

Effective Corporate Communications as a Catalyst for Organization Profitability, Growth and Sustainability

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Abstract

Every organization exists for the purpose of actualizing the set-out goals and objectives as particularly enshrined in expansion and sustainability. One of the ways all these goals and objectives of the organization can translate to visible results is through effective corporate communication which clearly outlines the very purpose of the organization and the language of the organization. What corporate communication does is the linking together of every aspect of the organization in the pursuit of the goals of the organization by establishing contacts with all those involved. Corporate communication ensures that both the internal and external stakeholders in an organization are effectively carried along and that is the very key reason the concept is considered as highly imperative towards the growth of the organization. Its ability to analyze environment, come up with policy and actions, ensure the spirit of teamwork, protect and improve the corporate identity of the organization amongst others, clearly underscore the importance and uniqueness of corporate communication as not just the machinery that can ensure organization's growth but also a tool that can help sustain the growth of an organization.

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Introduction

One of the strongest and most valuable tools that has continued to make the world and all sectors within it to keep advancing positively and expansively is information (Cornelissen J. , 2011). It is such a powerful tool that has the utmost capacity to shape the world in all ramifications (Gray & Balmer, 1998). It can make or mar the corporate existence of any sector or sphere of the world depending on how it is properly managed. Though, information remains a very key hallmark of development and growth across all start of human endeavor, it is also safe to state unequivocally that there is a procedure that must be observed for information to achieve its penetration purpose[s]. This procedure is better described as communication. It is a way of exchanging information in an understandably way between people. Different scholars have advanced different definitions of communication based on their perceptions and thoughts about the way the concept works. Communication is transfer of information from one person to another, whether it elicits confidence. But the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver. In the words of Brown communication is the transmission/interchange of facts, ideas, feelings, or course of action (Brown, 1982). On his part, Schram defined communication as the process of establishing commonness or oneness of thought between a sender and a receiver (Schramm, 1954). Furthermore, communication as the sum of all activities that one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another (Allen, 1958). It is a bridge of meaning., it involves systematic process of telling, listening, and understanding. Nosnik defines communication to establish contact with others through ideas, facts, thoughts, and behavior's (Nosnik, 1986). Looking for a reaction to the statement that has been sent. A very crucial definition to the subject topic above is communication as the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. Therefore, all communication influences at least two people; the one who sends the message and the one who receives it. From the above definitions. One major thing is obvious and that is the exchange of information between those involved in the art of communication. It suffices to assert that communication houses information.

The different sector of the world has an explicit way of communication especially as it bothers on the modus operandi of such a sector. Linking this statement to the role of communication in advancing the growth of an organization, we can as well investigate the concept of business communication and corporate communication since the topic is all about how communication can effectively be explored to advance the expansionary and sustainability drives of an organization. One of the key reasons for any organization's establishment is to make profit which will further promote the aims and objectives of such an organization especially in the quest to expanding and getting sustained. Therefore, we can define business communication as the sort of communication that is used to promote a product, service, or organization, relay information within a business. Business communication is an all-encompassing concept that houses marketing, interpersonal communication, reputation management, consumer behavior, employee engagement, customer relations, brand management advertising,

corporate communication, and host of others.

On its part, corporate communication entails the way in which business and organizations communicate with internal and external various audiences which may include employees, key stakeholders, the media. General public, customers and potential customers, government agencies, fellow organizations etcetera. Irrespective of the channels employed in business and corporate communication, one thing is set out to be achieved and that is the pursuit of the expansionary and sustainability tendencies of the organization. For an organization to grow exponentially, there is the need to ensure adequate and effective communication among the different stakeholders that form the organization's corporate existence.

The indelible and incontrovertible roles played by corporate communication in entrenching a culture of togetherness, growth and overall development cannot be underestimated. In other words, corporate communication is a tool that must be generously and compulsorily practiced by organizations which aim to actualize the set out goals and objectives especially in the areas of sustainability, profitability and growth. It is therefore on this basis that the study examines the concept of corporate and business communication and how they can both serve as catalyst for the exponential growth of an organization in the light of effective and adequate coupled with time bound information dissemination in an organization. Most importantly, the study also has the potential of guiding organizations on how to relate with stakeholders of the organizations such as the shareholders, suppliers, customers, employees and others.

The significance of the subject matter is anchored on the fact that it has the huge tendency to enable organizations devise the right approach to managing their corporate communications just as it can also unravel to the organizations the incontrovertible importance and uniqueness of corporate communication to their existential drive in the business world.

Statement of Problem

The world and its components today are products of information dissemination either on the larger scale or proportionate ground. One obvious and indisputable fact is that the world is anchored on information since information remains the greatest knowledge that is being craved for on daily basis by humans. It is against this backdrop that all sectors or spheres of the society are in strong pursuit of information aimed at advancing the course of such sectors. The business sector is never a left out in this global pursuit of information. As a matter of fact, communication remains the strongest cornerstone a thriving organization because information is required in no small amount to plan and execute the agenda of any organization either among internal stakeholders or external stakeholders. In achieving this onerous task, how does an organization communicate effectively to get the desired result? This is where the instrument of corporate communication takes center stage. Corporate communication encompasses methods and processes in promoting a company's credentials, its positioning pitch and its acceptability in the marketplace. How can communication in its corporate form help in promoting the growth of an organization in its entirety becomes the major bone of contention of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to understudy the usefulness of communication in the expansionary and sustainability drives of an organization with these set out objectives:

1. To find out how corporate communication can help grow the fortunes of an organization
2. To unravel how communication can be effectively managed to sustain the growth of an organization.
3. To find out the importance of communication in the daily operations of an organization consequent upon adequate management of churned out information.

Literature Review

Corporate Communication in Perspective

There are two major key stakeholders in any organization. These two key stakeholders are the staff of the organization and the customers or potential customers or any other relevant stakeholders from the outside operational structure of the organization. These two stakeholders can further be described as internal and external stakeholders with the staff forming the internal stakeholders while the customers/potential customers/other relevant stakeholders being the external stakeholders. In all, there is something that must keep these stakeholders going in the right direction that aligns completely with the organization's designed goals and aspirations and one of such smartest and productive tools is communication. In the context of an organization or any other corporate world, the term corporate communication is often the ideal type of communication that is deployed to pass across messages exclusively, effectively and productively in an understandably manner.

Corporate communication can best be described as the way in which businesses and organizations communicate with the various internal and external audiences. As clearly stated above, the different audiences are the staff[employees], customers, potential customers and other relevant stakeholders like the public and government agencies. Corporate communication is also defined as the set of activities involved in managing and

orchestrating all internal and external communication aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organization, with the common goal of enhancing the organization's ability to retain its license to operate (Van & Fombrun, 2007). Corporate communication strives to achieve four basic things vis-à-vis the strong message it has been designed to achieve. Corporate communication strives to maintain favorable inter-organizational relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent. [Van Riel, 1995; Cornelissen, 2011], helping a company to innovatively and proactively adapt to changes in the society through the evaluation of social trends and the formulation of policies (Bernays, 1923); to support the marketing activities of an organization by integrating all communications under one unique strategy (Schultz et al, 1993; Caywood, 1997; Kitchen and de Pelsmacker, 2004) and it also represents the nexus between the corporate identity and the corporate reputation (Gray & Balmer, 1998).

Corporate communication is a set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communication aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organization, with the common goal of enhancing the organization's ability to retain its license to operate (Van & Fombrun, 2007). It is sacrosanct to state that communication is the brain behind the success of an organization that is thriving in the business world, and this is not unconnected with the fact that communication plays crucial role in the growth of an organization. Having painstakingly looked at the concept of communication across board, we are limiting the scope of this study to corporate communication and business communication since the study is more interested in how communication can be explored to grow an organization in its expansionary and sustainability drives. To this end, attention will be on the role of corporate and business communication as it affects the growth of an organization.

The languages of corporate and business communication are quite different from the everyday communication that the world is known for. As a matter of fact, all sectors of the world have distinct communication languages that distinguish them from others and the business world is not an exception in this regard. Effective corporate communication is unarguably a major propellant for an organization's exponential growth and that is the reason this study strives to look at the ways and manners communication can serve as a catalyst for the exponential growth of an organization. Corporate communication represents the nexus between the corporate identity and corporate reputation (Gray & Balmer, 1998).

Brief Historical Perspective of Corporate Communication

Corporate communication is a compound word that originates from Latin. The word "corporate" in Latin is "corpus" which means to complete while communication in Latin is communicate meaning to impart, share or make common. Initially, corporate communication emerged in the United States of America in 1906, when Ivy Lee a journalist decided to recover the popularity and credibility misfortunes of a one-time most hated businessman in the US, John Rockfeller. Lee's brilliant work for his client was a huge success as the instrument of communication deployed by Lee changed the story of Rockfeller from one of the most hated to a benefactor of humanity. However, according to Yamauchi, corporate communication came to major limelight more than 30 years ago when the US business magazine Fortune held its first annual corporate communication seminar in 1972 (Yamauchi, 2001). The field of corporate communication has been perceived to be a clear profession handled exclusively by public relations practitioners. Those with this though believe that to be effectively grounded in corporate communication, there must be sound understanding of public relations; though, the 20th century witnessed the study of corporate communication in schools of communication and journalism thus leading to its categorization as a public relation related course. However, things are taking a new twist especially now that corporate communication has gone beyond just communicating the stakeholders and the public. In time past, corporate communication often involves the use of the media to communicate an organization's message to the stakeholders and by extension the public and that was when the concept was exclusively seen as the job of a public relation expert. The research of Wright that only 42 percent of public relation experts or practitioners have adequate knowledge on business changed the narrative as corporate communication is now seen as a serious issue that goes beyond just communicating the stakeholders (Wright, 1997).

Corporate Communication Strategy

"CEOs expect their CCOs to bring more than just a high level of specialist expertise to the table they also expect management and strategic competencies, above all. Almost without exception the CEOs questioned say that they want their CCO to be a kind of sparring partner". [Egon Zehnder, 2007]. The above statement clearly implies that corporate communication requires strong strategies that can help actualize the responsibilities, duties and key roles corporate communication is designed to achieve. The major problem about corporate communication strategy is the bad approach adopted in designing a perfect strategy that can propel corporate communication as a major catalyst for an organizational growth. In addressing this bad strategy approach, the work of Richard Rumelt, author

of Good Strategy, Bad Strategy and why it matters will be examined. A good strategy is a coherent mix of policy and action designed to surmount a high stakes challenge ([Rumelt, 2011]). We can juxtapose from the definition of good strategy put forward by Rumelt that any organization that tends to explore the huge benefits of corporate communication must be prepared to act on the action and policy statements put forward by the corporate communication officers or experts. According to Rumelt, a good strategy has three clear cut elements that should necessarily and ordinarily bring about the surmount-able ability of corporate communication in terms of any challenge occasioned by an organization. It is pertinent to state that corporate communication is very crucial to resolving perturbed challenges facing an organization. These elements are diagnosis, guiding policy and coherent actions. According to Rumelt, diagnosis defines or explains the nature of the challenge; guiding policy provides the platform to cope with or overcome the obstacles identified in the diagnosis while coherent actions are the steps or actions that are worked upon together as a team in accomplishing the guiding policy (Rumelt, 2011).

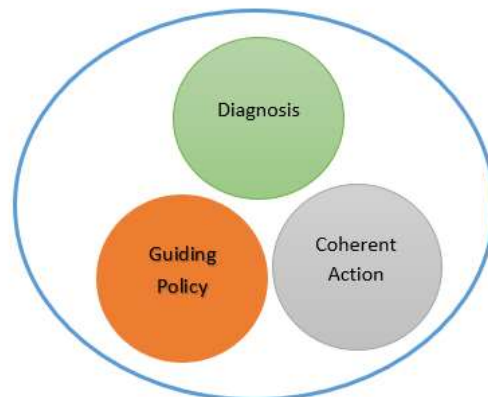


Fig.1: Rumelt Strategy Kernel

Source: Author

The high level of importance and roles played by corporate communication unarguably call for strong strategic approach which must be effectively designed to get the desired results. It is an established fact that both the internal and external environments of an organization play crucial roles in the growth and sustainability of such an organization. In her book *Corporate Communication Strategy*, Benita Steyn proposed model for a corporate communication strategy. According to her, this model is expected to follow these order:

*Analyze the internal environment: It is highly sacrosanct for the communication officer to understand the peculiarity of the internal environment before drafting the communication strategy. According to Benita, the corporate communication expert must understand the following about the internal environment: the corporate profile, vision, mission, corporate values, corporate philosophy, corporate culture and corporate policy. All these constitute the internal environment.

* Identify strategic stakeholders and publics: The next step after analyzing the internal environment is to identify the stakeholders and the strategic stakeholders. Stakeholders are people affected by the decisions of the organization and vice versa. The strategic stakeholders are those people who are critical, important, relevant or crucial to the accomplishment of the organization's mission and vision. Stakeholders could be the employees, top management staff, customers, potential customers, competitors, government, and its agencies etcetera.

* Identify and prioritize key strategic issues: It is noteworthy that strategic issues are developments, trends, events, happenings that are seen as very instrumental to the corporate existence and growth of an organization. Therefore, a corporate communication officer must be able to distinguish strategic issues from others during corporate communication drafting.

*Identify implications of strategic issues for stakeholders: The implications of the strategic issues identified in step 2 on stakeholders must be well understood by the corporate communication practitioner. How will such strategic issues affect the strategic stakeholders in an organization. This further implies that any communication with strategic stakeholders should be an avenue to explain the implication of strategic issues on them.

*Decide on the corporate communication strategy: In taking the decision on the corporate communication strategy, the sole interest and focus should be what will be communicated to each stakeholder to solve the problem or challenge on ground or better still capitalize on the opportunity presented by the strategic issues. Other steps in corporate communication strategy include:

*Set communication goals

* Develop a communication policy

* Submit a draft of the corporate communication strategy to top management

*Conduct a media analysis

*Develop a strategic communication plan.

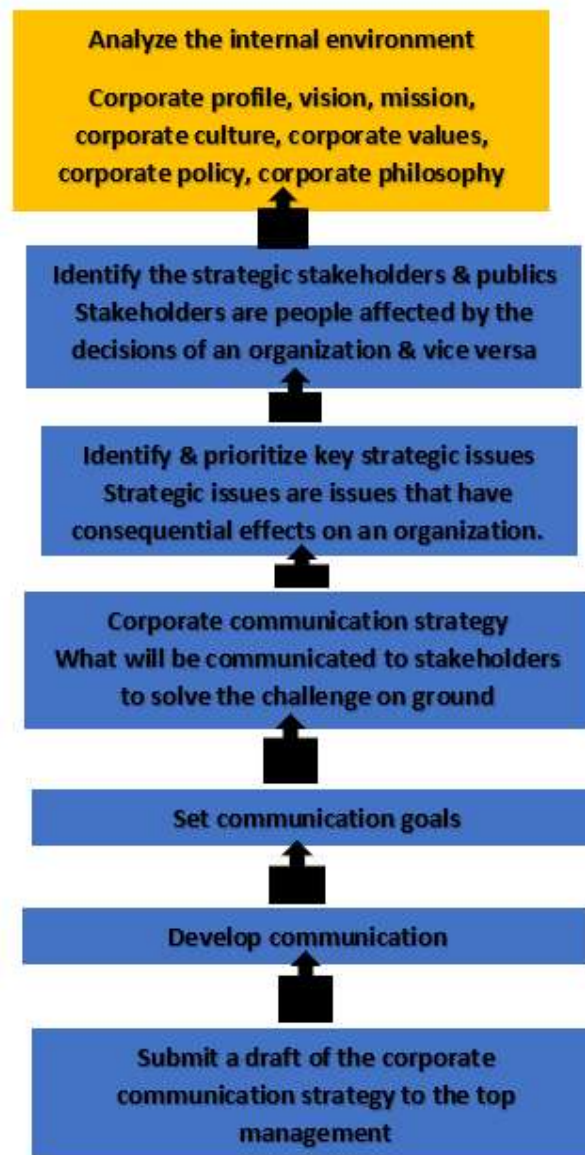


Fig. 2: Benita Steyn Corporate Communication Model
Source: Author

Importance of Corporate Communication

The business world has continually experienced different changes in the ways of doing business and these changes have been hugely embraced by the stakeholders through the avenue of corporate communication. It is an unarguable fact that every organization striving for success must prioritize corporate communication to the best standard. It is more necessary owing to the fact that managers, executives, supervisors and other top echelons of an organization adopt the instrument of corporate communication to reach out to their subordinates and the outside world in a bid to actualize the targeted goals and aspirations of the organization.

As posited above, the imperativeness of corporate communication cannot be overemphasized in an organization that intends to drive positively the expansionary and sustainability agenda of such an organization. To this end, it is crucial for organization to accept the fact that corporate communication has great and beneficial roles to play in aiding the expansionary and sustainability drive of an organization. Some of the importance is discussed below.

*It ensures that the organization adopts the approach of corrective measures. It is a known fact that corporate

organization is made up of large number of staff which practically creates the impossibility of having the same results required as the minimum standard. In other words, there are staff that may not meet up to the standard and one way this can be corrected is through the instrument of corporate communication which may require the management team having a talk or better still organizing training for such staff in this category. The message of such talks or training will only be achieved through communication in its corporate form.

*Transparency becomes a clear-cut agenda when corporate communication is adopted. One of the major reasons why some organizations fold up so easily is the lack of proper communication excluding the employees. Corporate communication that includes employees in the picture of an organization's goals and aspiration will definitely create in the employees a huge sense of belonging to the bigger picture of the organization pegged down goals and aspirations thus allowing transparency to evolve.

*Corporate communication helps in reducing miscommunication. This can be achieved through the dissemination of information on timely and rightly basis. In other words, through the instrument of corporate communication, information is disseminated to every employee thus equipping them with the needed understanding and knowledge they require to hit the ground running. Also, part of the miscommunication reduction role played by corporate communication is strengthening relationship with stakeholders due to reduction in miscommunication. Relationship building is part of corporate communication and this can only be made possible when there is clear communication. In the submission of scholars, relationships are considered the core of corporate communication (Zaharna, 2016; Lock, 2019).

*Teamwork is a secured result when corporate communication is deployed. Not only will employees be engaged in the activities and operational system of the organization, but they will also be highly productive because they feel carried along thus creating in them the atmosphere and mindset of feeling belonged in the success of the organization.

*Corporate communication helps maintain and improve corporate identity. Organizations need positive corporate identity to survive the ever-increasing level of competition in the business world. To achieve this, every means of communication especially in a corporate form must be deployed to build and maintain the organization's image because that is one of the greatest selling points before the customers or prospective customers.

*Through corporate communication, organization may experience innovation at its peak. When knowledge is shared, goals and visions are communicated to the employees, inter-departmental collaboration will all ensure innovation since employees clearly understand the mission and vision of the organization they are working for.

*Corporate communication helps connects the organization with the outside world. The plans, products and activities of the organization are made known to the public or the outside world through the instrument of corporate communication.

Guide for Effective Corporate Communication

Corporate communication remains an essential aspect of any organization striving for success. To effectively practice corporate communication with outstanding result, here are some of the guides that should be followed.

*Corporate communication must be kept simple and direct. Corporate communication that if filled with jargons and irrelevant messages will create an ambiguous situation for the stakeholders; thus, defeating the beauty of corporate communication.

*In practicing corporate communication, messages and information must be polite, clear, and accurate. It is necessary for corporate communication to be polite, clear, and accurate content personified. It is expected that corporate communication ought to be polite irrespective who the sender and receiver is. Also, it is expected to be accurate because people are often driven by what they hear or see.

*Another major way to practice corporate communication is to ensure that the five key questions are answer in the communication. These questions are the who, when, why, where and what. No doubt, these questions and the subsequent answers provide stakeholders with the basic knowledge required to take a firm stance.

*Organizations must ensure that they gather the feedbacks resulting from corporate communication. Feedback is necessary to prepare the company ahead for any possible task that requires urgent attention, adjustment, and improvement.

*Organizations must also ensure that their corporate communication is designed to incorporate and integrate the different policies and actions of the organizations into one banner (Christensen, Cornelissen, & Morsing, 2007).

Recommendations

Having established that corporate communication is a key aspect of any organization's operational standard especially organizations striving for success; cautions must also be taken to avoid flagrant abuse of the process involved in corporate communication. In other words, poor handling of corporate communication has the very tendency of ruining the fortunes of an organization. So many organizations and even individuals have gone down owing to poor communication strategy. It is in the light of this, that organization must never approach corporate communication without understanding clearly what the communication strives to achieve. Below are some

recommended ways to ensure smooth success of corporate communication in an organization.

*social media that are used for corporate communication must be effectively utilized. In other words, adequate and sophisticated strategies should be adopted in the utilization of an organization's social media platform which is one of the channels of corporate communication. If it is practically possible, a well drafted document detailing how the social media platforms should be handled will go a long way in avoiding any calamitous end, poor handling of corporate communication may likely want to introduce.

*There should be opportunity for employees to undergo skills improvement seminar and conferences. It is highly important because it will surely prepare them better for the task of using corporate communication to make positive gains for the organization.

*Another recommended point is for the organization to ensure that even the diversity in workplace does not interrupt the smooth working atmosphere among employees.

*Management of an organization should strive to ensure that the design of their corporate communication is tailored to suit three key characteristics which are corporate communication as management tools, internal and external communication, and stakeholders or audiences (Varey, 1998; Mohamad and Bakar, 2018; Cornelissen, 2008; Goodman, 2000).

Conclusion

It is understandably clear enough that communication plays pivotal roles in an organization. These roles are geared towards ensuring that the organization maintains its steady growth, expansion and sustainability drives as rightly enshrined in the mission and vision statements of an organization. These roles also ensure that an organization keeps pacing in terms of being run adequately and effectively, maintaining the financial flow as well as achieving the designed and projected long term goals. The roles of communication in ensuring the expansionary, sustainability drive and success of an organization are not excluded from training of employees, designing strong communication strategy, developing marketing and sales strategies, entrenching the spirit of teamwork and productivity as well as eliciting reactions from the company through the feedbacks gathered from discussions and conversations with stakeholders, both the internal and external stakeholders. The inestimable roles of communication in organization's growth cannot be underestimated; hence, the need for every organization craving for success to ensure that corporate communication which has to do with organizational set up is highly practiced. Furthermore, it is highly considered as an expedient act for companies to ensure that their corporate communications are well managed because it is the tool that ensures the successful handling of the public relation team, the internal communication, interaction with shareholders and above all corporative advertising (Mihai, 2017).

Future Research Directions

Corporate communication as established above is definitely a tool that is considered as completely important and useful to the course of any organization in the sustainability, profitability and growth drives; hence, there is need for it to continually undergo series of changes. It is on this basis that future researches are necessary to address some of these changes especially in the area of relationship building via corporate communication as it has been observed that relationship building is a major heartbeat of any successful organization. Furthermore, future researches could also explore the lacuna in managing corporate communication as most organizations still find it extremely difficult to manage their corporate communications which of course has brought about to collapse of some organizations. A knowledge of why this still persists will definitely enable organizations to have better understanding of how to manage their corporate communications.

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