke and mirrors'. Watson et al. (2011: online) are also rigorous about the problems of applying ROI out of its business context. Watson et al. (2011: online) state that 'PR's use (or abuse) of ROI does it no good with decision-making managers who have an accounting or financial management background'. They encourage the pr profession to find their own language to measure tangible communication results.

This study will examine how the case study organisations measure their communication success.

2.9.8 Overview of the benefits of effective communication

Any of the above benefits can be identified as areas in which organisations can achieve demonstrable improvements arising from effective internal communication. They study will examine whether the case study organisations measure the effectiveness of their internal communication activities in a similar manner.

2.10 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter outlines the theoretical framework within which the data will be assessed. The principles of the excellence study, best practice in communication techniques, and an ethical agenda form a set of criteria by which internal communication practices in the case study organisations will be evaluated.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the development of internal communications as a profession. Contextualizing the development of internal communications practices outside of Ireland enables a comparative analysis of the development of internal communication in Ireland relative to its development in other countries. Such is the contribution to knowledge of this research, as the practices of internal communication in Ireland have evaded in depth academic examination in communications literature.

The chapter also examines the varying definitions of IC proposed by research scholars using a definition of IC that encompasses all elements of internal communication. This definition functions as a diagnostic tool in assessing whether the internal communication practices in public and private sector organisations in Ireland emulate best practice. It also provides insights into the varying areas of IC that will be examined in this research.

The second section of the chapter, offers a detailed discussion of the characteristics of best practice in organisational communication. The excellence study is critically analysed in four distinct sections.
(1) The relationship of communication to the management of the organisation,
(2) The organisation and purpose of the communication function,
(3) The management of individual communication programmes, and
(4) The organisational context that supports the best communication practices.

In critically analysing the characteristics of excellence, the researcher does not confine herself to the field of public relations as she believes that the isolation of public relations theory can lead to a lack of perspective in relation to communication research. For this reason, this chapter draws from relevant research in the disciplines of positive psychology, behavioural science, business management, human resources and emotional intelligence. Therefore, although the thesis argues that the excellence criteria provide a valid conceptual framework within which to examine and audit IC practices against that of an ideal programmeme, the use of the criteria is informed and enhanced by reference to other disciplinary research.

The research takes place at two time intervals, 2007/8 and 2010. During this period, the Irish economy experienced a dramatic reversal. As discussed by The National Economic and Social Development Office (2011: 1), the country experienced unprecedented change with economic indicators returning to levels last seen in the early to middle part of the previous decade. Income measures per head declined almost 15%. The exceptionally large contraction in the Irish economy was precipitated by loss of investment in building and construction, which fell by 57% in volume terms between 2007 and 2010. All the case study organisations were affected by this economic downturn and experienced significant change. This thesis discusses

the theories and strategies surrounding the importance of communication in change management. The communication of change within the case study organisations will be assessed against these criteria.

Ethics is discussed within its own section although brief reference is also made to ethics in the section 'organisational context'. A separate section was deemed necessary for the exploration of this topic as the research surrounding this issue is complex and contradictory. Bowen (2008:288) contends 'that public relations practitioners should and often do play the role of ethics counsellor in their organisations' and for this reason ethics should be the tenth generic principle of excellence (Bowen: 2004: 65). These assertions have such significant implications for the practice of communication that they form the backbone of the thesis's questions in relation to the role of ethics in internal communications. The research questions on ethics are also informed by the varying critical analysis of ethics within the communications sphere detailed in this section.

Finally, the literature outlines the benefits of effective IC. This section provides research outlining the return on investment and the bottom line results that can be achieved through effective IC including increased productivity, improved financial performance, decreased turnover and reduced absenteeism. Outlining the bottom line results is of significance to the research as too often internal communicators fail to talk about communication in the facts and figures language of senior management. Few organisations directly tie their IC to strategic management and bottom line results. This thesis will establish if the participating organisations can demonstrate bottom line results for their IC programmemes.

This summary of provides the reader with a condensed outline of the theoretical positions adopted for this study. The next chapter on methodology will outline in detail the manner in which these criteria would be measured and examined.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research questions, the research focus, the choice of research paradigm, overall research strategy, and research techniques. It provides a detailed inventory and explanation of the research methods employed. It also indicates the sources of primary and secondary data presenting the technical rationale for the empirical project that forms the basis of this thesis.

The methodology employed was primarily qualitative in nature although quantitative methods supplement the qualitative data. The technique chosen consisted of case studies, employing an interpretivist perspective and documentary analysis. A questionnaire approach was used for the quantitative aspects of the research. There was also a simple analysis of data counting of employees by the internal communication personnel across the case study organisations at both interview periods in 2007/8 and in 2010. All these methods and techniques are explained in detail in this chapter.

3.1   Research Objectives

The absence of research on the practice of internal communication in Ireland represents an opportunity for this thesis to make an original contribution to knowledge in communication management.

The main research objective is to examine the internal communication practices in public and private sector organisations in Ireland.

In addition, the research also aims to address the following:
   1. To examine existing theories and opinions regarding internal communication.

2. To establish and define the internal communication practices of four Irish organisations across the public and private sector, and compare their internal communication practises with the generic benchmark developed by Grunig et al. (2002: 6) in the excellence study.

3. To establish whether internal communications is developing equally in both the public and private sector in Ireland.

4. To identify if the participants believe ethics has a role in internal communications and if so, what type of role?

Although the question of ethics has traditionally been at the fringe of organisational communication inquiry this study sees it as central to the examination of best practice. The internal ethics of an organisation relates to how values are modelled within the organisation. Seeger (Tourish, 2003: 223) states that internal ethical domains have been described as organisational culture. Organisational culture and organisational ethics correlate directly with how behaviour is enforced and how the rights of employees are framed and maintained. Victor and Cullen (1988: 104) highlight that the ethical climate of the organisation is the 'shared perception of what is ethically correct behaviour and how ethical issues should be handled.' This research maintains that it is impossible to examine organisational culture (a characteristic of best practice communication) without addressing ethics.

3.2 Qualitative Versus Quantitative

According to Sarstedt (2011: 29) we can distinguish between two types of data: primary and secondary 'primary data are data that a researcher has collected for a specific purpose; secondary data have already been collected by another researcher for another purpose.' The literature review in the previous chapter is derived from secondary sources of data. The literature review is important to this study as it provides a theoretical lens, a framework for developing an analytical model.

The primary data can be quantitative or qualitative. Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 12) suggest that both qualitative and quantitative research is concerned with the perspective of participants but qualitative investigators believe they can get closer to the actors through detailed interviewing. Bell (2010: 5) describes qualitative research as 'more concerned to understand individual's perceptions of the world'. Strauss and

Corbin (1998: 11) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 3) suggest that qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details of a phenomenon, through processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods. It is, as articulated by Maykut and Morehouse (1996: 3), an approach that is described as essentially phenomenological:

'[that] phenomenological approach is a focus on understanding the meaning events have for persons being studied'.

Qualitative research is presented in the literature on research methodology as being a more 'holistic' method, taking in the full context of a social situation, as opposed to quantitative research which is presented as being 'positivistic' and unsuited to qualitative research. (Jorgensen, 1989:7, Haralambos and Holborn, 1991: 698,707,709)

Aspects of qualitative research outlined by Daymon and Holloway (2010:6) Wiid and Diggin (2009: 88) Denscombe (1998: 104) also influenced this study. They highlight that qualitative research is

- Based on participant viewpoint – it allows people to be subjective.
- Provides insights into causes and motivations.
- Flexible – it allows researchers to explore new and surprising avenues.
- Grounded in reality
- Rich in detail and suited to small-scale research
- Leads to a prospect of future exploration

As this study is primarily a journey into the culture and communication practices of public and private sector organisations in Ireland, as experienced by senior management, communication managers and staff, the research adopts a mainly qualitative method. This allows the researcher to get close to the participants through discussion uncovering their honest thoughts. The field work for this research needed the latitude of the qualitative research methodology to investigate the phenomenon.

This thesis attempts to understand the internal communication practices in Irish organisations as well as to establish the challenges for communicators who must work

on strategy and operations on a daily basis. For this reason, the flexibility and insights offered by qualitative research are attractive. A purely quantitative approach would have been too restrictive to follow the data of this research and to dive deeper into subjects and concepts as interviewees brought them forward. The quantitative approaches alone would not have facilitated the human and social aspect with regard to the discovery of information.

While qualitative methods have many distinct advantages for this study, the advice of Downs and Adrian (2004) was noted. They identify that there are many advantages to using more than one method of data collection. They explain a multi-faceted approach offers more fine-tuned analysis. In order to facilitate the fine tuning of the findings, a plurality of approaches, quantitative and qualitative were used in this study. A questionnaire on the research themes was answered by IC managers or by individuals with some responsibility for IC, within 20 public and private sector organisations in Ireland. This quantitative data did not provide the same insights as the qualitative interviews, but the data did enhance the representative nature of the findings. There was also simple analysis of official employment statistics and an audit of the number of communicators and internal communicators employed across the case study organisations at both interview stages. This qualitative research helped address disadvantages of qualitative methods as outlined by Denscombe (1998: 105) and Szondi and Theilman (2009:205):

- Data may be less representative
- Interpretation of data may be bound up with the self (a loss of objectivity)
- Data may be sensitive to interviewer bias
- There may be a lack of generalisability/transferability

Carey (1993) states that quantitative and qualitative techniques are merely tools; integrating them allows the researcher to answer questions of substantial importance. In fact, Casebeer and Verhoef (1997) argue that qualitative and quantitative methods should be seen as part of a continuum of research with specific techniques selected based on the research objective. Reichardt and Rallis (1994) echo similar sentiments stating that qualitative and quantitative methods are united by a shared commitment to understanding and improving the human condition, in a common goal of

disseminating knowledge for tactical use, and a shared commitment for rigor, conscientiousness, and critique in the research process. Morgan (1998) believes that complementary results can be achieved by using the strengths of one method to enhance the other through a mixed method.

Creswell(2011: 5) outlines that mixed methods research focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. Creswell (2011: 13) observes that mixed methods research is "practical" in the sense that the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address the research problem. It is also "practical" because individuals tend to solve problems using both numbers and words, they combine inductive and deductive thinking, and they employee skills in observing people as well as recording behaviour. It is natural, then, for individuals to employee mixed methods research at the preferred mode of understanding the world.

Bearing in mind the arguments above supporting the use of mixed method this research uses a mixed method approach to help 'make the data collection and analysis more accurate and the inferences more useful' (Rocco et al. 2003: 21).

The mixed method is chosen even though conducting mixed methods research is not easy. As Creswell (2011: 17) stresses it takes time and resources to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. It complicates procedures of research and requires clear presentation of data. Despite the challenges of the mixed method the researcher believes that the use a variety of methods will enable this research to be responsive to the nuances of particular study.

3.3   Research Design

Based on an extensive literature review, key variables were identified for further study in the communications audit. Interviews were first held in 2007/8 and again three years later in 2010. As Kane (1985: 55) explains, 'since the range of what you cannot observe is almost limitless, you have to limit it'.

Based on an extensive literature review, key themes were identified for further study. The research themes in themselves suggested various courses of action in terms of data gathering techniques. As Renzetti and Lee (1993: 27) reported 'the "what" to investigate, must come prior to the decision of "how" to go about doing one's research'.

In addition to the question of 'what' to research, there were considerations with regard to the organisations in which the research was being carried out. Indeed in order to assess the effectiveness of internal communication practices in both the public and private sector, as evidenced by experience in the day to day working environment, a form of 'selective' or 'judgmental' data gathering was used. As Jorgensen (1989: 50) explains:

> Theoretical' or 'judgmental' sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that depends on the researcher's ability to make decisions about what to observe based on constraint this opportunity, personal interests, resources, (…) and the problem to be investigated.

The techniques employed consequently were selective and purposive in nature. Maykut and Morehouse (1996: 56) describe such an approach predicated on personal or professional prior knowledge as follows:

> It is not our goal to build a random sample, but rather to select persons or settings we think represent the range of experience of the phenomenon in which we are interested. Thus it is our working knowledge of the contexts of the individual and settings that lead us to select them for initial confusion in our study.

As a result, the scope of the case study research was consciously narrowed to certain companies that were representative of the range of public and private sector organisations in Ireland. Bell (2010: 149 -150) draws attention to the difficult nature of achieving 'a true random sample' for small scale studies; however, she notes that

even for smaller studies 'efforts should be made to select as representative a sample as possible'.

Selecting the cases was done so as to maximise what could be learned in the period of time available for the study. Denscombe (2007: 38) states that

> a case study should be chosen deliberately on the basis of specific attributes to be found in the case – attributes that are particularly significant in terms of the practical problem or theoretical issue that the research wants to investigate.

When selecting suitable case studies, a number of criteria suggested by Denscombe (2007:42) were considered:

- Does it represent a typical instance?
- Is it similar to other cases?
- Can it be used as a test site for theory testing building?

The intention, aim or purpose of the selection was to achieve a maximum variation sample. Morehouse (1996:56) explains that

> Perhaps the most prominent and useful strategy is maximum variation sampling rate where the researcher attempts to understand some phenomena by seeking out persons or settings that represent the greatest differences in that phenomenon.

Given this advice, the case studies in this research were selected as they represented public and private sector organisations in Ireland across differing industries and disciplines. Equally, the online survey was issued to an equal number of communication practitioners in both public and private sector organisations in Ireland.

3.3   The Influence of Similar Communication Studies

Jablin and Punam (2001: 164) explain that as an area of study distinct from sociology and anthropology, organisational communication has its own unique history and trends in the use of qualitative research. Jensen (2010: 8) explains that organisational communication scholarship is today marked by a healthy eclecticism in which a variety of research methods are accepted as legitimate.

According to Johansson's research organisational communication is characterised by empirical, qualitative research. The tradition of holistic and profound case studies is strong.

Hargie and Tourish (2009: 6) explain that organisational communication research is extending 'beyond pen and pencil self-reporting techniques that, while providing careful measurement, rarely capture the full complexities, ambiguities and frustration of really occurring organisation behaviour.' They explain that many auditors now seek to employ a combination of methods and theoretical perspectives as done in this thesis.

This thesis also draws substantially on the work of Grunig et al. (1995) in The excellence study and Bowen's (2006) ethical research. Grunig et al. (1995: 238) explain that one cannot measure outcomes of communication programmemes in isolation of organisational opportunities and constraints. They explain (1995: 240) that

> rigorous case studies have enriched our understanding of how communication is practiced in the organisation. In [their study] reserarchers interviewed communicators and senior managers at length. Interviews are linked to other data such as annual reports and other materials to provide rich tapestries of communication practices in context.

To execute the excellence study, Grunig et al. (1995) developed a sampling strategy that maximized both the quality of the research and the pragmatics of collecting the data. They used purposive sampling strategy. They also used questionnaires and in-depth interviews to collect data.

To facilitate the comparison of communication perspectives within the case study organisations, this research collected a purposive sample that maximised both the quality of the research and the pragmatics of collecting the data. In-depth interviews were held with the communicator, senior management and staff of each organisation. This enabled a comparison of the communication perspectives of all three audiences within the organisations.

In developing the questionnaire and interview questions for this research, the themes developed in the excellence study were used. The researcher took on board the advice of Hargie and Tourish (2009: 62) 'to use a pre-existing tool and then make adaptations to the instrument'. The actual excellence study questionnaire itself is not used; to quote Grunig et al. (1995: 245), while insightful, it was time consuming and was described as the 'survey from hell'. Therefore, a questionnaire was used as a benchmark for the research.

The ethics element of the research was heavily influenced by the ethics diagnostic survey developed by Bowen (2006: 27). Some adaptations were made to this diagnostic survey, and it was administered in a similar format to Bowen's research (albeit on a smaller scale). The quantitative element was an online survey and the quantitative aspect entailed in-depth interviews. Interestingly, the ethics research benefited from the multiple perspectives of the communicator, senior management, and staff within the case study organisations, although the online questionnaire was completed by communication managers or individuals who were responsible for IC within 20 public and private sector companies.

3.4   The Primary Research

In terms of primary sources of data, the research carried out was both quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative research included in-depth semi-structured interviews with case study organisations. The quantitative research included questionnaires completed online by 20 public and private sector organisations in Ireland.

3.4.1 The Case Study

In considering the methods or techniques of data gathering within the qualitative paradigm chosen, a case study strategy of four organisations was chosen. Johannson (2010: 106) outlines the particular strengths of using case studies for organisational communication research. She states that (Johannson: 2010: 106) empirical studies in organisational communication represent 'a rich and realistic image of organisational life and organisational communication activities'. They also Johannson (2010: 106):

allow researchers to study chosen phenomena in a profound way, illuminating topics from different angles in the same study. Research employing multiple methods and/or multiple materials is also strength of case studies.

Johannson (2010: 106) also states that case studies are

Often deceptively descriptive in nature, often revealing deeper explanations and a thorough understanding of communication issues and activities—which of course can be subject to further testing in a larger number of organisations.

Blaxter et al. (2001: 74) and Denscombe (1998: 82) echo many similar benefits highlighting that case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants. Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991: 152) agree, stating that 'one of the quintessential characteristics of case studies is that they strive toward a relatively holistic understanding of cultural systems of action'. Stake (2000: 19) explains that a case study is 'a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry'. This research uses a multi-site case study strategy as it aims to capture the complexity of the phenomenon of internal communication within Irish organisations while revealing a rich understandings about the context in which it is based. Mills et al. (2010: 588) explain that a multi-site case study enables research to establish the 'why' and 'how'. In this thesis the research questions richly show why and how the IC practices and ethics of IC in Irish organisations are conducted.

Tellis (1997: online) states that case studies are multi-perspectival analyses, meaning that the research considers not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them. This is also relevant for this thesis as the views of employees, communicators and senior management are investigated.

The unique contribution to knowledge of this research includes empirical data that will contribute to the subject of IC and the role of ethics in IC practices in Ireland. The cases will also examine the role that IC plays during times of change and turbulence for organisations.

3.4.2 The interview

Downs' (1988) asserts that if confined to using just one audit method, he would choose the interview. Hargie and Tourish (2009: 78) explain that 'the interview is considered to be one of the central tools within internal and external communication audits'. Miller et al. (1992: 3) defines an interview as:

> A face-to-face didactic interaction in which one individual plays the role of interviewer and the other takes the role of interviewee, and both of these roles carry clear expectations concerning behavioural and attitudinal approach. The interview is requested by one of the participants for a specific purpose and both participants are willing contributors.

The main data source in this research is interviewing. As Bernard (2011: 191) highlights, there are different types of interviews, ranging from very informal exchanges to very structured set of questions—the standardised schedule interview, the standardised interview with no schedule, and the unstructured interview. The advantages as outlined by Bernard (2011: 191) and Marshall (2010: 145) stress the adaptability of interviews and the power they give the interviewer to probe and clarify any difficulties. In contrast, questionnaire responses can only be accepted at face value.

Bryman (2004: 319) also considers the particular strengths and weaknesses of interviews as a research technique, illustrating that 'it is the flexibility of the interview that makes it so attractive.' Bryman (2004: 320) also explains that 'rambling or going off at tangents is often encouraged' as it enables the participant to reveal rich insight and focus on aspects they feel are important. Bell (2010: 161) highlights the interview can also pick up insights and information through 'the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation' which would not be possible in a written response.

Most interviews take one of two forms either focused or exploratory. This research is characterised as exploratory because while the researcher had a list of subject areas to be covered, there was opportunity for the participants to take the lead in discussions and openly expand on questions in as much detail as they wanted. Corbetta (2003: 270) reaffirms, that a semi-structured interview 'gives...ample freedom, while at the same time ensuring that all the relevant themes are dealt with and all the necessary information collected.'

This contrasts with focused interviews (Hargie and Tourish, 2009: 86) in which 'most aspects of the interview are rigidly predetermined from topics, to question types, to sequence and even response alternatives'. As an interpretive approach guided the interviews, it was decided not to use qualitative analysis software. While such software could be useful, it was not intuitive or sensitive enough for interpretive interviews. Hargie and Tourish (2009: 293) suggest that 'in terms of interpretivist framework, it may be viewed as a barrier that prevents the researcher from becoming fully immersed in the data'.

The researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews as they are flexible and allow for deeper probing of issues of interest that arise during the course of the interview, something which cannot be done in a survey or structured interview. Interactionists see this insight into peoples' actual experience as the advantage of semi-structured interviews. It is worth noting Bell's (2010: 161) caution that 'the attainment of a successful interview is much more complex if a semi structured, less prescriptive approach is adopted', stating that this flexibility places more responsibility on the interviewer to ensure key aspects are covered. To ensure that all elements of the research are covered an interview guide is prepared.

The researcher believed that a more interpretivist approach would add greater value and would reveal deeper insight into internal communication practices of the case study organisations. While this approach does yield rich descriptions and key insights, it also presents challenges. Hargie and Tourish (2009: 91) emphasise the need for interviewers to 'think on their feet and make on the spot decisions in the absence of a tight structure'. In this study, the researcher had to listen attentively to all interviewees and had to adjust prior research questions on occasion depending on what the interviewees mentioned in their responses. On occasion, these interviews entailed extra time to listen to participants if they wished to present significant information pertaining to particular topics. While this was a challenge, it was also a strength of the research as it provided rich descriptions.

As communication is affected by the overall climate and culture in which it takes place, it cannot be viewed in isolation from leaders, staff, organisational culture and organisational business goals and strategy. As Hargie and Tourish (2009: 301) outline

> Ambiguity, uncertainty and paradox are [ ] ever present features of workplace communication. Consequently, we do not believe that surveys would ever capture the full strength and depth of people's feelings, the stories that they share with each other, or the sense-making heuristics employed in their construction

Hargie and Tourish (2009: 303) argue compellingly in favour of this type of research and explained that that it is 'not surprising that more interpersonal audit studies are now being published'.

3.4.3 The questionnaire

Hargie and Tourish (2009: 55) note that

> most organisations are enchanted with questionnaires. The lure of the survey lies in the seeming simplicity of the methodology, the ostensive ease of administration and the apparent directness of the interpretation.

Hargie and Tourish (2009: 55) also explain that 'questionnaires are often referred to as 'instruments', and with good reason. They are the tools of the trade.' Studies that limit themselves to questionnaire methods alone may miss crucial meaningful information but in this research they are used to complement others methods and they help provide a more comprehensive and insightful formulation of the communication climate and process.

In order to ensure the quality of the data, it was important to select a representative sample for the administration of the questionnaire. Such selection also ensured statistical reliability and generalisability. Hargie and Tourish (2009: 64) claim that 'failure to adequately address administrative issues is one of the more subtle ways to undermine a communication questionnaire'. To administer the questionnaire the researcher sought and was granted the email addresses of those who had participated in the Public Relations Institute of Ireland's Certificate in Internal Communication Course. This appeared to be the most logical and practical method of accessing communication professionals working in the area of internal communications. Simply reviewing the job titles of the members of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland

would not have revealed the practitioners who are involved in IC, as often IC is not stated in job titles. All the course attendees were emailed and invited to participate in the questionnaire. A total of 40 invitations to participate were issued, 21 agreed to participate. Those invited either worked in the area of internal communication or had a level of responsibility for internal communications within their organisation. For example, there were a number of HR Directors, Communication Managers, and Marketing Managers alongside Internal Communication Managers. A list of these invitees was provided by the Public Relations Institute of Ireland based on their members who had undertaken their Certificate in Internal Communications. This was deemed the most effective method of contacting practitioners who actually worked in the area of IC as often the word IC does not appear in the job titles of practitioners who work in this area. As job titles were not going to provide sufficient information to target the relevant professionals the assistance of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland was invaluable.

It was deemed that this group would facilitate a targeted audience, who worked in the field under investigation and would be motivated to complete the survey. The survey was administered online. The main advantage of using an Internet-based survey was speed and ease of use. Online surveys also facilitate the tabulating of results. The advice of Hargie and Tourish (2009: 74) was noted:

> As a rule of thumb, it is best to start with the qualitative data.
> Why? Sometimes auditors will unwittingly interpret the
> quantitative data and then massage the qualitative data to confirm
> the original findings.

Therefore, the questionnaires were distributed after the qualitative case study work was complete. One of the distinct advantages of the questionnaire was that it made it possible to make broader conclusions about the general state of IC in Ireland while also providing valuable insights into the role of ethics in IC.

3.5   Secondary Sources of Data

In addition to the primary data obtained, use was made of secondary sources of data in order to cross check assumptions and assist in the methodological triangulation within the research. Use was made of written sources from communications and public

relations textbooks, journal articles, newspaper reports, novels, autobiographies and a variety of academic texts. Kane (1985: 98-117) and Haralambos and Holborn (1991: 753) list various sources appropriate for this type of secondary data analysis; they include reference books, periodicals, dissertations, abstracts, bibliographies, censuses, yearbooks, government publications, parliamentary speeches, aspects of novels and newspapers. The approach taken in this study combined secondary sources with the data from the case study organisations. An analysis of these secondary sources was carried out in order to get inside the culture of organisational communication in an interpretive-descriptive or narrative manner.

The study makes occasional references to novels, bibliographies, newspaper articles, and public government documents. These documents reflect public perception of the role of communication in organisations in popular culture. The research also makes reference to organisational documents and public government documents as they pertain to the foci of this study. Bernard (1988: 237-298) refers to the analysis of secondary sources as listed as a form of 'content analysis': Bernard (1988: 237-298) explains that content analysis 'is a catch-all term covering a variety of techniques for making inferences from 'texts'.

Despite some of the inherent dangers involved in this treatment of such sources of data, Bernard finds in favour of the type of sample content analysis used in this study. He explains (1988: 237-298) that 'for all its problems, content analysis can produce fascinating results'.

The sources of secondary data utilised and quoted from throughout the research are varied. This thesis was not confined to the field of public relations as the isolation of public relations theory can lead to a lack of perspective thinking in relation to communication research. For this reason, relevant research in the disciplines of positive psychology, behavioural science, business management, human resources, emotional intelligence and popular culture are drawn on.

3.6 Gaining Access to the Settings

Bernard (1988:160) offers some advice on 'entering the field'. He states,

> There are five rules to follow. First of all, there is no reason to select a site that is difficult to enter when equally good alternatives are available that are easier to enter.

The case study organisations chosen were not necessarily easy to enter. However, by virtue of working in the profession for nearly 15 years the researcher was in a position to approach the communication practitioners within each organisation as an initial entry point. Given the close relationships the communication practitioners have with the CEOs and senior management within their organisations, they were able to recommend that the organisations partake in this research. Gaining access to the settings, documents and information may have been more difficult for a non-practicing communication professional, an 'outsider' who would not have had a professional network to draw on to garner the necessary permission to undertake such research.

The literature on research methodology is filled with reference to powerful 'gatekeepers' from whom permission must be sought in order to enter the field (Jorgensen, 1989: 45-46; Renzetti and Lee, 1993: 27, and Mitchell, 1993: 10). The gatekeeper may impose restrictions on the study and may attempt to influence its outcomes. Obstruction, however, was not a problem in this research. On the contrary, the organisations welcomed the researcher and generously shared their insights and practices in the area of IC. No onerous restrictions or constraints were applied. The public endorsement and agreement of senior management to participate in the research, in turn encouraged participation. The CEOs or senior executives dealing with the research request nominated a senior member of the executive to provide the management perspectives in the interviews.

Haralambos and Holborn's (1991:741) research outlines both overt or covert approaches to qualitative data gathering. Although ethics was explored, no suspect or illegal practices were being examined; therefore, there was no cause to undertake a covert approach. The fact that the researcher was seen as a respected member of the communications profession facilitated a successful rapport with those under study.

Following the sampling strategy used in the excellence study the study sought to interview the CEO or nominated senior manager, the head of internal communication and a focus group of approximately 15 persons from each organisation. This strategy for collecting data evolved as the study progressed with the first two organisations admitting upfront that they were only in the process of establishing internal communications. Therefore, interviewing focus groups would be unproductive. Also both organisations had employees spread over a large geographical area, making the gathering of a representative focus group complicated.

The strategy was therefore amended to interviewing:

1. The internal or communications manager

2. A senior manager within the organisation and

3. An individual employee

Indeed, interviewing an individual employee provided an essential element of the research, i.e. that of the perspective of the intended recipient of internal communication.

The interviews were carried out where possible in the case study organisations. Entering each of the case study organisations facilitated a limited element of participant observation. Data and insights were accumulated particularly in relation to organisational culture and settings during her visits to these case study organisations. The data or circumstantial evidence provided insights. These insights were on followed up in the semi-structured interviews, if it appeared to conflict with participants comments.

Gaining access to the group for the online questionnaire was also challenging. As many job titles don't include the phase internal communications, it is often difficult to establish what communication practitioners actually work in the area of IC. Analysis of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland's (PRII) membership list yielded only a small number of names. It was essential that the participants in the online questionnaire worked as least to some degree in the area of IC. If participants didn't work in IC the results would be less reliable. The final list of invitees was based on the PRII members who had undertaken the Certificate in Internal Communications

run by the PRII. This ensured that all those invited to participate did work in the area of IC in both the public and private sector.

Details of the quantitative research participants

Number invited to participate in the quantitative research	40
Number who agreed to participate	21
% who participated	52.5%

3.7   Developing the Questions

The generic benchmark of critical success factors and best practices in communication management as outlined in the excellence study was used as the framework for developing questions for the interview. This enabled the gathering of the empirical evidence required to compare organisational communications in the four case study organisations with a programmeme that is considered the best and most effective. The questions on culture were extended to include the role of ethics in internal communication as Bowen (2004: 65) proposes that ethics should be the tenth generic principle of excellence.

The research also observed Bell's (2005: 158) recommendations for developing interview questions: 'There should be no leading presumptive or offensive questions, avoid jargon, ambiguity and imprecision'. Other recommended techniques by Patton (1990: 238) and Maykut et al. (1994: 95) were also followed including being well prepared, working out probes in advance for potentially inadequate answers, and avoiding words or signals which convey expectation of particular kinds of responses.

Hargie and Tourish (2009: 84) indicate that interviewers must have some form of interview guide to plan in order to ensure that the purpose of the interview will be achieved. However, for exploratory interviews there is no requirement to have all the questions predetermined or set in a particular sequence; the guide, however, served to ensure that all interview questions were asked at some stage during the interview. Hargie and Tourish (2009: 85) explain that reference to the interview guide may remind interviewers of the topics and questions to be asked.

As Bell (2005: 149), Morrison (2002: 46) Gubrium et al (2002: 183) suggest, where possible the participants are interviewed in their own environments as their natural setting is the place where the researcher is most likely to discover or uncover what is to be known about the phenomenon of interest. A face–to-face interview setting was chosen as it allowed the interviewer to build a rapport with the interviewee. This enables a more natural conversation and more realistic discourse by the interviewee. Four interviewees were unable to participate in face-to-face interviews and in these cases they were interviewed over the phone.

The semi-structured interviews began with the internal communication managers in each organisation. They were followed by interviews with senior management. The employees were interviewed in the final phase of the research.

The interview guide questions for the semi-structured interviews were based on the excellence study criteria and Bowen's ethics research. They were organised under the following headings

(1) The relationship of communication to the management of the organisation. Areas examined within this included:
  • Dominant coalition membership
  • Dominant coalition support for internal communication

(2) The organisation and purpose of the communication function. Areas examined within this included:
  • The communicator as technician or strategist
  • Strategy development and implementation
  • Measurement and evaluation
  • Benefits of internal communication

(3) The management of individual communication programmes. Areas examined within this included:
  • Communication models
  • Communication flow
  • Communication tools
  • Barriers to communication

(4) The organisational context that supports the best communication practices.
  • Organisational culture
  • Role of women in the organisation

- Ethics in communication

The subject and purpose of the interviews was explained to each subject in an open way. Kane (1985: 69) endorses this approach for interview techniques:

> [the subject should be informed] what the study is about, presented in such a way that the interviewee reads its general relevance, and if possible, it is relevant to his or her own life and experiences.

The interviews are carried out over two time periods three years apart (2007/8 and 2010). Following the first interviews the analysis of the cultural aspect of communication led to the development of questions around ethics. This led the researcher back to the original case study organisations with follow-up questions. During the second round of interviews the researcher was able to check the findings of the first interviews. This resulted in a total of 24 interviews being undertaken. The interviews range in time from 40—90 minutes.

Mitchell (1993:47) and Bernard (1988: 152) stress the importance of learning the language appropriate to the topic being assessed. Having worked in the communication field with both public and private sector organisations for 15 years the researcher was well acquainted with the language of settings being investigated. This insight into the day-to-day operations of communication within organisations did provide the researcher with an accurate picture and a true reflection of what happens in a working environment. This insight enabled the researcher to ask relevant follow-up and insightful questions during the semi-structured interview.

The researcher characterised the interviews as being relaxed. They were as informal as possible in order to minimize the barrier of the researcher. In order to facilitate free-flowing interviews and follow-up questions an audio recorder was used with the permission of participants during the interviews. This enabled the researcher to take minimal notes during the interviews, which facilitated a more natural conversational style interview. All interviews were then transcribed and sent back to the interviewees to ensure they were happy with the content. Interviewees were encouraged to correct any misleading or incorrect information. The researcher described the contributions as ranging from the succinct and to the point to more in-depth and lengthy. She believed

them to have been a very worthwhile exercise in that they produced a great deal of data.

3.8   Undertaking the Interviews

A topic guide and list of questions was prepared and circulated in advance to the participants. Advance notice of the questions encouraged participation. These questions were supplemented with further questions where necessary to illicit further information during the interview. As Denscombe (2003:)

> the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewer develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher

To begin the interview, the researcher reiterated the nature of the research and assured the respondent that their organisation's confidentiality would be respected. Oakley (1981: 90) explains that the introduction is important as 'the task of establishing rapport and a trusting relationship is crucial'. The one hour interview was recorded with the permission of the participants and transcribed directly afterwards to ensure that valuable information gathered at the interview was not lost. Hargie and Tourish (2009:88) outline that 'interviews require some form of structure in order to guide the interviewer from the beginning to the end'. The interview guide ensured this case in this research. Interviewees are able to speak freely about the research topic, as most of the questions asked were open-ended in order to obtain an accurate and realistic description of their experiences. The researcher employed follow-up probes to reduce any ambiguity and vagueness or contradictions and to sharpen understanding. If necessary the researcher confirmed any further queries that surfaced at the end of the interview.

Strauss and Corbin (1990: 42) indicate that a detailed practical and theoretical knowledge of the topic under investigation enhances the value of the data drawn: 'the more professional experience, the richer the knowledge base and insights available to draw upon in the research'. Given that the researcher has worked in the field of communications practitioner and consultant for 15 years, the researcher had substantial insights which enhanced the value of the data collected.

Each interview lasts between 40 minutes and 90 minutes and was digitally recorded to include all data. Recent studies from Bryant (2006) and Quinn and Hargie (2004) indicate that audio recording and transcription are indeed normal elements of procedure. Details of interviews were written down immediately after the interviews to ensure accuracy and the resulting data was analysed using content analysis.

Qualitative content analysis has been defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1278) as 'a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns'. Qualitative content analysis is mainly inductive, grounding the examination of topics and themes, as well as the inferences drawn from them, in the data. Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1278) describe three types of content analysis: conventional qualitative content analysis, directed content analysis, and summative content analysis. This research uses directed content analysis, in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. Then, during data analysis, the researcher immersed herself in the data and allowed themes to emerge from the data. The purpose of this approach is to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory.

The researcher acknowledges the advice of Jackson (2006: 372) who states that evidence should 'not be drawn from a content analysis of any once source of data but rather from a process of induction from all available tests'. Therefore, the data gathered from each of the case study organisations was analysed from three viewpoints and content analysis is cross checked against secondary data. The data was not taken from any one source.

3.9   Triangulation

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 97) raise concerns over bias in qualitative research when they argue that 'it is not possible to be completely free of bias but the researcher should be aware of their own biases and try to take a 'step-back' and ensure data is objectively analysed'. Hofstede (1980: 15) also cautions about bias stating that

> There is no such thing as objectivity in the study of social reality. We will always be subjective but we may at least try to be inter-subjective, pooling and integrating a variety of subjective points-of-view of different observers.

Bell (2010: 170) recommends 'we must be wise and vigilant, critical of our interpretation of the data.' Caution in relation to bias is particularly relevant to this research as the topic chosen for this thesis was personal to the researcher. To mitigate bias and loss of objectivity an interview guide was developed and a concerted effort was made to maintain as much neutrality as possible. A digital recorder was also used in the study to address reliability issues regarding the consistency of recorded information. Transcripts were also sent to participants after their interviews to verify and reflect on their contributions being accurate. It is thought the researcher's previous training dealing with the press in pressurised situation also helped minimise personal impact.

Glesne (2005: 119) suggests that the researcher should select research methods that will contribute to the trustworthiness of data. Patton (2001: 247) states that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researchers should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Denzin (1978: 14) outlines that to eliminate bias and increase the study's truthfulness of a proposition about some social phenomenon, triangulation is used. Kane (1985: 51) explains that 'theoretical triangulation uses several theories or perspectives to examine the same material.' McFee (1992: 70) explains that 'triangulation is fundamentally a device for improving validity by checking data either by using mixed methods or by involving a range of participants'. Moran-Eillis (2006: 50) further explains that triangulation means comparing many sources of evidence in order to determine accuracy of information.

Nisbet and Watt (1984: 85) apply the concept of triangulation to case study research:

> In order to guard against being misled, either in interview or by documents, you must check one informant against another and test what they say against any documents which exit. Similarly, observations in one context must be checked against others in comparable situations.

McFee (1992: 216) explains that 'triangulation within a method takes as its starting point the claim that "the reality" of a situation is not to be apprehended from a single viewpoint'. This entails bringing to bear two or more viewpoints on a particular occasion. In this research, the viewpoints of senior management, the communication professional and staff member are brought together with a view to characterising the occasion so as to accommodate, or account for all these viewpoints. A mixture of data gathering methods and techniques is also used in order to cross check, verify or otherwise—the accuracy of the data collected.

Most case studies are triangulated using either data sources or methodologies. This research is triangulated using both. Denzin (1989: 237) states that there are three data points: persons, situations, and time. This thesis seeks to use triangulation to address the criticisms levied on case study research by combining interviews from three unique viewpoints within each of the case study organisations. These data sources not only provide detail on the internal communication practices within the case study organisations but they also work to triangulate the information determining its accuracy by providing cross checks from varying viewpoints. This data is then cross-checked against the quantitative data and the secondary data. The fact that empirical data gathering occurs at different occasions also enables retrospective confirmation of the data from the first interviews and also aids triangulation. Following each interview, subjects were sent transcripts of the interview data to ensure the interviewees were happy with the information. Where possible interview data was correlated with event related documents and artefacts for example: website, newsletter, codes of ethics etc. in order to improve accuracy and completeness.

Jick (1979: 605) notes the following advantages of triangulation: (a) it produces more confident results; (b) it stimulates the development of creative ways of collecting data; (c) it can lead to thicker, richer data; (d) it can lead to the synthesis or integration of theories; (e) it can uncover contradictions, and (f) by virtue of its comprehensiveness, it may serve as the litmus test for competing theories.

3.10 Limitations

The limited scope of the sample and qualitative approach is balanced by the quantitative data collected. The results still need further investigation to be generalised. However, as the research gathers the opinions from three perspectives it provides in-depth analysis of the communication in the case study organisations.

Limitations of this study also include the use of the organisational communication matrix by companies in Ireland. Investigation of the matrix itself is outside the scope of this research, as it is a conclusion of the research rather than the focus of the research. The purpose of this research is to examine the internal communication practices of organisations in the public and private sector in Ireland and to compare them to the 'ideal' communication practice. It also aims to understand the role of ethics in IC in Ireland. Future studies may examine the use and effectiveness of the organisational communication matrix in various organisations and cultures to determine if there is validity in it beyond this research. The matrix presented in this thesis seeks to address the challenges inherent in organisational communication as outlined by the participants in this study. The matrix may provide an opportunity to start a further discussion about how organisational communication can be managed more effectively, and it also presents an opportunity for future research. Equally, the contribution to knowledge in relation to ethics is considerable and the thesis also presents an opportunity for further research.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has contained an account of methods. This account has outlined my choice of methodology from the debate over qualitative versus quantitative methods, the influence of similar studies, the choice of qualitative techniques selected and the research design employed. The account contained in this chapter also details the characteristics of the settings in which the research takes place, including details of how access was gained to these organisations and the issues surrounding the research techniques employed. In terms of sources of data, the chapter gives an account of primary sources including case studies, the exploratory interview, the use of

questionnaires, the choice of interview samples and the techniques employed. The chapter also includes an account of secondary sources utilised including organisational documentation, governmental publications, as well as texts from relevant research in the areas of positive psychology, behavioural science, business management, human resources, emotional intelligence and popular culture. The purpose of the through account of method is to demonstrate the credibility of the study undertaken.

This is the account of my research. It began by examining what constituted best practice in organisational communication. The fundamental research questions explored in this study were triggered by questions that had arisen for me as a communications professional working in the field. The formative framework of this research developed to encompass the role of ethics in communication. It was also influenced by the economic climate that the organisations operated within during the period of this research.

I believe that I have learned to think about IC in a more strategic manner due to this research. I can now operate as a communications practitioner helped by the instruments of communications theory. To quote Daniel Pink (2011: 27), too often there is 'a gap between what science knows and what business does'. The unique contribution this research makes is to enable other practitioners make use of its findings to improve their own practice and think more profoundly about how they approach their communication activities.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship of communication to the management of the organisation

The aim of this study is to critically examine the internal communication practices in both the public and private sector in Ireland, which is addressed in a number of ways such as the role IC plays in the dominant coalition. A number of issues in relation to the important communication relationships are assessed in this chapter. Support of the dominant coalition for communication has particular impact on the effectiveness of the discipline and is covered in detail. The issue of support from middle management is also addressed. There is discussion of the information obtained during the in-depth interviews as well as an analysis of the qualitative insights from the online survey. Participant comments centre on how senior management and middle management view IC and the role that IC plays in the dominant coalition. It also analyses how support for IC manifests itself.

Data provided in this chapter is shared from participant data under three sub-categories:

- The position of the communicator in the dominant coalition

- The support of the CEO for IC

- The support of middle managers for IC

4.0   *Location, Location*

Grunig et al. (2002:222) identify that if internal communications is to play a strategic role in improving the performance of a business, it must have direct access to the dominant coalition of the decision makers. Argenti (2007: 54) explains that when the communication function doesn't report to the CEO, its location within the organisation's hierarchy 'can present tremendous problems', if the person that the

communication function reports to has 'little knowledge about or lack of interest in communication'.

Argenti (2007: 54) highlights that

> Most multidivisional and multinational corporations have a communication department linked to the CEO and executive team in an advisory capacity. In practice, this typically means that the communication department is a staff function at corporate headquarters, from where it can advise senior decision-making team, and that the most senior communications practitioner has a direct reporting or advisory relationship to the Chief Executive Officer or even a seat on the executive board or senior management team.

Cornelissen (2012: 25) points out that Marks and Spencer and Sony are two examples of companies that have recently promoted their most senior communication director to a seat on the executive board. For this reason, it is of interest to establish the position of IC in Irish public and private sector organisations. If internal communications gets buried deep within the organisation and doesn't have access to the dominant coalition in a strategic manner, they become relegated to the position of 'town crier', the person who takes instructions and messages from senior management and delivers them to employees in a non-strategic manner. In this situation, IC is still viewed simply as a linear process in which the message is transmitted by the sender to a source, who then understands it and acts on the message.

The qualitative results demonstrate that in 2007 IC is located within the communications department in one of the organisations, in the HR department in two of the organisations, and in an as yet unidentified location within the fourth organisation (as the role was only under development). In 2010, we notice the shift in the position of IC; it is now positioned within the communications/corporate communications department in three of the four case study organisations. It still resides in the HR department in one of the organisations. The 2010 data correlates strongly with the quantitative data where 80% of IC functions are located within the Corporate Communications/Communication Department, 10% are located in the HR department, 5% are in the marketing department and the remainder are located in other areas of the business. Gayeski (2007: 37) argues that the position of IC is not necessarily pre-determined but he explains that IC 'should be placed within a unit

where communicators can best be involved in strategy [as IC] exists to promote corporate strategy, culture and vitality.'

The qualitative research enabled content analysis of IC documents to identify whether IC is influenced by the communications department situation and location in the organisation. The findings indicate that when IC sits within HR, it has a slightly more HR policy communications approach to communication. Whereas when IC sits within communications department is appears to have a more external/driven communications approach.

The qualitative data also provide insights into slight tensions between the internal and external communications functions when they are within the one overall department. In all of the organisations under study the external communication function has more staff. In the three organisations where IC sat in the communication department, the external function is seen as the more desirable, more serious, and more strategic by both the IC professionals and senior management. A 'Cinderella' syndrome results, where IC feels as if they are not being invited to the ball when it comes to strategic communications. These findings were revealed through the interview process and through probing and follow-up questions on issues mentioned by the participants. It was not possible to identify if this situation was reflected in the quantitative research.

Despite feeling slightly less advantaged than their external communication counterparts, all four of the case study organisations identified that IC is seen as its own distinct discipline. It is not seen as an add-on role to an existing job description; it is seen as a role in its own right. The quantitative data correlate weakly with this finding, with only 52.4% of respondents indicating that IC is seen as a distinct role. On this issue, there is significant difference between public and private organisations, with 61.5% of public organisations identifying IC as a distinct discipline/role, whereas only 37.5% of private companies identify it as such.

TABLE 4: ARE IC DEPARTMENTS STANDALONE DEPARTMENTS?

Is the communications department a stand alone department?
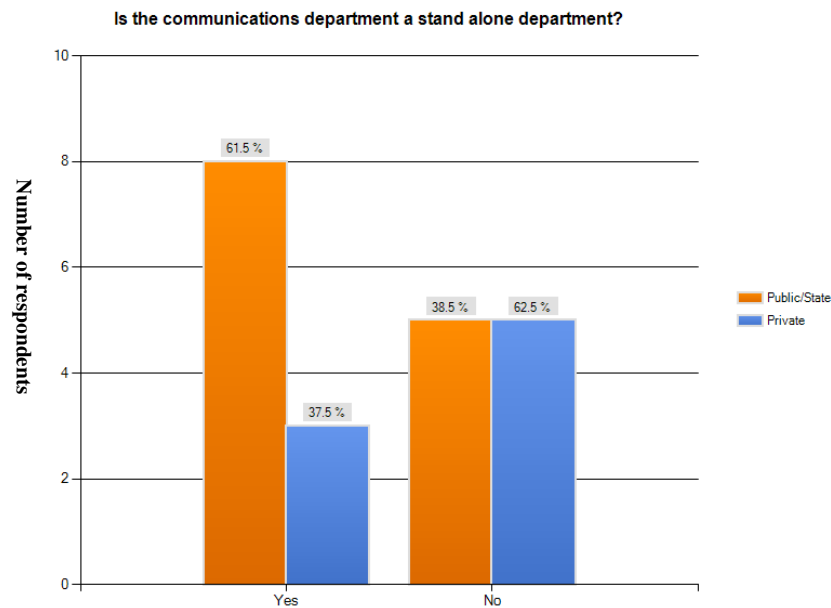
It is worth noting that between 2007/8 and 2010 the data illustrates an increase in the number of employees working in IC in three of the four case study organisations. Two organisations identify a 100% increase in personnel from 2 to 4 people. One organisation increases from 6-7 people, and one of the organisations remains unchanged. While the increases are significant in terms of percentages, the figures are still small with an average of 4 IC personal in each of the case study organisations in 2010. The increase in recruitment in the IC function during an economic downturn, however, demonstrates an understanding by senior management that IC is an area that requires investment.

4.1   Access to the Dominant Coalition

Being a member of the dominant coalition can spell the difference between the success and the failure of the IC function. In exploring the question of whether IC has access to the dominant coalition, the qualitative data establishes that none of the IC managers' report directly to the CEO. In the cases where IC sits within the communications department, it reports to the head of communication. In 2007, the head of communication was not a member of the dominant coalition. Although in 2010, the head of communication has been included as a member of the Executive

Management Team in one of these case study organisations. Where IC sits with HR, it reports to the head of HR who is a member of the dominant coalition. There is significant statistical difference with the quantitative data as they reveal that 23.1% of public sector, and 37.5% of private sector organisations identify that they are a member of the organisation's management team, contributing to strategic planning, and decision making.

TABLE 5: IC AS A MEMBER OF THE DOMINANT COALITION.
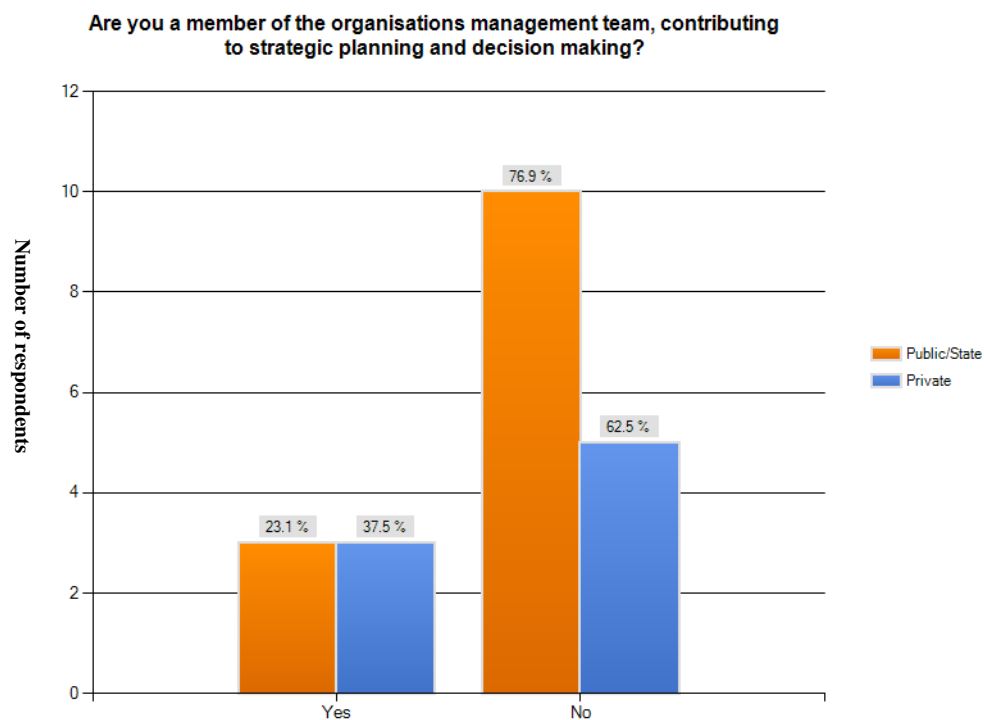
Significantly, in 2010, 50% of the case study organisations report to a head of function who is not part of the dominant coalition. This, in effect, means that IC is quite far removed from the dominant coalition, and is therefore unlikely to have access to strategic decision-making insights. It suggests that IC could be operating within the command and control tradition of communication in 50% of the organisations where IC professionals are instructed how and what to communicate instead of participating in the decision making process. This question will be examined in detail in later chapters.

A lack of a reporting relationship with the dominant coalition contrasts with Gillis's (2006:8) assertion that 'being in the dominant coalition or having access to it increases the likelihood of an excellent communication function'.

It is worth noting that in 2007, the external communication function was equally excluded from the organisation's dominant coalition. This indicates that communication (internal or external) was not seen as part of the modus operandi of the business. Being at a distance from the dominant coalition makes it difficult for the IC function to lend expertise to vital decision-making. Such reporting relationships can also present problems, especially if the reporting manager has little interest in, or knowledge of IC. This may explain why there is a certain tension between internal and external communication. If both are vying for the attention of the dominant coalition, an element of competition is not unexpected. Despite the potential for a degree of tension between IC and external communication, Gayeski (2007: 31) argues that it is helpful to create synergy and consistency in communication for optimisation of corporate image management. In 2010, the communications function has moved to executive level in one of the organisation. This change in reporting relationship has made the communications function more strategic, and there is a deliberate focus on improving both internal and external communications within this organisation.

As the IC Managers in the case study organisations are not officially part of the dominant coalition, they all compensate by cultivating relationships that give them access to the dominant coalition. The quotes below illustrate how the communication professionals explain this relationship.

> 'IC is represented through direct meetings with the CEO and his special advisors.'
> *(Head of Communication, HSE, 2007)*

> 'IC has access to the CEO and other senior managers when necessary.' *(IC Manager, BOI, 2007)*

> 'In my role, I have direct access to the decision makers when necessary.' *(EM editor, ESB, 2007)*

> 'Partners know to come to me if they need help.'
> *(IC Manager PWC, 2007)*

Gillis (2006:8) states that compensating 'by gaining informal access or reporting directly to the members of the coalition' is not uncommon. While this informal connection is positive, suggesting that the CEO values communication on certain issues, it also suggests that the CEO does not fully appreciate the power of communication in formulating and implementing organisational strategy.

The table below provides analysis of the numbers of employees in each organisation at its peak: the reporting relationship of IC to the dominant coalition and the numbers of people employed in the IC function between 2007 and 2010.

TABLE 6: ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTING RELATIONSHIP OF IC WITHIN CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS BETWEEN 2007-2010

HSE 112,000 employed at peak		ESB 7,858 employed at peak		BOI 15,952 employed at peak		PWC 2,000 employed at peak	
2007	2010	2007	2010	2007	2010	2007	2010
	Director of Communication (member of the dominant coalition)		Dep CEO (member of the dominant coalition)	Group HR (member of the dominant coalition)	Group (member of the dominant coalition)	Partner HE (member of the dominant coalition)	Partner HR (member of the dominant coalition)
Communications Manager (not part of the Executive)			Corporate Communications		Corporate Comms		
Internal Comms	Internal Comms	Internal Comms (in planning)	Internal Comms	Internal Comms	Internal Comms	Internal Comms	Internal Comms
2 working in IC	4 working in IC	2 working in IC	4 working in IC	6 working in IC	7 working in IC	2 working in IC	2 working in IC

4.2   CEO support for IC

Argenti et al. (2002: 45) state that IC 'can't be a solo act'. A minimal requirement for the success [of IC] is for it to be championed by the CEO. Kotter's (1982: 80) study on the role of general managers challenges the notion that effective executives spend their time working in their offices strategising and writing organisation plans. When Kotter followed 50 chief executives, he concluded that the most successfully used internal communication was face-to-face interaction, their primary tool to promote

business and achieve successful changes. Sims and Lorenzi's (1992: 75) leadership studies reaffirm the importance of effective communication in leadership, stating that effective leadership in the workplace requires a constant use of the tools of communication to create meaning, to share a vision and to build a common focus on the agenda for change. Madlock (2008) reinforces this finding in his research that demonstrates that the more skilled and competent a leader is at communicating, the more likely employees are satisfied with their jobs.

In the first round of interviews in 2007/8, all IC managers and senior management expressed that their CEO is very supportive of IC, rating it an average of 8/10. Employees are a little less enthusiastic but are still quite generous rating CEO commitment at an average of 6/10. Similar findings are reported in the qualitative research. An average of 7.8 out of 10 is allocated to CEO support for communication. A majority of the 21 organisations rate CEO commitment higher than the average score of 7.8/10. However, two of the organisations gave their respective CEOs a low score of 3/10. Interestingly, these organisations came from both public and private sector organisations. Such high ratings seemed somewhat at odds with the position of internal communications within the dominant coalition necessitating an exploration of these responses in the qualitative interviews. How and why was CEO commitment to internal communications rated so highly? What were the CEOs doing in relation to IC that facilitated such high ratings?

The data reveal that CEO commitment is often characterised by CEO attendance at IC events or support of IC initiatives such as CEO breakfasts, town hall meetings, branch visits and team meetings. The quotes below illustrate this:

> The CEO demonstrates his commitment …by supporting the newsletter…the intranet…and other change initiatives and by the large number of emails he sends to staff. *(IC Manager, HSE, 2007)*

> Management support for communication is manifest in their attendance at town hall meetings…team meetings…staff briefinges… and developmental programmemes. . . .It is also manifest by freeing staff to attend off-site briefings. *(Corporate Change Manager and Staff Member, ESB, 2007)*

> [The CEO] writes a lot on his own IC to staff himself. He takes IC very seriously. He writes to staff frequently on any

development of significance that happens within the Group.
(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)

These findings are significant because they demonstrate a level of commitment to IC by the CEO. However, worryingly, they also demonstrate a lack of understanding that effective IC is more than attending communication events. It involves establishing a culture of open two-way communication within the organisation. This finding is concerning because it demonstrates not only a lack of understanding of effective IC on behalf of the CEO but also on behalf of the IC manager. Hargie and Tourish (2009: 396) explain that 'leaders of the organisation must embody proactive communication in their day-to-day work, and model appropriate behaviour for each tier of the organisation'. The research data reveal that the CEOs are demonstrating a certain level of commitment to IC, but they are not focusing on communication as key to the management of employee relationships at every level in the organisation. Communication is not being embedded in the organisation as part of the managerial ethos. IC is still viewed as something that takes place separate to the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Support and attendance at IC events is a positive development because successful organisations need a CEO who can master communication. However, CEOs cannot create effective IC alone. Instead, they must lead the communication effort while also establishing expectations that management will follow their lead. According to Quirke (2008: 23) 'successful leaders understand the importance of good communication and they plan time to make themselves visible to their people'. Collins (2011: 111) highlights Jim Burke, the CEO of Johnson and Johnson as an example of a leader who understood the importance of IC. According to Collins, Burke spent 40% of his time communicating the organisational credo. He believed that the fact that he and his board allocated time for communication sent a message to all managers at all levels that they too were expected to make time available for communication. In this research, this is the area where a majority of the case study organisations are faltering. The importance of IC is not inculcated in managers and employees. The result, as acknowledged by participants, is that communication is not optimum.

[There are] shortfalls in IC.
(IC Manager, HSE, 2007)

> [CEO commitment to IC] doesn't translate into effective
> communication. ….Management may believe communication is
> effective but, in general, employees would have a totally
> different viewpoint. …they would say it is on the low side of
> poor.
> *(Staff Member, BOI, 2007)*

As Smythe (2007: 15) outlines that the CEO is the person who creates a culture that encourages people to participate and communicate it is understandable why the case study organisations identify shortcomings in IC. Smythe's view is shared by CIPD (2011: 3) who see developing a vision and inspiring others to deliver it as the primary objective for leaders. Crozier (2011: 84) also emphasises the need for CEOs to 'lead from the front'. He demonstrates how increased CEO visibility promotes a proactive, transparent and honest attitude which improves employee participation during change.

Interestingly, the findings of this research indicate that staff appears sympathetic to the challenge of IC, and they are prepared to give management credit for the efforts they make.

> Communication with over 120,000 people presents difficult
> challenges and I have no suggestion how it can be improved.
> *(Staff Member, HSE, 2007)*

Only one of the organisations has embedded communication into the culture of the organisation. This firm sees communication as 'part of the firm's organisational structure'. They state that communication is a core organisational value in maintaining the firm's competitive advantage and vitality. In this organisation, the partners are the force behind IC, and they lead by example, holding regular briefings with their staff. Their actions function as guidelines for the actions of other employees.

> The Partners understand they are the people who must be the internal
> communicators and that it is not something that is done by the IC department
> alone. *(HR Director, PWC, 2008)*

This organisation embodies effective IC as it is seen as part of every partner's job description. It is also part of the firm's modus operandi. In the first set of interviews in 2007, this organisation demonstrated a culture of honest, timely internal communication, showing respect and concern for employees and creating channels for effective upward and downward communication. By 2010, changes occurred in this firm that placed significant pressure on the IC structures. For a period of time, IC did

suffer before being rectified. The IC difficulties experienced by the firm during the economic downturn are explored later in this chapter.

4.3   Middle Management Support for IC

Gayeski (2007: 190) highlights that 'successful organisations need both top executives as well at frontline managers who practice good communication'. Wagner and Hartner (2006: xiii) explain that, 'great managers are the organisation's glue. They create and hold together scores of folks who power high performing companies.' They also explain (2006: 201) that the level of 'employee engagement appears to change dramatically not with macroeconomic swings, but only through better managers'.

Smyth (2008: 23) agrees, outlining that communication and engagement lie in the gift of the local manager or supervisor. Unfortunately, too often positions of managerial responsibility are given as a reward for good performance rather than on the manager's ability to motivate and communicate effectively with their team. Equally, unfortunately middle managers are promoted to their positions without realising that effective communication is part of their role as an effective manager.

The research data from this study reveal that middle management in the case study organisations do not see communication as an essential part of their job. In both sets of interviews in 2007/8 and 2010, support from managers for IC is rated an average of 6/10. Quotes from participants indicate that the level of communication depends on the individual manager or department. As communication is not embedded in the culture of most of the organisations, it is not surprising that support for it varies between managers.

> Some managers are supportive but others do not realise the value
> or need for IC.
> *(Communication Manager, HSE, 2007)*

Similar findings are identified in the quantitative data where an average of 5.6/10 is the rating given to middle managers support for internal communication. There is no significant difference between either the public or private sector organisation on this

question. This lack of commitment to communication is unfortunate as Mintzberg (1989: 18) comments that

> The manager does not leave meetings or hang up the telephone in order to get back to work. In large part, communication is his or her work.

The lack of consistency in communication also points to the fact that a climate of communication has not been established within the organisations. Communication is not viewed as a core value and is not included as part of every senior manager's performance review. Smith (2008: 27) outlines the difficulty that this presents as middle managers are 'important agents in the delivery of communication to the organisation'. She explains that 'managers need to be effective communicators; an e-mail will simply not suffice'. Quirke (2008: 39) identifies another challenge posed by poor manager communication. He identifies the cost of poor line manager communication: emphasising that communication creates higher employee satisfaction, reduces staff turnover and creates higher customer satisfaction which in turn equals higher profitability. The data from this study indicates that only one organisation views the importance of communication in this manner.

The fact that communication is not part of the organisation's dominant coalition and is not identified as a key performance indicator for managers leads many managers to view IC as an optional extra.

> Some managers view communication as something they have to do and they just fly through team briefings.
> *(Staff Member, ESB, 2007)*

> I would say the concept of strategic communication is not fully understood.
> (*Communications Director, HSE, 2010*)

This point is further strengthened by the assertion of some participants, that even when managers are educated about the importance of effective communication, there is no follow-through if the communication does not occur. This links back to the need for support from senior management for IC. If support for IC is not evident from the top of the organisation, it will not be taken seriously by middle management. The two quotes below illustrate this point.

> We can't instruct managers how to communicate. We can't make it a key performance indicator.
> *(IC Manager, HSE, 2007)*

> The extent to which communication is effective within the Business Units depends very much on the individual units…we can only advise and educate.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2007)*

Hargie and Tourish (2009: 394) explain the

> responsibility for communication lies with management, rather than with an isolated individual secreted in a separate office far away from where line managers do their daily work… the main role of [IC] should be to support line management and complement their efforts, rather than act as a substitute for it.

The data from this research reveal that too often IC is seen as the role of the IC department. After all, why else would there be a position of internal communications within the organisation? This attitude by middle management persists in these organisations because senior management do not demonstrate otherwise. In fact, one could argue that senior management reinforce this message by associating internal communications with staff town hall briefings, newsletters, and communication events that are organized by the IC department rather than by associating it with manager's key performance indicators. The absurdity of this approach to IC is also abundantly clear when the number of employees in each organisation is examined:

- 112,000 employees in the HSE, and there are four internal communication personnel.
- 7,856 employees in ESB, and there are four internal communication personnel.
- 15,952 employees in the Bank of Ireland, and there are seven internal communications personnel.
- 300 employees in PWC, and there are two internal communications personnel.

Interestingly, the 2010 data from the Bank of Ireland demonstrate improvements in the rating of middle managers' support in IC from 5 to 7/10. The data reveal that as the economic downturn continues senior leaders within this case study organisation face considerable challenges and pressures and change has become constant and inevitable. The research reveals that this leads to a change in mangers' opinions about the importance of IC. What is interesting in the data is a reference to managers' 'demand for IC'. This reference highlights that managers want to learn about the

changes taking place in the organisation. They want to receive communication from senior management. They themselves are more motivated and engaged to listen to senior management's messages. Worryingly, it doesn't indicate that middle managers are any more interested in communicating effectively with their staff. It merely indicates that middle managers are interested in finding out what is happening within the organisation to inform themselves.

The 2010 data also reveal that in three of the four organisations, including Bank of Ireland, there is still no formal structure for cascading information to employees via their managers.

At this point, it is important to address another interesting finding in the 2010 qualitative data. PWC had been identified in 2007 as having established a culture of effective manager/partner internal communication in their firm. The 2010 data reveal deterioration in manager communication. The reason for this deterioration provides significant learning. Interview participants explain that during the Celtic Tiger managers had positive messages to convey to staff. However, as the economic climate deteriorated, changes had to be made within the organisation, and the news which had to be communicated to staff was not as pleasant. The firm discovered that managers were not keen to communicate negative messages to staff and therefore staff briefings deteriorated. When times were good and messages were positive, managers were content to brief staff accordingly, but when the messages were more difficult, managers were less eager to communicate with staff. This deterioration in communication illustrates an interesting challenge for IC during periods of change and it will be explored further in Chapter 8.

4.4   Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 focuses on the communication relationships within the organisation and the role that IC plays in the dominant coalition. The data explore the position of IC within public and private sector organisations in Ireland and establish whether it is manifesting itself as a key strategic management function embraced by the dominant coalition and managers alike.

The chapter demonstrates that IC is predominantly situated within the corporate communication/communications department. The other departments most commonly featured as a location for the IC function are the human resources department and on occasion the marketing department. The research also indicates that the work of IC is somewhat influenced by the department in which it sits. When IC is situated in the communications department, it has as strong public relations focus. When IC is situated in the human resources department, it has a more policy and incentives focus, and when it is situated in the marketing department, it has a brand focus.

Section 2 examines the importance of access to the dominant coalition and identifies if IC in the case study organisations has access to the dominant coalition. The research aims to establish if IC is factored into strategic decision making and planning within the public and private sector organisations in Ireland. The results of the research show that IC is not well integrated as part of the organisations' strategic management. A majority of the organisations don't take arguments and recommendations of IC into account for policy making. However, there are indications that IC is gaining importance with an increase in staff and a rapprochement to the dominant coalition in some of the organisations. Therefore, the future trends would expect that the importance of IC as a strategic management function will continue to increase further in the years to come, provided IC can prove its worth.

Section 3 explores the importance of leadership support for IC. The data reveal high ratings for CEO support for IC, although further investigation reveals that CEO support manifests itself through attendance at IC led communication initiatives. However, in a majority of the case study organisations IC is not seen as an essential role for all managers. Given these findings, it is reasonable to argue that both senior management and the IC managers lack a strategic awareness of how effective IC should actually operate in their organisations. If they had such knowledge, they would rate support for IC very highly only if it were prioritised and linked to middle management performance. The data indicates how only one of the case study organisations has established a culture of effective IC within their organisation. This case study clearly demonstrates how leadership support from the top is essential to effective IC. The importance of leadership support for IC is reinforced by Crozier's

113

(2011: 84) finding that communication must be led from the front. Although the other three case study organisations in the study demonstrate a level of support for IC from the senior management, this does not translate into action on the ground with middle managers.

The final section delves into the importance of managers' support for IC. The research demonstrates that when IC is not seen as a top priority for senior management, it is not seen as a top priority for middle management. It is interesting to note that there is broad similarity between both the quantitative and qualitative data, and there are also strong correlations across both public and private sector organisations. Both data sets reveal mixed levels of support from middle management in their organisations. These findings are a concern as Quirke (2008: 106) explains that survey upon survey evidences that the most important and preferred communication source for employees is their line manager. The findings are in line with Rusk and Trainor's (2011: 5) evidence that line managers don't think highly of communications.

The improvement in rating for middle managers' commitment to IC in one organisation in 2010 can be viewed as both positive and negative. It is positive in so far as managers are requesting and motivated about receiving IC. It is negative in so far as there is still an absence of a formal system to pass this information on to front line employees. The 2010 data also reveal further challenges posed by the economic climate. The research demonstrates that managers who are used to briefing their staff are less inclined to do so when they have negative messages to deliver. This is a significant finding highlighting a challenge for communications during turbulent times.

Overall, the data find that IC still faces significant challenges. IC professionals must link their function to business strategies if they want to improve their standing with the dominant coalition. The data provide interesting findings in relation to the opportunities and threats posed by difficult economic circumstances for organisations. On one hand, the data can provide an opportunity to demonstrate the power of IC as managers are very keen to listen to IC. On the other hand, the data create a significant challenge as managers do not want to communicate negative messages to their staff.

114

Taken in their entirety, the findings in this chapter suggest that considerable improvements need to be made if IC is to be seen as a strategic management function.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGY

5.0 Organisation and purpose of the IC function

An outcome-based, results-orientated communications function must be managed strategically. This chapter examines whether the IC function in the public and private sector in Ireland is strategically managed. It will also assess if there is a correlation between strategic communication and how the function is viewed by the dominant coalition.

This chapter assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the case study organisations in regard to their research, IC strategy, communication goals and objectives and their method of measurement and evaluation. Consideration is given to best international research alongside the data accrued from the interviews conducted in the qualitative research and the data gathered in quantitative research. Finally, it will examine if the IC uses a broader strategic awareness of the key business issues facing the organisation, to contribute to communications development, or does a lack of such insight limit the capacity of the IC function.

5.1 Audit

Audit or situational analysis is the plenary activity that forms the backdrop to the successful development of a strategic internal communications strategy. Holtz (2004: 57) agrees and recommends that the logical place to start developing a communications strategy is to carry out an IC audit. The qualitative data from this study reveals that only one of the case organisations has undertaken a comprehensive IC audit encompassing the communication needs of staff, in order to tailor their communication activities accordingly. A participant from this case study organisation explains:

> The organisational audit highlights areas where communication
> is poor and enables us to pinpoint why communication is better
> in some areas than in others. We can also then break the results
> down further to find out how communication is perceived within
> each Business Unit.
> *(IC Manger, ESB, 2007)*

As identified by this participant, an audit should provide an overview of the communication needs with sufficient detail that someone not directly involved would understand the issues driving the need for communication. Without such data, it is difficult to identify areas of particular concern or sensitivity. Lack of data also makes it more challenging to identify how communication can be improved and differentiated from past failed communication practices. Therefore, the fact that only one of the case study organisations has engaged in a communications audit is a worrying finding.

Without an audit or situational analysis, it is impossible to appraise accurately how the organisation communicates today, in order to establish what communication professionals must do tomorrow. In order to plan successfully for the future, it is important to take an in-depth look at the organisation. Without the assessment of the capabilities and resources of the organisation the best conceived communications plan is merely a wish list. Without data, communicators are only left with their intuitions. Often organisational leaders will not place high value on communication when they perceive that, unlike other management functions, communications does not measure its activity and cannot demonstrate its business need. For senior executives who value analytical skills, communication should avoid appearing soft, abstract, and immeasurable. An example of this non-analytical approach to communications research is demonstrated by one of the case study organisations when the participant explains:

> There is a sense of disconnect within the *organisation.*
> *(Communications Manager, HSE, 2007)*

Unfortunately, with no statistical data support this 'sense', the communications manager's insights are of little tangible benefit to the success of communications within the organisation. Assertions not based in fact are easily challenged by any senior manager who thinks otherwise. Without the support of concrete facts and

figures, IC dooms itself to the role of technical support function. Organisations need actual, analytical information on which to base strategic decisions.

Auditing and situational analysis also facilitate the establishment of a benchmark against which future achievement can be measured. Research data provides communications professionals with the ability to establish concrete not abstract measurement. As senior leaders are held accountable by measurable results a communication function with the ability to talk the facts and figures language of senior management, it is more likely to be viewed as an integral part of the organisation strategic management function. The sole purpose of internal communications is to help the organisation achieve its business goals. This is difficult when a measurable baseline is not established. The fact that only one in four of the case study organisations undertake audit or situational analysis does not bode well for the strategic development of the IC function. Hargie and Tourish (2009: 3) outline that the case study organisations in this research are not unique in this approach to communication as 'bizarrely, organisations often seem to determine whether they are effectively communicating without recourse to any kind of objective data. A moment's reflection shows that this is not a credible approach'.

The data from the qualitative research is somewhat more encouraging, with 52% of the 21 organisations identifying that they do audit the internal communication needs of their employees. Interestingly, 33% of public organisations undertake research of some kind whereas only 19% of private companies undertake research to inform the development of their communication programmeme. Further data from the qualitative research reveal that the organisations who do undertake research use a variety of sources both, primary and secondary, internal and external. Employee surveys are the single biggest tools used, while existing data from surveys such as the 'Great Place to Work' are also popular. The data do not demonstrate a particular preference for research methodologies between public and private sector organisations.

TABLE 7: IC RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN IN IC OUTLINED IN THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

	Public/State	Private	Response Text
1	X		online and hard copy survey Staff very willing to change the way they work
2		X	Great Places to Work Survey. A number of results from the survey have shown the need for an internal communications strategy which is now being drafted. Results showed there is a lack of trust in management and a lack of work-life balance in the company.
3	X		Research conducted by an external agency brought in by HR/Communications.
4	X		N/a
5		X	surveys findings after employee town halls finding from feedback slides
6		X	Not research based other than the internal communications specialist's own knowledge
7		X	research was done by Group HR 1 year ago. There was interest in hearing more about the direction and future plans os the company. This has resulted in top level management meetings being filtered back down to teams. Individuals are encouraged to ask questions, 'Don't say no one told you, if you didn't ask'.
8	X		The strategy was in part based on an employee opinion survey and in part based on external research.
9	X		Purely quantitive reseach used - number of intranet hits, readership figures for newletters etc. Only unexpected finding was that staff profess not to read the weekly newsletter however readership stats disprove that.
	Public/State	**Private**	**Response Text**
10	X		Survey Monkey was used to gather information from staff. Response level was 25%. When asked for their preferred method of communication, email was the no 1 choice, with face to face no 2, particularly around financial and operational performance. Respondents also indicated that a new revamped intranet site would be desirable.
11	X		We surveyed staff, middle management is where the breakdown in communications occurs, they have been poor at giving staff information and also poor at giving staff feedback to management.

Research provides a temperature check on employee attitudes while also providing a benchmark for future progress. It identifies current gaps between strategy and reality and establishes what forms of communication are the most effective. As Quirke (2008: 58) stresses:

it is important to have a reality check to identify what the current perceptions held by employees are. This in turn will identify any gaps between employees' current attitudes and behaviours, and what is needed from them into the future to make the strategy succeed.

Failure to undertake a communications audit also deprives employees of an opportunity to feed their views upwards. This does not bode well for employee engagement as Smythe (2007: 5) indicates that

employee engagement is significantly driven by the degree to which people are usefully included in the decision making process both day-to-day and in big ticket change.

The data from this research in the area of audit demonstrates room for improvement in both the public and private sector organisations in Ireland

5.2 Plan

Effective internal communication relies on a strategic planning process guided by an IC strategy. It provides the criteria for making the day-to-day decisions within the IC department. Too often the management practices of communications professionals contribute to the perception that communication is a soft, intangible, and immeasurable skill. This stems from the fact that communicators do not link their work to the broader organisational picture. They do not position communications as part of the strategic planning process of the organisation. According to Miller and Dess (1996: 5),

Strategy refers to either the plans made, or the actions taken to help an organisation fulfil its intended purpose.

Data from this research reveal that only one of the four case study organisations has a communication strategy which outlines a cause-and-effect relationship between the communications activities and the achievement of the organisation strategic objectives. This organisation is a public sector organisation. The quantitative data reveal more positive findings: 47.6% the companies indicate that they have a communications strategy; 46.2% of the public companies, and 50% of the private companies identify that they have a communications strategy.

TABLE 8: DO YOU HAVE AN IC STRATEGY DOCUMENT?

Do you have an internal communications strategy document?
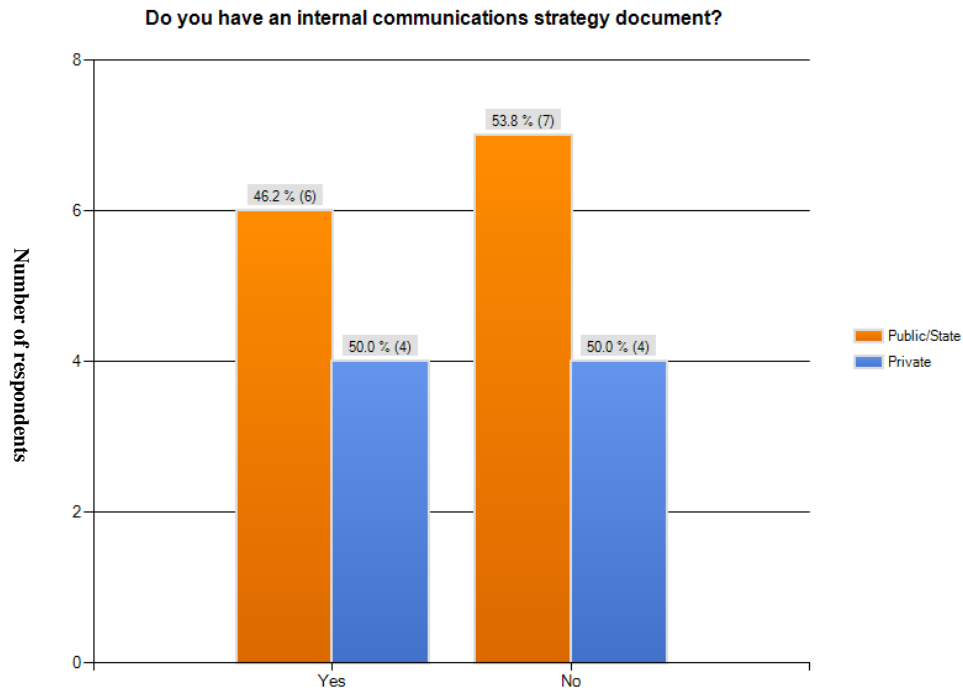
It is interesting to note that while more public sector organisations conducted research to underpin their communications programmemes, more private sector organisations have a developed internal communications strategy. This stands in contrast to the qualitative research which identified that only one of the case study organisations, a public organisation, had a developed IC strategy.

It is worth noting that two of the case study organisations explain that while they did not have a formal communication strategy document, their internal communications activities are based on the company's business research and business strategy as well as best practice in IC.

> The strategy [under development] draws on information available about the company's internal and external environment and information from best practice *(IC Manager, BOI, 2007)* and draws on information from our Gallup employee engagement survey and the external MORI survey *(Corporate Communications Manager, BOI, 2007).*

> Each year a document is prepared outlining the IC initiatives that will be undertaken in order to meet the firm's corporate objectives *(IC Manager, PWC, 2007)*

These findings are somewhat encouraging as Smith (2008: 19) emphasizes that the biggest obstacle to the progress of internal communications 'has been the lack of business focus.' She explains that too often practitioners get stuck delivering messages rather than planning and strategising. Smith (2008: 21) advises that 'internal communication should be planned, coordinated and linked to business strategy'.

Gathering data from the broader corporate picture is positive and is integral to producing strategic communications. Failing to capture the insights of the target audience though does weaken the process. Failing to complete a strategic internal communications document also suggests that strategic planning is not a top priority. These findings demonstrate areas for improvement as
Grunig (2006: 6) notes

> effective organisations are able to achieve their goals because they choose goals that are valued by their strategic constituencies both inside and outside the organisation.

Ironically, a strategic communications plan saves time in the long run because the communications professional can rest assured that they are working on the right activities that will deliver results for the organisation. A plan also identifies the communication activities that are not strategic, and it empowers the communication professional with the data to identify and eliminate wasted effort. The case study organisations benefited from Roger D'Aprix's (1996: 68) advice that 'there are typically five or six major business issues that are critical to success- things like the competition, the need to control costs, customer satisfaction, product and service quality, or issues peculiar to the business industry'. Using D'Aprix's issues as a guide would enable the communication professionals to zero in on specific issues that must be addressed in their communications strategy.

5.3   Set Goals and Objectives

As Stephen Covey (1989:98) advises, 'begin with the end in mind'. An excerpt from the book, *Alice's adventures in Wonderland,* identifies the need for communicators to have a clear vision of their end goal.

> Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I should go from here?
> Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.
> Alice: I don't much care where –
> Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

The reality is that if IC is to survive and prosper as a strategic management function in the corporate world it must have a clear vision of what it wants to contribute to the organisation. In order to do so it must have measurable goals and objectives. The goals and objectives are developed during the planning process and must support the organisation's strategy and business objectives in a measurable way.

Goals are broad, general statements that carry no built-in measurement. As Bedeian and Zammuto (1991: 26) explains, goals 'describe the future desired results toward which present efforts are directed'. The research data reveals that all four case study organisations and all the quantitative respondents are able to provide information on the overall goal of their IC. Their goals include

> Keep employees informed and encourage staff to embrace change.
> *(HSE, 2007)*
>
> Improve staff's understanding of where the company is going.
> *(ESB, 2007)*
>
> Foster employee engagement.
> *(BOI, 2007)*
>
> Make staff feel part of the organisation and make them aware of the important role they play in developing the business.
> *(PWC, 2007)*
>
> A selection of the goals from the quantitative data are the following:
>
> To improve communications with all key stakeholders.
> To create brand ambassadors.
> To focus on operational excellence and innovation.

As the data reveal, goals are broad statements of desired outcomes, and all the research participants are able to outline these. Objectives add information to goals. Objectives are specific and measurable and usually a number of objectives are used to achieve a particular goal. Objectives should build towards the overall goal, and they should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timed). In

deciding on the objectives, the constraints of the communication environment should be taken into consideration; otherwise, the objectives will not be achievable.

The research data reveal that none of the organisations in the qualitative or quantitative research have SMART objectives. On the whole, their IC objectives are vague and don't relate in specific ways to the business objectives of the organisation. For example,

- Keeping people informed about the changes taking place in the HSE.
- Outlining to staff how they could align themselves and their work to the HSE's new priorities.
- Encouraging staff to embrace change.
- Encouraging managers to communicate effectively.
  (HSE, 2007)

None of the above objectives makes it clear what the end result will actually look like and how it will be measured. For this reason, they would not be categorised as SMART objectives. In this set of objectives, the research was particularly interested in the objective, 'Encouraging managers to communicate effectively'. When explored in more depth during the interview, it was revealed that the IC department could not instruct managers how to communicate it could only encourage effective communication. It was suggested by the IC manager that until performance management incorporated IC as a key performance indicators (KPI) that it would not be embraced by managers. As there were no plans to introduce such KPIs, it appeared that the IC manager had resigned himself to the non-delivery of this objective. Failing to consider the communications environment within the organisation before setting communication objectives is another weakness in this organisation.

What follows is a sample of the IC objectives from the other case study organisations.

- To outline company objectives and decisions to staff.

- Improve staffs' understanding of where the company is going and why it is going there.
- To show staff the role they play in achieving the company's objectives.
  (ESB, 2008)
- Provide tools and channels of communications for line managers, helping them play an important role in ensuring that employees feel they are well informed, know what is going on, and have the information they need to do their job.

- Fosters employee engagement through the delivery of honest managed free-flowing communication.
  (BOI, 2008)
- To increase staff engagement, making them feel they are part of the organisation and making them aware of the important role they play in developing the business and maintaining clients.
  (PwC, 2008)

While laudable, none of the objectives outline specific measurable outcomes. When setting SMART objectives, communication professional should focus on the following questions: What are we trying to accomplish with our communication? What do we want to see change as a result of our communication? Do we want to see attitudes change? Do we want to increase knowledge? Do we want to change behaviour in relation to certain issues? Answering these questions will help frame SMART objectives. The research data above indicate that the case study organisations have not taken this approach to identifying their objectives.

The research identifies that the case study organisations suffer from what Pophal (2009: 2) explains as

> identifying that you want to 'increase awareness doesn't provide enough specific direction to allocate resources money and effort— appropriately. By how much? Your goal needs to take into consideration where you are today and where you would like to be (specifically) so you can focus on closing the gap.

The thesis also notes that the two-way symmetrical model of communication outlined by Grunig (1992: 56), which enables an organisation to stay close to his various stakeholders, is notably absent from the case studies communication objectives. Communication objectives should incorporate ways of listening to employees as well as addressing the processes of developing and delivering the messages. The research data indicate a focus more on one-way dissemination of information. To practice IC, according to the two-way symmetrical model, the communications professional must have a way for employees to initiate communication. They must then use this information to develop good quality relationships.

Unfortunately for the case study organisations, research by Cutlip et al. (1994: 406), Pavlik (1987: 79) and Grunig (1984: 7) all reinforce the need to have SMART (strategic, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed) two-way communication objectives. Without SMART objectives, Macnamara (1993: 57) explains it is

impossible to measure success. And according to Mintzberg cited in Kiechel (1984: 8) communication activities that are not strategically planned are more difficult to implement with 'only 10 per cent of strategies getting implemented'.

The results of the qualitative research are no more encouraging when it comes to examining communication objectives. When asked, 'What corporate and business objectives set for your organisation are supported by the work done in your IC programmeme?' the answers from the 21 communicators who completed the online survey are equally vague and at times discouraging.

They include

- Improving engagement with external clients.
- Reaching programmeme targets.
- Group Strategy: focus on "operational excellence" and an innovative, customer oriented and result oriented approach.
- Focus on internal and external growth (have yet to find specific objectives to achieve the above.)
- We've no internal comms objectives, although some might argue we do!
- Don't know.
- Not sure.
- Not applicable-no joined up strategy.
- None.
- Business growth.
- Employee retention and satisfaction.
- Development of a commercial culture and capability.

The researcher is cognisant that this question was an open-ended question on the online survey. Therefore, it would have taken participants longer to complete. It is possible that in the interest of completing the survey in a timely manner, the participants did not spend time answering this question. However, it is reasonable to argue that if the participating organisations had SMART objectives as part of their communication strategy, it would not have taken long to include even some of them. The fact that no such objectives are detailed indicates the likelihood that SMART objectives do not exist in relation to IC. The fact that a number of participants openly indicate they have no idea how internal communications contributes to the business is a very discouraging finding and identifies considerable areas for the improvement of IC.

5.4   Research, Measurement and Evaluation of IC

What gets measured gets done.

What gets counted, counts.

Measurement and evaluation can be done at the input, output, and outcome stages of communication activities. This means that measurement can take place before, during, and after communication activities. Measuring the input before undertaking any communication facilitates planning and provides a benchmark for later measurement. Measuring the output entails measuring the communication activity itself, for example, the number of newsletters produced each year. Measuring the outcome evaluates the attitudinal, behavioural, or knowledge changes that have occurred as a result of the communication activities. If communicators measure only the output of the communication activities, they are missing the measurement that really drives the business, the outcome that the communication has on the employees. Merely measuring outputs does not tell the company about the broader results or changes that have been achieved as a result of effective IC. From a strategic point of view, it makes sense to try and track outcome (impact) indicators because they get to the heart of how and if the communication interventions have made a difference.

Measuring the outcomes of communication activity starts with setting clear strategic objectives. Without clear objectives, it is impossible to measure the success of the communication activities. For this reason, it is not surprising that the data reveals that a majority of the organisations in this research are unable to measure the outcomes of their communication activities. For the case study organisations, delivering the communication activities themselves (the output) has become the measurement of success.

The data reveal that effective measurement is hindered for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is a lack of research at the outset to facilitate benchmarking. Secondly, there is a lack of SMART objectives for IC function. And thirdly, the aims of IC are not linked closely to the business objectives of the organisation.

While there are occasional effective measurements of particular projects, on the whole, the research indicates that 100% of the case study organisations fail to measure outputs effectively. While the findings of this research indicate that evaluation and

measurement is poor, MacNamara (2006, online) indicates that the case studies are not alone as the reality on the ground is that evaluation is still not fully embraced. Broom and Dozier (1990: 414) echo these sentiments explaining that the majority of practitioners ... still prefer to 'fly by the seat of their pants' and use intuition rather than intellectual procedures to solve public relations problems.

The fact that the case study organisations are no worse than a majority of organisations is no cause for complacency. Senior leaders in organisations seek research and measurement in order to make sound business decision and they will expect no less from their communications department, if it is to be considered a strategic management function. Lindenmann (2003: 7) points out that evaluation is the 'key to any successful public relations communications effort.'

When examining the qualitative data, the results indicate that only 36.8% of these organisations are able to produce tangible results for their IC. The data indicate that 36.4% of public organisations and 37.5% of private organisations indicate that they can produce tangible results for their internal communication.

TABLE 9: ARE YOU ABLE TO PRODUCE TANGIBLE RESULTS FOR MANAGEMENT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION?
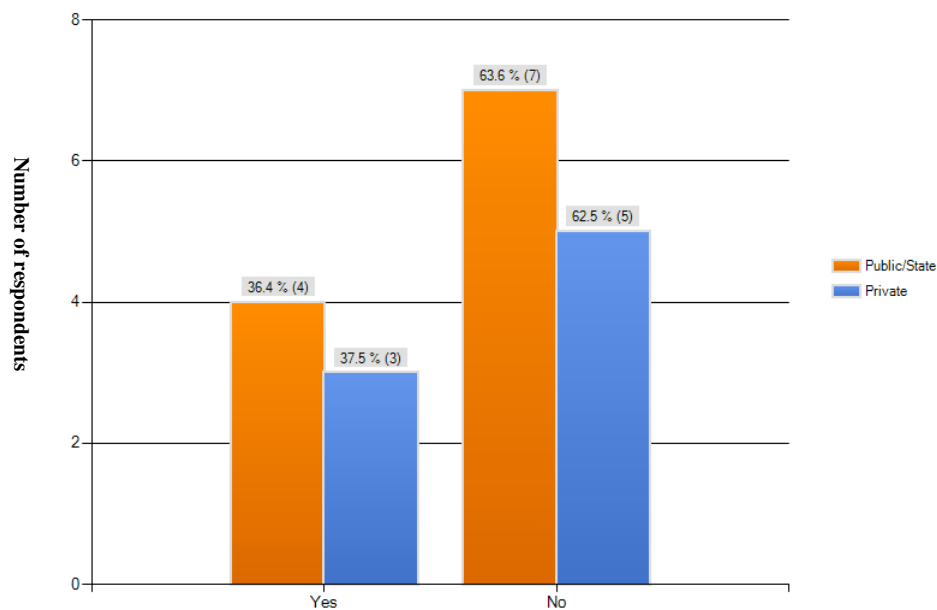
Again it is interesting to note that the public sector produce more tangible results than the private sector. Looking at these results, it is important to note that the research cannot differentiate whether these measurements are focused on outcomes or outputs. This level of analysis was possible in the in-depth interviews as the researcher probed the responses of the interviewees. It is also worth noting that most of the interviewees in the qualitative research are content with output measurements. Most have not even realised the significance of not measuring the outcome of their communication activities.

5.4.1 Examples of measurement

When measurement is conducted in the case study organisations, it focuses more on measuring success by outputs than by outcomes. For the case study organisations, delivering the communication initiatives has become the measurable goal. They do not measure the impact of the communication is terms of its outcome.

The HSE measures the number of newsletters it produces each year on time and on budget. This is an output measurement. An outcome measurement would be to measure the impact of the newsletter on staff. If the HSE had developed a SMART objective they would have had the ability to undertake more substantial measurement. An example of a SMART objective is:

> To increase by April 2012 (2 months) the number of employees, from 20% to 50%, who understand the new quality programmeme and quality initiatives taking place in the organisation, by publishing 2 monthly articles with staff members involved in the initiatives.

The benefits of such a SMART objective include the following:
Firstly, IC has a guide in relation to the type of stories they should include in the newsletter. Secondly, they are able to top and tail the stories to reinforce the quality message to staff. Thirdly, IC has a target, agreed in advance with senior management, outlining what success will look like. And fourthly, they have a timeframe in which the project was to be completed.

In contrast to the above example, interviews with the HSE reveal no such objectives for the newsletter. A content analysis of the newsletters also indicates no apparent overall objective. Stories are included as they are submitted from organisations across the HSE. They have value as individual stories, but they do not culminate in the delivery of a single unified message about the HSE.

Another of the case study organisations also focuses primarily on measuring outputs. The BoI sees undertaking the employee engagement survey as a result in its own right. The reality is, in fact, that if the findings of the survey are acted upon and deliver improvements in organisational performance, only then can it be considered successful.

The research notes that in 2010, a change project in which IC was very much involved did in fact deliver significant measurable outcome orientated results. This project will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9, but this measurement was the exception rather than the rule.

The ESB focused on the number of times their intranet was updated rather than on how the content was influencing staff. The reality is that simply counting the number of hits on a website is no longer enough. Communication professionals need to have extra business dimensions to their measurement.

Equally, PwC encourages face-to-face communication, but it fails to measure the effects of these briefings on an on-going basis. It must be stated, however, that the annual feedback survey conducted in PwC did establish that there was a problem with the briefings. This in fact proves the value of measurement. Although it is not regular or detailed enough to be considered best practice in IC, the annual survey does enable the firm to identify and address a weakness in their communications structure.

The lesson for the communications professional from this research is that you don't have to measure everything, but you do have to measure the right things. As Rodney Gray (1999: 1) explains,

> Imagine a business concern that didn't examine its profits or return on investment.

Imagine a job where no-one looked at how well or poorly you've
performed.
Imagine paying someone to perform a service but not being able to tell
how valuable that service had been.
If you can imagine these things - then you can imagine what
communication is like without measurement of effectiveness.

5.4.2 Feedback

Measurement can take place during the communication cycle and often developing
feedback loops is an effective way to do this. All of the case study organisations have
feedback mechanisms for a number of their communication tools but investigation
reveals these to be weak.

HSE staff can send email feedback following email circulars. While this is positive,
further probing discovered that there is no formal way of capturing or acting on this
feedback. Equally, a readership survey is conducted but it has a return rate of less than
1% which does not provide sufficient feedback *(HSE, 2007).*

The BOI's staff briefings are set up to engage staff. However, data from staff indicate
that the meetings inhibit staff contributions. For this reason, the briefings are poorly
rated by staff and a lack of measurement of the briefing means staff frustration is not
picked up by management. In 2007, the same organisation spent a considerable
budget on the implementation of a staff engagement survey but a lack of follow-
through on actions following the survey made staff sceptical about the value of this
communication activity. The BOI also gathers feedback from managers and holds ad
hoc focus groups. However, the data reveals that there is no formal structure through
which this information is fed back to senior management.

Even in PwC, the organisation with the most established culture of two-way, face-to-
face communication, explains that 'effective communication is intangible and difficult
to measure and the IC Department is not required to produce tangible results (IC
Manager, PWC, 2007).

The commentary in relation to a lack of measurement and evaluation within the case study organisations is not to detract from the considerable busy workload of all of IC managers. The research notes that simply carrying out the day-to-day operations of the IC function is often enough of a challenge for the IC managers given the limited resources of time, money and people available. Many of the IC managers explain they simply don't have the time or the resources to strategically plan and measure their communication:

> Communicating the 13 change programmemes while at the same time developing the staff newsletter and intranet leaves little time to think about strategy.
> *(IC Manager, HSE, 2007)*

> I think the days of strategizing in IC are gone for the moment. We seem to be to moving from one event to another at the moment. We are in the business of information provision and reputation management. IC is certainly very event driven at the moment.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

Despite the pressure that the IC departments are under Stephen Covey's advice is worth examining. He outlines how even the busy woodcutter needs to take time out to 'sharpen his saw' in order to be as productive as possible. The data in this research reveal that the IC function would benefit from taking time away from their day-to-day activity, in order to plan their communication strategically. It is certainly necessary to do this if IC is to become a strategic management function.

5.5   Technical Experts or Strategic Managers

Hargie and Tourish (2009: 95) explain that 'it is commonplace to find researchers saying that communication should be a member of the top management team, or at least be represented during their discussions'. However, in order to become accepted as part of the management team the communications function must be managed strategically. And according to Argenti (2002: 47),

> in order to do this [IC] manager need expertise and experience common at the senior rank, like bottom–line responsibility and knowledge of the business from a strategic perspective...They need to adopt a strategic companywide perspective on communication.

The data gathered in this research indicate that a majority of the IC functions in both the public and private sector in Ireland are still dominated by technical journalistic and project management type skills. A bulk of the IC practitioners' time is spent developing, organising, and implementing communication initiatives rather than planning a strategic companywide perspective for IC. Having said that, in 2010, the data reveal that the role of many of the IC managers has become somewhat more strategic as they are tasked with helping to deliver particular change projects for example, pensions' issues are a major project for two of the organisations. Interestingly, the IC managers are keen to talk about the tangible, measured successes they have on these projects.

> We were able to measure the effectiveness of communication within the pensions' issue. We had to get all members of staff to sign a letter in relation to their pensions. This was a very tangible way for us to establish if communication had taken place; 99% of staff have now signed that letter and that is a really strong measurement of our communications programmeme. Very often communication is intangible and difficult to measure but the fact that these letters have been signed presents us with a very tangible measurement.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

> Dealing with the pension issue the IC Manager was brought into the process ... She was very beneficial. The pension issue was a €2 billion problem and it is now solved.
> *(IR Manager, ESB, 2010)*

While it is true that these individual change projects are strategically managed, the lack of a strategic companywide IC strategy persists and measurement of communication outcomes remains weak overall.

5.6   Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 focuses on the role and function of IC, in public and private sector organisations, in Ireland. The data demonstrate that audit or situational analysis is weak in both the public and private sector. And without an actual assessment of the capabilities and resources of the organisation most of the organisations have not

established a communications benchmark against which they can measure future achievement.

Section 2 deals with the strategic planning process that guides IC. The data obtained indicate that on average 47.6% of companies have communications strategies. It is noted that there are no particular differences between public and private sector organisations. Equally, the gathering of data from the broader corporate picture, to inform the development of the strategy, is inconsistent and lacks direction.

Section 3 outlines the goals and objectives for IC. All the organisations are able to outline the goals of their IC. Although none of the organisations in the qualitative or quantitative research have objectives that outline the cause and effect relationship between their communication activities and the achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives.

Section 4 consists of analysis of the research and evaluation methods employed by the case study organisations. The quantitative data reveal that 36.4% of public organisations and 37.5% of private organisations claim to be able to produce tangible results for their internal communications. In-depth analysis of these measurements was not possible with the quantitative data. In-depth analysis was indeed possible with the qualitative data. The qualitative data reveal that while some of the case study organisations initially indicate they have tangible measurements, investigation reveals that measurement focus on outputs rather than outcomes. Such measurements do not indicate the achievement of internal communications in terms of how it benefits the organisation. Equally whenever feedback loops are evident as measurements tool they fail to be useful as action is seldom taken as a result of the feedback.

Finally section 5 concludes that the data illustrate that a majority of the IC functions in both the public and private sector in Ireland are still dominated by technical journalistic type skills rather than by strategic management. The development of IC as a strategic management function is a process that involves careful consideration, research and evaluation of the communication activities and the business objectives of the organisation. The data reveal significant room for improvement in both the public and private sector organisations in Ireland in relation to this. Quirke's (2008: 31) advice is pertinent to this research as he acknowledges that

internal communications is a means to an end, not an end in itself
-- as part of its rationale it helps turn strategy into action by
engaging, informing and directing employees.

CHAPTER 6

So many tools, so little time

The Management of individual communication programmemes

6.0   Introduction

This chapter investigates the range of communication tools used in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. Fielding (2005: 10) explains that effective communication involves a wide range of communication activities to ensure good upward, downward, and lateral or sideways communication. Wilcox et al. (2003: 343) outline that the company magazine, brochures, newsletters, and policy manuals written for employees are fundamental forms of internal communication. Reflecting on these comments, the first section of this chapter analyses the data to establish which communication tools are the most used in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. It also investigates why these tools are chosen, because as Mersham and Skinner (2005:70) explain, the communication tool used will often depend on the subject matter that needs to be communicated to employees. Section 1 also examines whether there is alignment and consistency of messages across the communication tools. It also examines if those messages are strategically aligned to the business strategy because as Edelman (2006: 2) states, alignment of messages is critical to achieving effective communication and behavioural change. Finally Section 1 also examines the impact that the changed economic circumstances have had on organisational communication tools. All the case study organisations have experienced significant turmoil and change over the period of the research, and Wilcox et al. (2003:343) state that corporate turmoil, unrest, and uncertainty creates a greater need for effective employee communication and effective use of IC tools. The data are investigated to reveal if these changes have had any significant impact on the level of communication in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. Folkerts and Lacy (2004:77) explain that employees deserve to know the truth about the company in which they work. Such transparency can be realised only if the workforce

is kept up-to-date on the activities in the organisation, and the likihood of this outcome requires an effective internal communication strategy supported by effective communication tools.

Section 2 explores the area of social media in IC. As Quirke (1995:72.) reflects the shift from a limited number of internal communications techniques such as notice boards, memos, and company newsletters, to more interactive media, such as meetings, forums, video conferencing, and e-mails offer many possibilities for IC practitioners. The data reveal whether IC in public and private sector organisations in Ireland are availing of the new communication tools.

Finally, Section 3 identifies how two-way communication is facilitated and how employees' views, opinions, and feedback are collated and what action is taken in respect of this feedback. Identifying how feedback is addressed will provide further insights into whether IC is managed strategically and will demonstrate how it is contributing to the organisation reaching its bottom line.

6.1 The Most Used IC Tools

The study reveals that the majority of respondents in both the qualitative and quantitative data identify e-mail as the most used communication tool. E-mail is identified as the most instantaneous method of communication with staff. The data highlights that most of the respondents use e-mail for its speed and efficiency. The fact that geographical distance from the sender does not affect the delivery time of email messages is also cited as an advantage as is the fact that the e-mail goes directly into the recipients' e-mail box as opposed to sitting on an external site.

The next most used communication tools from the quantitative data are staff briefings and team meetings, both of which are used by 81% of organisations. These tools are followed closely by the intranet which is used by 76.2% of organisations. Interestingly, the traditional newsletter is used by 57.1% of organisations while electronic newsletters are used by 38.1% of the organisations.

TABLE 10: WHAT TOOLS DO YOU USE AS PART OF YOUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?
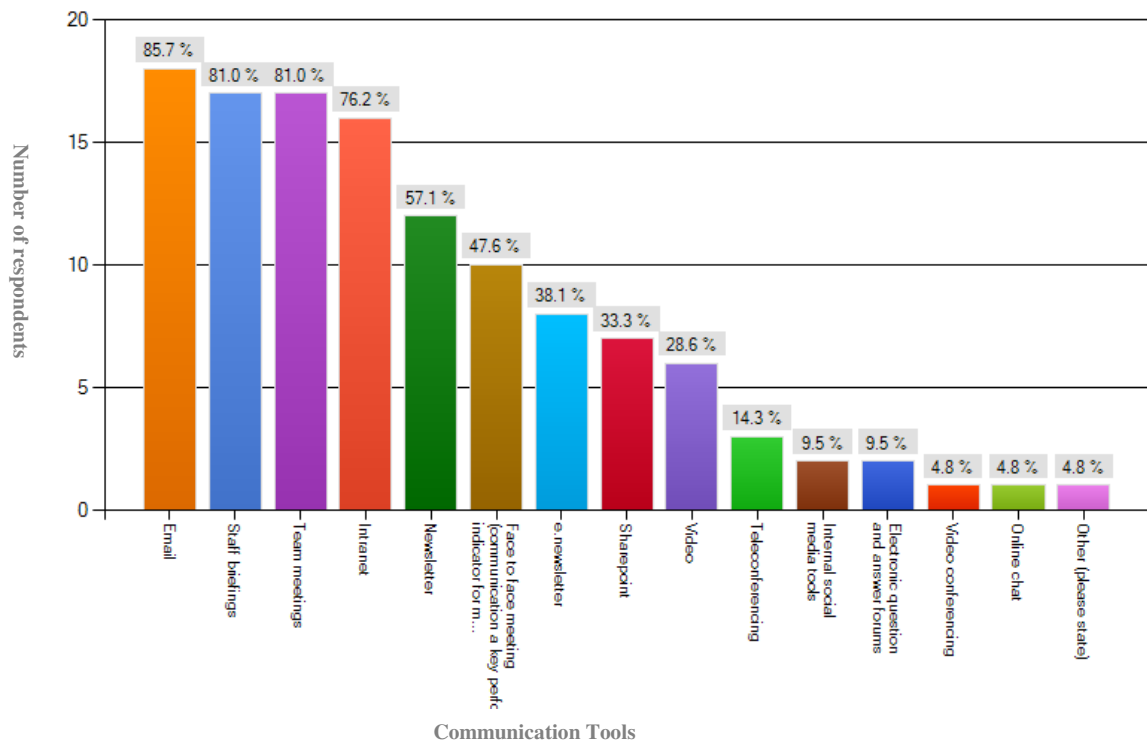
There is no significant variation between the public and private sector organisations, but the small variations are noteworthy. Staff briefings and team meetings are used more by private sector organisations. 87.5% of the private sector organisations use staff briefings and 100% of the private sector organisations use team briefings. This compares with the 76.9% of the public sector organisations using staff briefings and 69.2% using team briefings.

E-mail too is used more by private sector organisations with 100% usage identified as opposed to 76.9% usage for IC in the public sector organisations. Another interesting finding is that public sector organisations appear to have embraced the relatively new technology of e.newsletters more than the private sector: 46.2% of public sector organisations use it while only 25% of private sector organisations use e.newsletters.

TABLE 11: WHAT TOOLS DO YOU USE AS PART OF YOUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?

Communication tools used by the public and private sector organisations
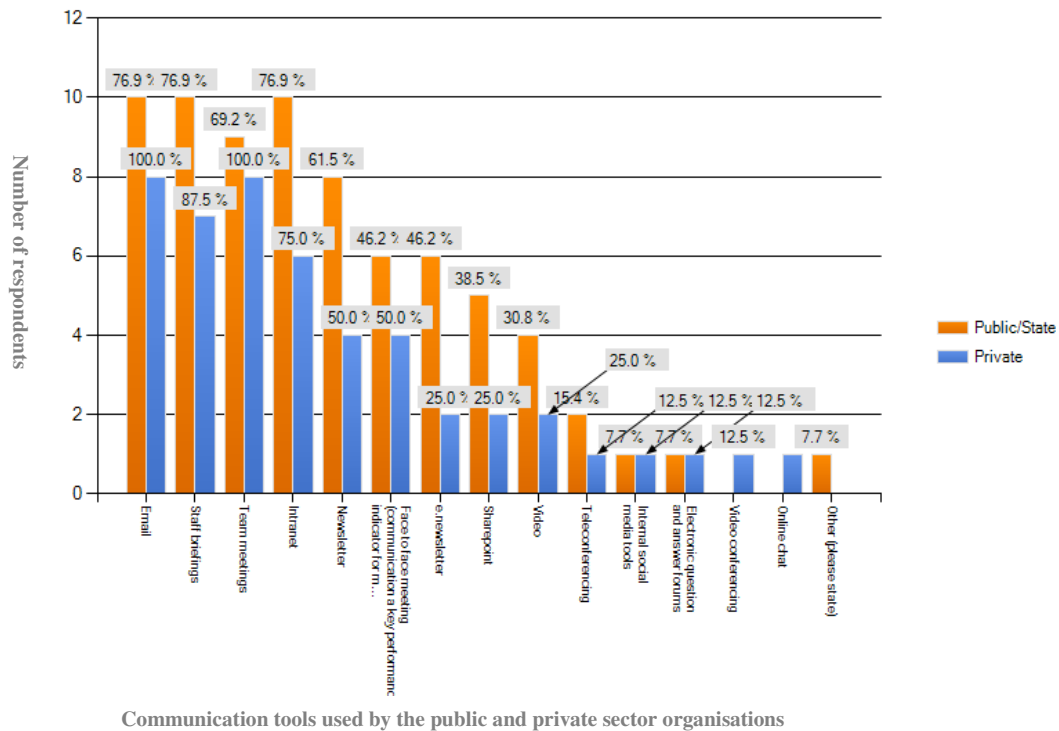
Despite e-mail ranking as the most used tool, the quantitative data reveal that when asked the question, 'Which tools are the most effective?' 80% indicate that face-to-face communication is the most effective tool. This data reveal that both public and private sector organisations are aware that that human interaction plays a significant role in ensuring that information reaches the workforce. The semi-structured interviews in the qualitative research enabled further probing of this area; the findings are discussed later in this chapter.

The qualitative data reveal similar findings when participants were asked which communication tools are most useful. E-mail was the most used tool and face-to-face communication was the second most used tool. These findings replicate the Edelman research (2006: 12) which found that e-mail was listed as the most frequently used communication vehicle within companies, while in-person communication was rated as the most effective channel for communication with employees. However, further investigation with the case study organisations reveals that, while there is an understanding that face-to-face meetings are the most preferred and the most effective

tool, a majority of the organisations are struggling to provide effective face-to-face communication.

As there are many interesting findings in relation to the selection and use of the various communication tools used in public and private sector organisations in Ireland they are explored in detail below.

6.6.1 E-mail

The quantitative data reveals that 76.9% of public organisations and 100% of private organisations use e-mail as a communication tool with staff. The qualitative data also reveals universal use of e-mail among the case study organisations with some organisations relying on it more than others. Organisations are clearly favouring the use of e-mail to share information with and amongst employees. The organisations have identified, as Furnari (2010: 126) did, that 'technology is the enabler for greater mass connectivity'.

Discussion during the qualitative interviews with all four of the case study organisations demonstrates that they are aware of the limitations of e-mail. They agree that on occasion e-mail can be as Vidgen et al. (2011: 88) explains untargeted, hard to read, overwhelming in volume and becoming little more than a filing cabinet.

Bank of Ireland (BOI)
BOI highlights awareness of some of these difficulties when they explain that they use e-mail regularly to communicate with staff but that they are aware of the danger of e-mail overload. For this reason, in 2008 they operated a gate-keeping service for organisation-wide e-mails. This service restricts the sending of companywide messages unless they have been sanctioned by a member of the senior management team. The IC manager explains that there are no more than two or three companywide messages issued per month. The head of corporate communications on the other hand, believes that they could make better use of e-mail. He feels that there is a higher possibility of people reading something that is sent directly to their computers and developing the use of e-mail as a communication tool is an area he would be

interested in investigating further. The staff member interviewed in 2008 stated that e-mail is often used to provide links to further information on the intranet. He believed that much of the e-mail information should be communicated via his manager and not via an impersonal e-mail. He highlighted that on one occasion a colleague learned about changes in his role via a company-wide e-mail to all staff. He believed that communicating in this manner was alienating staff.

> A reliance on communication through e-mail and the intranet is alienating staff.
> *(Staff participant, BOI, 2007)*

In 2010 things have changed slightly with regard to e-mail. With pressure on the organisation to communicate continually with staff due to the financial difficulties faced by the bank, direct e-mails had become more common and e-mails from the CEO were also far more frequent.

> The CEO sends personal e-mails to all employees. We would have done about 50 of these e-mails last year (2009). When anything of significance takes place the CEO does a personal e-mail to staff.
> *(IC Manager, BOI 2010)*

Electricity Supply Board (ESB)

The ESB also relies on e-mail. Its main use of e-mail for IC is to draw staff attention to the repository of the IC messages on the intranet. All staff members receive e-mail alerts when new information goes up on the intranet. These e-mails contain links to the new information. In 2008 the EM editor believed that, while useful, this technique wasn't enough to attract staff to look at the intranet. This use of e-mail continues in 2010 with staff receiving daily e-mails about intranet updates.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)

In PwC e-mail is also used as a communication tool, although the People Partner in PwC explained that the firm does make a determined effort to keep e-mails to a minimum. In 2008, the IC manager highlighted the difficulty of e-mail overload, saying that e-mails from business managers are regularly circulated, but that staff sometimes complain about getting too many. The IC manager explained that

> the firm has tried to regulate the amount of e-mails sent firm wide by getting business managers to sign off on them.
> *(IC Manager, PwC)*

She also explained that they were planning to examine whether they could reduce the amount of e-mails reinforcing the views of the IC Manager. The staff member interviewed explained that e-mails are also used to communicate information. She outlined that she would get quite a number of e-mails on firm specific information and, while useful, she was sometimes overloaded with e-mails. This finding is reminiscent of the Sears research outlined by Argenti and Forman (2002: 59). They describe an experiment carried out by a Sears department store in the 1990; collating everything sent to a fictitious store manager, they explained that if the store manager were to have read all the e-mails he received 'it would be the equivalent of reading War and Peace twice each month'.

In 2010, PwC still uses e-mail as a communication tool. The IC manager highlights that the firm haven't as yet managed to address the issue of e-mail volume but they are hoping that the development of an intranet will help, although she is aware that changing employee behaviour will take some time.

> We are introducing a new intranet in the very near future and we anticipate that this will reduce the amount of e-mails that have to be circulated. We hope to post firm updates to the intranet rather than posting them to individual e-mail addresses. But I think that could take quite some time to change that behaviour.

Health Service Executive (HSE)

The HSE identifies e-mail as its most effective communication tool *(Head of Communications, HSE, 2007).* The data in relation to the use of e-mail in the HSE demonstrates some very interesting findings in relation to the challenges of IC in a vast organisation, with staff members spread across every town in Ireland.

In 2007, the IC manager and the Head of Communication both explained that there is no centralised e-mail database through which all staff can be contacted. E-mails had to be sent to a number of centres around the country in order to be forwarded to regional staff. This meant that it was impossible to evaluate if staff received the e-mail at all or if they received it in a timely manner. It was also difficult to measure how many staff read the e-mails. Both interviewees recognised this as a significant drawback which they hoped to address. In 2010 the issue remained unresolved. The Director of Communications explains that

> [getting a centralised e-mail database] is not actually a simple
> project. You would think it is but it is much more complicated
> than even I realised. I would say however [that a more
> significant problem is] the question of who can get access to
> the e-mails once they are sent. If you take, for example, that
> there are 55,000 PCs in the HSE and some people may have
> multiple PCs - how many staff can actually access a PC? It has
> to be less than 55,000 and that is what we need to establish.

Given that at the end of 2010, there were 107,972 employed in the HSE (Annual

Report, 2010: 2) and there are only 55,000 computers it is easy to see that e-mail does

not reach all staff. The Director of Communications believes that only 35,000 of their

staff have regular access to a PC.

Lessons learned from the case study organisations in relation to e-mail

Both the qualitative and quantitative research identifies e-mail as a useful

communication tool. The ability to communicate messages to large numbers of staff

instantaneously is very attractive. However, the case study organisations highlight

drawbacks aligned to the research of Vidgen et al. (2011: 90) which claim that e-mail

overload leads to resentment, reduced autonomy, more misunderstandings and work

overload. In addition, they say that the lack of conversational clues inherent within e-

mail gives greater susceptibility to negative evaluations. This finding was re-iterated

by some of the participants who believed that certain messages, particularly change

messages, should be communicated through face-to-face meetings.

6.1.2 Face-to-face communication

East (2008:7) writes that formal communication, whether through large meetings, e-

mails or other methods, does not change employee behaviour. To overcome resistance

to change, the preferred method has to be face-to-face communication.

> Choose face-to-face communication when you need to overcome
> employee resistance. More than 50 years of research into how
> words change behaviour is clear.

Equally, research undertaken by IABC (2008: 2) indicates that
> Direct face-to-face employee communication practices are
> identified by respondents as the most valuable for building
> employee engagement and increasing productivity.

Larkin and Larkin agree (1994: 120) stating that communication should come from the supervisor, in a face to face manner and it should address the issues relevant to their local work area. Therefore the data findings are encouraging as they identify that 81.3% of the quantitative data respondents indicate that they use staff briefings and team meetings as important communication tools. Equally, positive findings are revealed in the qualitative research when IC managers and senior managers acknowledge the importance of face-to-face communication. These opinions are reinforced by the staff interviewed, 100% of whom express a preference for face-to-face communication.

Despite this knowledge only one of the case study organisations (PwC) has a consistent and functioning face-to-face communication structure. While the other organisations are aware of the importance of IC they are unable to establish an effective face-to-face communication system.

PwC

In PwC face-to-face communication is the most commonly used communication tool. Briefings take place on a regular basis, following Group Executive meetings. After these briefings the Senior Partners brief their staff and groups of managers about what is happening. These briefings are normally held quarterly. Feedback from staff noted the usefulness of these briefings.

Individual business unit team briefings are also considered extremely important for internal communication in PwC. They are generally held on a more regular basis and they address day to day operations as well as strategic issues. The staff member interviewed explained that her team have briefings once a week. These meetings cover work issues, strategic issues and social events that are taking place in the firm.

Speaking about the briefings that People Partner carry out in PwC

> Briefings take place on a regular basis, following Group
> Executive meetings. At these briefings Partners brief their staff
> and groups of managers about what is happening. These
> briefings are normally held quarterly.
> *(People Partner, PwC, 2007)*

> All other communication tools simply support what staff are
> told in their briefings.
> *(People Partner, PwC, 2007)*

This view is supported by the staff participant who enhances the data explaining that:

> We have an opportunity to ask questions at these briefings and
> we are always given the opportunity to approach a Partner
> privately with any concerns we might have, if we don't want to
> ask a question in front of everyone.
> *(Staff Participant, PwC, 2007)*

It is worth noting that, even though there is a culture of face-to-face communication established in this organisation, it is not measured and monitored on an on-going basis. In 2007, this study noted this as potential problem in highlighting difficulties if they arose.

In 2010, the data reveals that the turbulence experienced in the organisation due to the economic downturn has taken its toll on the face-to-face communication. The IC Manager highlights that managers are not as keen to deliver messages to staff when the messages are not positive.

> The firm went through a difficult restructuring process in 2009
> and I think that people shied away from communicating these
> difficult decisions. This has led to this call for improved
> communication. Our people need to be able to talk about difficult
> situations as well as positive situations.
> *(IC Manager, PwC, 2010)*

This is a very significant finding as it illustrates how organisational changes impact negatively on communication, even when it appears that communication is securely embedded. It is also worth noting that a lack of measurement of these briefings on an on-going basis meant that senior management were not aware of the deterioration in communication until it was highlighted through the firm's annual survey.

The deterioration in communication during the re-structuring process is echoed by the staff member interviewed who identifies that morale was very low and people were concerned that they didn't know what was happening. This reinforces what D'Aprix (1999: 9) and Gerstner (2003: 50) advocate, that when changes confront organisations internal communication becomes increasingly important.

However, PwC had begun to address these difficulties establishing a face-to-face communications group with the specific aim of listening to and engaging with staff. This group is called Exchange and feedback from staff in 2010 indicated that it was having the desired effect.

> If I had an idea, I do think they would listen to it.
> *(Staff participant, PwC, 2010)*

The other three case study organisations did not face similar difficulties as face-to-face communication was not their main source of communication with staff, despite knowledge that face-to-face communication is their employees' preferred method of communication.

ESB

In 2008, the interviewees in the ESB explained that their communication research demonstrated that face-to-face communication was staff's favoured method of communication. This research also demonstrated that staff received information about changes from their unions before they received it from management. In order to address this, the frequency of town hall meetings and business unit meetings was increased. The interviewee believed that these face-to-face communication activities were very beneficial, but she questioned whether the system of briefings was being carried out throughout the entire organisation or whether it was something that only took place in head office. She indicated that anecdotal feedback showed that these briefings were appreciated but they needed to be further developed. These concerns were echoed by the staff member who acknowledged that the town hall briefings and the smaller team meetings were one of the ways he found out what was happening in the organisation but he understood that the effectiveness of that communication was based on the fact that he had a good manager who was a good communicator.

In 2010, the IC Manager indicated that the face-to-face briefings have not become established in the organisation.

> Business unit meetings do that place but they are not very regular.
> There would be an end-of-the-year review meeting and sometimes
> safety meetings. There are various meetings held during the year
> within the business lines but they are not regular. From time to

time the CEO calls the senior managers together but those
meetings are also quite irregular.
(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)

He also explained that face-to-face communication was part of every manager's job description and although in the past there has been little enforcement or measurement of manager's communication he hopes to address this in the very near future.

Communication is part of every manager's role and I believe that up until now we haven't been strict enough about enforcement, explaining to managers that communication is part of the role and their performance will be measured and monitored against that. Managers are managing a whole range of other issues and sometimes communication is not focused on as being strategically important. This is something I would be very conscious and aware of and this is something that I am talking with the corporate communications manager about. We have a meeting coming up next month specifically to begin to address this.
(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)

In the 2010 interviews, the IC Manager identifies that the difficulties with face-to-face communication remain. He believes that a lack of uniformity and measurement is limiting the potential for face-to-face communication. The briefings remain unmeasured and remain at the discretion of managers.

At the end of the day it comes down to the individual and their willingness and competence to communicate effectively. However, having said that communication is part of every manager's role and I believe that up until now we haven't been strict enough about enforcing that and explaining to managers that communication is part of the role and their performance will be measured and monitored against it. Managers are managing a whole range of other issues and sometimes communication is not focused on as being strategically important.
(IC Manager, 2010)

This view is reinforced by staff, in 2007 and 2010, who explain that the effectiveness of face-to-face meetings depends on the particular manger. Some managers communicate effectively and others don't. Effective communication is not embedded into the culture of the organisation.

HSE

In the Health Service Executive the data again identified that face-to-face communication was the most effective method of communication but the organisation

does not have 'a formal structure for face-to-face meetings' *(IC Manager, HSE, 2007)*. In 2007 the IC Manager explained that if the IC department wanted to meet with staff to communicate a particular message, the IC department would have to organise and set up the meeting themselves. There was no structure into which IC could plug the corporate messages. The IC Manager expressed the view that while organising these meetings did not meet with resistance from the managers in the areas involved, the effort of setting up and running these meetings, without building them into a formal structure to be run within each area meant that communication was time consuming and once off. Not having a structure of regular face-to-face meetings to tap into made communicating information to staff in a face-to-face manner difficult. It also made it impossible to reach all employees in a timely manner.

However, despite these insights the IC Manager did not have a strategy for establishing a more formal face-to-face structure. Instead he indicated that it is not possible to have a formal structure for face-to-face meetings.

> It is not possible to have a 'one size fits all' approach to communication. Our organisation is too vast with too many different groups that work different shifts and are not necessarily desk based.
> *(IC Manager, HSE 2007)*

This is significant finding as it demonstrates a note of resignation that IC was found to be too hard to handle in a large complex organisation.

Interestingly, the staff member interviewed in 2007 explained that face-to-face meetings were a very important method of communication for her. She outlined that her own manager was very efficient at communicating with her staff and passing on strategic information. The staff member did however foresee problems ahead as face-to-face communication decreased due to financial pressures. The travel ban was already significantly reducing the amount of face-to-face communication and she believed that, given the way human beings work, the reduction in face-to-face communication would have a detrimental effect on working relationships.

> If you lose the relationship building aspect of communication, work will suffer and the reality is that it is not possible to develop personal relationships with people when there are ten people on a conference call. You lose the camaraderie and togetherness that you get in a face-to-face meeting.
> *(Staff member, HSE, 2007)*

The staff member's comments are insightful and they emphasise a point made by Dozier et al. (1995: 11) whose research demonstrates that

> Inside the organisation, excellent public relations increases the level of satisfaction that employees have with the organisation which in turn saves money that might be wasted on the consequences of bad relationships with company employees – strikes, absenteeism, low motivation and turnover of staff.

The situation remains the same in 2010 although the new Director of Communications appears to have identified the main problem. He explains that the concept of IC is not understood by managers within the system. They do not as yet realise that it is part of their role as effective managers to communicate with their staff.

> I would say the concept of strategic internal communications is not fully understood. Real internal communications is staff engagement and it means managers effectively talking with their staff. They say they do it but I would question if it is done effectively.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

Having identified the difficulty in the system he has plans to implement a communication structure that he believes will provide a standard model for effective face-to-face communication throughout the entire organisation.

> I do believe that there is a system and a standard model of communication that can be used throughout the entire organisation.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

While outside the scope of this study the research is aware that further national changes in the HSE have limited the roll-put of this IC structure.

Bank of Ireland

The 2008 data from the BOI acknowledges a divergence of opinion on the existence of a face-to-face communication structure. The IC manager explained that there was no structured communication system for systematically sending information from the top down and the bottom up. However, Head of Corporate Communication explained that a cascade system did exist for important information, especially in relation to change management. He explained that when the cascade system is being used, ready

made packs with slides etc are provided to each manager. When questioned about the effectiveness of this system he acknowledged that, while it was not measured, he believed from anecdotal evidence that it is only about 50% effective. The staff member interviewed in 2008 made no reference to a cascade system but did highlight that in his view change management was communicated very poorly and often in a very impersonal way stating that he believed his immediate manager was not provided with the information himself so it was impossible for him to pass it on to his staff.

Interestingly, the Corporate Communications Manager pointed out that he had witnessed a cascade system work very effectively when he worked in Aer Lingus, post 9/11, when they had to get staff to agree to cost-cutting packages. To make sure that all staff understood what was entailed and what they were voting for, spot checks were carried out, to ensure that the message was getting down to the grass roots. If these spot checks pointed out areas where the cascade wasn't working another manager was used to communicate the message. While very efficient the Corporate Communications Manager believed that such a time consuming and costly approach is not possible in the day to day running of most businesses.

> While the face to face meetings were very effective they were
> necessary during the crisis we were in after 9/11. However, they
> were time consuming and costly and I don't believe they are
> possible in the day to day running of most businesses.
> *(Corporate Communications Manager, BOI, 2007).*

When this was explored further, it was established that these face-to-face meetings were measured and monitored and staff feedback and understanding was consistently checked. If a manager wasn't effectively delivering the messages to his or her staff, they were assisted by a senior member of the management team. This description appears to be an effective method of embedding face-to-face communication in the organisation, even through the resources needed appear significant in terms of measurement and senior management commitment. The IC manager's views that it would be unworkable in his or her current company is an interesting finding which appears to conflict with Profile's (2006: 4) conclusions that 'poor internal communication is a major concern for organisations since it can result in workplace inefficiency.' Although outside the scope of this research, it would be interesting to

undertake a cost-benefit analysis of such communication to establish if the IC Manager's assumptions are correct.

Another interesting finding in relation to face-to-face communication was disclosed by the IC manager who explained that face-to-face meetings, called Team Talk, had worked well in the UK offices for a period of time but, as they were unmonitored, they fell by the way-side and were never introduced into Ireland. This supports Clutterback's (1997: 271) logical argument that 'you can't manage what you can't measure'.

The data also revealed that the organisation holds face-to-face meetings with the top 150 managers within the organisation a number of times a year. While this is a positive initiative, feedback from front line staff indicates that this information is not making its way to them.

The IC Manager also explains that staff briefings are also held with various groups throughout the organisation on an ad hoc basis throughout the year. However, feedback from staff indicated that the information provided at these meetings is too broad and not specific enough. They also explain that questions can be difficult to ask at these meetings, resulting in a one-way flow of information. The staff participant interviewed in 2007 believed that all important information should be delivered in face-to-face meetings. He stated

> A reliance on communicating through e-mail and the intranet is alienating staff.
> *(Staff member, BOI, 2008)*

The staff member's views echo the sentiments of Fairlie and Ogg (1998: 7) who caution organisations not to neglect face-to-face communication stating that 'no other variable has as strong and consistent an effect on results as face-to-face communication'.

The data in 2010 demonstrate changes in communication. The Head of Corporate Communications indicates that the number of face-to-face meetings has decreased. This appears at odds with much of the IC research as Smythe (2005: 5) stresses that in times of change, it is important to engage 'the hearts and minds' of people to build

151

trust in the change process. This is difficult to achieve with less face-to-face interaction. He explains

> The number of face-to-face meetings has decreased…. I would say they take place about twice a year. …Staff breakfasts also take place but less than in previous times. Branch visits and staff town hall briefings also take place but they are less likely to be undertaken by the group CEO. The central senior team has become much more preoccupied with survival and undertaking things that need to be done to ensure that survival.
> *(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)*

The Head of Corporate Communications does identify, however, that there has been a significant increase in the use of teleconferences as a communication tool.

> We do far more teleconferences now.
> *(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)*

He also outlines that responsibility for communicating with staff has transferred to less senior managers. He explains that while communication has increased with staff, he was not sure that this would be reflected in staff feedback. He outlines,

> The central senior team has become much more preoccupied with survival and undertaking things that need to be done to ensure that survival. The business as usual managers are running the day-to-day operation. This means that divisional heads are undertaking staff briefings etc….

> The divisional heads are definitely receiving information. As to whether staff would say they are well informed is debatable.
> *(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)*

Team briefings are now the responsibility of middle managers. The effectiveness of these briefings is crudely measured via unstructured verbal feedback to the IC Manager. The structure for these briefings is loose: the information is supposed to cascade through the organisation naturally without being measured or formally evaluated. The Corporate Communications Manager also indicated that they were trying to introduce IC as a KPI for managers, but the researcher concluded that as the senior management team were preoccupied with survival, it is unlikely that KPIs will be implemented while the organisation is in crisis mode.

> Communication is built into manager's performance management. It is crudely measured by the frequency that they conduct their briefings. Communications are cascaded through the management team. All managers are then meant to report it to

152

their direct reports. They are also meant to provide feedback.
They report back to their own line managers and to Sara Holland
the IC Manager. …We are trying to standardize performance
reviews and in some departments communication is a KPI.
(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)

The data have already revealed changes in the types of communication tools used, but it is not just the tools that have changed. The content of the IC within this organisation has also changed. Participants explain that nearly all staff communication relates to how the economic crisis is and will affect the organisation and its staff.

The overarching issue at the moment with IC is all about the
crisis we are going through. Much of the business as usual takes a
backseat. I would say that 70% or 80% of our IC is trying to
explain and keep staff up to date with developments on how the
financial and economic crisis is affecting the business. Alerting
staff as to how the economic downturn is having an effect on
them and will have an effect on the Group.
(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)

Along with the change of content comes a change in the pace of IC. The BOI data also reveal another challenge in communicating with staff face-to-face during a time of crisis: The data emphasise that things move so quickly during times of turbulence that there is significant external speculation about the organisation's future; the media are covering the story 24/7 and often information can't be released until a final decision is made.

My own experience of such crises is that employees always feel they are not
kept informed or up-to-date. It is very difficult when there is immense
speculation in the press about what is happening. There is no doubt that we
have increased our IC because we are very aware of this situation but
equally it is not always possible to discuss what we are involved in with
staff as it is confidential.
(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)

This reveals another interesting insight into the challenges of communication in a crisis as the news is on a 24-hour cycle that demands constant updates and which is prepared to speculate in the absence of facts.

Lessons learned about face-to-face communication
Only one organisation has established an effective face-to-face communication structure in the organisation. The success of this initiative was led and influenced by senior management in the organisation. The other case study organisations struggled

with developing effective face-to-face communication. They cited that often effective IC was dependent on the individual managers involved. This reinforces the importance of leadership from senior management, and it also highlights the need to measure the IC face-to-face meetings that do take place. The financial crisis also highlights two significant challenges: firstly, managers are less willing to communicate negative information to staff and, secondly, the pace of change and the media scrutiny of many changes put further pressure on the IC structures to deliver up-to-date information to staff in order to maintain their trust.

6.1.3 Intranet

East (2008: 13) explains that an almost universal belief exists that fixing the intranet will fix internal communications. (TM & Co, 2009: 3), but explains that this assumption is a false and dangerous assumption as

> effective employee communication cannot be based on any single tactic. An intranet can and should be a powerful tool in consolidating business resources and information, functioning as an electronic convenor for the employee community. However, the intranet must be integrated within a broader tactical mix, which includes channels such as face to face opportunities, communication via managers as well as informal avenues for information and exchange.

Bearing this advice in mind, it is encouraging to see that the quantitative data reveal that while 76.2% of organisations use the intranet, they use it in conjunction with other communication tools.

The data from the qualitative research highlights slightly more concerning findings. While none of the case study organisations rely solely on the intranet for IC, which is positive, two of the organisations in 2008 identify a strong reliance on it.

HSE
In 2008, a new intranet was under development in the HSE. It was anticipated by all interviewees at the time that this would become a very useful IC tool for staff. The plans were to use a content management system to support the site enabling each HSE area to update their own information on a regular basis. The need for an intranet was

stressed by the Head of Communication who explained that at that time they had no way to communicate everyday information to staff across the system. While e-mail could be used for urgent messages, notices such as policies and job advertisements couldn't be e-mailed or distributed in such a manner. He explained that

> Even advertising internal jobs can be a challenge at present.
> *(Head of Communication, HSE, 2008)*

He was confident that a functioning intranet would alleviate many of these communication bottlenecks.

The staff member interviewed in 2007 indicated that she used the intranet regularly although sometimes it was hard to find the information she was looking for. She explained that she used the links she received alerting her to new content as her method of navigating the site and finding the relevant information. She then explained that once she found the information she downloaded it and kept it on her computer.

In 2010, progress has been made on developing an intranet (or many intranets). The Director of Communication underlines a new problem with the intranet in 2010. There are in fact now four sites that staff can reference if they are looking for information about the HSE. The problem is that information across all the sites is not necessarily consistent and no one site contains all the relevant information. Also not all staff is aware of the existence of all four sites. For this reason, the Director of Communications has plans to once again revisit the intranet in order to consolidate the information and create one unique destination for HSE information.

> What I don't like about what exists at the moment is that there is an HSE intranet, Internet, a HSE Land site and a Communications hub site. Some of these sites are in separate directorates so the information across the sites is not always consistent. Some people will have heard of the communications hub, some will have heard of the intranet. What I want to do is collapse everything and build a new site.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

The development of the intranet in such a manner identifies a lack of a strategic IC plan understood by senior management in the HSE. The Director of Communications is aware that the structure of the intranet is not the only stumbling block to it being an effective IC tool. Given that at the end of 2010, there were 107,972 employed in the

HSE (Annual Report, 2010: 2), and there are only 55,000 computers he is aware that there is a need to identify how many staff will actually be able to use the new intranet site.

> We need to establish if the infrastructure is in place and if people have the interest to log on to a site. … We need to be able to put in a system where staff can access the intranet even if they are at home.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

Despite this difficulty there are plans underway, in 2010, to identify how staff are using the existing sites and what information they find most useful. It is hoped that this will provide insights for its future development. It is also hoped to undertake research into other communication tools for staff who don't have access to a PC but there are no firm plans in this regard.

BOI

In 2007, the intranet is identified as the most used communication tool in Bank of Ireland. At the time there were plans to put more and more information on the intranet instead of using e-mail or staff briefings. Interestingly, the staff member interviewed explained that the intranet was the only tool he really used to keep informed about what was happening in the organisation. He indicated, however, that this was not the communication channel he used by choice; it was in effect the only communication channel available as he believed he wasn't told information in any other manner. The staff member was unhappy with this situation and believed that it was contributing to staff dissatisfaction. He explained,

> E-mail alerts direct me to the intranet for information about certain decisions…this system is not an effective or appropriate way to communicate with staff…we should get information from our managers.
> *(Staff Participant, BOI, 2007)*

While the internet was identified as their main source of communication with staff in 2007, there were no measurements in place to identify if staff were using it. Both the IC Manager and the Head of Corporate Communication expressed a desire to develop these measurement systems.

Interestingly, in 2010, this organisation has changed their use of communication tools. They reveal that the intranet is used less as staff were not reading the information.

This is a very significant finding and it reinforces Holtz's (2003: 97) view that while the intranet has become a popular tool, he warns 'despite wonderful features, the intranet is not a panacea' and it should only be used as part of an integrated communication programmeme and should not become the sole source of information.

In 2010, the Bank of Ireland has moved to enticing people to use the intranet by developing webcasts as a communication tool. The webcasts are placed on the intranet after the event for reference by staff members.

> We do a lot of webcasts. We make some and put them on the
> Internet. We made a number of webcasts on the pension's issue.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

It is worth noting that in 2007 there was no measurement of the intranet usage by 2010, measurement has improved somewhat as the number of staff logging onto the webcasts is tracked.

ESB

In 2007, the ESB explained that they also viewed the intranet as one of their most useful communications tool. All employees received daily e-mails about what has been put up on the site. The EM editor explained that while useful, this technique wasn't enough to attract staff to look at the intranet. The data also reveal that as there was no staff member assigned the role of putting the information on the site, it was sometimes difficult to keep the information timely. The EM editor also outlined that often the content was not necessarily compelling enough to attract the staff's attention. Interestingly, the staff interviewed in this organisation said that the internet was their main source of information. In contrast however, to the Bank of Ireland the staff members didn't resent this situation. The researcher believes this is because the information was backed up through other forms of communication with staff.

In 2010, the intranet remains a significant communication tool and social media tools have been trailed on one occasion alongside the intranet. There is, however, still no way to measure usage of the site effectively and it is still largely a one-way communication tool.

PwC

In PwC in 2007 the intranet was used only as a reference tool to support face-to-face communication. The IC Manager explained that they did not rely on the intranet to keep staff updated. It was used more as a reference tool. The People Partner also reiterated this point explaining that they used face-to-face briefings and e-mail to keep staff up to date and they used the intranet as a backup resource. These assertions were proven to reflect the reality when the staff member interviewed didn't make reference to using the intranet to find out what is happening within the organisation. She identified face-to-face communication as the main source of communication in the organisation. PwC had done as Ruck (2010: 86) advises, and they had not made the mistake of assuming that using technology as a communication medium can replace a face-to-face meeting, 'despite their popularity and acceptance, alternative communication technologies can't replace the richness or effectiveness of face-to-face communication'.

The 2010 data reveal a change within this organisation to the use of the intranet. The IC Manager explained that there were plans to develop a new intranet and that there will be a concerted effort made to ensure that more information is posted to the site rather than sent to staff via e-mail.

> We are introducing a new intranet in the very near future and we anticipate that this will reduce the amount of e-mails that have to be circulated. We hope to post firm updates to the intranet rather than posting them to individual e-mail addresses. But I think that could be could take quite some time to change that behaviour.
> *(IC Manager, PwC, 2010)*

While PwC is planning an intranet it is not at the expense of face-to-face communication as it too is being revitalised and is still seen as the key to effective IC.

The IC Manager also outlined that the organisation was aware that this was going to be a significant change in the communication process in the organisation and they were planning to use photos and video to pull staff to the site.

> We now plan to post photos on it and make it a more central place for people to refer to and use.
> *(IC Manager, PwC, 2010)*

Lessons learned about the intranet

All the case study organisations use the intranet to varying degrees. It can be a very useful tool. The advantages include speed of delivery and the simultaneous delivery of messages to all employees. However, the data reveal a number of challenges: firstly, in organisations where not all staffs have access to a pc, sections of staff can feel alienated. Staffs often don't bother checking the information in the intranet. If the intranet is used as the main source of employee communication in the organisation staff can resent it as they believe that they should receive significant strategic initiative announcement s from their managers in face-to-face meetings.

6.1.4 Newsletters—the move from print to electronic

Smith (2008: 83) states the 'demise of the printed word has long been predicted but it is showing no immediate signs of happening'. The quantitative data in this research support this finding and demonstrate that 57.1% of the responding organisations identify that they use the traditional newsletter and 38.1% identify that they use e.newsletters.

Wright (2009: 33) explains that if many of a company's staff commute to work by bus or train, then a magazine or newsletter which they can pick up as they leave their office is still a valuable option, provided, of course, the content is targeted, of interest, and well written. The qualitative data also reveal that the newsletter is a communication tool used by all four of the case study organisations.

HSE

In 2007, the staff newsletter in the HSE was entitled *Health Matters.* It was produced once a quarter with a circulation of 55,000. It was distributed to HSE services throughout the country. The newsletter was put in place when the newsletters of the former Health Boards were discontinued. The Internal Communications Manager explained that the circulation was large and unfortunately they had no way of ensuring that the newsletter was distributed to staff once they arrived to HSE offices throughout the country. Equally they had no method of measuring whether staff read the newsletter. The Head of Communication indicated that there were plans to review

the effectiveness of the newsletter, in particular, examining how non-administration staff used it. It is noted that the newsletter had a circulation of 55,000 even though there are 112,000 people employed in the HSE. This suggested that the HSE were aware that not all their staff would have an opportunity to read the staff newsletter.

In 2010, the HSE has changed its newsletter model slightly. It has reduced the number of hard copies produced and has supplemented this with the addition of an electronic newsletter. The newsletter has also expanded in size. This was made possible by advertising revenue paying for the publication.

> The electronic version is only a supporting act to the hard copy. We have changed the format and we have pushed it to lateral HSE staff, as there is information in it that is all interest to the general public. It has moved slightly away from being a HSE newsletter to being a more health service magazine. The fact that it is no longer costing of anything gives us more leverage to develop it. Previously we were tied in to a very cost conscious model.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

Despite the development of the newsletter, the difficulties in relation to distribution measurement and access still persist.

The staff members interviewed in 2007 and 2010 were aware of the staff newsletter and were aware that it was distributed quarterly. One participant indicated that it was a useful communication tool for staff who did not have access to e-mail and intranet. She explained that the newsletter was well put together and was a good newsy production. She highlighted that her own department had established a group to provide information to this publication. She believed that people took the newsletter seriously and wanted to appear in it. The other participant indicated that she rarely read the newsletter. She certainly didn't see it at a strategic information source.

A content analysis of a number of newsletters indicated a wide variety of topics covered; however, there did not appear to be any particular consistent message or service initiative reinforced on a regular basis.

ESB

In the ESB, the newsletter was seen as particularly important. The 2007 data identified it as the most effective way of communicating with staff, although face-to-face communication was the most preferred method of communication by participants. The staff newsletter, Electric Mail (EM), has a circulation of 16,000 each month and is couriered to individual ESB centres around the country. Similarly to the HSE, the ESB highlighted that they had no way of knowing whether the newsletters were distributed to staff, once they reached their destination. For this reason, they were investigating mailing the newsletter to individual staff. This never became a reality; on the contrary, by 2010, budget constraints had reduced the number of newsletters produced and it was now supported by an electronic version. Significantly the problem of measurement continues to persist.

BOI

In 2007, the Bank of Ireland staff magazine, *Bank Talk,* was distributed through internal mail and was also mailed to pensioners. Both interviewees identified the distribution of the newsletter to staff as a difficulty, as they had no way of assessing its distribution or uptake. Dan Loughrey also questioned the value of this publication as it isn't used to communicate strategic information and is published less than 10 times a year, so it is difficult to keep the information relevant.

The staff member interviewed in BOI acknowledged the existence of the newsletter but was unsure how often it was produced explaining he thought it was 'fairly irregular'. He also felt that it provided little strategic information. It was more social and personal. He described it as something individuals read if they had time to spare, rather than something they'd feel they should read as a reference to what is going on in the organisation.

PWC

In 2007, in PWC the newsletter was not seen as a particularly strategic tool. It was purely a support to face-to-face communication. In 2010, they had plans to produce a newsletter that would be hosted on the new intranet site.

Lessons learned about newsletters

In 2007, all of the organisations had a printed newsletter. A lack of measurement characterises all the print newsletters. Three of the organisations identify that distribution of the newsletter was problematic. The aims of all four newsletters are unclear. None of the organisations were able to identify what tangible benefits they wanted to achieve through the use of the newsletter. A staff participant from the BOI echoes the sentiments of other organisations when he explains

> The newsletter is something to read when you have time to spare,
> rather than something you'd feel you should read as a reference
> to what is going on in the organisation.
> *(Staff Participant, BOI, 2007)*

In 2010, the financial crisis has led to a repositioning of the newsletters. Two of the organisations that had the largest distribution figures in 2007 have been forced to curtail the number of hard copies produced and to supplement them with electronic versions. The objectives and outcomes for the newsletters remain vague and measurement remains weak.

6.1.5 Other tools

Texting: The BOI uses texting to update the top 50 or top 150 managers in the organisation about breaking media issues. The Head of Corporate Communications indicates that feedback from this group demonstrates that they find it useful. This is very much a one-way communication tool used to get information to the relevant people instantly.

Partnership: The ESB mentioned the use of Partnership (union/management teamwork) as an important element of IC. Similar sentiments regarding the role that Partnership plays are expressed in 2007 and 2010.

> Partnership is certainly part of the IC jigsaw. We have a very
> strong Partnership group for the Director Level. They meet on a
> monthly basis to discuss issues pertaining to the organisation….
> Partnership is a very strong element of the communication

process within the company. There are also pre-existing
Partnership structures within the organisation and we use these
also. There is a steering group that manages the Partnership
process and while I am not on that group I do know that certain
forums work more effectively than others.
(IC Manager. ESB, 2010)

6.2   *Social Media and Other New Technology Tools*

Lange et al (2008:2) see social networks, in IC terms, as being

> social designs to create connections and community... and they
> are networks whose radical potential lies in their proven ability
> to cut across the traditionally stopping barriers of distance,
> interests, social class, geopolitics and so on.

Given these findings, it was surprising to note that in the quantitative data only 9.5%
of respondents indicate that they use social media as a communication tool in IC. The
data also indicated that there was no significant statistical differentiation between
public and private organisations use of social media for IC. The data were reinforced
in the qualitative data. In 2007, none of the case study organisations were using social
media as an internal tool. In 2010, both the public sector organisations were beginning
to experiment with the use of social media tools. The ESB had used social media in
conjunction with the intranet for a particular project and, although there was no
measurement of it, they believed that it is quite successful and they will explore using
it further in the future. The HSE also had plans to develop the use of twitter. The
private sector organisations still indicated that social media is not an area that they
were currently exploring. None of the organisations had embraced social media tools
as part of their day-to-day business. Although 50% of the case study organisations
were very cautiously dipping their toes in the water, the remaining 50% were laggards
in adopting social media.

Despite the significant changes taking place in the case study organisations, they did
not seem to be affected by what Mersham and Skinner (2005: 149) describe as social
media forcing organisations to react to change and giving them the tools to stay ahead,
acting as a kind of digital nervous system connecting business strategy and
organisational response.

Overall, social media was not identified as a rapidly emerging technology. The research of Friedl and Veric (2010: 85) that 'contrary to popular opinion, not all employee nodes 30 are completely immersed in digital technology' could be good news for the case study organisations who have not yet already embraced social media. This finding is contested by Furnari (2010: 124) who suggests that 'the emergence of a new breed of younger employees, known as Generation Y, who have been brought up on checks and Facebook, demand new forms of communication, collaboration and content generation our basic expectations.'

Given the divergent nature of these opinions, it would be beneficial for the case study organisations to establish whether or not their staff that social media tools would benefit IC within their organisations.

All the case study organisations expressed concerns around introducing social media to the workplace. Their concerns centred around employee productivity and behaviour online. Their opinions reflected the views of Shirky (2008: 50) who explains 'it is famously difficult to keep online conversations from devolving into name calling or blather... for any group determined to maintain a set of communal standards, some mechanism of enforcement must exist.'

In 2010, new media channels are rarely mentioned as commonly used forms of sharing information even in the 2010 interviews. One of the companies, HSE, is beginning to explore the possibilities of Microsoft SharePoint (software that provides intranet and Web portal capabilities) to facilitate collaborative communications. None of the organisations use a custom tool to share information. Any of the tools being explored are off-the-shelf solutions. None of the organisations are investing time and resources in personalised products. None of the respondents report that their organisations host, support, or author a blog. Overall the data reveal a hesitancy to implement new social media tools and demonstrate a resistance to experiment with channels unfamiliar to the organisations. Social media is not as yet recognised as a method of building deeper employee relationships in the case study organisations. On the contrary, social media tools are blocked in many of the organisations.

Li and Bernoff's (2011: 318) argue that companies do not just go directly from thinking about social media to embracing it. They stress that firstly organisations need to establish if their employees are ready for social media implementation, and secondly, they need to ensure that employees have the skills to 'go social' and keep going. Companies need to take into account risk, putting in place procedures and protocol to deal with fall out whilst ensuring that the IT infrastructure is not going to fall over. None of the organisations have undertaken any such research or put in place any social media measures as yet.

Another challenge to the development of social media to the case study organisations is cited by the IC Managers in two of the organisations. These managers are interested in exploring and developing social media as an IC tool, but they are having difficulty convincing their ICT departments of the benefits of social media. Without the backing of the ICT department it is virtually impossible for the communications department to implement a social media strategy. These findings are in keeping with the 2009 findings of British IT firm Bloxx; that firm identified that 90 per cent of IT managers surveyed believe access to social networking sites should be banned or restricted because of factors including staff productivity, network security risks, and damage to the corporate reputation.

6.3   Listening, Learning, and Taking Action

Smythe (2007: 200) explains,

> Feedback and the ability to listen to employees is critical.
> Employee commitment and engagement is not about telling but
> about listening... two-way communication both formal and
> inform, as essential as a form of reality check and basis for
> building trust.

These 'reality checks' enable IC managers to establish the effect their communication is having on employees. They can also use this data to identify the tangible benefits of communication for the business. The quantitative data establishes that 63.2% of the organisations cannot demonstrate any tangible benefits of their communication.

TABLE 12: ARE YOU ABLE TO PRODUCE TANGIBLE RESULTS FOR MANAGEMENT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION?
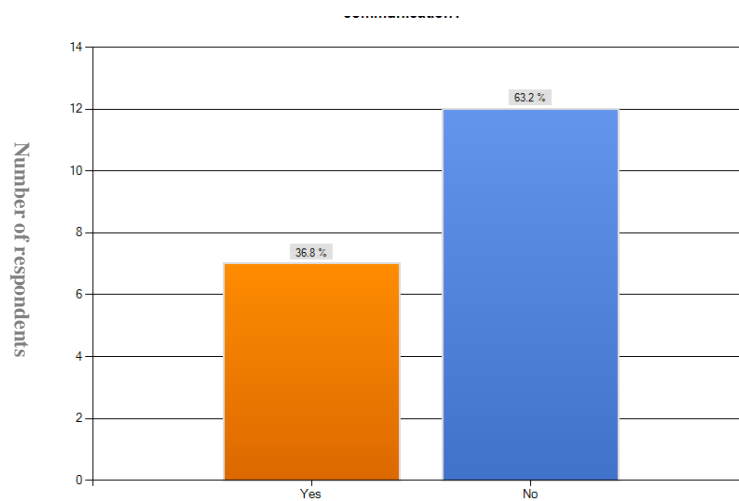
A comparative analysis of the data across the public and private sector reveals little differentiation with 63.6% of public organisation and 62.5% of private organisations indicating that they could not identify tangible benefits for their IC. This finding is a damning indictment of the standards of IC. It reflects findings from previous chapters that identified that IC was not strategically managed and was not seen as a key management function.

TABLE 13: ARE YOU ABLE TO PRODUCE TANGIBLE RESULTS FOR MANAGEMENT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION?
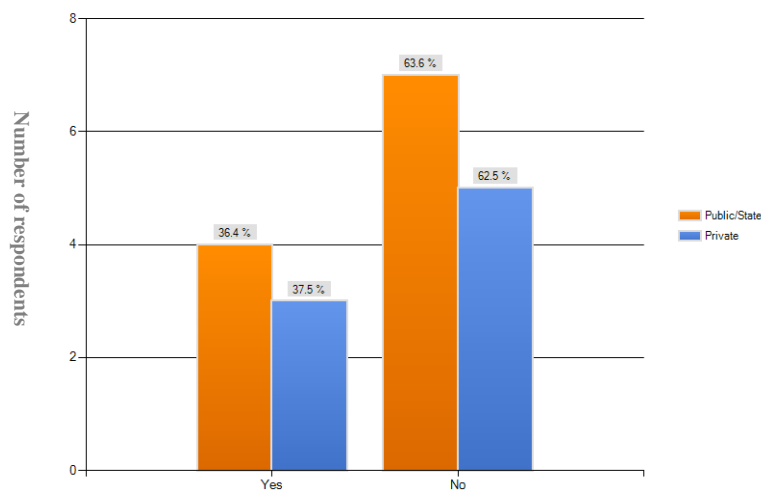
Measurement divided by the public and private sector organisations

166

It is reasonable to argue that if the organisations are measuring the benefits of the communication they are unlikely to be gathering feedback from employees. This is proven to be the case in the qualitative research outlined below reveals a deficient in the feedback and measurement undertaken by the case study organisations.

Surprisingly, three of the case study organisations undertake employee engagement surveys each year. Only one of the organisations has specific communication questions on it but the other organisations believe they can get an indication of the effectiveness of communication through the general organisational questions. Senior management and the IC Managers in all three organisations see the survey as a two-way communication tool. However, feedback from staff reveals varying levels of satisfaction with the survey.

In 2007, one staff participants in BOI, explains that

> The employee engagement survey is a waste of time. Every year
> the same questions are asked, every year when the results come out
> a team is formed to address the findings, every year they do
> nothing and disband and the next time you year amount the survey
> is when your manager wants you to fill it in again. …It is simply a
> tick box exercise.
> *(Staff Participant, BOI, 2007)*

This finding highlights the need to act on survey findings; otherwise, staff become sceptical and the surveys can become more of a barrier to effective communication rather than an enabler of effective communication.

Interestingly, by 2010 this organisation has realised that the survey is outdated and no longer of any value. They have therefore stopped it but as yet have not replaced it with anything else.

> It was felt that the employee engagement survey was past its sell by
> date and was no longer truly effective. There are plans to replace
> this with another but this has not happened given the circumstances
> we are in.
> *(Head of Corporate Communications, BOI, 2010)*

In 2007, the ESB is the only organisation to actively survey staffs' communication needs. This survey led to the appointment of the IC Manager. In 2010, the survey is still conducted, however, as with so many of the organisations, the focus of

communication has shifted and specific change initiatives take up the time of the IC Manager.

> There are various initiatives and change programmes within the company and communication would be ingrained into those change plans. It wouldn't be seen as an afterthought or a 'bolt on' extra. My role would be very much involved in that area.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

> I would say useful feedback and tangible results are zero at present.
> *(Director of Corporate Communications, HSE, 2010)*

In PWC, they have two surveys: 1) Global People Survey and 2) Peer and Upward feedback. Senior Management explains that they learn how staff feel about communication through a series of general organisational questions. Both the IC Manager and senior management explain that the Peer and Upward Feedback, which takes place annually, enables staff to provide anonymous feedback on a manager's technical performance and personal skills, and they believed that if a manager was not communicating effectively with his or her staff, it would be evident in this survey. Similarly they argued that the global people survey, conducted globally on an annual basis, provides an indication of the morale and engagement of staff in the firm and that if communication is poor it is reflected in poor staff morale and motivation. While the surveys do not provide detailed insights into communication needs or tools the data in 2010 reveal that they do provide broad insights into staff's satisfaction with communication. It is through these surveys that the firm identifies that there is a falloff in face-to-face meetings, and they are able to take steps to address this difficulty.

> There is definitely a need for more face-to-face interaction. This is something that came to light … in the Global People Survey which takes place on an annual basis. IC was highlighted as an area that needed improvement. On foot of these findings we have put in place a group which we call Exchange. Exchange has representatives from each business team across the firm. So there are over 50 people on our Exchange group….. We will also be asking the team leaders and business leaders to take a more active role in updating their teams.
> *(IC Manager. PWC, 2010)*

The fact that the firm has acted on the recommendations of their surveys is integral to gaining staff support. This is evident in PWC. In 2010, the staff participants indicate that there were some difficulties with communication but, based on the results of the

survey, the firm has put steps in place to address the issues, and he is much happier with communication. He believes the surveys are worthwhile as actions come out of them. He explains,

> If I had an idea I do think they would listen to it…both the Global People Survey and the Peer and Upward feedback are amazing… You know exactly where you stand: what things you are good at and what things you need to improve…they are confidential and that is drummed into us…you definitely see changes in your boss as a results of the surveys…all managers know they are being reviewed and therefore they will never be rude…People don't shout in PWC it just doesn't happen.
> *(Staff Participant, PWC, 2010).*

> The most significant overall finding in relation to surveys is the importance of taking action as a result of the findings and communicating the actions taken to staff. As

When surveys are a useful way of engaging staff feedback, they are not the only way to measure staff views. Focus groups, forums, engagement groups' regular feedback forms, anonymous question and answer forums etc. are all methods of establishing staff views on an ongoing basis. Frost et al. (1997:150) believe that upward communication provides a valuable feedback mechanism and helps provide information for decisions. It also helps employees to relieve some of the pressures and tensions of work, and it adds to their sense of participation in the organisation. Reece (1999:48) claims that upward communication is valuable in any organisation, because it gives employees the opportunity to contribute valuable ideas that may lead to substantial savings for the organisation. Despite the documented benefits of establishing employee feedback, a majority of the case study organisations do not encourage employees to participate in decision making by contributing their views on a regular basis. They knew he reinvigorated face-to-face briefings in PWC to generate staff feedback, and it doesn't appear to be acted on according to staff interviews. However, even in this system, there is a lack of a formal structure for capturing that feedback to ensure that it becomes part of the decision-making process within the organisation.

6.4   Difficulty reaching some internal audiences

The data reveal interesting challenges for very large organisation with a diverse workforce across many locations. Three of the case study organisations face challenge. Luckily for one of those organisations, whether or not staff are geographically dispersed, they all have access to the internet on a daily basis. This makes the use of electronic communication tools more viable. Further, two of the organisations face more significant challenges as their staff are geographically dispersed and do not necessarily have access to a computer. In 2007, two of the four organisations identified audiences they had difficulty reaching. The true extent of the difficulty the organisation faces in communicating with all staff is outlined by the internal communications manager in the HSE in 2007 when he asserted that sometimes the best way to reach all of the staff is through the media.

> Sometimes the most effective way of communicating with an
> internal audience, for example GPs, is to communicate with them
> through the press and media.
> *(IC Manager, HSE, 2007)*

This statement highlighted a serious challenge and arguably a serious deficiency in the IC structure of the HSE. In 2010, no significant improvements have been made in addressing these challenges. The e-mail database remains fractured and there is an acknowledgment that many staff cannot avail of the communication tools such as the intranet which have been developed. When asked if there was still a sense of disconnect within the organisation, the director of communications emphasized that he believed this was still the case.

> I would say the sense of disconnect is exactly the same, if not worse. You
> have absolutely no direction nationally for staff. It is particularly one way
> communication.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

The ESB-based similar challenges as many of their staff are fieldworkers would not have access to computer on a daily basis. Is this problem was understood and outlined in 2007; in 2010 the organisation has not implemented as a significant changes to address the challenges. The particular difficulty appears to be that connecting with the employees is costly. The organisation is examining the possibility of purchasing mobile devices for these staff; however, no concrete work has begun on these proposals.

The data indicate that organisations that have smaller staff numbers with access to similar technology and communication tools have the possibility of establishing effective internal communication structures and processes more easily than large organisation is geographically dispersed that work irregular hours, and he did not have a date communication tools or communications technology.

6.5   Chapter Summary

This chapter examines the use of communication tools in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. It assesses why these tools were chosen and what tangible benefits they bring to the organisations. At a time when it's never been easier to access information, the role of IC has become even more complex. With staff bombarded with messages from a variety of sources, there is a pressing need to have someone make sense of it all and place it into context. IC must also be data interpreters, shining a guiding light through the confusing haze of conflicting and competing information. Employees are looking to their managers and their organisation's senior management to set clear direction and provide an official version of events. It is the job of IC to act as data interpreters, providing a direction through the complex information for managers and staff. IC now has an array of tools to disseminate information and encourage staff collaboration and to empower and engage employees.

Section 1 reveals that traditional communication tools such as e-mail, face-to-face and the intranet are still the most used tools. There is a marked reluctance in all the organisations to embrace new media and new technology in IC.

Robson and Hayden (2009: ix) state that line manager communication with direct reports is crucial, regardless of organisation, sector or employee group. The data highlight recognition amongst a majority of the organisations that face-to-face communication is the most preferred method of communication by employees. However, in-debt analysis with the case study organisations reveals that most of the organisations are struggling to deliver effective face-to-face communication. This is because it is not seen as an essential management function by senior managers in the

organisations and is not therefore seen as a key deliverable by middle managers. As Dwyer explains,

> Successful upward communication is very difficult to achieve because it is often impeded by the egos of supervisors, a lack of incentive to put forward ideas, and a poor response to previous upward communication.

The researcher also concludes that a lack of effective face-to-face communication within the case study organisations is also affected by the lack of strategic planning by the IC managers.

Ruck and Trainor (2011: 7) outline how internal communication practices are often driven by immediate business requirements rather than by strategic goals and objectives. This, they explain, prevents leaders from seeing the true value of internal communication and the positive impact it can have employee engagement and performance. The data reveal that this is very much the case with the case study organisations. The data indicate that while e-mail and intranet are popular communication tools, examination of the type of information placed on the sites indicates that many of the IC managers have lost sight of the principle that IC is there to ensure that communication has a positive impact on employee engagement.

Smythe (2007: 11) emphasizes that employees can become bombarded in a way in which the impact of much communication wears off, and people switch off if the information is not relevant to them. We see this in the case study organisations where the information transmitted using these tools is unfocused and doesn't add value for the employee, and so it adds little value for the organisation. Many of the case study organisations are therefore struggling to get employees to engage with their communication. Also, in a number of the case study organisations the use of the intranet and e-mail as one of the most significant communication tools reinforces a culture where staffs feel their views and opinions are not valued and not listened too.

The research also examined the changes in the communication tools used by the case study organisations over a period of particular turbulence in the Irish economy. Internal communication is more important now than ever. The data indicate that the

reality was that if an organisation's workers are not being informed from the inside, they will be hearing the news from someone else, and with breath-taking speed. The data also reflect that if employees are not kept up to date, they lose trust in their management, and this can in turn undermine the organisation.

Section 2 examines the use of social media in IC. Amid all the debate surrounding the explosive development of social media, the data indicate that Irish public and private sector organisations are slow to venture.

Section 3 explored the measurement, evaluation, and feedback loops built into the communication tools and found that in all the 63% of the quantitative respondents indicated that they could not demonstrate the value of their communication. Equally, weak measurement was identified in the qualitative research. If IC wants to be seen as a strategic function, there is a basic need to ensure communication is fulfilling the purpose for which it was intended. The data reveal that this is not achieved in a majority of Irish public and private sector organisations.

Overall the findings presented in this chapter reveal that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for IC and no one communication tool that will provide effective IC. Research and advice must be gathered from employees and from business intelligence throughout the organisations. Decisions on which IC tools to use should then be tailored to the needs of the organisation. Any of the IC tools selected must have SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed) objectives to ensure that the basic principles of effective internal communication are not lost along the way.

It is also worth noting that all the best IC tools in the world will not be effective if an organisation is lacking in the fundamental qualities of leadership. There is no doubt the communication agenda of the organisation is set by the behaviour of its leaders. The management style at the top also impacts on the level and quality communication between middle managers and staff and the level of feedback flowing upwards from employees.

CHAPTER 7

CULTURE

The organisational context that supports the best communication practices

7.0   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into the organisational culture within public and private sector organisations in Ireland. Establishing the culture within an organisation is important because as the excellence study (Gillis, 2006: 546) demonstrates organisational culture is a supporting element of excellent communication.

Corporate culture is conceptualised in many ways. As Ferrall et al. (2008: 275) emphasise

> Corporate culture includes the behavioural patterns, concepts, clause, ceremonies and rituals that take place in an organisation.

In order to gain as full and as detailed a picture as possible about the culture of Irish public and private sector organisations, this chapter explores the findings in relation to artefacts, values and beliefs, decision making and codes of conduct within the research organisations.

The importance of understanding organisational culture in highlighted by Canabou and Overholtt (2001: 102) who identify that

> more than ever, it's critical …to create the right climate in your organisation. Ultimately, your people will produce the results; you need to produce the vision and put the mechanisms in place to support those people.

and by Neuhauser et al. (2000: 3) who state that

> culture is often defined as the way we do things around here. It can either drive an organisation forward or serve as an obstacle to progress…. the culture wins every time. No matter what the company says it intends to do, the way people actually behave, think, and be determines what really happens.

7.1   Artifacts: First Impressions Count

According to Schein (2010: 23) artifacts include what is seen, heard, and even encountered in a new organisation or an unfamiliar culture. Artifacts include the physical products of the group, such as the architecture of the physical environment.

The quantitative data provide an overview of organisational culture as described by participant organisations. The qualitative research offered the unique opportunity to absorb the artifacts of the case study organisations alongside the culture described by the research participants. Analysis of the artifacts facilitated the development of deeper insights into the culture of the case study organisations. The findings of the artifacts of each case study organisation are outlined below.

The qualitative research provided a unique opportunity to see the dynamic culture and artefacts of the case study organisations. Analysis of these artifacts facilitated the establishment of the climate of the organisations. While deep assumptions were not based on artifacts alone observation did provided valuable insight.

ESB

To gain entry to the ESB, the researcher had to sign in with an attendant at the front desk in the lobby. There was quite a lot of informal chitchat between the two people on the front desk. After signing in the researcher had to wait in the main lobby. While the researcher sat waiting, she noticed that the attendant at the front desk seemed to know most of the employees who streamed through the lobby. In the main lobby there was a TV screen which carried the latest news and messages about the organisation. Entry was permitted when the person the researcher was visiting came personally to escort her through the swipe access area.

The building was built in the 1970's and the participants in the research commented on the building as we went to the interview destination. The researcher judged the offices to be quite comfortable but participants themselves pointed to the fact that they were quite outdated. The physical layout of the offices appeared to be enclosed as opposed to open plan. Managers had their own individual office spaces while lower rank employees shared office spaces.

The company cafeteria occupied one floor of the building. It was one large open area where people sat at large or small tables. The city views were pleasant from this area and one of the participants explained that it was one of the perks of working in ESB. The clothing worn by employees varied. Managers wore business suits while lower rank employees were dressed in smart casual. The researcher was struck by the high level of interpersonal conversations between people within the organisation as they passed.

BOI

The Bank of Ireland changed locations between 2007 and 2010 and the artifacts observed in both locations have relevance to this research. In 2007, the Bank of Ireland headquarters was situated in the city centre in an extremely impressive building. While a number of years old, it had a large plaza in front of the building and numerous steps up to the building entrance. Once inside the researcher had to give her name to an attendant at the front desk, and she was asked to write in the visitors' log where she was from and who she was visiting. The attendant then asked her to take the seat while he telephoned for her to be escorted to her appointment.

The lobby was large and impressive. The furniture was leather and minimalist (and a little dated), and there were impressive paintings on the wall. There was a feeling of business office opulence. The physical layout of the offices was mixed with some open plan areas and many enclosed offices. The researcher observed that the office decor was a little dated, but this was not commented on by the research participants.

While being escorted to the interview location the researcher was introduced to a number of people along the way. The researcher noted that while everyone greeted each other in a friendly manner there was a formal demeanour in the discourse.

In 2010, the bank had moved locations. While the bank hadn't moved far in terms of geographical distance, the change was nonetheless significant. The total distance between the old headquarters and the new headquarters was probably no more than 800m. It was, however, further outside the city and across the canal. The new headquarters were not a new purchase; it had always been owned by Bank of Ireland but this new building was considerably smaller and was accessed directly from the main public pathway. The grand plaza and steps up to the front door no longer existed. The researcher simply walked directly into the main lobby from the main street. The system of signing in still exists. Once signed in the researcher waited in the lobby to be escorted. The lobby was far smaller than the lobby in the previous headquarters. It was less opulent but the furniture was more modern. While for many companies, the new layout would have been considered impressive, the researcher was comparing it to the previous headquarters and certainly in terms of size and overall impact, it was less impressive. It expressed what the researcher imagined it was designed to express, 'We too are affected by the economic downturn and are cutting our cloth to suit our measure'. The general layout of the offices remained largely the same with some open-plan areas and many offices. It appeared to the researcher that staff was still settling into the new office space.

HSE

The HSE offices also moved between 2007 and 2010. The HSE corporate headquarters, where these interviews took place, was based in a city centre location. In 2007, staff had only recently moved into their office space. It was interesting that while government policy had indicated that the HSE headquarters was to be based in a town called Naas approximately 35 km outside Dublin, that is was in fact in a city centre location. This was despite the fact that offices had been procured in Naas. The researcher mentioned this at her first interview and was informed that for the time being headquarter staff was to be based in the city centre.

On arrival at the offices the researcher had to give her name and the place she worked to an attendant at the front desk. A phone call was made and the researcher was told to take the lift to the relevant floor. The office layout was a mixture of an open and closed plan, although it appeared as if a majority of the offices were closed plan. The

employees the researcher came across appeared to be relaxed and informal. The dress code too was relaxed. Some people wore business attire; however, most appeared smart casual or casual. Rank and status appeared evident by whether an employee had his or her own office.

In 2010, the communications department had moved; however, not to Naas. They had moved approximately 400m to a beautiful old building. The building was formally a hospital, and it was now being used by HSE administration staff.

On arrival formal sign-in was required at the front desk; however, if people knew where they were going they were permitted to make their own way there, otherwise you could stand in the old, small, historic hallway and wait for an escort. Leading from the foyer there was a very impressive old staircase. The office layout was a myriad of offices and corridors. It was very easy to get lost. Some departments shared large rooms, which were divided into office spaces with temporary movable space dividers. The furniture was basic office furniture and the overall impression was one of structured, disorganisation. This was understandable as the offices were not purpose built. They were offices in an old, historic building. The researcher's reaction was that she would not particularly like to work in such an environment. The overall atmosphere in the organisation lacked a sense of rapid pace. In the communications department, there was a slight under-siege mentality. This was evident by the large media walls in the room. It held all the media clippings for the day. Most of the clippings on the day in question were negative. When remarked upon, staff explained that this was life in the HSE, under scrutiny by the press every day.

PwC

To gain entry into PwC, the researcher had to sign in with a receptionist who sat at the reception desk in the front hall. The entrance area was protected by swipe access entrance. After signing in, the researcher waited, in a large open plan designer glass fronted lobby which faced the river Liffey, until the person she was visiting came personally to escort her.

The officers were newly built in 2006. They had an ubiquitous open office architecture. In general the office space was open plan. There were numerous meeting

rooms dotted throughout the building. These were completely made of glass so everyone within that could be viewed from the general work area. There were also numerous breakout areas with comfortable low rise tables and chairs like coffee tables. It was explained to the researcher that these were areas where staff could go if they wanted to get away from their desk as a change of scenery or for brief meetings. The atmosphere overall in the organisation was a very dynamic environment with a sense of rapid pace, and a high rate of interaction among employees the organisation had an air of enthusiasm, intensity and energy.

The organisation had a gym on one level for staff. Each level had a coffee-making area. There was an array of fruit on display in these areas with a sign that read that employees should help themselves to these free healthy snacks.

The furniture throughout the entire organisation was extremely modern and appeared expensive. The clothing worn by employees was formal business attire reinforcing the sense of professionalism the organisation. The researcher's own reactions to this organisation also have to be considered as artifacts to be documented. It was an exciting environment to be in. It exuded an impression that this was a professional, exciting fast-paced environment to work in.

Lessons learned about artifacts

In doing a cultural analysis, the researcher's reactions are themselves artifacts of the culture, and they must be acknowledged and taken into account. As Schein (2010: 23) explains, 'it is undesirable to present cultural analysis with total objectivity'.

The researcher has detailed her emotional reactions to the various different organisations. But this does not provide a full understanding of the culture of the organisations and nor does it identify what significance the artifacts had for members of the company. To gain further understanding the researcher had examine the beliefs and values.

7.2 Beliefs and Values

As the researcher talked to the case study participants about her observations, she began to elicit some of the beliefs and values of each organisation. Goodstein, Nolan and Pfeiffer (1993: 60) define values as

> a pattern of beliefs and expectations deeply held in common by members of the organisation. These beliefs, in turn, give rise to situational norms that are evidenced in observational behaviour.

Schein (2007: 48) explains that

> beliefs and values tend to be elicited when you ask about observed behaviour are other artifacts that strike you as puzzling, anomalous, or inconsistent.

ESB

In the ESB, authority and rank were respected. Although the organisation appeared to be one very large family where everybody knew everyone else, the researcher noted a definite ranking order. It appeared that if there were differences of opinion in relation to work the higher rank employee appeared to be able to enforce their views. As with a family, employees appear to be very supportive of the organisation as a whole. The researcher got the impression that while it was okay for those within the organisation to criticize it, it would not be okay for somebody outside the organisation (or family) to criticize. On a number of occasions the researcher picked up on nuances that indicated that employees felt the organisation was unfairly scrutinized and portrayed in the media. Like so many state organisations, there was an acknowledgment from participants that not all employees performed to the same professional standards 100 percent of the time, but they did not necessarily want poor performance to be resolved by an external person or agency.

HSE

It appeared as if employees at all levels were following routine. They were not necessarily enjoined at all times to deliver the best possible and highest quality service. The researcher noted an air of resignation about the work being undertaken. On occasion it appeared that employees were working on projects they knew were not going to be completed successfully. This resignation on occasion led to a lack of motivation in relation to certain projects. Participants indicated that they could be

180

working on a particular project but it could be changed before they had time to complete it. This lack of certainty was present throughout the organisation even at the very top. As was observed when examining the values of the organisation, the corporate headquarters had been identified as being located 40 km outside capital. However, despite this national announcement the headquarters never moved to this location. The staff did move locations twice within the research period but neither move was to a location identified in government policy. This level of conflicting decision making at a very high level in the organisation appeared to trickle down through the organisation and manifested itself in the changing of projects on a regular basis. This led employees to be somewhat unenthusiastic.

BOI

The values and beliefs observed in Bank of Ireland varied depending on the amount of time the employee had worked for the organisation. Authority and rank were highly respected. This may account for why the longer serving employees spoke more favourably about the company. Bureaucracy appeared to slow down the implementation of initiatives. The business groups within the organisation appeared individualistic, and they had power to choose which initiatives they would or would not partake in. This ability to choose which initiatives to undertake helps decipher the behaviour observed particularly in relation to the attempted rollout of face-to-face communication.

The views of the more recent employees were less supportive of the organisation of the corporate entity. Staff members interviewed did not believe their views were valued. They saw themselves as part of a corporate giant that was feeling the pressure of an economic slowdown and was trying to get as much work as possible from its employees without providing them with communication, direction, vision or support.

PwC

High value was placed on personal responsibility in PWC. A high degree of transparency was facilitated through the open office space layout. The casual breakout areas were used by staff on a regular basis to work. The aim of the company was to be the best in its field and the employer of choice. This implies that they would look after their staff well but they expected their staff to deliver top quality service and work.

It appeared to the researcher that employees were aware of these expectations and that at all levels they were responsible for working as hard as they could to deliver the best quality service. When we talked about their work, they were excited about the quality and professionalism that they delivered.

Lessons learned about values and beliefs

The values and beliefs are identified through observation at the case study organisations. Identifying these values provided useful insights into the culture of the organisations. These insights will help understand the lay behaviour and actions of the organisations in overcoming its internal communication challenges.

The researcher described the paradigms experienced in the case study organisations but it cannot be assumed that the same paradigms operate in every part of the organisation. The researcher explored these findings and any anomalies identified with interview participants. As Schein (2010:52) states,

> It is when you do not understand something that you need to
> pursue vigorously why we did not, and the best way to search is
> to use our own ignorance and naïveté

The lesson learned from these case studies includes a realisation that culture is complex. In all the organisations, the influence of leaders is very evident in the culture of the organisation. When the leaders have a clear vision and set clear measurable key performance indicators for staff, employees feel more excited and empowered about their work. When leaders do not have a clear vision for the organisation or regularly change the vision employees are less enthusiastic. They often feel as if their work is purely a tick box exercise or if they are enthusiastic about their work, they simply ignore change instructions from leaders until they are 100% sure the change will be undertaken. Both a lack of enthusiasm and a cautious approach to change has a significant impact on how quickly change can be implemented in these organisations.

There is a very strong sense of loyalty in 50% of the case study organisations. Interestingly one of them is a private company and one of them is a public company. The ESB has a very strong history and employees feel they are part of a family. They also articulate ESB's broad vision for the future to employees. In PWC, the vision for

the organisation is made explicit to staff, and staff embrace this. The other two organisations are less sure about the future direction of their organisations and have suffered significant turbulence and changes in their organisations' vision prior to and over the course of this research. This has impacted on staff who feel battle weary and frustrated.
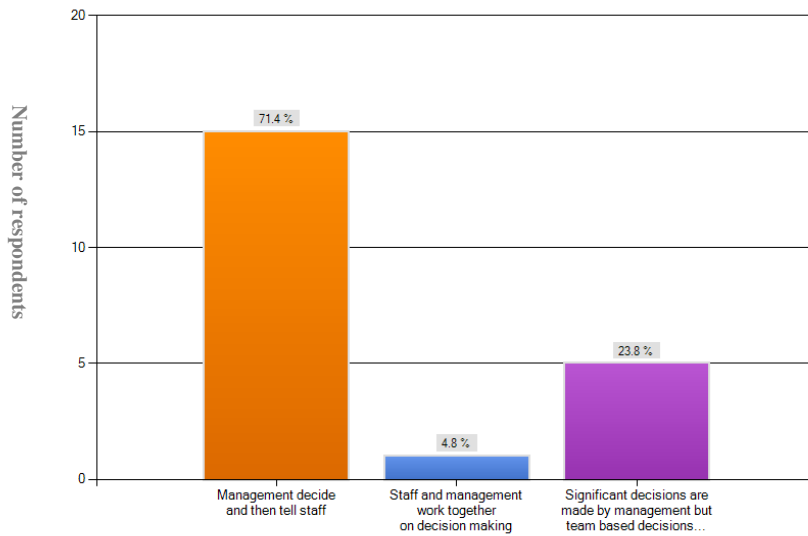
7.3 *Organisational Culture*

Wright (2009: 343) argues that understanding the organisation's culture is essential in developing an effective internal strategy because if disregarded, all IC campaigns will be undermined. Sanchez (2001: 31) makes it clear that there is no right or wrong culture. Paradoxically, Sanchez (2011: 29) states that the culture can be a potential advantage or a disadvantage depending on how organisations operate their cultural influences. As the data from this study indicates it is imperative for an IC professional to understand the culture of the organisation in order to tailor their IC practices to address the culture.

Dozier (1995: 131) states that organisations differ in the participative and authoritarian character of their cultures. Participative organisations infuse employees with a sense of teamwork, cooperation, and a shared mission while authoritarian cultures stress centralised decision making and authority.

The data from this research reveal that in the quantitative research 71.4% of organisations indicated that there is an authoritarian culture in their organisations.

TABLE14: HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

A comparative analysis of the data from the public and private sector organisations demonstrates that public sector organisations have a stronger authoritarian culture than private sector organisations: 79.9% of public sector indicated an authoritarian culture while 62.5% of private sector organisations indicated similar findings.

TABLE 15: HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

Public versus private sector organisation decision making

184
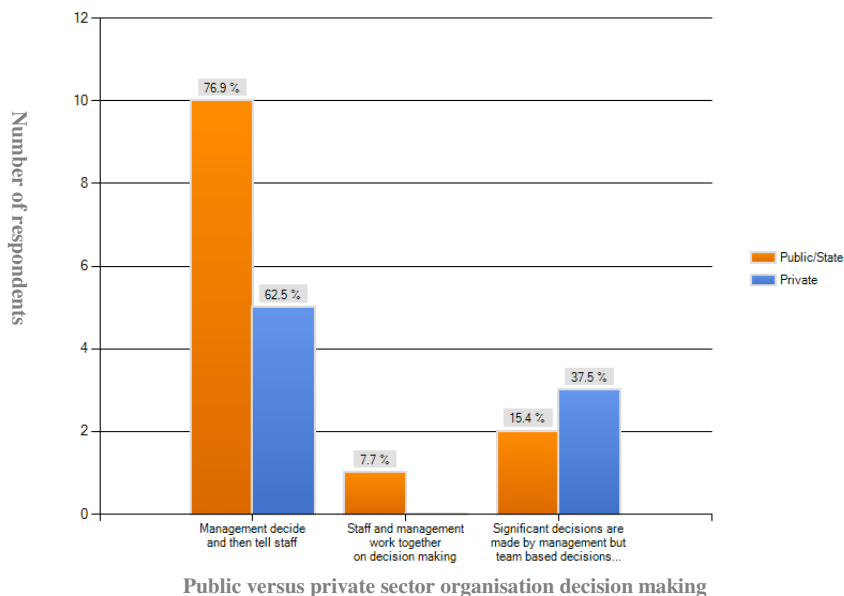
Interestingly, the qualitative research indicated that only one of the case study organisations, PwC, has a participatory culture. The interview responses in relation to PwC's culture reinforce the findings made by the researcher in relation to artifacts and values and beliefs.

The IC manager explains that everything in the firm is done by consensus and that people's views are always taken on board. She believes that the culture may have changed because of the difficulties the firm experienced during the recession, but she explains that the firm is making a concerted effort to remedy these difficulties.

> It is a very participatory organisation. Everything is done by consensus. Sometimes the decisions have to be made against the views of others but we always seek a consensus. Everyone's views are always taken into account. There is no command and control and at times this slows down the process….I don't know if our people would say we listen to them. However, in the run-up to Spencer Dock move a number of years ago I think staff found they were included. But I think the changes that we went through recently may have changed that mind-set. Through the Exchange Group, we want to get staff more involved. We want to re-build that trust.
> *(IC Manager, PwC, 2010)*

The data reveal that staff hold a similar view on the culture of the organisation. They explain that there were some difficulties for a period of time in relation to communication but that these are being resolved. Staff appear confident that their views will be listened to and taken on board.

> I would say they listen to staff in the organisation. I do believe that if I had a good suggestion I know they would listen to it… they sometimes come to us and ask for our solutions to problems and they listen to what we say.
> *(Staff Participant, PwC, 2010)*

The participative culture in this firm has fostered IC more than the cultures of any of the other case study organisations, supporting Dozier's (1995: 131) conclusion that a participative culture fosters better communication. It also supports Smyth's (2007: 41) conclusion that organisations that use a more inclusive, cooperative, participative approach to IC build a more committed and engaged workforce. Smythe (2007: 46) argues that in the turbulent times in which we currently live it is more important than ever to engage the hearts and minds of employees.

As we have seen in previous chapters, PwC is also the organisation that has an established face-to-face briefings culture within the organisation. It is also interesting to note that this organisation has a very strong training and support system that fosters a culture of trust and open communication.

The staff participant explains that

> The training you get on the job is amazing…There is an intensive few weeks when you join and then you are assigned a buddy whom you work with until you learn the ropes...there is also a peer group learning once a month where you have to present.
> *(Staff Participant, PwC, 2010)*

The remaining qualitative research data indicated that the other three case study organisations have a more authoritarian culture with a top-down approach to communication, although all three of the organisations stress a level of participative decision making. It is interesting to note that the BOI explained that it has become more authoritative and less participatory since the financial crisis.

> I would say that the organisation is quite hierarchical at the moment. Decision-making is much crisper, shorter, faster and more clinical than in previous times. Employees do not really participate in significant decision-making.
> *(Corporate Communications Manager, BOI, 2010)*

Moving from a participatory culture to a more authoritative culture conflicts with what would be expected during times of change. As Quirke's (2008: 137) research highlights

> Studies consistently show that most change initiatives fail to deliver their planned benefits. At the heart of this failure is poor communication, despite the recognition that well managed communication is central to managing change.

The communication culture within these organisations is what Smythe (2007: 41) describes as a command and control model of communication. Most of the communication tools used in these organisations were one-way, reflecting the hierarchical culture in the organisations.

> It is quite a top-down hierarchical organisation although the Partnership structure does facilitate local decision-making. Individual managers also contribute.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

> While decisions mainly come from the top in ESB nobody is the
> sole bearer of decision-making on any issue. We are not that kind
> of company. The burden of decision making is always
> shared…In our company there is a huge tolerance and support
> for a shared decision-making process. I can put my hand on my
> heart and say that is the case. Not one person from the CEO
> down would have a monopoly of wisdom and they would admit
> that.
> *(IR Manager, ESB, 2010)*

> I would say it's a top down decision-making process so a
> hierarchical structure.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

> It's not strictly hierarchical but it is certainly not flat. You
> probably need a new model for the HSE. Sometimes it just has to
> be hierarchical.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

> It varies. Managers at certain levels would have a certain span of
> authority. Issues are only fed upwards when they do not have the
> authority to make a decision, don't feel comfortable or can't make
> a decision. Every staff member has a manager and information is
> sent up through that system. There is a constant flow of
> information back and forth and people tend to make decisions
> within their area of authority and responsibility. I think there is a
> good deal of participation but at the end of the day decisions
> have to be made and there is one boss and he has the authority to
> make those decisions.
> *(IC Manager, HSE, 2010)*

These findings indicate that many organisations believe they have communicated effectively with their employees if they have told them the messages. However, as McCroskey and McCroskey (2005: 17) indicate

> It is very naive to think that this is all there is to communication.
> Telling is only part of communication—often a small part.

Communicating with employees is a two-way process for all information pertaining to the operation of the organisation. For example, an organisation's statement of value explains what the organisation believes in, and what they will and won't do to achieve their goals. They form, in some degree, the ethical underpinning of the organisation.
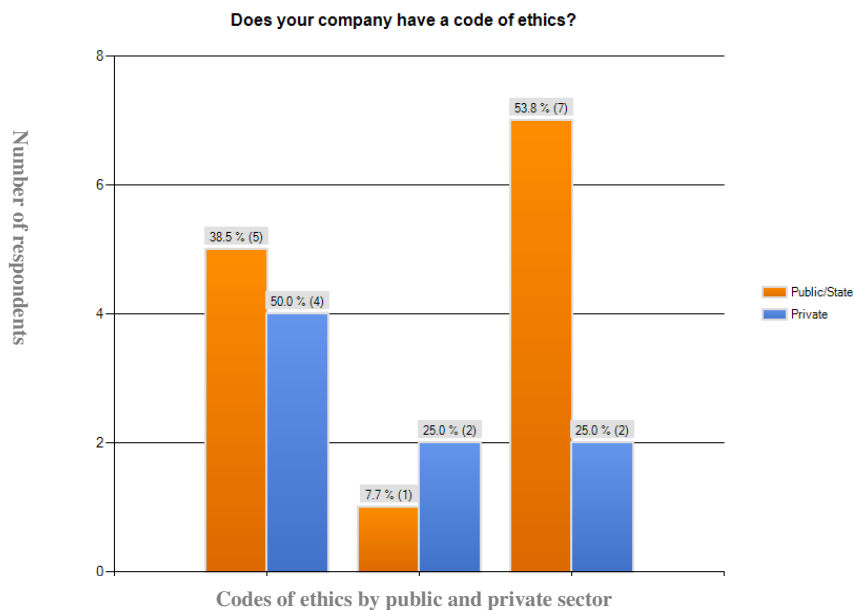
7.4 Codes of Conduct and Ethics

The quantitative research indicates that 42.9% of companies have a code of ethics. Equally, 42.9% of companies indicated that they did not know whether or not they had a code of ethics and 14.2% of respondents stated their organisation did not have a code of ethics. This finding indicates that even if there is a code of ethics it is not a document that is regularly referenced by managers or employees.

TABLE 16: DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE A CODE OF ETHICS?
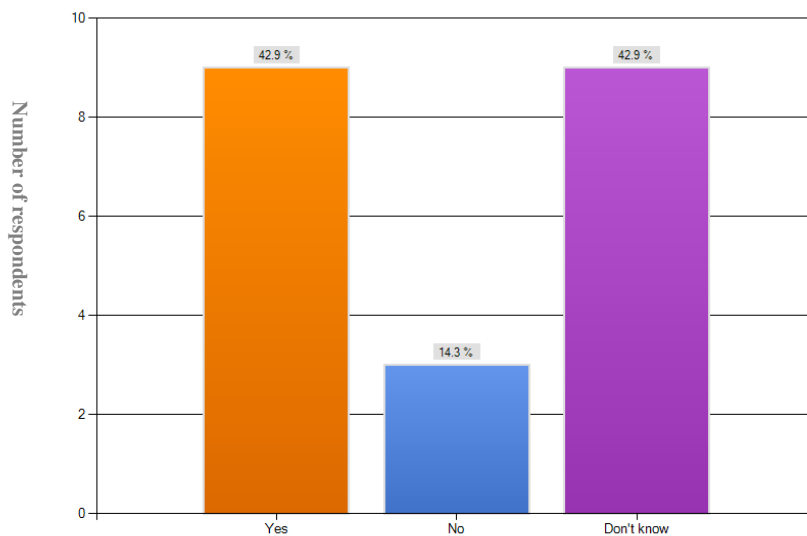
Breaking down this data by public and private sector organisations also reveals interesting findings with a significantly larger proportion of private sector organisation (53.8%) unsure if they have a code of ethics. This compares with 25% of public sector organisations.

188

TABLE 16 (B): DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE A CODE OF ETHICS?

Does your company have a code of ethics?

Number of respondents

- 53.8 % (7)
- 38.5 % (5)
- 50.0 % (4)
- 25.0 % (2)
- 7.7 % (1)
- 25.0 % (2)

Legend: ■ Public/State ■ Private

Codes of ethics by public and private sector

The qualitative data reveal different findings with 100% of respondents indicating, with varying degrees of confidence, that their organisation has an ethics policy or a code of conduct. All the organisations were keen to highlight that they have an ethics policy or code of ethics in their organisations. Two of the organisations also highlight that they have a senior manager responsible for ethics.

> We have an ethics team here. They provide ethics and business
> conduct introductory lessons to new employees. We would all
> have got a booklet outlining PwC ethics. All new graduates also
> get an introduction to PwC ethics.
> *(IC Manager, PwC, 2010)*

> I don't know if there's an ethics training programmeme but there is
> a policy. There is a senior management member in the organisation
> responsible for it.
> *(IR Manager, ESB, 2010)*

The participant responses are reinforced by an examination of the code of conduct from each of the case study organisations. All the organisations have their codes of ethics available for public scrutiny on their websites.

The ESB's code of ethics (2009:2) identifies that

> each employee has an obligation to know and understand not
> only the policies contained in the code, but also the values upon
> which they are based.

The ESB code contains examples of potential ethical dilemmas that employees may face (2009: 10) and provides guidance on how employees should react. For example, the code of ethics states,

> A supplier offers you cash in return for their company winning a
> contract—what do you do? You should disclose this to your
> manager, and excuse yourself from dealing with this company.

The HSE's framework for the corporate and financial governance of the HSE (2009:4) contains a code of standards and behaviours. The document states,

> to underpin the change process, an integrated approach to values,
> and standards and behaviours of employees is now being adopted
> through the HSE code.

The HSE's framework provides general guidance for employees in relation to ethical behaviour.

The Bank of Ireland's code of conduct (2011: 4) explains that
> as an employee of the group, you are personally accountable for
> compliance with both the letter and spirit of this policy.

The policy provides general guidance but does not provide information on how to make ethical decisions. It does mention, however, the group 'speak up' policy where employees can report any behaviour they consider inappropriate or unethical.

Finally, the PwC code of ethics (2011:12) again outlines to employees what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable in their organisation. What is different about PwC's approach is that the firm attempts to inform employees about how they should make ethical decisions. They provide a 10-step guide for making ethical decisions.

1. Is it against PwC or professional standards?

2. Does it feel right?

3. Is it legal?

4. Will it reflect negatively on you or PwC?

5. Who else could be affected by this (others in PwC, clients, you, etc.)?

6. Would you be embarrassed if others knew you took this course of action?

7. Is there an alternative action that does not pose an ethical conflict?

8. How would it look in the newspapers?

9. What would a reasonable person think?

10. Can you sleep at night?

It is interesting to note a strong emphasis on legality, personal repercussions, business repercussions, and potential negative media coverage. It has a strong utilitarian slant as opposed to a deontological perspective. This will be discussed in further detail in the chapter on ethics.

The content analysis of the code of conduct/ethics identifies that they are not communication specific. They do not in general provide guidelines on how to make ethical decisions in relation to communication issues.

Overall, it is interesting to note that while the code of ethics is available on the company's website 50% of those interviewed were not certain that such a code existed. This suggests that the code is not communicated to staff on an ongoing basis. This emphasises the importance of Ferrell et al.'s (2008:216) guidance that 'a code that is placed on a website or in a training manual is useless unless it is reinforced every day'.

For this reason the practice within the ESB is noteworthy. The data reveal that the ESB ensures that all staffs complete a questionnaire on the code of ethics annually.

> We have an employee code of ethics and I recently had to do an
> online training module to gauge my understanding of code.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

However, even amongst those who complete the questionnaire, there is a lack of knowledge as to what is covered in the policy. Equally, none of the interviewees are in a position to explain how the code of ethics is relevant to the organisation's communication. The ethics policy cover business etiquette and legally enforceable responsibilities more than it covers the process of ethical decision making.

Diversity

Schein (2010: 370) explains that organisations with more cultural diversity are better able to cope with unpredicted events. Grunig et al. also emphasise the importance of diversity as an element of excellence in organisational communication. The excellence study examined the effect of a growing number of women in communication and explored the evidence that women have difficulty entering managerial roles. Research shows that organisations with excellent communication value women as much as men for the strategic roles, and they develop programmemes to empower women within their organisation.

In exploring the idea of diversity in this research, the data reveal significant diversity identified within the quantitative analysis. Overall 71.4% of organisations explain that there is considerable diversity within their organisations

TABLE17: IS THERE MUCH DIVERSITY WITHIN THE ORGANISATION?
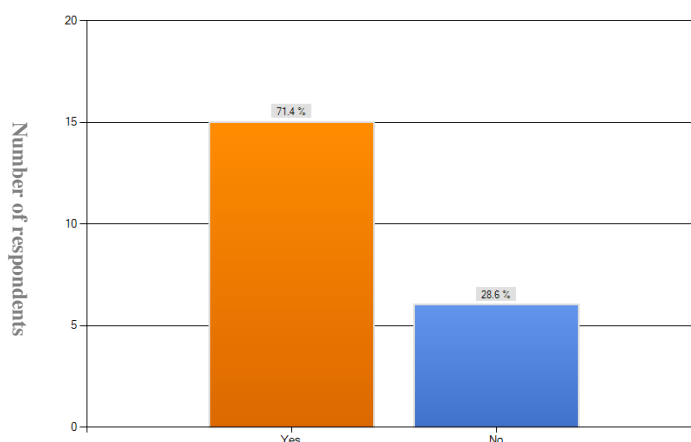
Interestingly the private sector identify a higher degree of diversity in their organisations with 87.5% of private organisations stating they have considerable amount of diversity, while 61.5% of public organisations express the view that they have considerable amount of diversity.

TABLE 18: IS THERE MUCH DIVERSITY WITHIN THE ORGANISATIONS?

Diversity broken down by public and private sector organisation
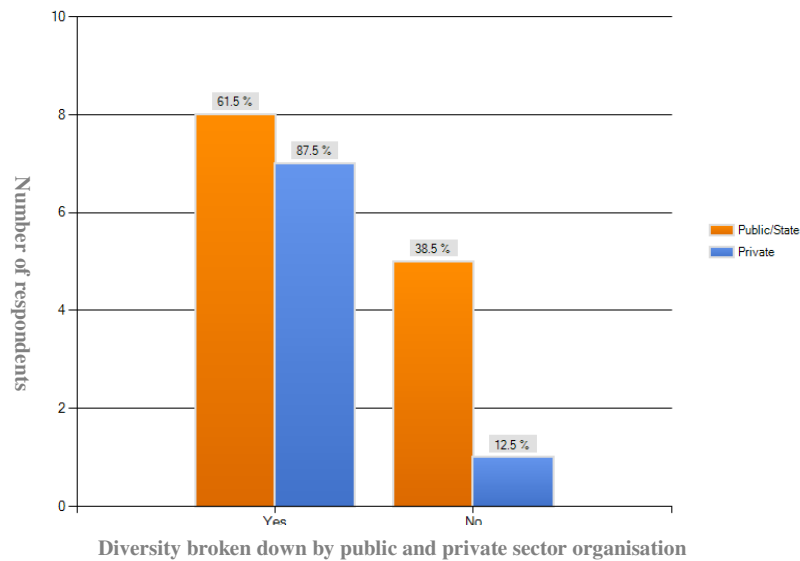
When the issue of diversity was explored with the qualitative research, data revealed that the organisation identified as having a more participative culture had the highest level of diversity within their workforce. PWC was able to provide considerable detail in relation to diversity in their workplace.

> There is a person in HR with responsibility for diversity. I think we have in order of 146 different nationalities in our workforce. We have statistics for the number of nationalities working in the organisation. Given that it's an international organisation we get people placed here and a lot of our people are placed in the international network. I think that the female/male ratio is something like 52 to 48. It is nearly 50-50.
>
> There are also policies around diversity. I don't know how wide-ranging they are but I would expect that diversity to be very much built into the recruitment process and I would expect that the diversity statistics are monitored to ensure we are not off kilter. We certainly encourage diversity. I don't know this for certain but I wouldn't be surprised if we have to submit our diversity statistics to the global organisation.
> (IC Manager, 2010)

These findings were reinforced by the staff participants who explained that they believed there was a certain ratio of males and females that had to be recruited each year.

193

The ESB also had very strong diversity within their organisation. One participant in the ESB explained diversity within the organisation in an impassioned manner.

> Yes, in my view our company leads the way in this regard. When I look back to when I started back in the late 90s we had the first anti-bullying harassment policies, two years before legislation required it. We are always very advanced in relation to equality and diversity. We have an equality manager. We have policies on code of practice for people with a disability.
>
> We were supporting women to go into engineering and take apprenticeships before it was traditionally the norm. We did international work in this regard. The company has always pushed out diversely. External organisations often approach us to use our policies because we are very advanced in this area.
>
> Women also tend to be very high in areas of HR and accountancy and many of our senior managers at the top level are women.
> *(IR Manager, ESB, 2010)*

While best explained and outlined by this participant, these sentiments were reinforced by all those interviewed in ESB.

Responses by the other case study organisations were far less detailed when it came to the question of diversity. Many participants expressed an assumption that diversity policies existed, but they were unaware of them; they would have to 'check it out'. When asked about the gender balance in the organisation, responses were again vague and uncertain.

> There is a reasonable gender split. In the senior management team three of the eight are female.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*
>
> It is quite a male-dominated environment and a male-dominated leadership.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

7.5   Deception and Cover-ups

Trevino (1990; 2000) argues,

> we can say that the ethics component of organisational culture is composed of a complex interplay of formal and informal systems that can support either ethical or unethical behaviour. The formal

194

systems include leadership, structure, policies, reward systems, orientation and training programmes, and decision-making processes. Informal systems include norms, heroes, rituals, language, myths, sagas, and stories.

In exploring the culture of the organisations further, the participants were asked a question about the encouragement of openness about unethical conduct. It was important to examine this aspect of organisational culture because often it indicates what acceptable or unacceptable business behaviour is. Ferrell et al. (2008: 60) indicate that sometimes business is regarded as 'a game' that is governed by rules other than normal society rules. Sometimes a warfare mentality, which is demonstrated in certain business books, fosters the idea that honesty is unnecessary in business. For this reason, Ferrell et al. (2008: 60) state it is important that organisations make it clear to employees what rules apply to their business.

The findings of the quantitative research are interesting in this regard. Only 28.6% of staff agreed that openness about unethical conduct is encouraged, while 38.1% do not believe that openness about unethical conduct is encouraged. Significantly 33.3% of respondents are unsure if openness about unethical conduct is encouraged. These are significant findings that demonstrate that public and private sector organisations in Ireland do not appear to be focusing on explaining to employees what is expected and what they can do it if this behaviour does not occur.

TABLE 19: OPENNESS ABOUT UNETHICAL CONDUCT IS ENCOURAGED IN MY ORGANISATION

195
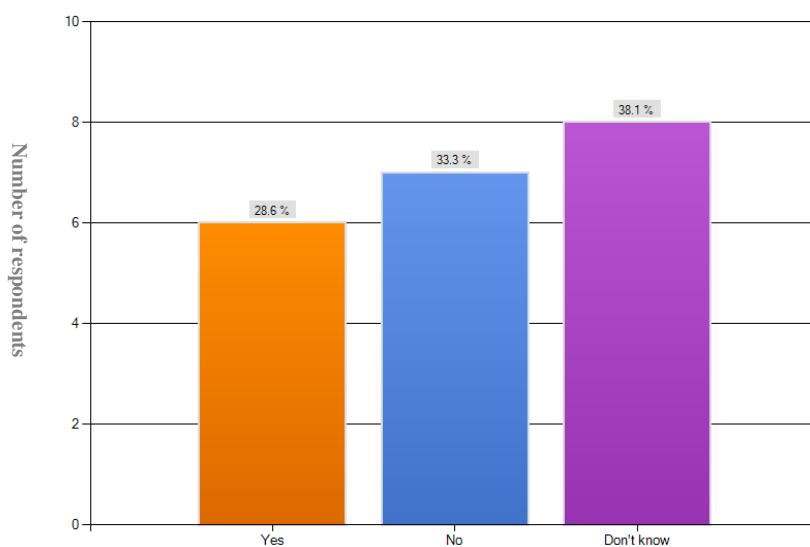
Comparative analysis of the quantitative responses demonstrates some striking statistical variations between the public and private sector: 53.8% of public sector organisations indicated that openness about unethical conduct was encouraged. This compares to a figure of 0% in the private sector. This is a startling finding. It is interesting to note, however, that 62.5% of private sector organisations are not sure whether ethical conduct is encouraged. These findings indicate that there is significant room for improvement surrounding the issue of ethics training within both the public and private sector organisations in Ireland.

TABLE 20: OPENNESS ABOUT UNETHICAL CONDUCT IS ENCOURAGED IN MY ORGANISATION (PUBLIC/PRIVATE CROSSTAB)

Openness about unethical conduct in public and private sector organisation s
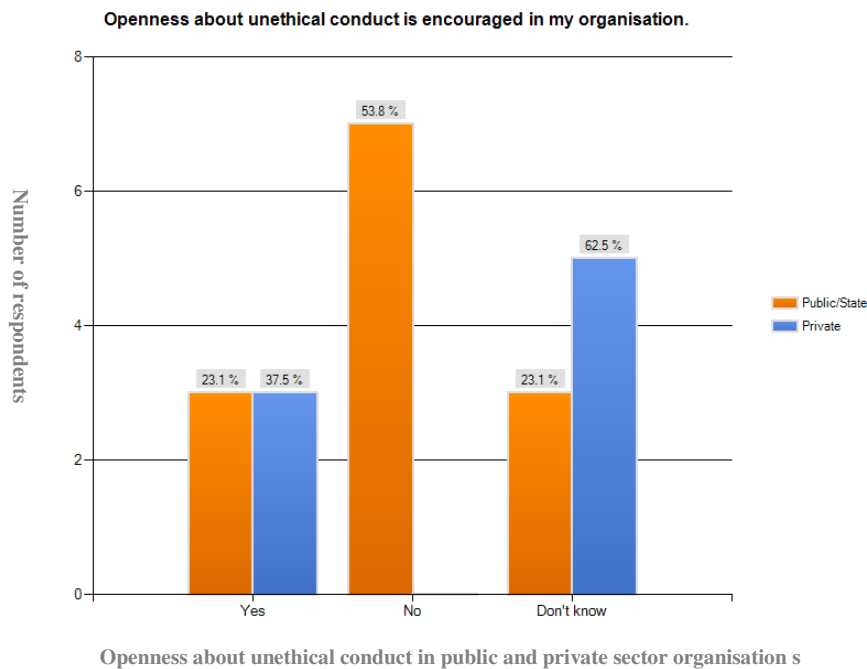
The findings from the qualitative research were somewhat more encouraging with 50% of the organisation strongly indicating that openness about unethical conduct is encouraged. Again both these organisations were the organisations that responded positively to the questions on diversity. The remaining two organisations indicated a positive response to this question but they were less certain about the answer.

> I think it is. There is a whistle-blowing charter.
> (Corporate Communications Manager, BOI, 2010)

196

> There is a whisteblowing charter. There is a statutory obligation
> to have that in place.
> (Director of Communications, HSE, 2010)

The researcher wanted to investigate whether a lack of encouragement for the reporting of unethical behaviour facilitated unethical behaviour in the eyes of the participants and therefore asked the question: 'Would you say that managers in your company often engage in unethical behaviour?' The results revealed that while organisations indicated that 91.4% of respondents don't believe that there is unethical behaviour in their organisation, a significant 9.5% believed that unethical behaviour does take place.

TABLE 21: WOULD YOU SAY THAT MANAGERS IN YOUR COMPANY OFTEN ENGAGE IN UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR?
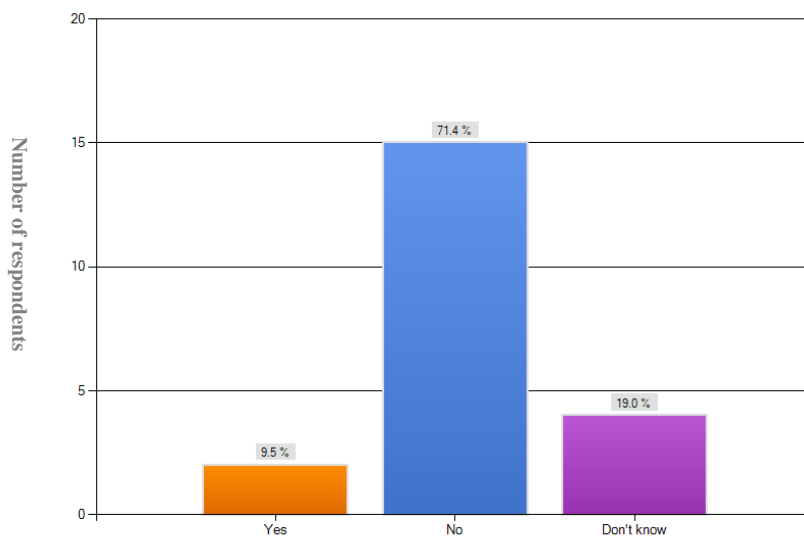
Comparative analysis revealed significant statistical variation between the public and private sector organisations: 15.4% of public organisations believed that managers often engaged in unethical behaviour. This compares to 0% in the private sector organisations. Again interestingly, a far greater percentage, 37.5% of private organisations in comparison to 7.7% of private organisations respondents indicated that they did not know whether managers engaged in unethical behaviour in their organisation. These were startling findings. The high percentage of "don't know" in the private sector is of concern as it indicates a level of uncertainty surrounding ethical conduct within organisations. The level (9.5%) of public sector participants

who believed that unethical behaviour takes place in their organisation was also concerning.

TABLE 22: WOULD YOU SAY THAT MANAGERS IN YOUR COMPANY OFTEN ENGAGE IN UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR? (PUBLIC/PRIVATE CROSS-TAB)
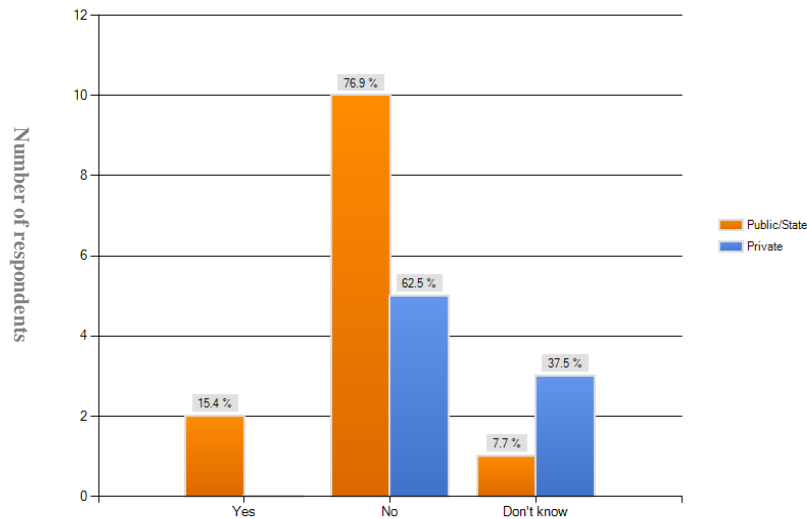
The qualitative data were significantly more positive. The data indicated that none of the participants believed that their managers engaged in unethical behaviour. It is worth noting, however, that after providing this answer, two participants stipulated that if unethical behaviour did take place it was because the people involved were not aware that their actions were unethical. The participants indicated that they were confident that if this unethical behaviour was brought to the attention of these employees that it would cease immediately.

The findings revealed in both the qualitative and quantitative analysis in relation to this question poses many more questions. While exploring these results in detail was outside the scope of this study, the researcher does identify this as an area for future examination.

7.6   Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the culture of public and private sector organisations in Ireland. In establishing the culture, the researcher drew on data from observation and content analysis as well as qualitative and quantitative research. In establishing the culture of

the research organisations; artifacts, values and beliefs, organisational policies and decision making were all studied. It was important to examine all these elements because as Keyton (2010: 19) states organisational culture emerges from the complex and continuous web of communication among members of the organisation. Keyton (2010: 28) also explains that an organisation's culture becomes the framework against which organisational communication is evaluated and is the avenue for creating ongoing collective and individual action.

Understanding the culture of the public and private sector organisations in Ireland entailed undertaking a cultural analysis. As Schein (2010: 370) explains,

> Cultural analysis reveals important mechanisms by which groups and organisations function in completing their tasks. Without cultural analysis, it is difficult to understand the groups are created, as they become organisations, and how they evolve throughout their existence.

The quantitative data reveal that 71% of the participant organisations have an authoritative culture. Similar findings are found in the qualitative data. The qualitative data were further supported by the observations of the researcher with regard to the artefacts, values and beliefs observed in the case study organisations.

The quantitative data also reveal that 71% of the organisations identify that they have strong diversity in their workplaces. This figure dropped slightly in the qualitative data, and the researcher identified that 50% of the organisations have a strong understanding of diversity within their workplace. Although the other two case study organisations do have a level of diversity, it was less structured and less formal.

The culture of an organisation is reinforced by the existence and teaching of a code of ethics that helps employees deal with ethical dilemmas. The quantitative data reveal that 42.9% of organisations have a code of ethics. Comparative analysis with the qualitative data reveals that 50% of the case study organisations are very aware that their organisation probably has a code of ethics. This uncertainty expressed by 50% of the respondents reinforces Ferrell et al.'s (2008: 216) argument that 'a code that is placed on a website or in a training manual is useless unless it is reinforced every day'.

Levels of deception and unethical behaviour are surprising findings in this research: 15.4% of participants from public organisations believed that managers in their organisations engage in unethical behaviour, and 37.4% of participants from private organisations indicated that they do not know whether unethical behaviour takes place in their organisations. This is an interesting finding and while further examination of these results was not possible within the scope of this research, it is identified as an area for future research.

This chapter examined the culture of the organisation in order to establish how it affects IC. In summary, IC plays an important role in facilitating interaction at all levels of the organisation. The research demonstrates that the IC approach will vary from one organisation to another as the culture in each organisation varies. Qualifying the culture of the organisation is, therefore, essential as it enables the internal communications professional to work with and develop the communication networks that exist within the organisation to deliver significant business results.

CHAPTER 8

CHANGE

8.0   Introduction

The patterns found in the comparative analysis of the data on the communication of change, within the public and private sector organisations in Ireland, is presented in this chapter. It examines whether communication plays an integral part in the change process within the case study organisations and it examines the change theories or tactics used to introduce change to the organisation. It examines if there is an awareness of how employees cope with change and whether specific communication techniques and tactics were employed to address how employees move through the change process. It also examines influence strategies from outside the communications arena which have been proven to be effective and instrumental in facilitating change and it examines whether any of these techniques have been used in the case study organisations. The chapter draws on the qualitative research data as the nature of the in-depth interviews facilitated analysis of these issues.

8.1   Change in the Case Study Organisations

To understand the significance of the changes that have taken place in the case study organisations the researcher began by undertaking a content analysis of each organisation's annual reports for the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. While the annual reports of PwC were unavailable the researcher, draws from other secondary research to gather a picture of the changes that took place within that industry.

Snippets from the annual reports of the case study organisations are outlined below and a summary of the challenges faced by each organisations during the period of this research is outlined. The summaries focus on the challenges faced by the organisations. It is important to understand these challenges in order to assess the effectiveness of the communications tools and tactics that were used.

8.1.1 Overview of changes during the period 2007–2010 HSE

At the time of the first interview the HSE had recently undergone a change programmeme. The Health Service Executive (HSE) had been established on January 1, 2005 replacing ten regional health boards. In 2007, the HSE was still adjusting to the new arrangement and a significant transformation programmeme was being implemented. With the economic downturn the HSE faced even more considerable challenges. Between 2008 and 2010 the organisation had to save in excess of €1 billion. In addition, the CEO of the HSE changed during this period and it was anticipated that the Minister for Health would also change in the near future. This led to a shift in priorities and further planned restructuring.

Health Service Executive (Annual report, 2008: 8)
In common with many other countries, 2008 was a testing year for the health services in Ireland. As the year progressed, the deteriorating economic environment and the growing demands for services, particularly publicly funded services such as medical and GP visit cards, placed increasing demand on resources.

Health Service Executive (Annual report, 2009: 8)
Despite the many challenges, particularly those associated with making our financial and employment resources go further and implementing our transformation and reconfiguration agenda, our staff remained committed to the individual needs of our patients and clients during 2009.

The 2009 Euro Health Consumer Index (ECHI) shows that our health service has moved up 15 places in the European ranking since our Transformation Programmeme started in 2006.

Health Service Executive (Annual report, 2010: 8) CEO changed from Prof Drumm to Cathal McGee
The year 2010 was a very challenging year …we had to manage increased demand from patients and clients for our services, coupled with a decreasing budget. We had to source further efficiencies from the entire system and this was a challenge….We are delivering more services than ever before while spending less money. Our programmeme for 2011…is even more challenging….Service provision was delivered against a background of a difficult financial position requiring us to engage in a relentless cost reduction programmeme pursued across all non-pay headings, maximising procurement opportunities and eliminating all discretionary spending.

Services are being delivered more efficiently by not growing costs and between 2008 and 2010 this saving amounted to in excess of €1bn.

8.1.2 Overview of changes during the period 2007–2010 ESB

In 2008 the ESB forecasted strong growth. The future for the organisation looked positive and employees were relatively content. There was no significant amount of change although the organisation had expansion plans. From an IC perspective there was no significant change initiatives although there were some improvements in IC planned. By 2010 the situation had changed considerably. Competitors had entered the market and the ESB was restricted from competing against them for a number of years. The organisation was also suffering from an identity crisis as the commission for energy regulation forced it to re-brand part of its organisation from ESB to Electric Ireland. This was to facilitate competition in the marketplace. This was a difficult change for the staff in ESB who identified very strongly with the organisation's strong historic brand. The organisation also had to face the challenge of becoming more efficient and was negotiating voluntary redundancies.

Electricity Supply Board (Annual Report: 2007:12)
It is a very exciting time to join the ESB Board as the Company launches a new strategic framework to 2020…A €22 billion investment programmeme which will make ESB the leading renewables company in Ireland. Continued focus on delivering growth in shareholder value and customer service.
When I first interviewed in the HSE the organisation had just undertaken a significiant change

Electricity Supply Board (Annual Report: 2008:12)
The emergence of Bord Gáis and Airtricity as active competitors in the residential sector is strongly welcomed by ESB and should finally dispel any lingering perception of ESB as a monopoly. The price which ESB can charge its domestic customers is determined by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) and ESB is not permitted to discount from this price. As competitors take this opportunity to grow market share it is to be hoped that the regulatory restrictions on ESB will be lifted to allow ESB to compete on an equal footing.

Electricity Supply Board (Annual Report: 2009:12)
In the first place we had to deal with increased competition in both generation and supply and at the same time respond to reduced demand for electricity. On the generation side, our competitors – including Endesa (the Spanish utility), Scottish and Southern Electricity (who purchased Airtricity), Viridian and a range of renewables companies – now generate more electricity on an **all** island basis than ESB.
For ESB Customer Supply (ESBCS), our regulated retail electricity business, it was also a tough year. The new entrants to the residential market, Bord Gáis Energy and Airtricity, were able to take advantage of falling commodity

Electricity Supply Board (Annual Report: 2010:12)

> The economic recession has led to a reduction in electricity demand. Competition has increased with the arrival in the Irish market of major UK and European utilities. ESB's share of the generation market on the all-island basis is now 46%. Our share of the supply market on an all-island basis is 42%.

8.1.3 Overview of changes during the period 2007–2010 BOI

It could be argued that of all the case study organisations the Bank of Ireland experienced the most significant changes. In 2007 the interview for this research took place in the prestigious city centre headquarters of Bank of Ireland. The economic climate had begun to deteriorate but the organisation's future looked positive. In 2010 the research took place in the Bank's new head offices in a much smaller premises and a slightly less central location. The move symbolised the challenges that had been experienced by the Bank of Ireland Group. The speed of the economic downturn is well illustrated in abstracts from the annual reports below. The Bank went from a projection of strong economic growth in 2007, to requiring a government bailout of €3.5 billion in 2009. Alongside changes in locations came a reduction in staff. 13% of the workforce was shed 'by not filling vacancies and non renewal of fixed term contracts' between 2008 and 2010. In 2010 a further 5% (750) voluntary redundancies were sought (Flanagan and Walsh, 2010: online). These changes created an air of anxiety among staff.

> **Bank of Ireland (Annual Report: 2007:7)**
> Strong organic growth is the main feature of our results for the year to 31st March 2007. Profit before tax increased 28% to €1,958 million. On an underlying basis, profit before tax rose 22% to €1,700 million.
>
> This growth was achieved through excellent performances in our Irish and UK divisions and in Capital Markets. Thus the growth is diversified and well balanced. In addition, in a benign credit environment in Ireland and the U.K., the Group's asset quality is very good.
>
> **Bank of Ireland (Annual Report: 2008:7)**
> Bank of Ireland Group ended its financial year to 31 March 2008, with a strong capital base, good continuing access to funding, and strong asset quality
> The Group has not escaped the effects of higher funding costs, resulting from the global financial crisis, and economic slowdown in its main markets – Ireland and the United Kingdom – but management has operated prudently and conservatively to ensure that the Group remains in robust condition.

Economic growth in our main markets slowed in the second half of 2007 and it is now expected that this trend will continue in Ireland and the United Kingdom through 2008.

Bank of Ireland (Annual Report: 2009:7)
This has been one of the most difficult years in the history of Bank of Ireland. The difficulties in financial markets, particularly since last September, have caused a significant reduction in profitability and led to our decision to cancel dividends to ordinary stockholders. I record the deep appreciation to the Irish Government for its intervention in providing support to the Irish financial sector and, specifically, to Bank of Ireland.

The Group's financial performance deteriorated dramatically during the year, in particular in the second half of our year following the collapse of Lehmans in September 2008 and the resulting financial crisis. Rising impairment charges, as the economic situation at home and abroad deteriorated rapidly, and difficulties in securing term funding posed particular problems.
On 11 February 2009 the Government proposed the recapitalisation of Bank of Ireland through the provision of €3.5 billion in core Tier 1 capital in the form of preference stock.

Bank of Ireland (Annual Report: 2010:7)
2010 brought many challenges to our Group. It has been a particularly difficult year…
We made progress against our key priorities but continued to be impacted by the severity of the economic downturn in Ireland. Our funding objectives were severely impacted by the sovereign debt concerns which arose in the second half of the year culminating in the announcement by the Government of an EU/IMF Programmeme of support on 28 November 2010.
…Losses on disposal of assets to NAMA have been higher than our expectations and those anticipated …
We have continued to manage our costs which in 2010 were 6% lower than in the previous year. We have also made significant changes to a number of infrastructure contracts and in our office premises arrangements which should benefit both efficiency and costs in future years.

8.1.4 Overview of changes during the period 2007–2010 PwC

The annual reports of PwC were unavailable. However, the researcher drew from other data sources to attempt to analyse the challenges faced by PwC. It was believed that it would be relatively easy to establish the details about the company from news reports, published financial statements etc. However, unearthing such data proved equally difficult. A dearth of reports produced by PwC were available but very little existed detailing the companies won situation. The researcher had to extrapolate information from the scare number of news articles pertaining to the company and drawing on the information that was provided by the case study interviewees.

A news article from the Irish Independent newspaper in 2009 reported that PwC's All-Ireland revenue dipped 6.5% that year. The article also outlined that professional service firms in general had been hit hard by the financial crisis, with job cuts and a drop in profits and a senior partner within PwC is quoted as describing the years 2008/2009 as very difficult and challenging years for both their clients and their firm.

There was no information available in the public arena that identified the number of job cuts made in PwC. While there were volumes of articles on the reports the company had published on economic matters there was no information on their company's own financial situation. From interviews with participants in PwC however the researcher was aware that the headcount in PwC had dropped significantly. While the exact figure was not confirmed it was believed to be between 10-15% of the workforce.

8.2   The role IC played in Introducing Change

Ruck (2010: 29) identifies that IC plays a role in helping organisations adapt and be responsive to change. As all the case study organisations had experienced reform and change during the period of this research, the study sought to examine the role that IC played within that change.

Quirke (2008: 256) explains that the deeper the change the greater the disturbance to the organisation and culture. Given that the changes within all the case study organisations were significant it is anticipated that a significant change in culture would also be experienced.

In assessing how the organisations dealt with change, Kotter's eight steps of change were examined (1) how a sense of urgency was developed, (2) who within the guiding coalition? (3) was there a vision for the change? (4) while this vision communicate clearly to staff? (5) were staff empowered to act? (6) were short term wins communicated? (7&8) have the changes become part of the culture of the organisation?

8.2.1 The role IC played in introducing change in the HSE

In the HSE a sense of urgency was being created in 2007 in relation to the transformation programmemes. The transformation programmeme, the brain child of the then CEO Prof. Drumm, aimed to establish an effective health authority in Ireland. The transformation document that was provided to the researcher at her first meeting in 2007 outlined that the organisation was focusing on 6 transformation priorities. In order to realise these priorities the HSE was focusing on 13 different transformation projects (HSE, 2007:13). In 2007 the IC department was almost wholly consumed by the production of information leaflets and online resources relating to these transformation programmemes. The activities of the IC Department were more tactical than strategic. The IC department was producing information based on what management wanted them to prepare rather than undertaking contextual analysis, audience analysis and strategic design to unsure that the messages reached and impacted on their intended audience. Equally, the channels used did not facilitate feedback or two-way communication. Thislimitation resulted in senior management being unaware of staffs' views.

There was a knowledge within the system that change was taking place but it is debatable whether necessary levels of support for these changes was ever truly garnered. Kotter (2007: 4) identified that '75% of managers must believe that the status quo is more dangerous than the unknown [change]'. As no measurement was ever taken in relation to support for the transformation programmeme, it is difficult to assess whether a sufficient sense of urgency was achieved. The staff interviewed in 2007 were aware of the transformation programmeme, but they were also aware of further changes coming down the tracks in relation to their specific area. They indicated that they were more interested in finding out information pertaining to these changes than they were in participating in the transformation programmemes. Despite this lack of engagement, the 2009 annual report provides us with an indication of the success of the transformation programmemes as it states that

> The 2009 Euro Health Consumer Index (ECHI) shows that
> our health service has moved up 15 places in the European

207

ranking since our Transformation Programmeme started in
2006. At the time (2006) our health service was ranked
28th out of 29 European countries. In 2009, we are now
ranked 13th out of 33.
(HSE, Annual Report, 2009: 13)

In 2010 the situation had changed significantly. There was a new CEO and as the
government was under significant difficulties it was anticipated that the new Minister
for Health would also shortly be in post. A new direction for the HSE was anticipated
as the T.D. expected to be the new Minister for Health had explained that if appointed
he would disband the HSE. The financial situation within the HSE was also difficult
and the significant savings that needed to be made involved changes in the HSE
across all levels. On this occasion the 'burning platform' (Kotter 2007: 4) for change
was facilitated by the media, as much as it was created by the leadership within the
HSE. The daily media reminders about the state of the economic finances created the
sense of urgency for change. Staff interviewed in 2010 were experiencing the effects
of budgetary cuts first hand, with the non-replacement of retiring staff and the non-
filling of maternity leaves. Among staff interviewed, there was a feeling that the
changes required doing more with less but that the instrument being used to
implement this change was extremely blunt. Certain areas with a high turnover of
staff were experiencing far greater difficulties than other areas in the system. Staff
identified this as frustrating.

Interestingly, in 2010 despite significant changes taking place within the organisation
the IC manager was spending a majority of his time on the production of the monthly
staff newsletter and the development of a more comprehensive intranet site. A content
analysis of these staff newsletter demonstrated that it was not specifically focused on
communicating the urgency of the changes taking place in the organisation. The
emphasis was on good news stories from various different parts of the health service.
It appeared that in 2010 the IC Department was even less involved in the
communication of the changes. The changes appeared to be viewed as a HR/finance
issue rather than an IC issues. Again this demonstrates a lack of strategic approach to
change communication.

The Director of Corporate Communications appeared to be more focused on the
change agenda. He had plans to roll out a significant IC infrastructure which would

support changes happening throughout the organisation countrywide. He identified the development of Integrated Service Areas (ISAs), which were designed to integrate primary and hospital care, as an opportunity to improve IC.

> I can see communication getting a lot of traction with the rollout of ISAs in early 2011. The communication model is there. It has just been too cumbersome up until now to roll it out and measure it. But now with the implementation of ISAs, we are putting in place the structures which will enable communication to be measured and monitored.

The Director of Corporate Communication recognised that IC was not strategically managed but he was hoping to remedy this.

While outside the scope of the period of research it is noted (Culliton: 2010: online) that in 2012 before these structures had been embedded the new Minister for Health announced a 'diminution' of the structures as he did not favour the HSE. Talk about changing the health system once again highlights what Alvesson (2002: 185) identified as a significant problem in the introduction of change explaining that it is difficult to instil and make specific practices work if top managers stay only a few years in their position and their successor has a completely different idea or approach and they too are keen to try to put their own imprint on the business. This leads to the resistance of change initiatives and declarations of 'again another mission statement!' The data from this study reveals that staff in the HSE are experiencing this frustration with change.

> We are apparently being disbanded, so we are not too sure where we are going to end up, maybe the Department of Health, who knows. Yet another clear plan!
> *(Staff participant, HSE, 2010)*

Overall, the researcher notes that the IC function was not used strategically in the communication of the HSE changes in 2007 or 2010. IC did not appear to be involved at a strategic level in any manner. Therefore none of the theory of change communication examined in the literature review was implemented.

8.2.2 The role IC played in introducing change in the BoI

In 2008 there were no significant change projects underway within BoI. The IC function sat within the HR department and had a HR perspective on communicating with staff. Communication with staff was mainly through the intranet, email, staff briefings and top manager briefings. The focus was on communicating the benefits of working in the organisation and the growth plans for the group.

In 2010 however the role of IC had changed significantly. It had been moved into corporate communications and was now far more in-line with external messages. This was very important as there was significant external interest in the operation of the Bank, so internal and external messages had to be aligned. The fact that the IC function had changed position within the organisation indicated an understanding of the importance of IC during turbulent periods. There were a significant number of major change initiatives taking place. For example, the bank had a pension issue that needed to be resolved bank, it required government funding, it had to reduce its workforce and it was relocating its headquarters. The bank did use IC to help increase the understanding of the need for change amongst staff. The IC manager explains

> We have driven more cascade communication than ever before
> and we have tried to make it the responsibility of all managers
> to communicate with their teams. When you're in a crisis it has
> to be done.
> *(IC Manager, BoI, 2010)*

While this appears to be a positive development, further analysis revealed that the face-to-face communication was not as positive as it initially appeared.

> The central senior team has become much more preoccupied with survival
> and undertaking things that need to be done to ensure that survival. The
> business as usual managers are running the day-to-day operation. This
> means that divisional heads are undertaking staff briefings etc.
> *(Head of Corporate Communication, HSE, 2010)*

The researcher also noted that urgency for the change was being communicated to top and middle managers through teleconferences and webcasts. However, interview data reveals that this information was not making its way to front line staff.

The IC department was involved in providing broad information on change initiatives to staff. The IC department was also strategically involved in delivering particular change projects notably the resolution of the bank's pensions issue. The researcher

notes the successful completion of this change plan and how IC worked in close strategic co-operation with the IR and HR Department to explain the issues to all staff. Resolving the pensions issue required contextual analysis and a detailed communications programmeme. Ultimately, a contextual analysis is an attempt to anticipate possible resistance points. This was undertaken and fused into the communication message development. Audience analysis was also undertaken to ensure that the messages would be delivered and understood by the appropriate staff. The tactics were then strategically designed and delivered through multiple channels. Importantly the voices of the employees were listed to and acted upon. The IC manager explained that

> Line manager communication was particularly strongly
> emphasized in this process.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

In order for this change to proceed over 90% of staff had to sign a letter agreeing to the change. In the end 99% of staff signed.

This project embodied all the elements of Kotter's change model. The vision of the future was clearly outlined and the elements of the change were clearly explained to staff through numerous channels, letter, intranet, line manager meetings and staff briefings. As the IC manager explained

> This was a very tangible way for us to establish if the
> communication had taken place and if it was effective.
> 99% of staff have signed that letter and that is a really strong
> measurement of our communications programmeme.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

Interestingly the Head of Corporate Communications and the IC manager agreed that the economic situation did help in achieving the burning platform and in creating a compelling vision for the change. However the researcher acknowledged that a significant amount of IC expertise was invested in this change project.

The data indicated that levels of communication within the Bank of Ireland have increased during this period of change. The IC manager below outlines the IC taking place.

> I would say our CEO is much more committed to doing more IC.
> He sends personal e-mails to all employees. We would have done
> about this 50 of those last year (2009). When anything of
> significance takes place the CEO does a personal e-mail to staff.
> That goes directly into their inbox. It doesn't just sit on the
> intranet.

However, further analysis with staff revealed that the face-to-face communication was not effective and not all staff had access to the teleconferences. It was also revealed that as the senior team had 'become much more preoccupied with survival and undertaking things that need to be done to ensure that survival' as outlined by the Head of Communications the business of face-to-face communication had fallen to middle or front line managers. This was not a positive finding. In the absence of leadership from the top of the organisation middle managers were not committed to face-to-face communication. It was noted that the organisation was attempting to introduce effective communication as a KPI for managers. However, it was going to be difficult if not impossible to implement communication KPIs as a new communication tool during this time of crisis; when senior management were preoccupied with survival.

The change in the use of communication tools from the dominance of the intranet to the dominance of tele-conference and webcasts demonstrated that the organisation was doing, as Kemp & Low (2008: 231) advise reducing resistance to change by communicating the change and the implementation of the change to employees. The data reveals that while communication may be clear to the top managers it is not making its way down to front line employees. Despite these efforts feedback from staff indicates that they do not feel they are receiving sufficient communication. They often feel they receive information from the media before they received it internally. This leads to frustration and anxiety.

A lack of measurement and evaluation still persists in the general communication system. The data reveals that the effect of communication is still referenced by 'gut feelings'. The Corporate Communications Manager indicated that while he didn't have any hard data he believed that

> whether staff would say they are well informed is debatable. My
> own experience of such crises is that employees feel they are not

> kept informed or up-to-date. It is very difficult when there is
> immense speculation in the press about what is happening.

Overall, the data reveals that IC was strategically involved in the pensions issue but only tactically involved in other significant change communications. The difficulty was that the volume of change was so significant that on occasion the IC manager could only properly focus on one initiative. It could be argued that focusing primarily on one initiative demonstrates strategic insight on behalf of the IC manager who identified that is was better to do one thing properly than do all things poorly.

8.2.3 The role IC played in introducing change in the ESB

In 2007 IC consisted of the newsletter and the staff intranet. An IC manager had not yet been appointed. At the time it was recognised that while the company was doing well, and appeared to have a bright future, an IC manager was needed within the organisation. The staff survey had indicated that IC was an area that needed development.

In 2010, the researcher met the IC manager who was in fact the second IC manager in the post. As with all the other case study organisations the ESB had experienced significant changes. They included: deregulation of the market, re-branding part of the organisation, adjusting its cost base to be able to compete with other entrants to the market, and a €2 billion pensions' issue.

A significant portion of the previous IC manager's time was spent on the pensions' project. The project took 18 months in total to deliver successfully. IC played a significant role in this. IC was heavily involved in this process from the outset and was central to the effective resolution of the issue. Unfortunately, it appeared as if developing permanent communication structures was not part of the pensions' programmeme. The project was approached as a one off event that had particular communication challenges. The process used successfully to address these challenges did not form the basis of the new IC structure.

In 2010 the second IC manager identified that managing change was one of his key priority. He explained that he would tend not to be involved in the day to day operations. He would be more involved in the change programmemes and in supporting managers to communicate effectively. He was aware that communication was part of every managers' job but that up until now effective manager communication had been very much down to each individual managers' willingness to communicate. He had plans to change this and was hoping to be able to measure IC in some manner in the future. He acknowledged that the face-to-face cascade structure that had been implemented by his predecessor didn't take hold and was not embedded into the culture of the organisation. He was aware that the method of effective communication to all employees needed to be developed, measured and again he hoped to be able to address this in the near future. He explained that since he took up the role front line supervisors in particular had been in a difficult situation.

> They [the front line supervisors] sometimes have to take very
> difficult messages and internal communications to their staff-and I
> have been trying to support that, but our success in this area needs
> to be worked on.
> *(IC Manager, 2010, ESB)*

As the IC manager was newly appointed to the position it was difficult to judge the contribution that IC made in the change process. Encouragingly, the IC Manager was aware of what needed to be achieved in theory. Equally, positive was the fact that his job was focused on change communication strategy development. Time would tell if the theory translated into practice. As the communication structures themselves hadn't been properly established it was impossible to assess whether any particular influence strategies were being operated.

8.2.4 The role IC played in introducing change in the PwC

In 2007 PwC had just completed a significant change. They had moved to new premises. They were in fact the first major tenant in the prestigious Spenser Dock development along Dublin's Quays. The building was a landmark, state-of-the-art, waterfront, seven story building.

The IC manager outlined how the successful move to new premises in Spenser Dock was an example of IC being instrumental in successfully delivering a major change initiative for the organisation. The IC manager explained that the change went smoothly because staff issues were addressed as they arose throughout the project. This ensured that nothing ever became a serious issue. In order to ensure that all staff issues were brought to the attention of management as soon as they arose, a group of 45 people from all around the organisation, who represented every business in the firm, were invited to lunch every two months and were given a presentation on every aspect of the new development. After lunch the presentation was circulated to the attendees and they were asked to incorporate it into their team briefing. The IC manager explained that at the outset they did have some people who didn't brief their teams, but this was quickly dealt with by requesting that each attendee document when they had their team briefings and how many people attended. This enabled the IC department to thank those who had conducted their briefings at the next meeting and this encouraged everyone to carry out the briefings. Nobody wanted to be highlighted as the person who wasn't communicating appropriately during the change process. She explained that the importance of IC in the effective move to Spenser Dock further contributed to how IC was perceived and the importance attached to it in the firm. The researcher noted that in this example the delivery of IC had been measured, by tracking when the team briefing sessions took place. The researcher noted that the rationale for the change was clearly explained to staff, a strong guiding coalition was formed and communication was clear, regular and two-way. Each milestone along the way was celebrated and staffs' concerns and issues were addressed as they arose. As this was a textbook approach to change communication in which IC was very heavily involved from the outset, it was not surprising that the change was a success.

In 2010, the economic downturn had resulted in an organisation wide restructuring. The challenges were different from the change undertaken in 2007. The company had to become sharper and leaner in a short period of time. Cost-control and a refocusing of core business was necessary. The rapid pace of change and the uncertainty of the future made it more difficult to keep staff informed. Feedback from staff indicated that there was a period of considerable anxiety as the number of staff to be made redundant was not clearly communicated to staff. They also outlined that there were a

number of waves of staff reductions. This meant that staff were constantly wondering if their jobs were secure. This environment of continuous change coupled with poor communication leads to distrust with the organisation. As PwC had relied on face-to-face communication as their primary method of communication with staff prior to the economic downturn, the fact that this system faltered during the change process led to significant difficulty.

> There is definitely a need for more face-to-face interaction. This is something that came to light in the last month or so. It came up in global people survey which takes place on an annual basis. Internal communication was highlighted as an area that needed improvement.
> *(IC Manager, PwC, 2010)*

It was some time, over 12 months, before the severity of the communication difficulties became apparent through the global people survey and the peer and upward feedback. It was noted that as the news was negative the company chose not to use the IC model that had served them so well in the move to Spencer Dock. The firm did not focus on addressing the concerns of employees as they arose. One of the research participants hinted that the firm wanted to avoid the negative media coverage experienced by some of the firm's competitors, for example Deloitte. The staff participant believed that this impacted on the firm's choice of approach to communicating the changes. By 2010, the firm realised that their approach to communication during the period of change had led to a significant loss of trust within the organisation and they were implementing a new communications structure to try and address this issue.

Overall, the communication of change within PWC in 2007 was textbook excellence. The communication of change in 2010 however, demonstrated the problems that can arise when poor communication occurs. The PwC case also outlines the need to constantly measure communication tools. The annual surveys enabled the lack of trust to be diagnosed but the difficulty could have been identified far earlier if the measurement was consistent.

8.3   Chapter Summary

Roger D'Aprix (1996: xvii) states that strategic communication in change management has become a widely accepted (though not necessarily widely practiced) priority for organisations. While all the organisations had appointed an IC Manager the data demonstrated that these roles are largely excluded from the strategy development surrounding the change process in the case study organisations. It could be argued that this is because the IC Manager had not demonstrated strategic insights in their work up to this point. It could also be argued that management didn't truly see IC as a strategic management function.

D'Aprix (1996: 69) also states that the most frightening vision for any employee is that there is no battle strategy and that the war will be a series of fire fights in which people will be picked off one by one as the generals try to concoct a strategy on the spot. This is demonstrated to an extent with both the BOI and the HSE. In the Bank of Ireland the changes were so rapid that employees felt very anxious for a period of time. In the HSE, the fact that change was a constant, also presented difficulties. Staff believed that while there may be a strategy today it would change again before it was ever realised.

Coffey (2002: 208) explains that when leadership appears reluctant to speak honestly about what is going on or attempts to control the delivery of information anxiety and mistrust increase. This was seen in PwC when there was a reluctance to engage in the communication of negative messages. This is in stark contrast to the manner in which the same firm handled its change communication a mere three years earlier.

Overall, the data reinforces the need for organisations to have established, functioning, measurable channels of communication prior to a major change. Trying to establish new communication structures during times of turbulence is difficult. The data also demonstrated the need for IC Mangers to operate as strategic managers at all times. If they haven't operated in a strategic manner prior to a change it will be unlikely they will be considered an integral element of the dominant coalition during a time of crisis.

Strategic communication planning during times of change entails the development of a communications plan or communications critical path. The data from the case study organisations revealed that a majority of the time the IC activity was focused on communication tactics rather than strategic planning. And to paraphrase Kotter (1996: 83) deploying communication tactics without a plan is like trying to build a house without a foundation.

CHAPTER 9

ETHICS

9.0   Introduction

This chapter provides an encapsulated view of the research findings in relation to ethics. Although the question of ethics has traditionally been at the fringe of organisational communication inquiry this study sees it as central to the examination of best practice in IC.

Victor and Cullen (1988: 104) highlight that the ethical climate of the organisation is the 'shared perception of what is ethically correct behaviour and how ethical issues should be handled.' Morris et al. (1995: 331) explain that the ethical climate or organisational culture of an organisation can have a profound effect on the ethical behaviour of organisation members. As positive organisational culture is a characteristic of best practice IC it is imperative that this research examines the area of ethics, as culture and ethics and inter-related and co-dependent.

The explanation and context provided are informed by the qualitative and quantitative data enabling greater understanding and explanation of the findings in relation to ethics. The qualitative research was used to investigate the in- depth causative reasons behind the trends outlined in the quantitative research.

The findings detailed in this chapter are suggestive of the attitudes and beliefs of communications professionals across many public and private sector organisations in Ireland. As the questions asked in research often shape the results and responses received, care was taken in the preparation of the ethics questions. In particular, a clear differentiation was made between the words 'an' ethical conscience and 'the' ethical conscience of an organisation. This was done to ensure that a true snapshot of the ethical attitudes of communication professionals in Ireland was captured. Universal generalisations could not be drawn, but the research findings are suggestive

of the attitudes of Irish public and private sector organisations in relation to the role that ethics plays in IC in Ireland.

9.1   Ethical Crisis in Ireland During the Research Period

Many of the case study organisations faced ethical dilemmas during the period of this research. These ethical dilemmas are outlined below. Because of an increase in known corporate misdeeds and subsequent scandals, ethical behaviour is now on the agenda of many business leaders as they can see the hazards of not paying attention to it.

The HSE had cases of undiagnosed cancers (*Irish Times*, 'Errors led to cancer diagnosis delay', April, 2009) and unreported x-rays (*Irish Times*, 'Massive systems failure in one of the State's leading acute hospitals exposed', March, 2010) both of which led to the deaths of patients and widespread public distrust in the system.

The Bank of Ireland was affected by the ethical transgressions of the banking industry. The bank was recapitalised with €3.5 billion of taxpayers' money (*RTE,* 'BoI shareholders back recapitalisation, April, 2009). These transgressions led to public cynicism about business and banking ethics and led the government to take a more active role in enforcing minimum standards.

PWC was also affected by the financial collapse in the economy as accounting firms in general were accused of conflict of interests. The *Sunday Independent* (April 2010) reported that KPMG replaced PwC as AIB's auditor in the wake of the €690m trading losses hidden by John Rusnak at AIB's US operations in 2001.

The ESB also suffered from the economic downturn and had to handle ethical issues in 2009 when the number of households being cut off because they could not afford to pay their electricity bills doubled in just a year. According to an article published in the *Irish Independent* on 16th April 2009, the 'ESB refused to describe its actions as cutting people off, instead calling their actions the "de-energising" of customers'. The ESB was disconnecting 900 homes a month up from 500 a year earlier. Due to public

outrage, the company had to backtrack on this policy and implement a number of measures to aid customers facing difficulties.

Many of these ethical transgressions caused observers to ask what happened and how such transgressions were allowed to happen? Bowen (2004:14) cites similar public sentiments in the United States following the collapse of Enron. Bowen (2004:14) asserts that in the absence of others taking responsibility for ethical decision making the responsibility falls to the communication professionals. This is an assertions that is investigated in this study.

9.2　Ethics as Part of Executive Decision Making

The communications practitioners overwhelmingly agreed on the question: Should ethical considerations be a vital part of executive decision making regarding how core values get translated into operational procedures and standards? Of quantitative respondents, 95.2% stated that yes ethics should be part of executive decision making.

TABLE 23: ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD BE A VITAL PART OF EXECUTIVE DECISION-MAKING REGARDING HOW CORE VALUES GET TRANSLATED INTO OPERATING PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS.
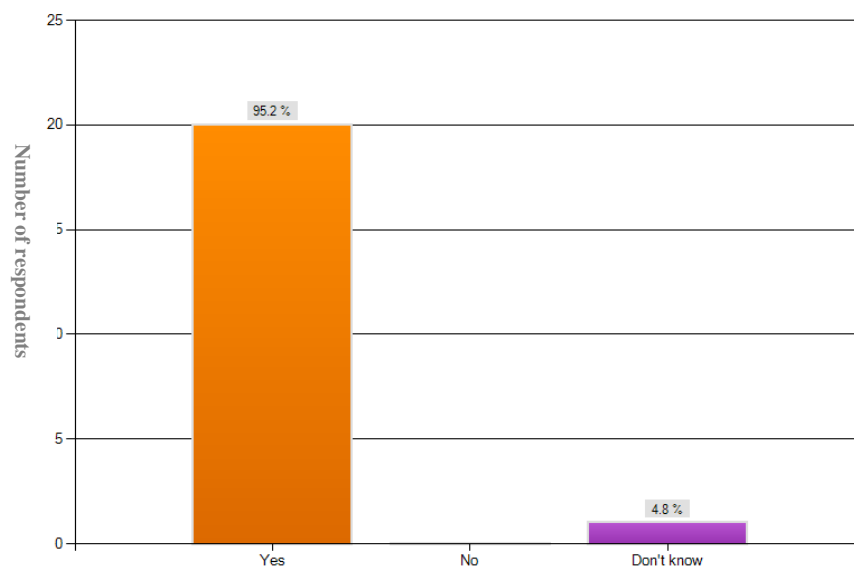
The 95.2% support for ethics as part of executive decision making is in keeping with the findings of Bowen's research and supports Seib and Fitzpatrick's (1995: 55)

221

research that practitioners have an obligation to be as professional and ethical as possible.

These findings are replicated in qualitative data when 100% of the case study participants (staff, senior management and the IC Managers) indicated that ethics should be an important element of executive decision making. Some interviewees also explained that they believed that ethical decision making was key to maintaining a positive reputation and building trust.

> If you're not trusted, you will not be successful. If I cannot be trusted to deliver what I say then people are not going to work with me. In my view I would say ethical communication is essential *(IR Manager, ESB, 2010).*

Some of the interviewees made specific reference to their pride in working for a company they considered ethical.

> A company like ours would see ethical communication as an integral part of its operation.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*
>
> If we are unethical we may as well resign as communicators. Anything that I'm going to do must not undermine my credibility or the credibility of my team to the detriment of us being able to do our day-to-day job.
> *(Director of Communications, HSE, 2010)*
>
> I would know that ethics is at the heart of everything that is done. So I don't think it would even be discussed to do something that is unethical.
> *(IC Manager, PWC, 2010)*

This data demonstrates two key findings. Firstly, organisations believe that ethics should be part of executive decision making and secondly, employees express satisfaction in working for an ethical organisation. Having an ethical approach from the top down in an organisation is in keeping with Bibb's (2010:98) 'Ethics in the workplace survey, 2010', which demonstrated that 70% of respondents believed that having top management who demonstrate high standards of ethics is important.

9.3 'The' Ethical Conscience or 'An' Ethical Conscience

Bowen (2008: 288) contends that the communicator should be 'the' ethical conscience of the organisation. In contrast, the findings from this research indicate that only 19% of quantitative responses indicate that the communicator or internal communicator can act as 'the' ethical conscience of the organisation: 66.7% believe they cannot act as the ethical conscience, and 14.3% did not know whether or not they can act as the ethical conscience.

TABLE 24: I BELIEVE THAT I CAN ACT AS 'THE' ETHICAL CONSCIENCE OF THE ORGANISATION?
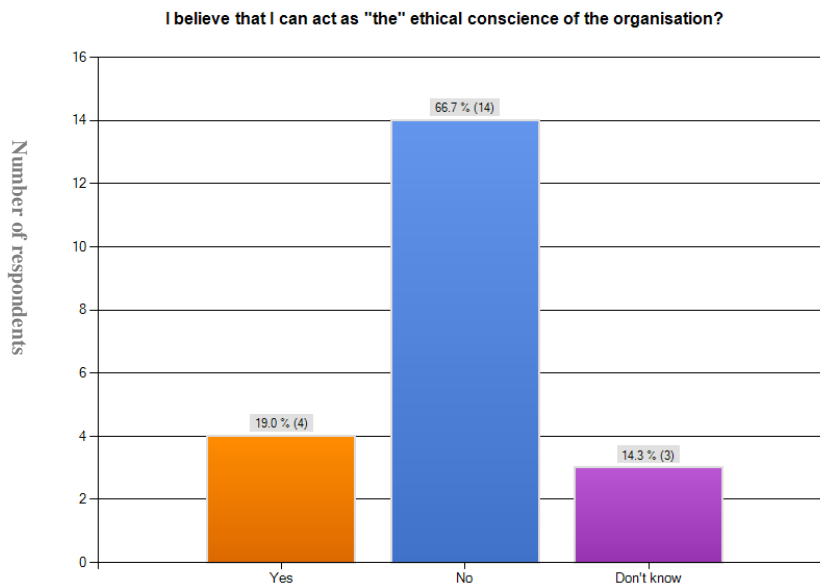
Similar findings were uncovered in the qualitative research with only one of the 12 interviewees expressing the view that the communication professional should be the ethical conscience of the organisation. The remaining 11 interviewees believe that the burden of being the sole ethical conscience for the organisation would be too great.

> Ethics spans over a number of boundaries and I would never look at communication on its own. Issues surrounding: tendering, recruitment, procurement etc. I would not be in a position to provide ethical advice on such matters.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

> [I would not provide ethical advise] on all ethical decisions. I mean, I don't know the business management processes.
> *(IC Manager, PWC, 2010)*

One interviewee explains he does not think it a desirable prospect, and he believed it would be inherently dangerous for the organisation.

> I don't think it would be right that the ethical counsel should rest with one particular person. I think there needs to be other influences that must be brought to bear on the situation. For example there are always legal implications, maybe HR implications, medical ethics, management and leadership influences and then PR and communication influences. I don't think there should be one ethical conscience or counsel.
> *(Director or Communication, HSE, 2010)*

A belief that the communicator cannot act as the ethical conscience of the organisation is in stark contrast to Bowen's research that states that the communicator should act as the ethical conscience of the organisation and that 'professional communicators are presumed to carry the primary ethical and moral responsibility in business communication' (Bowen, 2004: 5).

The danger of having a single ethical conscience is taken up by another participant who argues that everyone in the organisation has an ethical responsibility.

> There is a risk that people opt out of responsibility for ethical decisions if the responsibility lies with one particular area…If I could get my ideal organisation I would say that people within the organisation should all be trained in relation to ethical decisions making, enabling them to make ethical decisions. …This probably comes down to training and giving staff the responsibility to be able to take ethical decisions.
> *(Head of Corporate Comms, BoI, 2010)*

The reality of communication practice on the ground is also highlighted by one of the participants who explains that while he can highlight areas that need to be addressed, he is not in a position to be the ethical conscience of the organisation.

> I think that sometimes when it comes to ethics we can raise the issue of ethics and highlight the need for work to be done on it but that might be all we will be in a position to do. We can advise but cannot take all the responsibility for ethics within an organisation.
> (IC Manager, ESB, 2010)

The researcher believes that the interchanging of "the" ethical conscience and "an" ethical conscience is misleading. The researcher believes that the questions that Bowen asked in her research may have led to misleading results, as practitioners who

wanted to indicate a role for ethics in communication may have been inclined to support this question tentatively as there is no other question pertaining to their ethical role. For this reason, this study makes an explicit differentiation between "the" ethical conscience and "an" ethical conscience. Two distinct questions are asked in the research.

The data from the statement: I believe I can act 'an' ethical conscience for my organisation in consort with other members of the decision-making team are also interesting. The data identified that 95.2% of quantitative results indicate that participants believe that they can act as an ethical conscience in concert with other senior decision-makers.

TABLE 25: I BELIEVE I CAN ACT AS 'AN' ETHICAL CONSCIENCE FOR MY ORGANISATION IN CONSORT WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DECISION MAKING TEAM?

I believe that I can act as "an" ethical conscience for my organisation in consort with other members of the decision-making team?

95.2 % (20)

4.8 % (1)

Yes   No   Don't know

Number of respondents
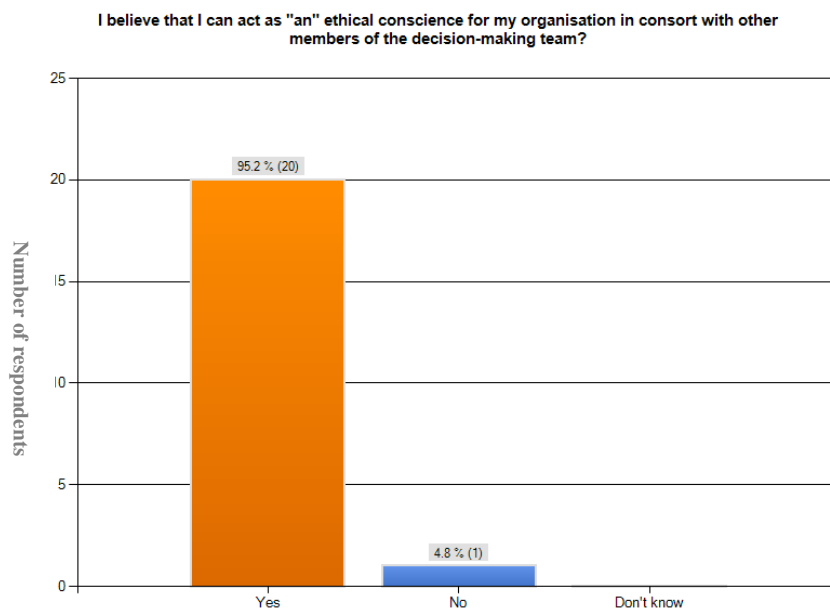
Similar findings were identified in the interviews with the case study organisations. 100% of those interviewed support the notion that the communicator could act as an ethical conscience in concert with other members of the dominant coalition. It is noted that some participants strongly agreed immediately to the statement while others took some time over their final decision. Despite the deliberations, 100% of the interviewees eventually came to the conclusion that they could act as 'an' ethical conscience.

225

The findings indicate that practitioners and senior management do indeed differentiate between being 'the' ethical conscience and 'an' ethical conscience. It is a significant finding. The words 'the' and 'an' ethical conscience are not interchangeable in the eyes of business and communications professionals. The findings of this research indicate that both words represent two distinct viewpoints when it comes to ethics. In the opinion of the researcher, the most important finding is that there is clear support for ethical communication. Ethics is viewed as a vitally important part of organisational decision making, and it is believed that communicators have a role to play along with other members of the dominant coalition in ensuring that ethics is part of decision making. The research finds that neither management nor communications practitioners are supportive of the communicator acting as "the" ethical conscience of their organisation. As Bowen's (2010: 153) research statements do not distinguish between being "the" ethical conscience or being "an" ethical conscience, the researcher believes that this statement may have led to misleading results. Practitioners who wanted to indicate that ethics was part of their role in concert with other members of the dominant coalition had no opportunity to indicate their views in Bowen's research. For this reason, this research makes an explicit differentiation between 'the' ethical conscience and 'an' ethical conscience. Two distinct questions are asked in the research.

The data are particularly interesting as it appears to conflict with Bowen's (2010: 153) research, which indicates that the communication professional should be the ethical conscience of the organisation. Bowen's findings indicate (2006: 8)

> Public relations should act as an ethical conscience or counsel in
> an organisation

However, the question she asked in her research is (2006: 138)

> Public relations practitioners should play the role of counsellor to
> top management on ethical matters.

This research also sheds light on what Bowen describes as significant and disturbing findings. Bowen (2004: 8) identifies

> a sharp and radical divide between public relations practitioners
> on the matters of ethics. The sharp divide is between two basic
> belief systems: those who believe public relations should act as
> an ethical conscience or counsel in an organisation and those

who believe that public relations should not be involved in
deciding matters of ethics.

Bowen (2004: 8) later explains that

the vehemence and entrenched nature of each side in this debate
is indicative of a strong rift within the field.

These research findings challenge Bowen's. The findings of this research indicate that both management and communications practitioners believe that ethics is important and believe that they have a role to play. However, they do not believe that as communicators they should bear full responsibility for the ethics within an organisation. It is not an all or nothing proposition. For example, one interview participant, who plays a significant role in relation to ethics in his organisation as chair of the ethics committee, explains that he would not see himself as the ethical conscience of the organisation.

I wouldn't believe that I should be the sole ethical counsellor but
I would strongly agree that it is part of my role to be a voice or
even an ethical conscience within the organisation.
(Head of Corporate Comms, BOI, 2010)

9.4   Ethics Training

As the findings above indicate, management and communications practitioners believe that they have a role to play in ethical communication. It is therefore interesting to examine the findings in relation to ethical training. It might be logical to infer that if 95.2% of respondents believe that they could play a role in providing ethics advice that they would presumably have had some training in ethics. The findings indicate, however, that this is not the case. The quantitative research indicates that 85.7% of respondents have never undertaken ethics training in communication.

Table 26: Have you undertaken any ethics training in relation to communication?
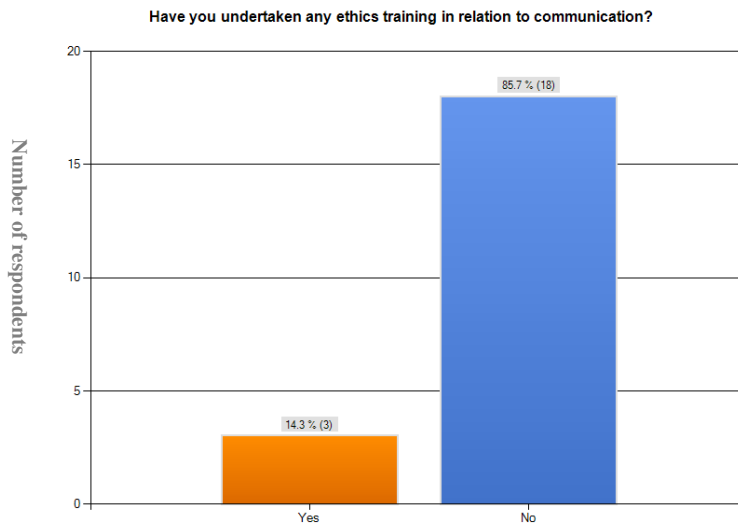
Similar findings are apparent in the qualitative research with none of the interviewees recalling having undertaken any ethical training in relation to communication. Some recall having touched on ethics as part of other courses but they had not studied it in relation to communication.

> I wouldn't have said there was any ethics training in my studies and I don't believe there was any ethics training on the job in relation to communication.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

> There was no ethics training as part of my academic education. There is ethics training however on the job. We have an employee code of ethics and I recently had to do an online training module to gauge my understanding of code… It doesn't go into communication.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

> I don't believe that there was an ethics element in any of my studies.
> *(IC Manager, PWC, 2010)*

> Ethics would have been touched on in some of my courses…but I never studied it as a programmeme.
> *(IC Manager, HSE, 2010)*

The lack of training in ethics for communication professionals supports Bowen's (2004: 10) assertion that

> Unfortunately, a state of neglect exists in terms of education, preparation, training and support for [ethics in communication]

The findings also illustrate the existence of a view that ethics just happens as part of internal communication. There is little conscious awareness of the ethical standards that are being applied or should be applied. Participants do not identify an ethical framework from which they work and there is no particular consistency in their ethical decision making process.

The communicators interviewed are aware of the public relations code of ethics, but they do not refer to it when making ethical decisions. Equally all of the case study organisations indicate, with varying levels of certainty, that their organisation has a code of ethics; however, none of the participants believe that ethical communication is covered in these documents. A study of these codes of ethics identifies that communication is mentioned in relation to confidentiality and the transmission of information to external parties. Furthermore, none of the participants express the view that communications should be covered within the codes of ethics.

> We have an employee code of ethics …but it doesn't go into communication in depth but there are issues around confidentiality
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

> Yes, there is a code of ethics. Whether it is widely disseminated or not is another question.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

> There are ethical guidelines for staff on their own ethical behaviour in the staff handbook etc. …and "trying to do the right thing" would be the essence of the organisation.
> *(Head of Corporate Comms, BOI, 2010)*

Interestingly, in the quantitative research, 42.9% of respondents indicate that their organisations have a code of ethics while an equal number 42.9% are unsure whether or not their organisations have a code of ethics.

TABLE 27: DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE A CODE OF ETHICS?
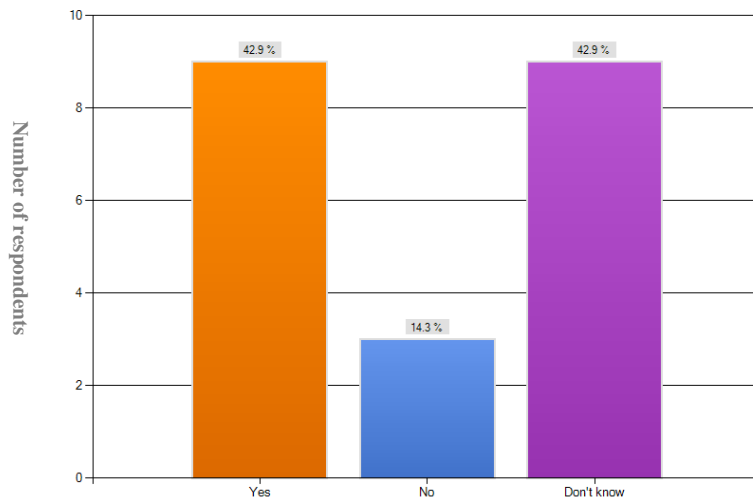
Equally when cross-tabulated to establish if there is significant statistical differentiation between public and private sector organisation, it is noted that there is not a significant variation. What is of interest in this analysis, however, is the fact that while more public companies have codes of ethics, the public companies also score the highest in not knowing whether or not a code of ethics exists. This data could indicate that public organisations have codes of ethics as a standard policy but that this is not necessarily communicated to all staff. It is more a tick box exercise than a regularly referenced document for the successful operation of the organisation. The thesis identifies this as an area for future investigation.

TABLE 28: DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE A CODE OF ETHICS?
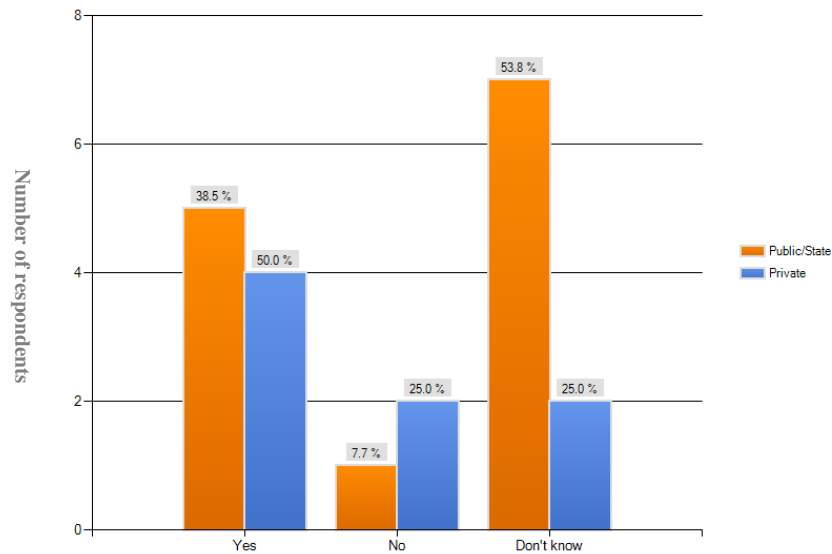
This finding when analysed against the lack of ethics training indicates that communication professionals have a lack of awareness of the importance of training and guidance in the area of ethical analysis. The findings indicate that practitioners have little background in ethics, and therefore it is unlikely that they use rigorous means of ethical analysis when they are charged with making ethical decisions for their organisations. They operate as though they have an inherent ability to judge what is ethical and what is unethical.

Some interviewees freely admit that they have never thought about communication ethics in a detailed manner prior to receiving the questions for this research. These comments are not dependent on the experience in the profession or level of educational attainment.

> I have never heard [ethics in communication] mentioned as an
> issue. From a communication perspective there is no ethics
> training, is there? Does it even exist? I have never heard of it.
> … I would certainly never have sat down and considered
> whether I should talk about ethics with my own
> [communications] team.
> *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

> I was giving this some thought in the run-up to our meeting.
> While not something I had specifically considered before, I
> would feel that ethics in internal communication is about being
> honest and open.
> *(ESB, 2010)*

231

The fact that ethics does not occupy the thoughts of communication managers on an ongoing basis is another interesting finding. It could be argued that this due to a lack of ethics training in communication.

A lack of education and training in dealing with ethics does not impinge, however, on communicators' confidence in their ability to provide ethical advice. The quantitative data reveal that 92.3% of public organisations and 100% of private organisations identify that the IC manager has the ability to offer ethical advice when required. The findings from the qualitative research also indicate that IC professionals and senior management are confident that the IC professional can provide ethical advice.

> If the ethics matter being discussed relates to IC I would be very conscious that I do everything possible to provide guidance.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*
>
> I would counsel senior management on ethical decisions in relation to communication issues.
> *(IC Manager, HSE, 2010)*
>
> I suppose I would give my view on ethical issues pertaining to IC.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*
>
> I would counsel senior management on ethical decisions in relation to communication issues but not on all ethical decisions.
> *(IC Manager, PWC, 2010)*

While the research did not contain a specific question on whether or not communicators believed they would benefit from ethics training, the researcher was able to infer from participants' responses during the face-to-face interviews that they would not be enthusiastic about undertaking ethics training.
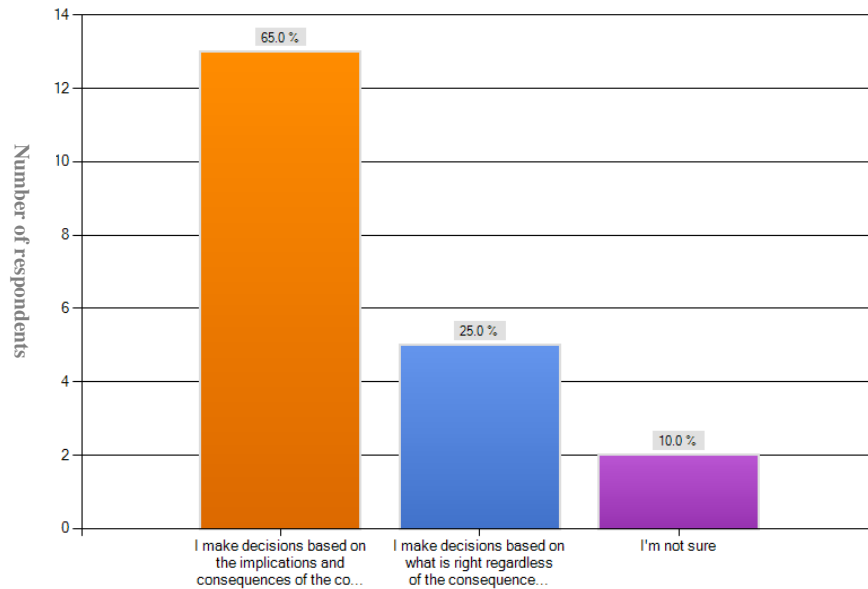
9.5   Ethical Decision Making

Again the data reveal little difference between the views expressed in both the qualitative and quantitative research.

The quantitative research identifies that 65% of respondents indicated they use a utilitarian approach to making ethical decisions. 25% indicated they use a

deontological approach, and 10% were still unable to identify how they make ethical decisions.

TABLE 29: HOW DO YOU MAKE ETHICAL DECISIONS?

Comparative analysis between the public and private sector demonstrates some interesting findings: 76.9% of public sector respondents indicate they make ethical decisions based on a utilitarian approach in contrast to 42.9% of public sector organisations. However, this statistical difference does not necessarily reflect a significantly different approach to ethical decision making because 28.6% of private organisations indicate that they are not sure how they make ethical decisions.

TABLE 30: HOW DO YOU MAKE ETHICAL DECISIONS? (PUBLIC/PRIVATE CROSSTAB)
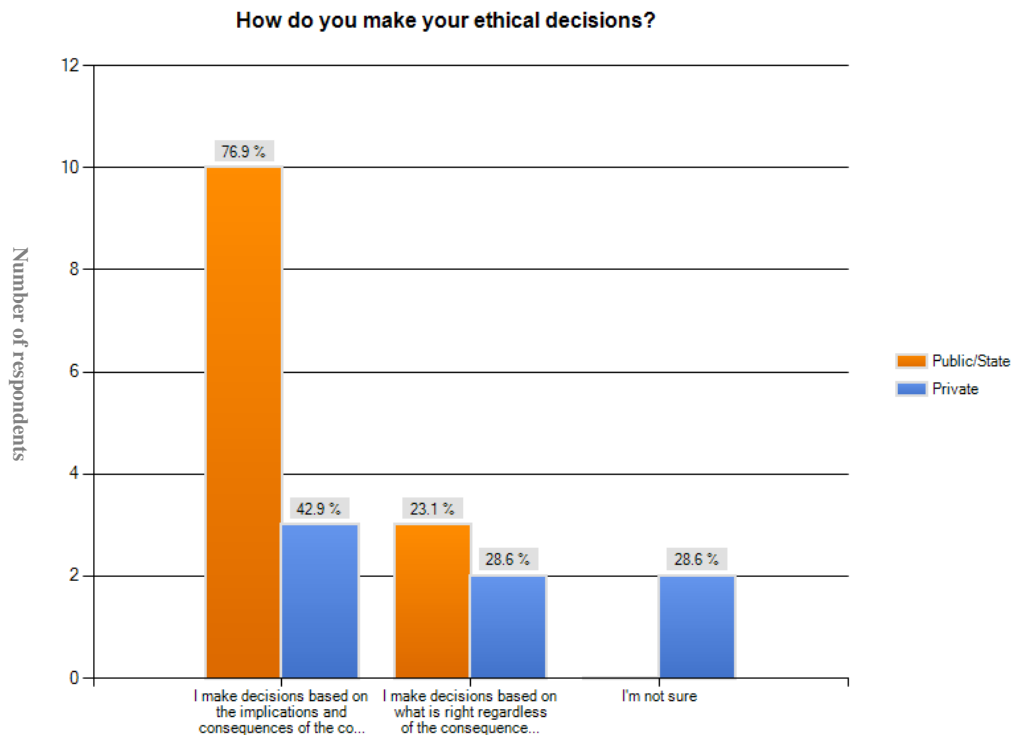
As the above data indicate, there appears to be significant confusion certainly in the private sector about how ethical decisions are made. The data provide insights into the decision-making process of communicators; however, it was not possible for the researcher to observe the demeanour of respondents, their indecision or hesitation in the quantitative research. Such observations were possible in the qualitative research, and they were extremely beneficial to the thesis. The qualitative data reveal a strong element of indecision in the qualitative research when she could observe participants answer the questions.

The qualitative data also reveal that none of case study organisations have a formal model for ethical decision making, and there is no set protocol for making ethical decisions. The qualitative responses indicate an inability to explain how ethical decisions are made. Even when presented with examples of a pragmatic or utilitarian approach, a deontological approach and an option to indicate neither approach, interviewees were still unsure about their responses.

Only two interviewees, without confidence, choose a deontological approach.

> I would have to go with the deontological approach, probably.
>
> *(IR Manager, ESB, 2010)*

> I'm not sure but I would say they try to do what is right
> regardless of the consequences.
> *(Staff Participant, PwC, 2010)*

The remaining 10 interviewees chose a utilitarian approach with varying degrees of confidence.

> I think it's the second one, I make my decisions based on the
> consequences and implications of my communication.
> *(IC Manager, BOI, 2010)*

> I would probably go for number two and make decisions
> bearing in mind the circumstances and the consequences of my
> communication.
> *(IC Manager, PwC, 2010)*

The ethical decision-making process of the communicators reflects the decision-making process of the organisation in which they work, and it focuses on whether the ethics decision will create or avoid bad press or reputation damage. This is clearly demonstrated by one of the interviewees who clarified that there could be a difference in the way he made ethical decisions in his personal life in contrast to how he makes ethical decisions in his professional life.

> It is difficult [to answer this question]. In my personal life, I
> might do something because I feel it is morally the right thing to
> do regardless of the consequences. However, working in the
> company I would make my decisions bearing in mind the
> circumstances and consequences of my communication.
> *(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

The research indicates that the decision-making process of the participants is not purely black or white; it is grey. The level of information provided to the communicators, the values of the organisation, the interest of the public, the interests of the organisation and the potential outcome of any communication, all compete to make decision-making more difficult. Although difficult, communicators are not shying away from participating in the ethical decision-making process.

Further interesting data are uncovered from in-depth discussions with one participant in the case study organisations. He explains how he chairs the ethics committee in the

organisation. The responsibility of the ethics committee is to ensure that the business decisions of the group do not have a negative impact on the reputation of the group.

> The Committee is chaired by myself and has representatives from different parts of the business. Our job is to assess, not the ethics of whether business is right or wrong, but to assess whether engaging in that piece of business could have a potentially negative reputation impact on our organisation.
> *(Head of Corporate Communication, BOI, 2010)*

It is interesting that this committee is called an ethics committee while the remit of it is in fact to study any potential negative impact on the organisation's reputation. This reality suggests that communicators and management view ethical communication through the prism of 'what would the media and the public say' rather than through a prism of ethical paradigms or frameworks.

A lack of a clear understanding about what ethical communication actually is equally apparent in Bowen's research (2004:9) when she quotes a participant, stating that

> The role of ethical counsellor, advisor or ethical conscience is rarely named as such, but it is common for the CEO to ask what the public and media might think of the decision. The public relations manager explained, "I do ethics stuff all the time -- they just don't call it that."

The above quote indicates that the participant in Bowen's research is also confused about what ethical communication actually is. Providing insight into how an audience will react to a particular message, while in the process of identifying which messages to use, is not necessarily providing ethical advice. Identifying which messages to use in a crisis is merely providing tactical and strategic advice and insights. The messages selected may or may not the ethical.

Further confusion about what communication ethics is can be seen in the qualitative responses to the questions: Is ethics an important part of your job? and secondly, What role do you think ethics plays in your job?

In the quantitative research, 76.2% of respondents indicate that it is an important part of their job, while 14.3% indicate it is not important.

236

TABLE 31: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT ETHICS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB?
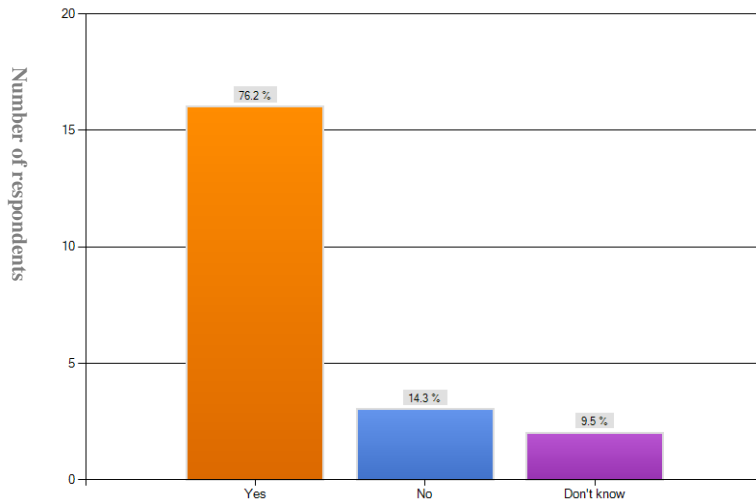
The data reveal no relevant statistical differentiation between the public and private sector, with 76.9% of public sector organisations stating it is important and 75% of private sector organisations stating it is important.

TABLE 32: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT ETHICS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB? (PUBLIC/PRIVATE CROSS-TAB)
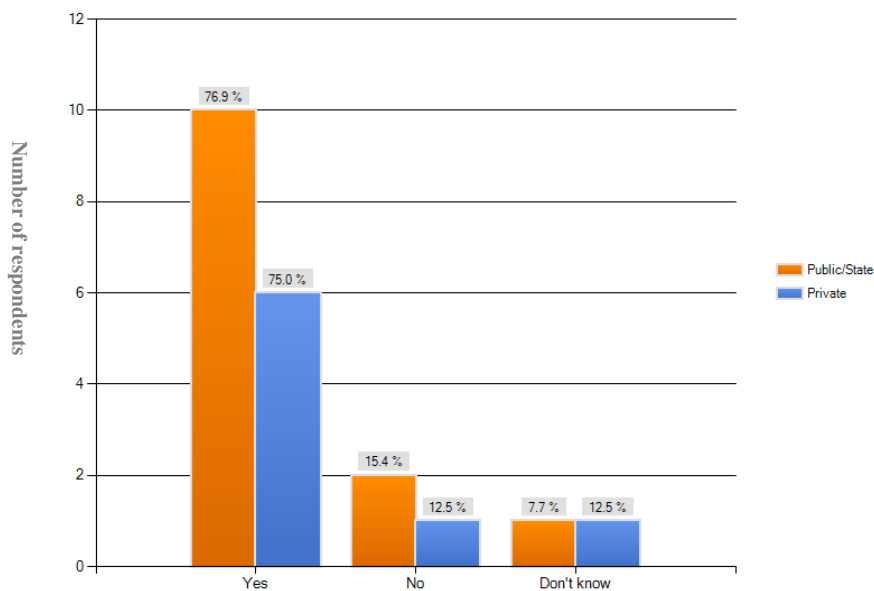
The qualitative data reveal that 100% of respondents indicate that ethics is an important part of their job. The descriptions below demonstrate the variety of opinions on what it means for communicators in their day-to-day jobs.

Ethics in communication is about advising management to ensure that nothing we do is inherently wrong [not just legally wrong, but bearing in mind the values of society in which we live] anything that would reflect negatively on the organisation in the short or the long-term.
(Head of Corporate Comms, BOI, 2010)

Ethics is an important part of my role and I see it as doing the right thing. The right thing is behaving professionally, behaving with respect, behaving with dignity, and acting as a role model.
(IC Manager, PWC, 2010)

If we are unethical, we may as well resign as communicators.
(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)

I would feel that ethics is important in internal communication, and it is about being honest and open … .It is about allowing people to comment and ask questions and to raise issues. It is then about listening to them and responding effectively to them.
*(IC Manager, ESB, 2010)*

The first step in addressing the area of ethics in communication is to identify clearly what is meant when we talk about ethical communication.

9.6   Ethical Partner or Postman

Respondents typically perceived that communication professionals should advise management on ethical matters rather than merely communicating the decisions of others. The quantitative data reveal that 85.7% of respondents indicated a positive response to this question

TABLE 33: COMMUNICATION MANAGERS SHOULD ADVISE MANAGEMENT ON ETHICAL MATTERS RATHER THAN MERELY COMMUNICATING THE DECISIONS OF OTHERS?
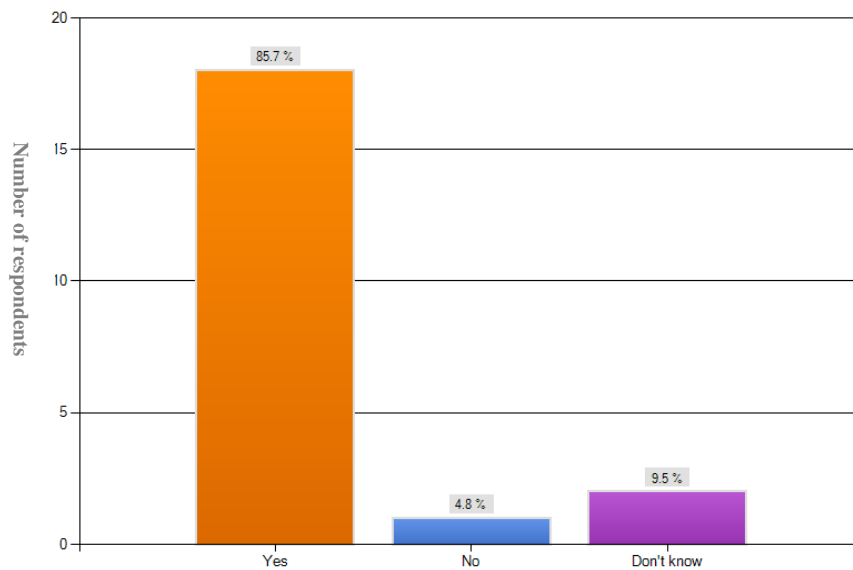
The responses in the qualitative surveys were even stronger, with 100% agreeing that they should have an input into the messages rather than merely communicating them. Taken in the context of the other findings, it is possible to argue that this finding suggests that senior management and communications professionals are viewing this question through the prism of message construction rather than ethical advice in its purest sense. This conclusion is strengthened by one of the case study participants who indicated that he is asked for input on ethical decisions only in times of crisis when the organisation is looking for the best way to get itself out of a difficult situation.

> Usually when I'm involved [in ethical issues] the horse is half way to France! *(Director of Communication, HSE, 2010)*

Ethical advice is not solicited on a regular basis except during crisis situations. Then the question of ethics seems to be more of a practical nature than an ethical one. This challenges the views of Bowen and Heath (2006: 288) who argue that 'leaders and clients will come to rely on their communicators for ethical guidance, counsel and day-to-day management of core values'.

9.7   Chapter Summary

Chapter 9 focuses on the role of ethics in IC. The chapter demonstrates that professional communicators are facing a challenging business environment that incorporates new demands. Businesses are being challenged to operate in a more transparent manner by making their practices more transparent and open to public scrutiny. These higher levels of transparency and ethical behaviour demanded by society mean that professional communicators, now more than ever, have to be able to advise on ethical issues.

The data obtained from the research indicate that communicators and management are supportive of the role of ethics in both the executive decision making and in the role of internal communication practitioners. There is also considerable support for the idea of the communications practitioner acting as 'an' ethical conscience within the organisation, in concert with other senior decision-makers. These findings are significant as they indicate that the communications profession is not split between those who value the role of ethics and those who do not value the role of ethics. There is also considerably less support for the notion of the communicator acting as 'the' ethical conscience of the organisation. In fact, many of participants highlight the dangers of any single department or profession taking responsibility for the ethics of an organisation. These findings have significant implications for ethical research as they identify that a majority of senior management and communicators are aware of the value of ethics and see a role for communications within the ethical arena.

The findings reveal that ethics training is rare, either on academic communications courses or in employing organisations. The data also highlight a lack of knowledge as to whether academic ethics study is even possible.

Advising on ethics is complex and fraught with potential problems (Bowen 2004: 119); however, this does not appear to affect the participants' confidence in their ability to provide ethical advice despite having received practically no ethical communications training. It is reasonable to argue that this underlines a lack of understanding of the importance of ethical analysis in decision making. Equally, while the communication participants were aware of their professional code of ethics

and many of participants indicated that their organisations have a code of ethics, these codes are not referenced as part of the ethical decision-making process in relation to communication (largely because they provide no insight or guidance pertaining to the ethical challenges that communication professionals face on a daily basis). This suggests that there is a requirement for specific ethics training within the profession. However, the research also identifies that the starting point for this training is to identify exactly what ethical communication means for the practitioner as the findings indicate considerable confusion on this question.

There is little evidence from this research that communication practitioners are frequently called upon to take the role of the ethical conscience of the organisation. On the contrary, the advice of the communicator is often only sought once the organisation is already in crisis.

On the whole, ethical decisions are made using utilitarian approaches, although none of the practitioners identified them as such. They did, however, explain that they make their ethical decisions based on the consequences and implications of their communication. This finding again has significant impact on the field of communications ethics training as it indicates that the deontological approach to ethical decision making as advocated by Bowen (2002: 237) may in fact be too theoretical for practice.

The data gathered in this chapter provide significant insights into the role of ethics in IC communication in public and private organisations in Ireland. The data confirm some of the findings of ethics research conducted in other countries that more training in ethical decision making is needed for professional communicators. The data also challenge some of the ethics research conducted in other countries. It doesn't find a split between pro-and anti-ethics communicators; it doesn't identify that the communicator should be the ethical conscience of the organisation, and it doesn't identify that organisations are seeking the advice of communicators on all ethical matters. While these findings reflect Irish attitudes and perspectives on ethics in communication and the researcher is keen to identify if similar findings are identified and other countries.

Finally, making time for ethical training might seem a new endeavour for many communication professionals, but it is important if the profession is to be able to deal with ethical issues in an ever more challenging business environment.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an executive summary of the main findings and conclusions of each chapter, relating these to the theoretical framework provided earlier. It also makes specific recommendations for the development of IC in Ireland and suggests further areas of research.

The theoretical perspectives on what constitutes best practice in organisational communication are articulated in chapter 2 and provide a lens through which the practice of IC is studied.

This chapter is structured in such a way that there is a deliberate contextualisation of recommendations with sectional conclusions. This structure fits with the methodological approach chosen for this study.

10.1 Relationships

The IC practices of the organisations were assessed in chapter 3 by gauging the support of the dominant coalition for IC. It is evident from the data that IC is a growing discipline in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. The findings demonstrate an increase in the number of organisations that have IC and in the numbers employed within IC. The research demonstrates that IC in Ireland is no longer 'taken for granted' (White 1997: 3) and is developing across both the public and private sector. While IC has been in existence for longer in the private sector, it is being increasingly embraced in the public sector. The research indicates that the length of time an organisation has been practicing IC does not necessarily correlate with improved quality or excellence in IC.

243

The data also provide insights into the location of IC and in a majority of organisations it sits within the communications and corporate communications function. In the quantitative research, 80% of respondents indicate that IC sits within the communications department. The second most likely position for IC is based in the HR department. Despite the evidence of growth in the field, the data identify several barriers that have limited the growth potential of the profession as a strategic management function. One of these barriers is a lack of reporting relationship to the dominant coalition. Gillis (2006:8) asserts that 'being in the dominant coalition or having access to it increases the likelihood of an excellent communication function'.

The data reveal, however, that a majority of IC functions are removed from the dominant coalition. And although the IC managers compensate by gaining informal access to the dominant coalition, this access is on an operational level rather than on a strategic level. IC managers have little influence on organisational strategy development, and they tend to take direction from, rather than influence, the dominant coalition. The reality is that being at a distance from the dominant coalition makes it difficult for the IC function to lend expertise to vital decision-making. The results of the research show that in a majority of organisations IC is not well integrated as part of strategic management.

While having an informal connection to the dominant coalition is positive, suggesting that the CEO values communication on certain issues, it also suggests that the CEO does not fully appreciate the power of communication in formulating and implementing organisational strategy.

On the question of CEO support for IC, the study establishes strong CEO support characterised by attendance at IC events. The data reveal that senior management do not yet see IC as a key strategic management function, and therefore it is not championed as a key performance indicator for all managers. Equating support for IC as attendance at IC events rather than equating it to organisational behaviour weakens the potential effect of IC. The identification of IC as an activity performed by the IC department sends a signal that other managers do not have to be involved in IC. The fact that IC is not seen as a strategic management function is highlighted by the following research participants' observations

244

- IC is important but 'it is often not important enough to get ahead of everything else' (ESB).
- IC is seen as important but 'sometimes the prioritisation of other elements of work can constrain effective IC' (PwC).
- IC is important but 'shareholder initiatives take priority' (BOI).

The research demonstrates that while the CEOs support IC, they are not taking action in a strategic manner and they are not, on the whole, making effective communication part of the modus operandi of their organisations. The onus for effective IC resides predominantly with the IC Manager and is not seen as a strategic activity in which all managers have an important role to play. The data reveal little understanding of Crozier's (2011: 84) advice that IC must be led from the front.

Given the high ratings provided for CEO support of IC, it is reasonable to argue that neither senior management nor the IC managers have a strategic awareness of how effective IC should actually operate in their organisations. As Hargie and Tourish (2009: 396) explain,

> leaders of the organisation must embody proactive communication in their day-to-day work, and model appropriate behaviour for each tier of the organisation…They must lead the communication effort while also establishing expectations that management will follow their lead.

The findings also revealed mixed level of support for IC from middle managers and front line managers. The findings reveal that the level of support is dependent on managers' own interest and competence in communication. A lack of performance indicators and a lack of accountability for managers charged with cascading information, means that potentially valuable communication opportunities are lost. This failure results in the inability of three of the four case study organisations to communicate effectively to their front line staff. The research identifies that three of the four organisations have fallen into the trap as outlined by Gillis (2006: 206) when she says, 'organisations generally do a poor job of telling supervisors about their communication responsibilities, training them to communicate effectively, measuring how well they communicate, and rewarding the ones who do it well' (cited in Gower, 1987). As Scholes (1997:9) outlines, this leads to 'managers concentrating on feeding themselves and each other with information, neglecting the important task of taking their staff and organisation with them'. As Smyth (2008: 23) suggests engagement

lies in the gift of the local manager or supervisor by use of effective communication. The data establish that many of the organisations are therefore not reaping the full potential benefits of effective IC.

10.2 Strategy

As Tench et al. (2009: 150) explain,

> in the aftermath of the excellence study into the function, the role and the position of communication management in an organisation, J. E. Grunig (2006:151) concluded that 'the greatest challenge for scholars now is to learn how to institutionalize public relations as an ongoing, accepted practice in most organisations.

Based on these findings the thesis sought to establish if IC was seen as a permanent necessary fixture in organisational infrastructure and if it was seen as a key strategic priority in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. The importance of IC as a strategic management function is assessed by exploring the manner in which IC is planned and strategically implemented.

In order to assess whether IC is strategically planned in the case study organisations, the research explores whether the organisations have an IC strategy. The qualitative research reveals that none of the organisations have an IC strategy. The quantitative results are somewhat more encouraging with 47.6% (46.2% public and 50% private), indicating that they do have an IC strategy. This is not in keeping with Holtz's (2004: 55) advice that communication with employees should be managed in two ways: '[it] should follow a strategic plan and [it] should be aligned with the company's strategic plan.' Many of the communicators explain that while they do not have a written strategy their communication activities are aligned with the organisation's business strategy.

Despite not having IC strategies, a majority of the organisations are able to outline the overall IC goals for example 'increase employees understanding of their role' and 'improve employee engagement'. However, none of the organisations are able to specify the unique measurable contribution that IC makes to their company. They do

not have SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic or timed) objectives outlining how they will achieve their broader IC goals. And as Pophal (2009: online) states,

> Simply wanting to "increase awareness" doesn't provide enough specific direction to allocate resources – money and effort – appropriately. Your goals need to take into consideration where you are at today and where you would like to be (specifically!) so you can focus on closing that gap. Your goal statements should be expressed in such a way that it is clear what the desired end result is.
>
> In short the objectives should be SMART, (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed). SMART objectives help determine the amount of resources that must be allocated to achieve the goal and also provide an indicator of success.

The lack of SMART objectives in the case study organisations results in the overall IC activity being broad, vague and difficult to measure. It also makes it difficult to assess whether the IC activities are delivering benefits, and it makes it difficult to produce tangible results. The data reveal that a majority of organisations do not undertake research to establish a benchmark for the measurement of success in IC. This goes against the advice of Quirke (2008: 58) who stresses

> it is important to have a reality check to identify what the current perceptions held by employees are. This in turn will identify any gaps between employees' current attitudes and behaviours.

Nicholas Ind (1997: 80) and D'Aprix (1996:49) all state that communication strategies must be based on research, yet only one of the case study organisations has systematically researched staff views on communication. Interestingly, it is the public sector organisations who have or who plan to research staffs' communication needs. It must be noted that the other organisations explain that they gather information to inform the development of the IC strategy from a variety of internal and external sources. The quantitative research revealed that only 47.6% (46.2% public and 50% private) had an IC strategy. Interestingly, of the organisation with an IC strategy 60% of the public organisations based their IC strategy on research, while only 30% of the private organisations that had a IC strategy based it on research.

Furthermore, in the quantitative research only 36.8% (36.4% public 37.5% private) of respondents indicated that they were capable of producing tangible bottom line results for their IC. The qualitative research, which facilitated a more in-depth exploration of the issues, identified that measurement was first and foremost concentrated on the output of the communication activities rather than the outcome. For the case study organisations, delivering the communication activities themselves (the output) had become the measurement of success. While the case study organisations did identify certain measurements that they used to evaluate IC, they were not considered truly effective measurements as they measured outputs rather than outcomes.

The research indicates that all four case study organisations are falling into the trap outlined by Macnamara (1993: 57) that 'without specific, unambiguous objectives, evaluation of a public relations programmeme is impossible'. Given that providing tangible results is the quickest route to the decision-maker's table, these findings suggest that the IC managers will find it difficult, if not impossible to take a seat at the decision making table.

This collective pattern demonstrates that the IC function is not managed by strategic managers. It is managed by technical experts or functional managers but as it is not strategically planned, implemented or measured it can be argued that the people in charge of IC are function managers rather than strategic managers. Given that IC activities are not based on hard data and do not produce tangible results it is understandable why communication recommendations are not taken seriously by senior management and are not factored into strategic decision-making and planning in the organisation. A majority of IC efforts are focused on delivering communication outputs rather than doing what Tench and Yeomans (2006: 337) state is the fundamental purpose of IC, creating 'two-way' relationships' and building relationships with internal publics, with the goal of improving organisational effectiveness. The findings demonstrate that the IC Managers are largely managers as technical experts rather than strategic managers.

The data also provide interesting insights in relation to the opportunities and threats for IC during times of significant change, turmoil, and upheaval in organisations. The research reveals that such turbulence presents tremendous opportunities as employees

are eager for leadership and communication guidance from senior management. If this opportunity is approached in a strategic manner, it presents a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate the value of IC. However, the same desire for leadership and communications places pressures on the IC function, especially when the media are also covering the story 24/7. Sensitive negotiations can make effective communication difficult, as the media report rumours but the organisation's leadership can only comment on facts.

Another challenge is outlined by one of the case study organisations when they demonstrate that managers do not want to communicate negative messages to their staff. This finding is significant as it illustrates that support and training in relation to employees' reaction to change is necessary in order to ensure that effective communication is continued during times of turbulence and change.

Overall, the findings indicate that despite the growth of IC it remains, as Morrison (2004:120) explains, 'an afterthought to external communication priorities such as… media relations and investor relations'. The data find that IC still faces significant challenges if it is to become a key strategic business priority. IC professionals must link their activities to business objectives. They must demonstrate how their activities are delivering real results for the organisation. They must also look at their work in a SMART manner, asking if the activities being undertaken are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.

10.3 Tools

This chapter investigates the range of communication tools used in public and private sector organisations in Ireland. E-mail dominates as the most used communication tool with 85.7% (76.9% public, 100% private) of respondents indicating they use it. The second most used is face-to-face (staff briefings and team meetings) communication with 81% (76.9% public, 100% private). This was followed closely by the intranet at 76.2% (76.9% public, 75% private)

It is encouraging that 90.5% of the organisations also identify face-to-face communication as the preferred method of communication. These findings are positive and reflect best practice. However, when these findings are explored in detail with the case study organisations, it is revealed that only one of the organisations has managed to successfully establish an effective face-to-face communication structure. While there is an understanding of the importance of face-to-face communication, a majority of the case study organisations are struggling to embed it into the culture of their organisation.

The research also scrutinized why these communication tools were chosen because, as Mersham and Skinner (2005:70) explain, the communication tool used will often depend on the subject matter that needs to be communicated to employees. The research reveals little strategic planning surrounding the use of communication tools. Only one organisation used face-to-face communication as their primary method of communication. Each of the other organisations used a mixture of communication tools and did not differentiate between the messages communicated via each tool. Communication tools were seen as vehicles for carrying all organisational messages. This created a difficulty for some of the case study organisations as employees indicated that they felt strongly that information pertaining to them should be communicated in person by their manager.

Fielding (2005: 10) explains that organisations should regard effective communication as essential for survival, and Hargie and Tourish (2000: 4) state that communication is the most fundamental and pervasive of all management activities. Therefore, communication within a company has to be as effective as possible. Fielding (2005: 10) explains that this involves a wide range of communication activities to ensure good communication upward, downward and, lateral or sideways communication. Edelman (2006: 2) adds that alignment and consistency of messages is critical to achieving effective communication and behavioural change. The data reveal little alignment of messages. A majority of IC is seen as delivering messages from senior management to employees. A content analysis of organisational publications highlights that there are interesting departmental stories and general business information covered in the publications but on the whole they fail to deliver consistent messages about the organisation business objectives.

Analysis reveals that IC is falling prey to using communication tools to deliver outputs rather than outcomes. It is more focused on the communication tools rather than answering the questions:

1. How can we demonstrate that the communication tools are contributing to the organisation's strategic objectives?
2. How can we quantify the value of the communication tools?
3. What impact are our communication activities having on the organisation's bottom line?

A lack of focus on the above questions results in the dominance of one-way communication tools. The findings reveal that a majority of the communication tools used are one-way, such as newsletters, intranet and email.

Of further concern is the fact that only one organisation conducts a comprehensive communication audit. This, in effect, means that a majority of communicators are operating in the dark when choosing which communication tools to use. They have no substantial information on the communication needs of staff, which tools staff will be prepared to use and what information they want to receive.

Another interesting finding is that employees want to be heard and involved in the company's business. Topics employees express a wish to learn more about include overall business strategy and the future of the organisation. Interestingly, the company that has a new two-way communication forum with staff received much higher scores from their employees with comments such as, 'I think if I had a good suggestion it would be listened to and taken on board.'

The lack of a strategic plan for communication hinders the evaluation process in most of the organisations. With no key performance indicators set, the communicators are unable to prove the effective performance of their communications. Measurement and evaluation in all of the case study organisations are weak. The majority of communication activities are not measured. On occasion when feedback is provided by staff there is no coordinated method of capturing and acting on that feedback. The findings also demonstrate that on occasion, due to a lack of evaluation, the

ineffectiveness of communication activities is not noticed quickly or at all, and therefore improvements cannot be made. For example, one organisation is unaware of how the set-up of the staff briefings is inhibiting staff contributions. This difficulty is easily rectified but the organisation needs to first identify the problem.

A lack of measurement of staff communication preferences also leads to difficulties and unnecessary workload, for example: employing three people to update the intranet a number of times a day, when the research indicates that staff would prefer to hear information from their managers, undertaking staff briefings when employees reveal that the set-up of the briefings inhibits staff contributions, or expending effort on employee engagement surveys when employees reveal they have no faith in the survey as nothing ever changes despite the findings.

A lack of measurement and evaluation of the individual communication tools means that potentially valuable and beneficial communication tools are not being maximised. This leads staff to make comments such as 'Communication is seen as a tick box exercise' (BOI) or 'they don't really have any interest in what we have to say' (HSE). This employee feedback is of concern as it does not depict a positive culture within the organisation. In order for employees to contribute productively in an organisation, they need to feel that the organisation cares for them, that their opinions matter, that their involvement is respected and that the company takes action on the input they give.

This chapter also reveals how the changed economic circumstances impacted on the choice of organisational communication tools. As Wilcox et al. (2003:343) state, corporate turmoil, unrest, and uncertainty creates a greater need for effective employee communication and effective use of IC tools. Two of the case study organisations identify changing their communication as a result of the termoil faced by the organisation. One organisation identifies the challenges faced in delivering effective face-to-face communication as managers did not want to deliver negative messages to staff. Steps have now been taken to address this issue, and there are plans to supplement face-to-face communication with the development of other communication tools. The other organisations described how the pressure of the change process has led to a decrease in face-to-face communication and an increase in the use of webcasts and tele-conferences.

10.4 Culture

Sriramesh (2007: 509) states that there is little doubt that culture affects communication and is affected by it. For this reason, it is important to examine the culture of public and private sector organisations in Ireland. As corporate culture is conceptualized in many ways (Ferrall et al., 2008: 275) 'corporate culture includes the behavioural patterns, concepts, clause, ceremonies and rituals that take place in an organisation', the research sought to explore formal and informal elements of organisational culture, through artefacts, values and beliefs, decision making and codes of conduct within the research organisations.

In doing a cultural analysis, the researcher's reactions are themselves artifacts of the culture, and they must be acknowledged and taken into account. As Schein (2010: 23) explains,

> It is undesirable to present and cultural analysis with total
> objectivity not only would this be if possible, what a person's
> emotional reaction and bias are also primary data to be analysed
> and understood.

These insights gained by the researcher helped her to understand the behaviour and actions of the organisations in overcoming their internal communication challenges. The artifacts, values, and beliefs identified were similar to the qualitative and quantitative data received by the research participants.

The data reveal that 76.9% of public organisations and 62.5% of private organisations describe their organisation's culture as authoritarian. Similar findings are recorded in the qualitative research where 3 of the 4 organisations describe their culture as authoritarian. It is worth noting that many of the case study participants struggled to define their organisations' culture, suggesting, as Sriramesh (1996: 237) does, that organisations may have more than one culture but that one culture is likely to be the dominant culture. The types of cultures identified are similar to the organisational cultures identified by Sriramesh, Grunig, Dozier (1996: 243). They found that while a participatory culture is not a necessary condition for the practice of symmetrical

communication, it can be more difficult to practice two-way communication in an authoritative culture. The research data reflect this finding as the organisation with the more participative culture is the organisation with the more developed two-way communication system.

The quantitative respondents' analysis was reflected in the qualitative data. The qualitative data were also reinforced by the observations of the researcher when she analysed the artifacts, values, and beliefs observed during her time with the case study organisations.

In describing the organisational culture, all the case study organisations stress that they have a code of ethics and although none of the participants are able to articulate in detail what is contained within it, they are all confident that they can get a copy of it at a moments notice if required. The quantitative results present conflicting findings, with 42.9% identifying that they have a code of ethics (38.5% public, 50% private). From an IC perspective, the IC Managers outline that the code of ethics does not cover the ethics of communication. All of the case study organisations also stress that they have policies and manuals to cover equal opportunities, disability, discrimination, bullying, diversity etc. These are all positive indications as to the open culture in the organisations. All of the participants in the qualitative research also agreed that openness about unethical conduct is encouraged. Similar findings were not apparent in the quantitative research where only 29.6% (23.1% public, 37.5% private) indicated that openness about unethical conduct was encouraged.

There are some interesting findings in relation to the question: Do managers behave in an unethical manner?' In the qualitative data all the participants initially said that their managers did not engage in unethical conduct, but they then proceeded to explain that sometimes some actions might be considered unethical but it was often because those engaged in the behaviour were unaware of this, for example, claiming extra mileage etc. The quantitative data were significantly different with 15.4% of public companies explaining that they believed their managers did engage in unethical behaviour. This was compared with 0% within the private sector, although it must be noted that 37.5% of the private sector respondents indicated that they were unsure if such behaviour took place.

10.5 Ethics

This leads the research into the area of what is ethical and the role ethics plays in IC. The data present a split between communication ethics theory and the views and practices of IC professionals in the workplace. The data reveal that all participants believe that ethics is an important element of communications and some participants stress that ethical communication is key to maintaining a positive reputation and building trust. While Bowen (2008: 21) claims that communicators can be broken down into pro-ethics and anti-ethics groups, this research demonstrates that this is not the case. There is a wide variety of opinions and strength of views on ethics in communication that goes far beyond simply being for or against it.

However, the research raises similar concerns to those raised by Tench and Yeomans (2009: 274) that although IC managers are faced with ethical decisions, very few have formal ethics training or can articulate the processes they go through when arriving at difficult ethical decisions. All of the interviewees, no matter what their level of academic attainment, have difficulty articulating the processes they go through when arriving at difficult ethical decisions. This is not particularly surprising given that the research reveals they receive no formal training in ethics.

Given these findings, the researcher agrees with Bowen's assertion that the current education and training of communications professionals does not effectively arm communicators with an understanding of ethical frameworks (Bowen & Heath, 2006: 36). The researcher also agrees with the views expressed by Bergman (2005: 18) that if as individuals and a profession we seek a higher standard, then it is time we started asking some hard questions about what we are teaching.

Interestingly, a lack of communication training does not impact on IC managers' views that they can provide ethical advice to their organisation on communication issues in consort with other members of the dominant coalition. This may be due to what Indick (2002: 26-27) describes as the use of intuition in a practical setting by the application of non–empirical approaches to arguments, either by making intuitive judgements or by regarding a judgement as self-evident and therefore free of the need for logical proofs. The research suggests that IC managers are using what Bourdieu

255

(1992: 66) describes as 'practical sense' to make ethical decisions. They are using their experience and knowledge of the organisation and the public they serve as their guide. In a sense, they view ethical decisions as self-evident. This is particularly evident in one organisation where the Director of Communication explains that he never thought about ethics in communication before receiving the research questions, but that he would regularly give advice on issues management.

> I would certainly never have sat down and considered whether I
> should talk about ethics to my own team.
> *(Director of Communications, HSE, 2010)*

Ryan and Martinson (1983: 21) state that communication professionals are uniquely suited to serve as the corporate conscience. Williams (2002: 27) believes that the communication professional is best suited to counsel and advise on ethics because they maintain relationships with many groups, both inside and outside the organisation. Bowen (2008: 292) states that 'the public relations practitioners might sometimes be the only managers in an organisation who understand the beliefs, interests, and values of publics enough to represent them and include them in strategic decision-making and planning.' The findings of this research do not support the above views. The quantitative research indicates that only 23.1% of public sector organisations and 12.5% of private organisations believed that the communicator should act as 'the' ethical conscience of the organisation. In the qualitative research all but one of 12 interviewees stated that they did not believe that the communicator should be the ethical conscience of the organisation.

Many of those interviewed provided the same analysis as Matthew Gonring, Assistant Professor, Northwestern University Evanston, who stated that setting ourselves up as the conscience of an organisation 'would not be healthy for the organisation or ourselves' (Williams, 2006: 48). The researcher therefore agrees with L'Etang (2001: 51) who questions the legitimacy of the proposed role of the communications professional as the ethics guardian in the organisation. In order for such a role to be fulfilled communicators would need considerable training and expertise alongside an opportunity to engage at a conceptual level with ethical issues. This research indicates that currently such opportunities do not exist for communication professionals.

By contrast, 92.3% of public sector organisations and 100% of private sector organisations indicated that they did believe that the communicator could act as 'an' ethical conscience for the organisation in consort with other members of the decision-making team. This is a significant finding as it demonstrates that a significant majority believe that there is an ethical role for communication. It is not the case that the profession is split between pro- and anti-ethics.

Bowen and Heath (2006: 36) believe that the role of ethical counsel appears to be increasing in demand and 'that public relations practitioners should and often do play the role of ethics counsellor in their organisations'. The findings of this research indicate that although the advice of the communication professional is sought in relation to issue management, senior decision makers do not believe that there is a need for the communicator to be the ethical conscience of the organisation.

When Bowen discovers that communicators have little training in ethics, she concludes that the profession would benefit from a clear set of ethical principles, which could be implemented by issues managers to arrive at ethical decisions (Bowen, 2006). As a solution to this difficulty, Bowen develops a practical model with a deontological approach. While the researcher finds Bowen's principles useful, the results of this research calls into question whether a deontological approach is practical, as 65% of respondents say they use a utilitarian approach. Parsons (2008: 64) states that, while having a cookbook-style guide to solving ethical dilemmas may seem appealing, the approach is limited and raises as many questions as it answers. The researcher agrees that while useful a 'one-size fits-all' approach to ethics does not enhance the role of the communication professional or provide a practicable solution to the difficulties experienced on the ground.

The findings revealed very many interesting insights and findings in relation to the role of ethics in IC. However the question still remains: how as a profession do we engage in this process? Do we develop ethical principles for the profession or do we acknowledge, as L'Etang does, that the ethics field is an area of expertise in its own right? Cognisant of the fact that the profession cannot say 'this challenge is too complex, so we have decided to let others handle it', the research finds neither solution meets the requirements of the profession. The research recognises that the

profession cannot ignore this issue. Ethics must be addressed in the teaching of communication. In order to do that the profession must first establish what ethics actually means for the profession. The research highlights the confusion between providing strategic advice on issues management and providing ethical advice. It is entirely possible to provide unethical advice when handling issue management. Therefore, linking both concepts of issues management and ethical communication is not particularly useful. A common understanding of what ethics actually means for the profession is the first to be established. Once that is established it is perhaps time to explore whether a middle ground exists between taking an unrealistic approach to ethics and taking no approach at all to ethics. An exploration of common trends that arise for communications professionals in issue management may provide further insights. The researcher agrees with the suggestion of Sherwin (1990: 202) that instead of trying to choose a single theory or moral framework to make a decision in every situation, it may be preferable to view different theoretical perspectives as providing alternative frameworks or templates for different sorts of approaches to problems. Further research is needed in this area.

10.6 Change

The qualitative research facilitated the analysis of the role that IC played in the significant turbulence experienced within all the case study organisations. The data highlighted the importance of having a functioning internal communication structure in order to be able to deal effectively with rapid organisational change.

The research noted a significant increase in the volume of IC. Interestingly, one organisation stated that face-to-face communication decreased as senior management were focused on survival. In this organisation, communication had been delegated to less senior staff. However, feedback from staff indicated that this was not operating effectively.

Another organisation unwittingly experienced a decrease in face-to-face communication as managers did not want to communicate negative messages to staff. Prior to the economic downturn, this organisation had a robust face-to-face communication system but the pressure of the changes had a direct effect the face-to-

face briefings. It is also worth noting that a lack of ongoing measurement of this communication process meant that it was over 12 months before the scale of the lack of face-to-face communication became evident to management through the peer and upward feedback.

The scale of the changes affecting all the case study organisations also made it very difficult for the small teams of IC professionals to make a significant impact. In two organisations, the IC managers were instrumental in delivering two significant change projects that involved pension issues. However, the communication tools used during these projects were not embedded into the system.

10.7 Moving Forward

IC functions are under pressure to achieve better performance. Organisational leaders are pressurised to produce measurable performance results and they in turn are looking to the various functions in their organisation to do similarly.

Increasingly, it appears that while the CEOs and other senior management leaders want to reap the benefits of effective IC, they don't have a tried and true method by which to bring about a system level IC structure. What is striking about the research is that there is a growing understanding of the importance of IC; however, most organisations are still struggling to deliver effective IC that is capable of producing tangible bottom-line results. All the organisations emphasise the importance of IC; however, there appears to be two main difficulties. Firstly, IC managers are unable to prioritise communication activities. This means that strategy and measurement are often sacrificed to the demands of the communication tools. Secondly, IC managers are not armed with the IC theory and therefore are not confident in opening productive dialogue with senior management about how to achieve effective IC. The results suggest that IC practitioners need an instrument to help them proactively prioritise communication activity and help to facilitate dialogue with senior management on their role in ensuring IC contributes to achieving organisational objectives. The research reveals that senior management and IC practitioners often

say that while they are pretty clear about what they should be working on, they are far less clear about how they should go about implementing or measuring that work.

During the course of this research, a great deal was learned about the IC practices within the public and private sector organisations in Ireland. The findings reveal what it takes to achieve tangible bottom line results. The research has been an extraordinarily rich source of learning to improve and extend the theory of strategic IC. The researcher has learned a great deal about what works (and, importantly, what doesn't) from a diverse set of organisations. Both the quantitative and qualitative in-depth work with public and private sector organisations have identified many leverage points which help facilitate effective IC. As the theories surrounding IC continue to grow, there is a constant need for sense making. The research findings indicate a need for an instrument/tool, so that those involved in IC can place their understanding of the elements of IC into some sort of meaningful context.

In response to the findings and the difficulties experienced within many of the case study organisations, a practical tool entitled the 'Organisational Communication Matrix' has been developed. The matrix identifies the key elements of effective strategic IC and outlines the relationship between IC and leadership, strategy development, and tangible bottom line results.

The results of this research reveal that senior management and often internal communications professionals don't have time to read the full breath and depth of literature on IC to develop their own comprehensive model. Caught up in the day-to-day operation of internal communications activities they seek a simple answer to the question, "but how exactly do I engage staff, create an open culture of communication and embed change initiatives?

The matrix is a method of answering the 'but how?' questions. The matrix explains the elements necessary for execution of a successful IC programmeme. It also provides a concrete guide of what IC professionals and organisational leaders need to do and how they can do it. The matrix also identifies the specific activities for leaders, managers and IC professionals. The matrix is the way of indicating that if IC

professionals are looking for the best place to start improving their communication, the matrix will help them to achieve system level results.

The foundation for the matrix comes from four different sources:
1. Strategy development
2. Leadership support
3. Communication tools
4. Measurement and evaluation

The findings of this research demonstrate the need for a practical tool to aid the development of the profession. The matrix is a quality improvement system that is outcome and action orientated. For IC managers who do not have time to read volumes of texts on best practice, it summarises the actions associated with best practice and is an inviting method of beginning quality control IC. The elements of the matrix centre on developing personal, managerial, and organisational effectiveness. The matrix contributes to the constant learning required of today's communicators. The tool helps communicators prioritise and execute their communication activities to ensure maximum results. Using the matrix has many advantages. It makes quality indicators explicit enabling the IC manager to present a fully rounded communications process to senior management. It facilitates understanding by senior management of the role that the dominant coalition needs to play in order to ensure effective IC. It facilitates dialogue between communication professionals and senior management. It also helps develop a coherent and measurable IC strategy, and it presents an opportunity to review and revise IC practice continuously. But most importantly, it connects IC with organisational strategy and facilitates the production of tangible bottom line results.

The matrix identifies four quadrants of quality in IC and outlines specific indicators in each quadrant. The IC manager uses a Likert scale to answer a question pertaining to each indicator. This enables the IC manager to identify where they need to focus. It also enables them to track their progress over time.

The tool does not cover the area of ethics in IC as further research needs to be undertaken in this area before such a tool would be of use. It is also possible that

261

further research into ethics will lead to the development of multiple frameworks or templates for ethical decision making. The matrix is, however, structured in such a manner that an ethics component could be added at a later stage, depending on the outcome of further research into ethics in IC.

The matrix is currently being tested in the field with 24 public and private organisations in Ireland and detailed feedback on its use is currently being evaluated.

10.8 The Matrix

This section on the organisational communication matrix is divided into two main sections:

> 1. An explanation of each of the four quadrants and the elements contained within each quadrant.
>
> 2. A description of how to use the self-assessment tool to help organisations design and plan their IC using the matrix.

10.8.1   Explaining the quadrants

To measure the overall quality of IC and to align improvements in IC across the organisation, the matrix has four quadrants. Within each quadrant there are goals that represent breakthrough communication performances. The matrix provides quality performance measures which are intended to complement the organisation's existing business strategy.

It is important for IC Managers to realise that they cannot do everything when it comes to IC, but they can organise and execute around key priorities. Effective IC requires putting time and effort into each of the four quadrants. Effective IC is a management discipline. Excellent IC requires putting the same emphasis on each of the following four quadrants of best practice in IC.

Quadrant 1	Strategy development
Quadrant 2	Leadership support
Quadrant 3	Communication tools
Quadrant 4	Measurement and evaluation

TABLE 34: ORGANISATIONNEL COMMUNICATION MATRIX

Quadrant 1 Strategy development	Quadrant 2 Leadership support	Quadrant 3 Communication tools	Quadrant 4 Measurement and evaluation
Strategy	Committed CEO	Communication audit	Link to strategy
Clear vision	Committed middle management	Two-way communication	Link to KPI
SMART objectives	Communication as management KPI	On-going evaluation	Tangible results

Quadrant 1: Strategy Development

Quadrant 1 is strategy development. This is at the heart of effective IC. It deals with writing an IC strategy and doing long-range planning and preparation. These are the things communication programmemes need if they aim to deliver real tangible, measurable benefits for the organisation.

It is difficult to deliver excellent IC without identifying the unique contribution IC intends to make in the organisation, i.e. what is the tangible benefit it will bring to the organisation? It is important to have a clear picture of what IC is to achieve. This will drive the decision-making process on what communication activities are worthwhile and what activities should be set aside.

The unique contribution must be captured in the communications strategy and must be reflected in the SMART (strategic, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed) objectives of the strategy. Objectives must be focused. If an organisation is to achieve new levels of performance in internal communication, it must establish a solid measure of performance. Communication must be established as a key performance indicator that can be measured and tracked. A good way to decide what project to focus on is to focus on the key deliverables identified in the organisation's strategy.

For each of these, the IC professional should identify how IC can contribute to delivering these goals. They should then published up to three 'drivers'—structure, processes or cultural patterns—that effective IC could improve or change. This would result in an internal communications strategy that is highly visible, logical, and wedded to the business objectives of the organisation.

Quadrant 2 Leadership Support

This quadrant deals with building relationships and the slow steady, incremental development of a culture of open communication throughout the organisation. It uses the strategy developed in quadrant one as a key reference point for all leaders in relation to the important role they have to play in developing communication excellence.

When the CEO and senior executive start holding managers accountable for effective internal communications, it sends a signal throughout the entire organisation. This can be a powerful force for cultural change. The reality is that the currency of leadership is attention. What leaders pay attention to tends to get the attention of the entire organisation. Staff pay particular attention to what leaders spend their time on. If the internal communications strategy is established, and the CEO and other senior managers continue to do exactly as they have always done—not communicate with staff—then staff interpret this as an indication that communication is not really a key priority. As executives are constantly sending signals about what they believe is important, it is imperative that the CEO is sending signals that effective communication is a quality issue and a key management function. But how does one get the CEO engaged in IC? The answer is simple: the key is to learn what the key objective is on the CEO's agenda and to harness internal communications efforts to their agenda. Make sure the objectives of internal communication focus on outcomes that are meaningful to the CEO.

In order to achieve effective IC senior leaders in an organisation must commit personally to effective IC principles, and they must demonstrate them to all stakeholders in a way that engenders heartfelt commitment to achieving them. Responsibility for internal communications cannot be delegated by the CEO. And just

as the CEO cannot delegate IC, managers cannot delegate their responsibilities. The era when internal communications could be delegated to the IC department while the managers work on other business priorities is over. The aim of this matrix is to make IC and strategic management function in order to deliver bottom line results for the organisation. It requires the energy and attention of the CEO and also the organisation's managers.

As 55% of the power of IC comes from senior management and given the fact that front line managers are the most trusted source of information in an organisation, it is imperative that senior management are aware of the important role they play in delivering effective IC. It is the responsibility of the IC manager to foster an understanding of IC starting at the very top of the organisation. CEOs and senior managers need to learn the skills and methods by which they can foster effective communication with their own staff. Such qualities do not develop accidentally; they must be nurtured and deliberately fostered.

Quadrant 3: Communication Tools

Too often IC managers are pressured to put the operational tools of communication first, and they allow the other three quadrants to take second place. There is no doubt that the tools are the most seductive part of communication; they are often the reason that communicators chose their career path, but the reality is, as the case studies demonstrate, if IC is not strategic, and fails to align itself with the business of the business, it will remain a technical function to be managed by others.

The research highlights that this quadrant is where the IC managers are spending a majority of their time. And while very positive work is being undertaken, a lack of time spent in the other quadrants, impacts on the effectiveness of the communication tools.

A lack of objective rigorous evaluation methods enables ineffective communication practices to continue unchanged. The research highlights that unnecessary time is being expanded on implementing ineffective communication tools. Time would also

265

be better spent auditing the communication needs, addressing these needs, and measuring the deliverables.

Quadrant 4: Measurement and Evaluation

It is impossible to over emphasise the importance of the data feedback loop that the IC manager can use to oversee achievement of IC. For strategic breakthrough, the primary question that the data collected must answer is 'are we improving and what tangible benefits are we delivering?' The strength of the matrix is that it enables the IC professional to track programmemes over time, providing a quality reporting mechanism. The matrix enables communicators to identify the performance data. It will enable reliable and timely measurement and reporting if used effectively. Its use will help channel leadership attention to the benefits of IC. For too long the connection between IC and business performance has been weak in most organisations. This matrix would help communicators to focus continually on performance improvement and tangible bottom line results.

IC managers often have plenty of reasons for avoiding quadrant four: They are too busy; they don't have enough staff; it isn't necessary; communication is intangible etc. Quadrant three has consumed them. However, taking time out to think strategically and to measure the effectiveness of the communication activities can conversely free up time as IC managers can see what communication tools work and what communication tools are largely ineffective.

Objective rigorous evaluation methods are required in order to deliver credible proof of results to management. Saying one doesn't have time to measure is the same as saying one doesn't have time to lead.

10.8.2 How to use the matrix

The matrix indicators are listed on the following pages in question format. There are 12 indicators in total. The IC manager simply circles their response to all the questions. They should select one answer per row. Once completed add the responses
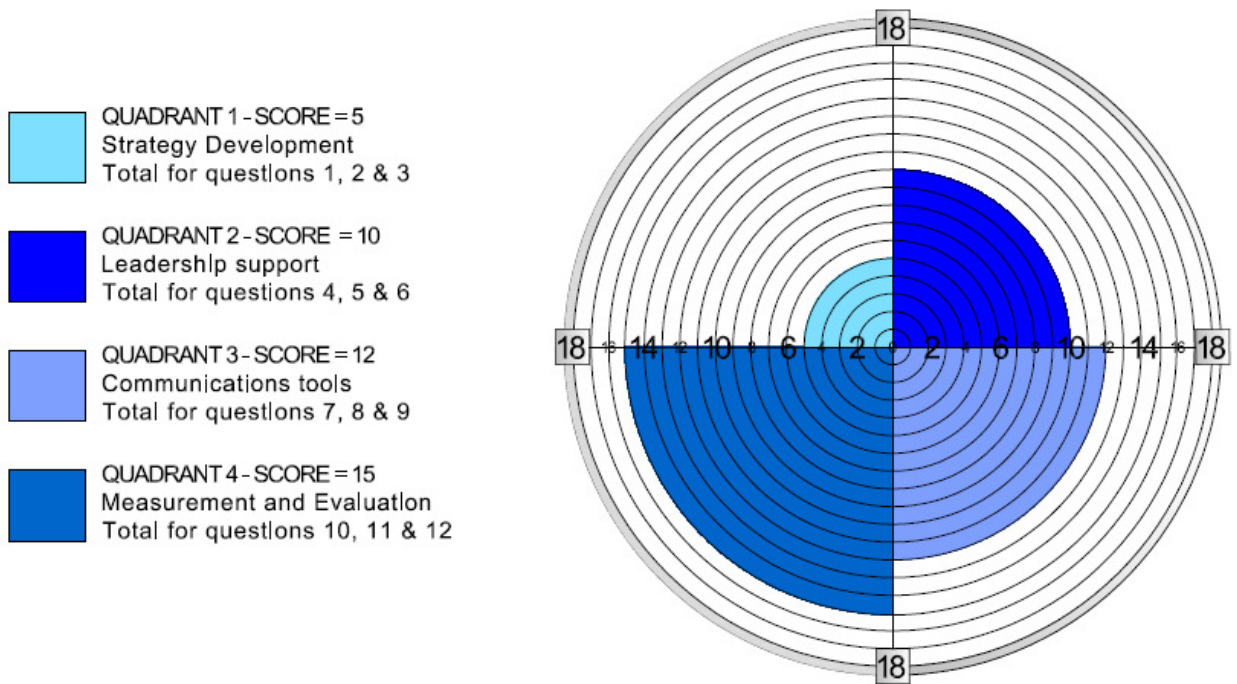
for each quadrant. For example: if in quadrant one you score 4+3+3=10. You have scored 10 out of a possible 18. Simply shade in the portion of the quadrant that reflects this score. Repeat this for each of the four quadrants. Once you have shaded in your matrix you have a very clear visual representation of the areas that need to be focused on in order to achieve excellence in internal communications.

You also have a compelling visual to open and facilitate dialogue with senior management about all the elements necessary for the improvement of IC within the organisation.

TABLE 35: ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION MATRIX

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 - I have an internal communications strategy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2 - I have a clear picture/vision of how internal communication will contribute to the organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6
3 - The objectives of all my communication activities are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed)	1	2	3	4	5	6
4 - My CEO is committed to and playing his/her role in effective internal communication	1	2	3	4	5	6
5 - My senior management are committed to and playing their role in effective internal communication	1	2	3	4	5	6
6 - Communication is a KPI for all management	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 - The communication tools used reflect the documented needs and preferences of staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8 - Most of the internal communication activities are two way-symmetrical	1	2	3	4	5	6
9 - I have feedback loops built into all communication activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10 - I can produce tangible results in respect of my communication work	1	2	3	4	5	6
11 - I can establish if Managers are meeting their communication KPIs	1	2	3	4	5	6
12 - I can link all communication activity to the organisation's strategy	1	2	3	4	5	6

TABLE 36: FILLING IN THE MATRIX

QUADRANT 1 - SCORE = 5
Strategy Development
Total for questions 1, 2 & 3

QUADRANT 2 - SCORE = 10
Leadership support
Total for questions 4, 5 & 6

QUADRANT 3 - SCORE = 12
Communications tools
Total for questions 7, 8 & 9

QUADRANT 4 - SCORE = 15
Measurement and Evaluation
Total for questions 10, 11 & 12

The diagram below indicates what best practice in internal communications should look like. If IC was operating extremely effectively, each quadrant would be completely shaded as the highest score would be achieved for each of the 12 indicators.

TABLE 37: WHAT BEST PRACTICE IC SHOULD LOOK LIKE
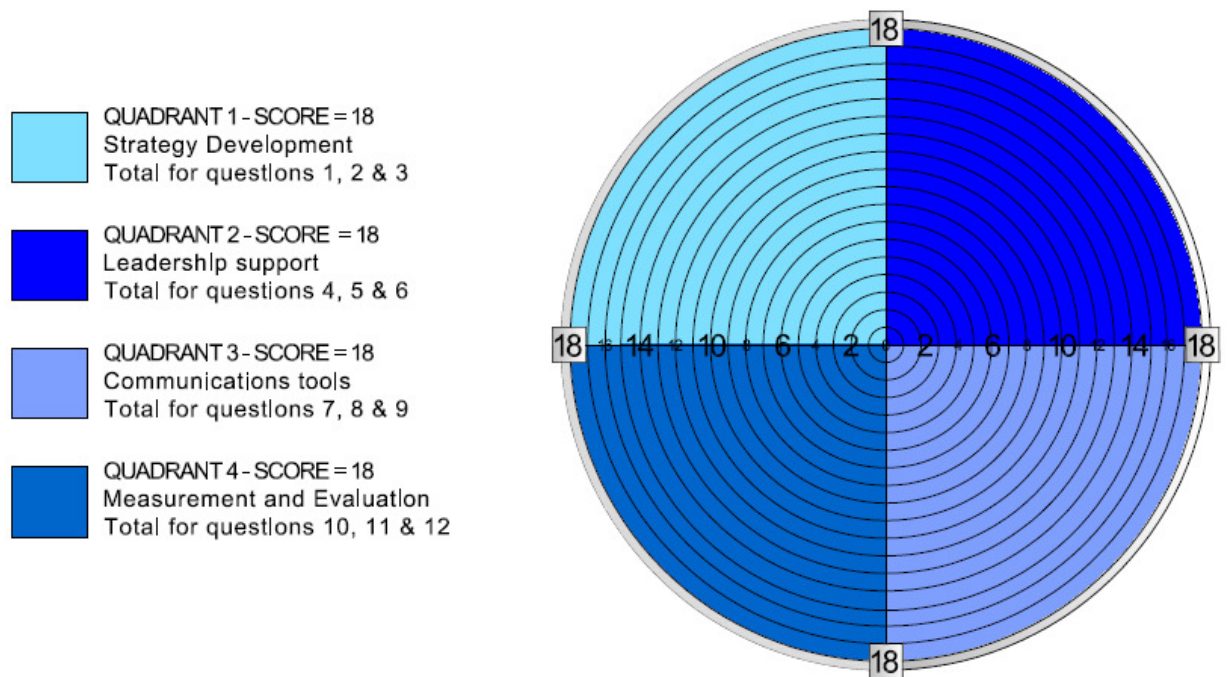
The matrix is constructed to measure and improve IC quality, and it can be a powerful tool to further develop the practice of IC and enhance accountability and measurement. The matrix needs field testing in various organisations and sectors. Currently, it is being tested in 24 public and private organisations in Ireland across a variety of sectors. The researcher intends to undertake further study into the use of the matrix during post-doctoral work.

If communicators cultivate the discipline to work equally in all four quadrants their effectiveness will increase dramatically and work will become more fulfilling because the IC manager will be able to demonstrate the improvements they are making to the organisation. Dealing with IC by crisis will decrease as management begins to think strategically about the important role that IC plays within the culture of the organisation. It will also ensure that difficulties in communication are identified and addressed before they become an issue. But most importantly, it enables IC managers to be able to produce tangible bottom line results.

10.11 Recommendations for Further Study

This thesis contributes to knowledge on three levels. It provides a detailed examination of IC practices within public and private sector organisations in Ireland. It contributes to knowledge at the level of providing further insight into the role of ethics in internal communication. It provides insights into how organisations utilise IC during significant times of change and turbulence.

The research findings provided an extraordinary rich source of learning and facilitated the developing of support tools for IC professionals, with the development of the Organsiational Communication Matrix. The matrix identifies in a simple format the key elements of effective IC. It enhances strategic planning and measurement and facilitates dialogue with senior management on the role that IC plays in an organisation. It has also extended the theory of IC by producing data contrary to some of the prevailing views on the role of ethics in communication.

For future study the researcher believes that the IC profession would benefit from an investigation of the use of the matrix. The matrix is currently being used by 24 public and private sector organisations and the researcher aims to explore the use of the matrix further in post-doctoral research.

The research identified that IC must be seen as a key strategic function in order to be consulted and included in key organisational decisions including change. This research identified that IC did not play a significant strategic role in the changes that took place in these organisations over the course of the research. Given that the research overall indicated that IC was not strategically managed, it is not very surprising that IC did not play a more significant role in the changes that took place. The researcher believes that IC practitioners must take time out from their communication activities and spend time on strategically planning their work. She hopes that the matrix will facilitate that and in turn IC will be able to take its seat at the decision making table.

For future study, the researcher also strongly urges further investigation to enhance the significant ethics findings in this research. The data from this research is significant on a number of levels:

- It demonstrates that there is not a split between pro and anti-ethics within the profession.
- It highlights the importance of distinguishing between 'an' ethical conscience and 'the' ethical conscience.
- It demonstrates a confusion surrounding what ethics in IC communication actually is.
- It identifies that a majority of IC practitioners use a utilitarian approach to ethical decision making (although they do not call it by its formal title).
- It emphasises the gap in ethics training within the profession.

As many of these findings are at odds with similar research conducted in other countries it would be very beneficial to conduct further research in other jurisdictions.

It would also be interesting to explore the findings in relation to unethical conduct within organisations. The significant differences between the public and private sector when answering the questions on ethics were unanticipated. While the public sector participants made deliberate choices the private sector organisations were far more hesitant indicating 'not sure' to a significant number of the ethics questions. This finding in itself is interesting as it did not occur in the questions pertaining to the practice of IC within the organisations. While in-depth investigation was outside the scope of this research, it is an avenue for future investigation.

The research findings indicate significant room for development and enhancement of strategic internal communication in Ireland. There is a growing demand for internal communications and it is imperative that the profession embrace these opportunities by demonstrating tangible bottom line results within the organisations in which they work. The single most significant finding in the communication practice element of this research is that internal communications practitioners often feel that they do not have the time to be strategic. What this thesis demonstrates is that if IC is not strategic, it will never be truly valued by the organisation. The organisational communication

271

matrix is specifically designed to help internal communication practitioners prioritise their work. It is designed to help them become strategic managers rather than merely technical experts by ensuring that they focus on strategy, gaining leadership support, choosing effective communication tools that deliver measurable results. It is hoped that by focusing on each of the four quadrants that strategic communication will become the modus operandi of IC professionals. To this end, the researcher hopes that the findings of this study will help develop IC practices in Ireland.

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Appendix 1:

Questionnaire used in this research. The questions in the questionnaire were also used as a guide during the semi-structured interviews.

1. Internal Communication

1. How many years experience do you have in communication?

[text box]

2. Please indicate your gender.

○ Male

○ Female

3. Do you work in the public or private sector?

○ Public

○ Private

4. Very briefly outline your academic background. The name of the courses or areas studied and the level attained.

[text box]

5. Do you have an internal communications strategy document?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't Know

6. If you answered yes, how was this strategy developed?

☐ Audit results

☐ Focus groups

☐ Continuous development

☐ Continuation of what was already in existance

Other (please specify)

[text box]

7. If you answered no, how does your organisation coordinate its internal communications activities?

[text box]

8. If your internal communications strategy is based on research, how is this research conducted and are there any findings that are particularly interesting or unexpected?

[text box]

9. What is the overall aim of your internal communications strategy?

10. What corporate and business objectives set for your organisation are supported by the work done in your internal comms programme?

11. Is the internal communications department a stand alone department?

○ Yes

○ No

12. What tools do you use as part of your internal communications strategy?

☐ Newsletter

☐ Email

☐ Video

☐ Staff briefings

☐ Team meetings

☐ e.newsletter

☐ Teleconferencing

☐ Video conferencing

☐ Online chat

☐ Internal social media tools

☐ Sharepoint

☐ Intranet

☐ Electronic question and answer forums

☐ Face to face meeting (communication a key performance indicator for managers)

☐ Other (please state)

13. Which internal communication tools are most effective?

☐ Newsletter

☐ Email

☐ Video

☐ Staff briefings

☐ Team meetings

☐ e.newsletter

☐ Teleconferencing

☐ Video conferencing

☐ Online chat

☐ Internal social media tools

☐ Sharepoint

☐ Intranet

☐ Electronic question and answer forums

☐ Face to face meeting (communication a key performance indicator for managers)

☐ Other (please state)

14. Are you able to produce tangible results for management on the effectiveness of internal communication?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

15. Is your IC manager a member of the organisations management team, contributing to strategic planning and decision making?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

16. If yes, do you find this essential to the development of internal communications?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

17. On a scale of 1 – 10 what importance do you believe senior management attach to internal communications? (1 not important, 10 very important).

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7

○ 8

○ 9

○ 10

18. How does senior management support for IC manifest itself?

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┌────────────────────────┐ ▲
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│                        │
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19. On a scale of 1 – 10 what importance do you believe front line managers attach to internal communications? (1 not important, 10 very important).

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7

○ 8

○ 9

○ 10

20. Would you describe the people who work in internal communications as technical experts or strategic managers or both?

○ Technical experts

○ Strategic managers

○ Both

2. Culture

1. There is diversity in my organisation: men, women, race, ethnic groups and other cultural backgrounds.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Undecided/ unsure
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

2. How are decisions made in your organisation?

- ○ Management decide and then tell staff
- ○ Staff and management work together on decision making
- ○ Significant decisions are made by management but team based decisions are consensus decisions

Other (please specify)

[   ]

3. Employees in my organisation participate in decision making.

- ○ Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Undecided/ unsure
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

3. Ethics in practice

Please mark the response category that most closely matches your view.

1. What type of ethics training have you received? Please mark N/A if you have not received ethics training.

2. My company has a code of ethics.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

3. There is a person with high managerial authority responsible for ethics in my organisation.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

4. In my job, I counsel management on ethical decisions on public relations matters.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

5. In my job, I counsel management on all ethical decisions.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

6. Communication practitioners should play the role of the counsellor to top management on ethical matters pertaining to the practice of public relations.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure

7. Communication practitioners should play the role of the counsellor to top management on all ethical matters.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

8. Communication practitioners should advise management on ethical matters rather than merely communicating the decisions of others.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

9. I believe that I can act as "the" ethical conscience of my organisation.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

10. I believe that I can act as "an" ethical conscience for my organisation in concert with other members of the decision making team in the organisation.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

11. I feel well prepared to engage in ethics counselling when senior management face a public relations dilemma.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

12. I make your ethical decisions based.....

- ○ I make my decisions based on doing what is right regardless of the potential consequences or implications of my communication.
- ○ I make my decisions bearing in mind the circumstances and the consequences of my communication.

Other (please specify)

[text box]

13. Ethics considerations should be a vital part of executive decision-making regarding how core values get translated into operating procedures and standards.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure

14. There is an environment of deception, repression, and cover-ups concerning events that would embarrass the company.

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Unsure

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

15. The organisation effectively communicates standards and procedures to its employees via ethics training programmes.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Undecided/ unsure

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

16. My organisation makes it clear to employees what is ethically acceptable and what is not acceptable.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Undecided/ unsure

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

17. Openness about unethical conduct is encouraged in my organisation.

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

18. Managers in my company often engage in behaviours that I consider unethical.

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

19. There a system for employees to report unethical behaviour.

○ Yes

○ No

○ Unsure

20. My organisation performs an ethics audit.

○ Yes

○ No

○ Unsure

21. Ethics is an important part of my job.

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Unsure

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

22. What do you understand ethics to mean in relation to your role?

23. Thanks for taking the time to complete the survey - I really appreciate it.