

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION THEORY

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DEMICOM • CORE



DEFINING THE FIELD

Public relations refers to the management of relationships between organizations and their stakeholder publics.

Strategic communication is defined as purposeful communication of an organization to advance its mission.

(Hallahan et al. 2007)



SUB-FIELDS OF RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

- ❖ Media relations
- ❖ Internal communication
- ❖ Community involvement
- ❖ CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility
- ❖ Issues management
- ❖ Crisis communication
- ❖ Marketing and brand communication
- ❖ Public affairs
- ❖ Investor relations
- ❖ Lobbying

THEORIES IN THE FIELD

- ❖ Systems theory
- ❖ Strategic management of communication
- ❖ Relationship management
- ❖ Audiences, stakeholders, publics
- ❖ Rhetoric
- ❖ Image, reputation and identity
- ❖ Practitioners roles and professionalization
- ❖ Ethics
- ❖ Complexity theory



STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATION

The old "flying by the seat of the pants" approach to solving public relations problems is over. – Edward J. Robinson

Proactive vs. Reactive communication

Successful communication does not just happen
– it is a result of sound research, meticulous planning, careful implementation and evaluation.

A British study shows that among the country's most admired companies, up to 70% of their communication activity is pre-planned.

COCA COLA AND CSR

The Coca-Cola Company



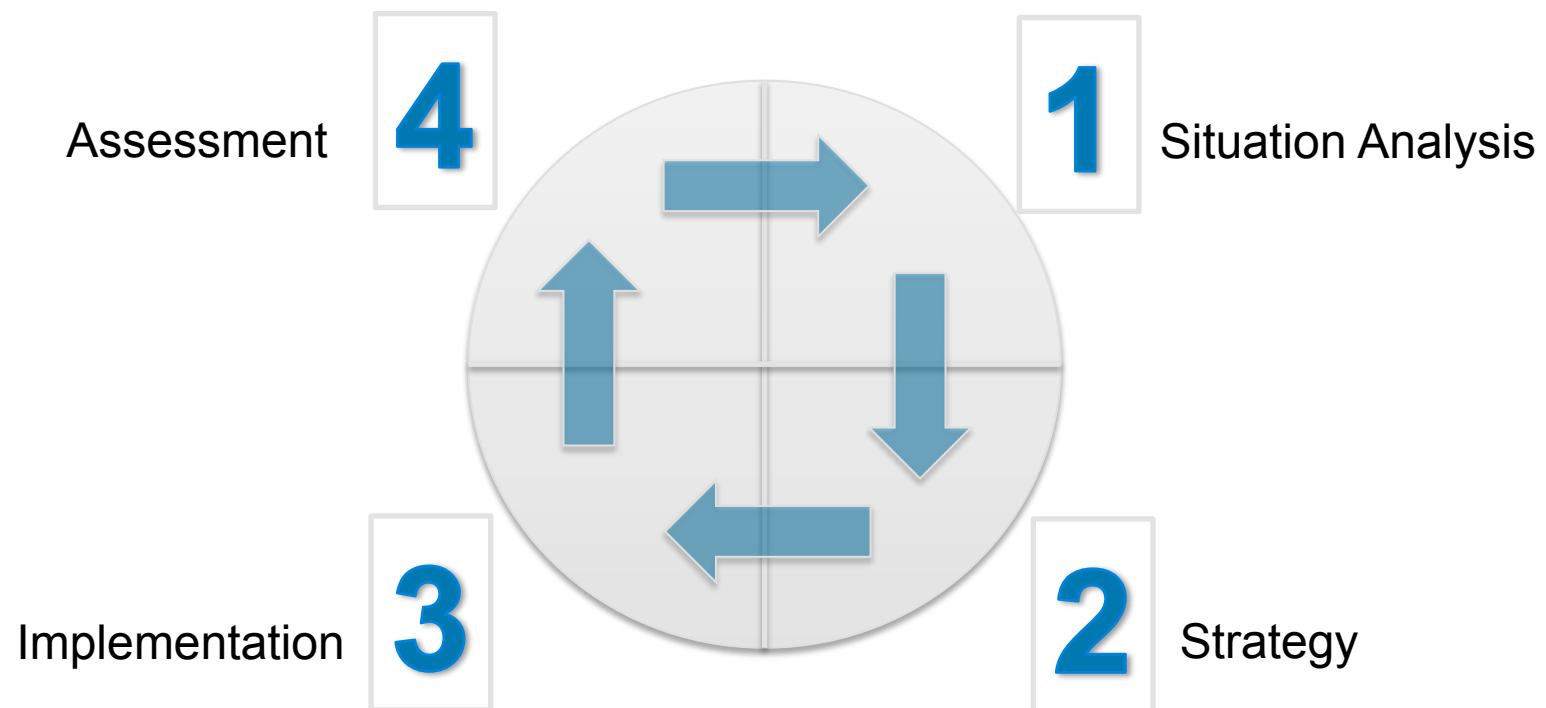
- Goals and targets in five areas "Commitment 2020" - sustainability
- CSR initiative to launch an eco-friendly lightweight bottle for Ice Dew, its drinking water brand.
- Reducing carbon footprint & recycling space
- Video illustrates how new design helps environment
- Media access to product manager and brands ambassador

PLANNING AND STRATEGY

- ❖ Focuses effort
- ❖ Improves effectiveness
- ❖ Encourages long-term view
- ❖ Assists proactivity – setting the agenda
- ❖ Reconciles conflicts – think through challenges in advance
- ❖ Minimizes mishaps
- ❖ Demonstrates value for money



THE FOUR-STEP PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCESS



(Cutlip, Center, Broom, 2006)

1. SITUATION ANALYSIS

”What’s happening now?”

Defining strategic communication problems

- What is the problem/purpose? (research the issue)
- Who is involved?
- Who should be talked to? (publics/people – relationship)
- What concerns do these people have?
- What factors influence the situation / publics? (internal/external)
- SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- What methods for research are used?
(key informants, interviews, focus groups, surveys,
content analyses of newspapers, websites/Facebook/Twitter,
workshops, advisory boards)

2. STRATEGY

”What should we do and say, and why?”

Planning and programming

- What are the (SMART) objectives?
- What are the key publics?
- What should be said to whom? (messages, content)
- How should the message be communicated?
(communication channels)
- What are the management expectations?
- Time schedule
- Budget
- How is success to be judged? (evaluation of objectives)

3. IMPLEMENTATION

”How and when do we say it?”

Taking action and communicating

- Coordinating action and communication
- Mutual interests of the organization and its publics
- Framing the message
- Semantics and symbols
- Barriers to communication
- Dissemination / Dialogue



4. ASSESSMENT

”How did we do?”

Evaluating the program

- Establish agreement on uses and purposes of evaluation
- Secure organizational commitment to evaluation
- Measurable results / evaluate the SMART objectives
- Evaluate levels of preparation, implementation, and impact
- Report evaluation findings to management
- Add to professional knowledge



IMPACT CRITERIA

- Number of people who learn message content
- Number of people who change opinions
- Number of people who change attitudes
- Number of people who behave in the desired fashion
- Number of people who repeat or sustain desired behavior

WAY FORWARD



Photo: Yvonne Palm Lundström

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