INTERNAL COMMUNICATION: BUILDING TRUST, COMMITMENT, AND A
POSITIVE REPUTATION THROUGH RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT WITH
EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

Karen Mishra: Internal communication: Building trust, commitment, and a positive
reputation through relationship management with employees
(Under the direction of Lois Boynton)

Relationship management is the practice of building strong relationships with

important publics, including employees. It is expected that richer communication flowing

between both employees and management will enhance feelings of trust between

management and employees, ultimately resulting in stronger commitment to each other and

to the organization. In addition, these feelings of trust and commitment will lead to a more

positive reputation for the firm, as employees are happy to be employed by the organization

and in turn, share their positive feelings with customers and other stakeholders. This

relationship management effort is thought to build long-term relationships for the mutual

benefit of an organization and its stakeholders. As employees have been thought to have

more credibility with the public as representatives of the organization than corporate

communications efforts, their opinions can influence other stakeholders to have a more

positive opinion about the reputation of the firm. Internal communication describes this goal

of communicating richly with employees to engage them in the priorities of the organization.

Face-to-face communication was found to be the best method for building close relationships

with employee publics. This study incorporates findings from employee interviews,

executive interviews, as well as a large-scale survey of employees to better understand the

role of rich communication in the context of relationship management with employees.

DEDICATION

   This work is dedicated to my husband, Aneil, and my children, Maggie and Jack. I could not have considered going back to school and completing this degree at this stage of my life without their constant love and support. They all have made many sacrifices on my behalf, and I am deeply grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem Definition

A study by the Great Place To Work Institute found that employees enjoy working in an environment where they "trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do and enjoy the people they work with" (Carroll, 2006, p. 1). Business ethics scholar Archie Carroll argues that ethical organizations take care of their employees, working to build trust with them through positive communication efforts, as well as demonstrating respect for employees and acting with integrity in all employee relations. He claims that if management does not demonstrate honesty, transparency, genuine caring, supportiveness and a willingness to listen, employees will end up with less trust in management.

Lack of employee commitment leads to lack of ambassadorship by employees on behalf of their organization. Two research firms, Walker Information and Hudson Institute, recently joined forces to conduct a nationwide employee loyalty study and found that "Only 24 percent of employees consider themselves truly loyal, committed to their organization and its goals. If employees feel less involved in the product or service production process, it can hurt the ultimate relationship with the customer" (Lowenstein, 2006, p. 1). Mathieu, Gilson, & Ruddy (2006) found that in a team context happy employees provide better service, which leads to happy, loyal customers. A recent PR Week article (Altus, 2006) supports this claim, identifying one manager who was quoted as commenting on the reasons for keeping employees happy, "In our business, clients don't like change" (p. 9).

This dissertation will examine the impact of organizational communication and relationship management on employee trust, commitment, and firm reputation. Organizational scholar George Cheney (1999), in his study of the Mondragon Cooperatives, found that employees are now demanding consideration as an internal market. The use of internal organizational communication, also referred to as inward marketing by advertising professor Robert Lauterborn (2005), leads employees to be better customer ambassadors (Lowenstein, 2006). Employees have important knowledge and skills about both their jobs and the organization, providing employees the opportunity to be organizational advocates to the customer, who in turn can enhance the firm's reputation (Gronstedt, 2000).

Relationship management is the coordination, management, and relationship building between an organization and its publics with a variety of publics, including investors, community activists, suppliers, and even employees. Integrated Marketing Communication scholar Gronstedt (2000) points out that the roles of each of these publics is overlapping, for instance, both employees and investors are becoming activists, which makes it more important for organizations to better manage communications between and across these different publics. Theoretically, relationship management is the practice of building relationships with an organization's publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) by attempting "to restore and maintain a sense of community" (Kruckeberg, 2000, p. 145). Relationship has been defined by Thomlinson (2000) as "as set of expectations two parties have for each other's behavior based on their interaction patterns" (p. 178). Increasingly, a focus of this relationship is how the parties communicate with each other to build the relationship (Toth, 2000), although the mechanics of how this communication takes place and what outcomes it produces have not been widely studied.

To date, employees have been understudied by relationship management scholars. This may reflect managers' lack of concern in their own employees. As Cheney (1999) points out, "Amid the rush toward heightened efficiency and competitiveness is a sense that most organizations don't care a great deal about their employees" (p. x). Organizational communication with employees is potentially insufficient because the emphasis by organizations is toward external publics about products and services through marketing communications such as advertising or public relations. Cheney points out that there is an opportunity to meld the internal and external communications of the organization, instead of keeping them distinct. Kennan and Hazleton (2000) are among the first to define internal public relations as an important step in recognizing employees as a distinct public worthy of individualized attention.[1]

As a result of such a narrow focus on marketing communications, employee communication can suffer, and with it, employee trust and commitment. Cheney (1999) suggested that values in the workplace can be evaluated by the role communication plays. Broom, Casey and Ritchey (2000) agree that communication is a critical aspect of how organization-public relationships are evaluated. Gavin and Mayer (2005) found that internal communication affects the trust between employees and managers. Additionally, Mishra (1996) found that "the extent to which the trusted person engages in undistorted communication then reinforces the trust (in terms of openness) placed in him or her" (p. 276). Organization communication scholars have shown that the adequacy of information provided by the organization has also contributes to an employees' job satisfaction (Rosenfeld, Richman & May, 2004). Communication practices within an organization are

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[1] Researchers William Kennan and Vincent Hazleton give Public Relations Scholar Carl Botan credit for prompting them to label the term "internal public relations" (per email correspondence with Dr. Hazleton).

expected to have an important influence on the degree to which employees trust their managers and the organization's top echelon, as well as their commitment to the organization.

One key dimension of communication that is expected to influence trust and related outcomes is its "richness" (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). Information that is richer (face-to-face communication) is considered more personalized and reduces uncertainty because it contains higher quality information (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). The richness of the media used to communicate with employees have been found to contribute towards increased satisfaction and loyalty in an employee-organization context by management scholars Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987) and in a business-to-business context by marketing scholars Vickery, Droge, Stank, Goldsby, and Markland (2004).

Public relations researcher Tom Kelleher (2001) found that public relations practitioners relied on written communication while public relations managers relied more on face-to-face communication. Cheney (1999) also observed that face-to-face communication is considered more reliable than written communication in a business context because it provides more information to the other party. It is important to understand if these differences in communication richness do matter in terms of reliability and trustworthiness among employees.

Despite researcher agreement about the importance of face-to-face communication, digital communication has nevertheless become a prevalent method for organizations to develop relationships both internally and externally, as well as to facilitate information searches (Gronstedt, 2000; Rappa, 2006). This finding is likely because digital communication is low-cost and perceived as an efficient way to reach many people. The

question remains, however, if it is effective for achieving its desired purpose of conveying higher quality information, as rich communication has been proven to do. As electronic media scholar Nicholas Negroponte (1995) admonishes, "the medium is no longer the message" (p. 61), meaning that there is an explosion of media with which to communicate, resulting in less emphasis on using one medium, but a new emphasis on integrating multiple types of media, such as email, video, etc.

In the public relations literature, trust is considered a critical aspect of the organization-public relationship (Botan & Taylor, 2004). In an earlier study, Bruning and Ledingham (2000) found that trust had a significant impact on customer satisfaction. In addition, Wilson (1994) found that both employee and public perceptions of commitment, trust and mutual respect are important for understanding organization-public relationships. All of these findings focus on the relationship aspect of publics and the positive impact on customer satisfaction and firm reputation yet fail to consider the impact of communication on that relationship or on the relationship with other stakeholders. Paine (2003), in her "Guidelines for measuring trust in organizations" specified that organizations should make sure to ask several questions prior to measuring trust in organizations, including "Which channels of communication were used and/or deemed most important to use in disseminating the messages? (e.g., the media…word-of-mouth…direct mail…special events?)" (p. 11). When an employee develops a relationship with external stakeholders, s/he can become an "ambassador" of that firm. Therefore, relationships exist not only between an organization and its publics, but relationships between an organization's different publics are also important. In addition, employees can take on multiple roles, including that of investor and activist, as well as employee (Dougall, 2005; Gronstedt, 2000). If employees are considered

an important public, they can be an important source of relationships with other publics, such as customers.

Communication between employees and external publics may be critical for building trust between the organization and those publics, and for enhancing the organization's reputation. Public relations scholars Grunig and Huang (2000) suggest that an organization's reputation is an outcome of its behaviors that a public remembers. Recent studies demonstrate that consumers trust communication from employees more than they trust communication from upper-level members of an organization, such as CEOs (Edelman, 2006; Keller & Berry, 2000). This finding stems from the publics general distrust of advertising and their growing trust in getting information from "someone like me" (Keller & Berry, 2000). Plummer (2005) recognized that corporate reputation is at stake because of the scandals occurring at large corporations such as Enron or Tyco, and he admonished firms to pay more attention to their reputation.

Reputation is becoming recognized as an asset to be managed and firms are now starting to hire Chief Reputation Officers, or CROs (Gaines-Ross, 2006). GlaxoSmithKline PLC created the position of vice president of corporate image and reputation (Alsop, 2004). This executive is charged with talking with employees and external stakeholders to help them understand the company's perspective. In general, CROs are being hired to monitor and manage a firm's external reputation by monitoring how various stakeholders perceive the firm. In addition, CROs are responsible for managing the communications that come from the firm in order to enhance firm reputation. These CROs, then, are acting as ambassadors to both internal markets, such as employees, and external markets, such as customers.

An emphasis on rich communication between the organization and its employees will reap benefits not only with building closer employee relationships, but will enhance the reputation of the firm by building stronger relationships with important external stakeholders, as well.

Study Rationale

Studying internal communication is important because it is a valuable means of building trust between employees and management. Grossman (2006) cited a Zogby poll that showed that 98% of those surveyed believe that trust and honesty are important in the workplace, but fully 69% rated their leaders as "low" in these traits. By focusing on the use of internal communication between an organization's leadership and its employees (Gronstedt, 2000), a common vision can emerge between the organization and its employees.

Effective organizational communication is important for building critical relationships that harness the enthusiasm, loyalty (Reichheld, 2001) and trust (Mishra & Mishra, 2005) of an organization's employees by creating shared values. Martin Marietta CEO Steve Zelnak, in an interview with Sky Radio (2006) emphasized that ethical communication and decision making produces a track record of achievement for the firm, and makes them an "employer of choice."

Public relations scholars Botan and Taylor (2004) identified the most striking trend in public relations as the co-creational perspective. In this perspective, relationships with an organization's publics are seen as important to the co-development of shared meaning or shared values. As a result, it is important to understand how organizations co-create this meaning with employees. Communication practices are expected to be a critical means to creating such meaning. This practice of co-creating meaning is relationship management,

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which is the theoretical construct that underpins this study. Relationship management is the practice of building strong relationships with all constituents by public relations professionals.

One type of communication practice, inward marketing (Lauterborn, 2004), internal communication (Deetz, 1992), or internal public relations (IPR) (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006), is often overlooked as being common sense (Davis, 2000), and is usually left to the devices of the human resources department at the policy-making level. However, there is a new emphasis on promoting dialogue internally within organizations (Gronstedt, 2000) in order to encourage employees to understand and even promote an organization's shared meaning to external stakeholders. By providing employees with more of a voice and role in managing the workplace, IPR provides the potential for creating shared meaning, which in turn builds the basis for a trusting and committed relationship between an organization and its employees.

Gronstedt (2000), an academic turned consultant, identifies many firms that use internal marketing, such as Xerox, where front-line workers are empowered to act as "customer advocates" (p. 30), but acknowledges that this concept has a long way to go until it is fully accepted by corporate America. This approach is similar to previous Total Quality Management approaches, where lower-level employees were encouraged to participate in improving quality from the bottom-up (Omachonu & Ross, 2004; Oakland, 2003). This approach was considered a fad by employees because organizations did not know how to fully implement these programs nor reward those who participated in improving the quality of the end product.

Communication has been identified by marketing scholars Morgan and Hunt (1994) as an important ingredient in building relationships between an organization and its customers or stakeholders. In the public relations and marketing literatures, however, communication, has not been explicated so that managers understand the best communication methods for improving those relationships. Management scholars, Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987) developed the concept of "media richness" to identify how much information a communication method provides between two parties. This concept of "media richness" might provide more information about the communication methods that are most effective in achieving organizational objectives.

The concept of rich media has been extended from its original context (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987) to include the use of digital communication such as email, intranets, and forums within a business-to-business setting (Vickery et al., 2004), but not within the organization-employee context. Gronstedt (2000) noted that the newer forms of digital communication would offer many benefits for the communication experience, including efficiency and immediacy. He also noted that the more personal methods of face-to-face communication were most effective for building trust and solving complex problems. Public relations scholars Grunig and Hon (1999) also identify the impact of digital communication or new media as an important aspect to study in the research on publics and trust. They predicted that digital communication would increase in importance as organizations would continue to build relationships with publics even in cyberspace. It is not clear, however, whether digital communication is perceived by employees as being as rich as face-to-face communication or non-digital written communication.

In summary, this study will examine how organizations utilize the rich media at their disposal to engage the trust and commitment of their employees and whether or not this communication process affects the reputation of the firm as identified by employees and *Fortune* magazine. This study will examine the communication methods of four firms—a software firm, a financial services firm, a retail firm, and to understand how they use multiple methods of communication including face-to-face communication, written communication, and digital communication to build relationships with their employees.

This study drew on a variety of literatures, starting with the public relations concept of an organization's publics. Publics are those stakeholders identified as critical to the organization's mission. Employees are often an overlooked public, and will be the focus of this study. In addition, the concept of organizational communication, drawing from both the management and communication studies literatures are critical to understanding how organizations communicate with their employee publics. One aspect that this study will survey is the impact of media richness (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987) on organizational communication and how it builds trust and commitment with their employee public. Finally, internal public relations (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006) is the name given to communication with employee publics. Aspects of this relatively new term will be examined from both the public relations and the IMC perspectives in the literature review in the following chapter.

The dissertation that follows includes a literature review, followed by the methods chapter that details the specifics of the study, as well as the list of survey and interview questions, and how the data were analyzed. The interview and survey questions all appear in the appendices.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter is designed to explicate terms that are key in identifying employees as a public, the approach to communication with employees, and the goals of that communication.

The literature used in this study will draw on a variety of inter-related disciplines, including public relations, organizational communication, management, and integrated marketing communications. The first literature addressed is the public relations concept of an organization's publics. Publics are those stakeholders identified as critical to the organization's mission (Dewey, 1927). Friedman (1970) emphasized an organization's duties to its stockholders, or those who had invested financially to reap the profits of the firm. In contrast, Post, Preston and Sachs (2002) identify stakeholders, or any party participating in the creation of value for the firm, which include employees.

Second, the organizational communication literature, drawing from both the management and communication studies disciplines is critical to understanding how organizations communicate with their employee publics. This focus on employees as publics has been termed "internal public relations" by Kennan and Hazleton (2006, p. 311). The marketing communications perspective calls this inward marketing (Lauterborn, 2005). This term is important to understanding how public relations professionals should include

employees in their strategic focus, as well as how public relations professionals can do this tactically.

Finally, this study will survey the impact of media richness (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987) on organizational communication and how it allows the organization to build trust and commitment with its employee public, as well as how it upholds the firm's reputation with its external publics.

Publics

Publics have been defined in a variety of ways in the extant literature. Early in the 20th century, Dewey (1927) identified publics as groups of people with a common purpose who are organized to act. Decades later, Ehling, White, and Grunig (1992) described publics as distinct from markets. Publics are more social and personal than abstract markets. Dougall (2005) also described the label of public as one who has a stake in the organization's future. Carroll and Buchholtz (2000) identified a five-step method for stakeholder analysis which entails 1) identifying who the stakeholders are, 2) understanding what their stakes are, 3) identifying the opportunities and challenges presented by the stakeholders to the firm, 4) considering the firm's responsibilities to its stakeholders, and 5) selecting strategies for dealing with stakeholders such as collaboration, defense, negotiation, etc. Once publics are distinct, methods for communicating with them must be set in place.

Grunig's (1989) excellence study asserted that two-way communication between an organization and its publics was more ethical than one-way communication, yet public relations ethics scholar Jacquie L'Etang (1996) observed that organizations with more power than their publics have less interest in participating in symmetrical or two-way communication. Management scholar Jim Miles' (1987) study of insurance companies found

that collaborative problem-solving was the first strategy of firms aiming to develop long-term relationships with stakeholders based on trust and communication.

This literature focusing on publics is important to understanding the concept of relationship management, which analyzes the variety of publics that an organization must manage and advocates the use of building relationships as an effective way for public relations professionals to engage with their publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).   One of the ways an organization builds relationships with its publics is through its communication efforts.

Organizational Communication

Organizational communication is critical for building trusting relationships between employees and the organization (Mayer & Gavin, 2005) that are open and honest (Mishra & Mishra, 2005). Deetz (1992) contends that communication between a company and its employees is not participatory or effective unless it is interactive.   He suggests that communication is effective when understanding is achieved between the parties who are communicating. He also suggests that there be opportunity for both parties to express themselves to each other in an authentic manner. For instance, interactive communication, such as a public forum, would provide an opportunity for each party to contribute to the exchange, as opposed to a news release, which does not allow room for two-way communication and feedback.

Organization communication to employee publics, however, has often been overlooked as a less-important part of a managers' job (Bobo, 2000).   Communication efforts are often taken for granted as managers believe that employees already know what is happening in the organization or that they might not really care (Davis, 2000). Instead of

relying on traditional ways of communicating via newsletters or weekly staff meetings, there is a renewed emphasis on promoting dialogue with employees and facilitating learning (Davis, 2000) both face-to-face and by utilizing new media, such as internal blogging and intranet forums.   In the 1980s, this type of effort would have been described as Total Quality Management (TQM). TQM had its drawbacks, as employees saw it as the fad of the month, and not a sincere effort to promote dialogue (Paine, 1994).

Information studies scholars Leah Lievrouw and Andrew Finn (1990) identified the dimensions of communication model in which communication is presumed to be mediated, but will range in its degree of involvement, control and temporality (Thomlinson, 2000). Communications author Jacquelyn B. Carr (1991) agreed that interpersonal communication is important in building relationships because the parties involved are critical to what is communicated.

In examining how companies utilize corporate communication efforts, Gronstedt (2000) identifies the differences in communication styles as "high-tech" vs. "high-touch." He argues that both are necessary to communicate effectively both within and outside of the organization. "The high-tech ways of online communications offer unprecedented efficiency in transactions, deliveries, information retrieval, and immediacy of communication. The high-touch vehicle of personal meetings, on the other hand, is unrivaled in its knack for bonding, building trust, developing ideas, and solving complex problems" (p. 219). This integration of high-tech, high-touch media is one way that communication can be further integrated to promote shared values between an organization and its stakeholders. Digital communication scholar Nicholas Negroponte (1995) points out that "one channel of communication might provide the information missing in the other" (p. 98). In addition, he

concluded that digital communication will allow people to seek out information rather than information being imposed on them. Vickery et al. (2004) suggested that the integration of media will result in a feeling of "closeness to the provider" (p. 1118).

Organizational communication efforts aimed at employees must allow for two-way communication in order to build trust between the two parties. Organizations often aim communication *at* employees, and thus, do not allow for feedback or even a way for employees to initiate communication. Digital communication is becoming more prevalent as organizations rely on email and the intranet to push communication out to employees. This study will test how employees perceive these efforts, their perceptions of the richness of these communication methods, as well as their perceptions of its effectiveness and provision for two-way communication.

Internal Public Relations

The move towards workplace democracy (Deetz, 1992) was supposed to empower employees to have a voice in their places of work, similar to the total quality management movement. The hope of creating such a climate was that organizations could focus on fostering dialogue with employees as a means of building effective relationships. Practitioner evidence suggests that workplace democracy is still evolving and that more efforts are needed to strengthen those relationships between the organization and its employee public. Communication efforts between an organization and its employees are often studied in the organizational communication discipline as a way to create participatory communication. Public relations scholars are finally discovering that a focus on employees as a distinct public is just as important as a focus on external publics.

Kennan and Hazleton (2006) are among the first public relations scholars to propose internal public relations, or IPR as a public relations practice. This concept differs from employee communication in its emphasis on treating employees as a distinct and important public, and providing for feedback and two-way communication, as opposed to the old ways of one-way communication. Kennan and Hazleton found that despite this move to workplace democracy, IPR are still rare and one-way, moving from the organization to the employee only. They claim that "success at internal public relations, then, lies not in planning, control, or cooperation, but in the effective management of group relationships to produce an environment in which task accomplishment is enhanced" (p. 315). Their view of internal public relations is one of empowering employees to harness the skills and abilities they bring as opposed to management attempting to control their actions, creating a more proactive and interactive role for employees. Kennan and Hazleton's conception of internal public relations puts workforce democracy into practice.

Kennan and Hazleton (2006) also identify social capital as a binding force that will encourage employees to become more engaged with the organization's mission through effective communication. Social capital is the glue that binds a community together, such as shared values and a sense of community. They argue that building both trust and identification is critical to the understanding of the importance of social capital in internal public relations. They also argue that communication is the vehicle through which IPR is accomplished. This can bring about varying levels of social capital within an organization, such as "productivity, efficiency, quality, customer satisfaction, net asset value, stock value, employee satisfaction, employee commitment, organizational adaptation, etc." (p. 330).

Internal public relations is a concept which recognizes that employees are an important and distinct public. The integrated marketing communications literature describes this focus on employee communication as inward marketing. These concepts, while developed in different disciplines, are similar in orientation.

Inward Marketing

Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn introduced the concept of integrated marketing communication in 1992, argue that organizations must not approach communications from the inside-out (or from the organization's perspective), but from the outside-in, thereby communicating with customers from their perspective in ways and in places where they will be most receptive to the message. Lauterborn's (2004) idea of inward marketing states that organizations must consider their first stakeholders when preparing this integrated plan—their employees. By including employees as a distinct public or stakeholder in a marketing communications plan, an organization will build trust with employees as well as harness their enthusiasm and commitment to the organization with other stakeholders. This approach is similar to Gronstedt's (2000) notion of integrating communications vertically from employees to middle management to top management. Gronstedt found that firms that integrate vertical communication are better able to communicate their values and brand promises to customers, which in turn ultimately improve the reputation of the firm.

Inward marketing is an action by the marketing staff that considers employees as important of an audience as any external audience. If internal marketing is taken seriously, Gronstedt (2000) has shown that it can have a positive effect on building trust with employees. The concept of trust and its impact on relationship building is explicated in the

following section with the following goals of building trust, commitment and ultimately

positively affecting the company's reputation.

Media Richness

Managers in organizations use a variety of ways or media to communicate with

employees. A manager's use of "rich media" (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987) varies in its

ability to convey social cues in order to reduce uncertainty and equivocality. "Medium

richness was originally proposed by Daft and Lengel (1986) as an objective characteristic of

a medium -- in which richer media are higher in immediate feedback, multiple cues, natural

language, and personal focus. Later, social influence theorists (e.g., Fulk, 1993) proposed

that richness should be considered at least partially perceptual because media can be

perceived differently by different people in different social contexts" (Trevino, 2006). Media

richness is a misnomer when considered from the mass communications context because

face-to-face communication, for instance, is not mediated communication while email

communication is mediated through use of a computer.

In a study of middle- and upper-level managers, Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987)

found that managers match the type of media used to communicate with employees with the

task before them. Their typology of rich media ranges from high media richness (i.e., face-

to-face communication) to low media richness (i.e., unaddressed documents). They placed

the telephone and personalized documents in between the extremes. They found that for tasks

that are ambiguous, managers use more face-to-face, personalized communication, or rich

media. In addition, they found that for tasks that are less ambiguous and more straight-

forward, managers are more likely to employ less rich media, or communication that is

written and less personalized. The concept of rich media is important to understanding how

organizational communication is developed between managers and subordinates. It is also important to understand how both managers and employees perceive the richness of their present communication efforts, in order to understand the levels of trust and commitment by employees.

In later work, Trevino, Webster, and Stein (2000) included electronic media in their study of media richness and found that media choice by managers was influenced by perceived medium richness. They discovered that managers' new media choice was influenced by perceptions of human/technology interactions and perceptions of media richness. In other words, managers chose what media to use based on their perceptions of how their employees would react to that medium, as well as how adept they were to using the chosen media. This discomfort with newer mediums could be as a result of their unavailability or inaccessibility to them during their formative working years. They also found, however, that media symbolism was more important than media richness in the selection of which media to use in disseminating information. Media symbolism represents how others would perceive a message in that particular media format, for example, face-to-face communication conveys more immediacy than a letter, which is more formal and less immediate. They had mixed results with email communication, however, finding that some employees found it immediate, while others did not, calling for more research on how individuals perceive the sending and receiving of email messages.

A more recent study by Vickery et al. (2004) in a business-to-business context found that suppliers did consider digital communication "relatively rich" (p. 1116). This finding suggests that organizations might be better at integrating rich media with external publics than they are with internal publics. This concept of integrating rich media in internal

communication requires further exploration, especially since email is such an integral element in day-to-day management/employee communications. There is limited public relations scholarship on the concept of media richness. Public relations scholar Kelleher (2001) did discover that public relations managers primarily utilize face-to-face communication and public relations practitioners primarily rely on written communication. They both use email communication similarly.

The concept of media richness (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987) has power to dissect the types of communication efforts organizations use with employees to determine whether or not these communication methods build relationships with employees in an internal public relations effort, and in turn, build trust and commitment with that employee public.

Building Trusting Relationships

The concept of trust has not been precisely explicated (Kramer, 1999). Management scholar Rod Kramer contends that while trust is agreed to be an important concept, its precise definition is not universally agreed upon. Trust is generally thought to be a general attitude or expectancy about trust (Luhmann, 1988). Lewis and Weigert (1985) define trust as the undertaking of a risky course of action of the expectation that the other person will act dutifully. Management scholar Andrew DuBrin (2000) described the process of creating trusting relationships between management and employees through openness and meaningful exchanges. Public relations scholar Joy Chia (2005) affirmed that "trust and commitment are byproducts of processes and policies which are designed to make the relationship satisfactory for both parties, such as open, appropriate, clear and timely communication" (p. 7). Trust can be conveyed through effective communication (Mishra & Mishra, 1994) via openness and concern. Kirkpatrick and Lock (1991) define openness in terms of employee perceptions

of a leader's openness and honesty and their ability to foster innovation and bring about positive change.

In addition, Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) describe the actions between employees and an organization as a cultural "performance" that provides the executive the opportunity to show personal strength, or the strength of their character as a way to build openness in the organization, as well. Leaders who are more clear and open in their communication foster greater trust by their subordinates (Mishra, 1996). Previous research in the management discipline has found that trust is positively related to organizational commitment in a variety of organizational contexts (Aryee, Budhwar & Chen, 2002; Brockner, Siegel, Daly, Tyler, & Martin, 1997; Brockner, Spreitzer, Mishra, Hochwarter, Pepper, & Weinberg, 2004).

These public relations and management studies demonstrate the importance of communication efforts in building trust. What has not been explored are the specific communication methods that are most effective to building those trusting relationships. In addition, there is a need to understand how these efforts to use effective communication are able to build trust and impact employee commitment. The management literature focuses on how trust builds commitment, but fails to acknowledge the role of communication in those efforts.

Commitment

For years, loyalty was one aspect of relationship building that was not able to be operationalized in such as way as to be quantified, but managers knew intuitively was a worthy goal. Loyalty is defined as a positive feeling of attachment to an organization, whether or not one works for the organization or is one of its external publics (Meyer &

Allen, 1997). Commitment, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of attachment felt by

employees and their desire to remain employed by the organization. Organizational

consultant Fred Reichheld's (1996) study demonstrated that it cost more to gain new

customers and employees than to retain existing ones. More recently, Reichheld (2001)

defined truly loyal employees as those who have "responsibility and accountability for

building successful, mutually valuable relationships" (p. 12) with customers. One of the

organizations Reichheld highlights is Dell computer. Michael Dell comment reflects the

importance of personal empowerment and accountability: "You need to engender a sense of

personal investment in all your employees—which comes down to three things:

responsibility, accountability, and shared success. Mobilize your people around a common

goal. Help them to feel part of something genuine, special and important, and you'll inspire

real passion and loyalty" (p. 35).

Commitment is used interchangeably with loyalty, although commitment conveys a

more permanent state. In particular, Meyer and Allen (1997) noted that "committed

employees are more likely to remain in the organization than are uncommitted employees"

(p. 11). They identified three types of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative

commitment. Affective commitment is a desire to maintain membership in an organization

based on an emotional attachment, an acceptance of or identification with the organization's

values, and an involvement in the organization. They reported that "employees with strong

affective commitment to the organization work harder at their jobs and perform them better

than do those with weak commitment" (p. 28). Continuance commitment is "an awareness of

the costs of leaving the organization" (p. 11). Finally, normative commitment refers to a

feeling that an employee "ought to remain with the organization" (p. 11). Overall, Meyer

and Allen (1997) demonstrate that affective commitment provides the strongest indicator of performance outcomes on the organization. Although they focus on the effect of management practices on commitment, they highlight the need for more of a focus on the role of communication in building commitment.

A feeling of commitment by employees can have a positive effect on the external reputation of the firm. Black (2004) found that employees who were not committed to their firms, acted to hide their affiliation with their employer, resulting in a negative reputation for that firm.

Reputation

There is debate among public relations practitioners and scholars whether or not reputation is something that can be "managed" (Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001). Yang and Grunig (2005) assert that reputation and relationship have similarities but distinctions should be drawn between terms. This distinction is important to the theory of relationship management because the goal is to manage important relationships with key publics. The ultimate result of a well-managed relationship should be a positive firm reputation.

Public relations scholars James G. Hutton, Michael B. Goodman, Jill B. Alexander and Christina M. Genest (2001) asked Fortune 500 practitioners to rank eight goals in their corporate communications efforts: "managing reputation" lead other public relations roles, with "manage relationships with publics" trailing behind in seventh place. They also note, however, at that time, no public relations textbooks incorporated reputation management as part of the definition. These authors questioned whether public relations practitioners can really manage the reputation of the firm, considering reputation is made up of a public's

evaluation of all of the firm's activities, many of which public relations professionals have no control over. Reputation is an additional area that requires further study, to determine whether or not effective management of employee publics in turn leads to a positive firm reputation. Such a finding would provide evidence that public relations professionals can have some control over firm reputation.

Advertising Industry Association executive Joe Plummer (2005) identified corporate reputation as an important area for marketing communication scholars to renew their research efforts, with the loss of the public's trust in the credibility of American corporations. Management scholars Charles Fombrun and Mark Shanley (1990) recognized that firms serve multiple publics, each of which "selectively attend to different informational cues, or signals, in judging its effectiveness" (p. 234). They suggest that reputations are a cumulative assessment of the publics' judgments over time. Those judgments include information about a firm's profitability, as well as other non-economic factors, such as how they demonstrate their concern for society. They determined that non-economic factors have an equally important impact on firm reputation as economic factors. For instance, they found that profitable firms such as Pepsi had lower than expected reputation ratings. This assertion suggests that publics rely on multiple information cues for information regarding firm reputation and include a variety of factors in their reputation judgment. Yang and Grunig (2005) successfully demonstrated that the result of an organization's relationship with its publics will impact its reputation and organizational performance.

One method for analyzing a firm's reputation is to use the *Fortune*'s *"Most Admired"* annual ranking of companies by reputation. Hutton et al. (2001) used the Fortune ranking as a reputation outcome and correlated this indicator with their survey items. They found that

"companies with certain corporate communication philosophies were more likely to have strong reputations" (p. 255). Because the *Fortune* ranking is an accepted method for analyzing reputation, this will be used in this study, as well.

This chapter explicates the terms that are important for understanding the role and function of relationship management. The following chapter discusses the concept of relationship management as a theoretical foundation for the study of an organization and its employee public.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONCEPT OF RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define the theoretical basis for this dissertation:
relationship management. This chapter will review the studies that have employed this
theoretical concept and will show how this theory could be applied more broadly to include
employees as a significant public.

Relationship management is the focused attention of public relations professionals to
create mutually beneficial relationships with their publics, including customers, investors,
and the community (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). According to public relations scholars
Glen Broom, Shawna Casey, and James Ritchey (2000), "Relationships represent the
exchange of information, energy, or resources" (p. 15). Public relations scholar Dean
Thomlinson (2000) defines a relationship as "a set of expectations two parties have for each
other's behavior based on their interaction patterns" (p. 178). While public relations has
always had a focus on managing its publics (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994), only with
public relations researcher Mary Anne Ferguson's (1984) call to focus on the relationship
with those publics has the concept and practice of relationship management grown. Rather
than merely focusing on garnering public attention as early practitioners practiced public
relations, this relatively new focus is on building long-term relationships for the benefit of
both parties. Public relations scholars Dean Kruckeberg and Kenneth Starck (1988) argued

that "public relations is best defined and practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community" (p. xi).

Ledingham and Bruning (2000), who established the concept of relationship management, identify several concepts or "dimensions" (p. 58) of relationship management. Those concepts are openness, trust, involvement, investment, and commitment. Mishra (1996) identified openness as a key aspect of how trust is built between people and/or organizations. Involvement, investment, and commitment are similar to the concepts of affective and continuance commitment, as articulated by management scholars John Meyer and Natalie Allen (1984). Thus far, relationship management has focused on external publics such as investors, customers, and the community-at-large, but this concept has value for the study of internal public relations, as well. Employees are becoming a more important public for organizations to consider in their mix of integrated marketing communications, both internally and externally. Employees are identified as a more credible source of information by customers (Keller & Berry, 2003) and they themselves are finding their roles outside and inside of work overlapping, as they become activists and investors (Gronstedt, 2000). The next section will address the importance of communication in the practice of relationship management. The relationship management concept is large in scope, and employee communication makes up one part of that concept.

The role of communication

Harvard Business School professor emeritus Richard Walton (1969) was among the first to identify the importance of communication in an organization-public relationship, calling it "the most significant factor accounting for the total behavior of the organization." In addition, he suggested that "the dynamic of the organization can best be understood by

understanding its systems of communication" (p. 105). Public relations researcher Carl H. Botan (1992) also advocated a focus on communication as the center of building relationships with publics. In addition to identifying the importance of positive organization-public communication, public relations researcher Laurie Wilson (1994) conceptualized those positive communications between an organization and its publics, and conceptualized those positive relationships that result as corporate social responsibility. Specifically, she identified the significance of perceptions employees and other publics have about honesty, commitment, trust, and mutual respect. Public relations scholars J. N. Capella (1991) and David Dozier (1995) suggested that the relationship could be best characterized by how the parties communicate with each other. If organizations practice excellent public relations (Grunig, 1993), then their communication efforts must allow for two-way communication and not just one-way communication. If this assertion is true, then we should be able to measure communication going both ways—outward from the organization to its publics and back from its publics to the organization. Thomlinson (2000) would suggest that a two-way method of communication between two publics would be of a transactional nature in which each party sends and receives messages to the other, whether intended or not. Grunig and Huang (2000) contend that we must consider the two-way nature of communication in relationship management and recognize its importance on both the organization and its publics in building relationships with each other.

Many scholars have focused on the importance of communication in relationship management. Ledingham's and Bruning's (2000) study of a telecommunications company found that a managed communications program can influence perceptions of the organization as well as affect the behavior of public members. Specifically, they found that "when the

organization engages in action and communication that facilitates a sense of openness, trust,

commitment, involvement, and investment, it builds the symbolic and behavioral

relationships with key publics that J. E. Grunig (1993) contends are critical to effective

organizations" (p. 65). Bruning and Ledingham suggest that communication be used as a

vehicle in building all phases of a relationship from initiation to repair. Other scholars agree

that communication is important for organizations in building successful relationships with

its publics. Rosenfeld, Richman, and May's (2004) study of field and headquarter employees

argued that in order to build trust and mutual gain, organizations must work to develop

constant and sufficient communication. They found that organizations must, first and

foremost, determine what information should be communicated to employees, rather than

focusing on how much communication is necessary. They also suggested that an

organization consider how to most effectively disseminate that information as well as how to

solicit feedback from employees. Public relations scholar Elizabeth Toth (2000) also

contends that successful relationships between an organization and its publics are established

and maintained through interpersonal communication.

In his call for public relations to become more globally professional, public relations

scholar Dean Kruckeberg (2000) identified the advances in communication technology as

impetus for making the community building aspect of public relations even more important.

Management scholars Dick Daft, Robert Lengel, and Linda Trevino's (1987) theory of media

richness can enhance this understanding of how communication technology affects an

organization's communication with its publics and ultimately its sense of community as a

public because public relations scholars have not stopped to consider what the best methods

are of communicating various types of information to its publics, whether externally or

internally, such as employees. If an organization better understands the communication methods that publics prefer, they will be able to build greater levels of trust in those relationships through those trusted communication channels and methods.

The importance of trust

Trust is defined a willingness to be vulnerable to others (Granovetter, 1985; Lewis & Weigert, 1985), based on the prior belief that those others are reliable, honest, competent, and benevolent (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Public relations scholars James Grunig, Larissa Grunig, and William Ehling (1992) were among the first to propose that many attributes led to the cultivation of relationships with publics, including "reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding" (p. 83) as the most important concepts to measure in building strategic relationships with an organization's publics. Trust has been found in previous research to improve and repair relationships between organizations and organizational members (e.g., Mishra, 1996). Vercic and Grunig (1995) also identified trust as contributing to the longevity of an organization.

Grunig and Huang (2000) contend that successful relationships between an organization and its publics emerge from mutual trust. Kruckeberg (2000) suggested that shared values can contribute to building trust in a relationship thereby ultimately reaching a strategic objective. Bruning and Ledingham (2000) called for research into a more complete definition of trust.   Although there has been a great deal of research on trust in both the public relations and management literatures, there does not seem to be consensus about the specific definition of trust or how trust is built. Specifically, communication is seen as contributing to the development of trust, but its form or development has not been agreed

upon. This study will examine which communication methods are perceived as more trustworthy by employee publics, which will contribute to a greater understanding of how trusting relationships are built through communication.

Employees as publics

There is a need for public relations research to consider employees as an important public. Huang (1997) defined organization-public relationships based on their exchanges of communication, trust, satisfaction, influence, and commitment. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2006) declared that by identifying which publics are most critical an organization can become more effective.

Employees are an important public but are often overlooked by organizations in favor of external publics such as customers. Grunig (1993) indicated that good relationships with employees led to job satisfaction, which Grunig and Huang (2000) said helped ensure employers actively work toward fulfilling the mission of the organization. Wilson (2000) also identified employees as important publics to consider in relationship management theory. In addition, Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2006) found that organizations that empower employees and other stakeholders place a higher value on public relations. They also found that empowered employees will be more likely to participate in decision making and symmetrical communication both internally and externally with customers. Similarly, public relations scholars Samsup Jo and Sungwook Shim (2005) found that employees who receive positive communication from management are inclined to form more trusting relationships with them.

One method for studying employees as publics is to ascertain the degree of mutuality in the relationship with the organization. Ledingham (2006) suggested that "mutuality is the concept upon which long-term organization-public relationships are constructed" (p. 477).

Finally, it is important to understand the impact the trusting communication with employees has on the firm's reputation. Public relations scholars Yang and Grunig (2005) contend that what publics think of a firm is the firm's reputation. In their study, they found that relationship management leads to a positive reputation. The effect of relationship management on reputation is not widely studied, however, especially from the viewpoint of the employee public.

The role of reputation

James E. Grunig (1993) found that reputation is an outcome of relationship management because reputation is how an organization's publics perceive of it. International public relations scholar Elizabeth Dougall (2005) described the importance of the "public opinion environment" as it measures the regard or esteem held by publics (p. 210). This "public opinion environment" is the sum of judgments about a firm and affects the firm's reputation. Other research found that organizations should not just be concerned with their reputations with external publics, but with their employees, as well. Public relations scholar Leeora Black (2004) found in her dissertation research that when a banking organization was not working in the best interests of both its employees and the community, employees were embarrassed to be found working for that firm, as evidenced by the fact that they removed their bank insignia clothing before leaving work so that the general public would not know where they worked.

Indeed, organizations are scrutinized publicly for whether or not they are being good corporate citizens. One study found that customers consider a firm to be socially responsible if it first takes good care of their employees. Pratt (2006) identified what he calls a "responsibility gap" between what an organization does and what a public thinks it ought to do. Pratt suggests that "it is imperative that organization take stock on how their programs affect both their reputation and their profit margin" (p. 272). A study by the National Consumer's League (2006) found that consumers believe that firm's should prioritize employees above charitable acts. This commitment by an organization to its employees will likely result in mutual commitment by employees back to the organization.

The role of commitment

There is limited research on the role of commitment between an organization and its publics. Grunig and Huang (2000) see the level of commitment as a barometer of the health of the relationship. Meyer and Allen (1997) found that affective or emotional commitment as well as continuance commitment built trust between parties. Therefore, it is expected that feelings of mutual trust will lead to feelings of commitment both by employees and the organization.

Summary

Hence, the literature exposes a number of areas that need additional attention through scholarly research. First, in the theory of relationship management, many scholars have focused on the important role that communication plays in building those relationships, yet have not specifically defined what types of communication are most effective. Second, trust has been found to be a critical outcome of building those relationships, yet the process of how trust is built also has not been defined. Third, most relationship management literature

stresses the importance of building relationships with external publics and this study will

examine the internal public of employees. Fourth, limited research has been done to

demonstrate the outcome of commitment as a result of these relationship management

efforts, and more can be done to assess what motivates an employee to be committed to an

organization. Finally, the role of reputation is important because the way employees are

included as an important public has been found to influence customer perceptions of

satisfaction with the organization (Sparks, Bradley, & Callan, 1997).

Therefore, as seen in the theoretical model in Figure A, it is expected that rich

communication between an organization and its employee public will lead to enhanced trust

and commitment on the part of employees, which in turn will lead to a positive reputation for

the firm. This model leads me to consider the following research questions and hypotheses.

Figure A. Theoretical Model

```
┌─────────────────┐
│ Perceived Rich  │
│ communication   │ ────────┐
│ sent to employees│         │         ╭───────────╮
└─────────────────┘         └──────▶  │ Employee's │
                                      │ Trust in the│      ┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐
                                      │ Organization│      │ Commitment  │─────▶│ Firm        │
┌─────────────────┐                   │ or Top      │─────▶│             │      │ Reputation  │
│ Opportunities to│         ┌──────▶  │ Management  │      └─────────────┘      └─────────────┘
│ communicate for │ ────────┘         │ Team        │
│ employees       │                   │ (TMT)       │
└─────────────────┘                   ╰───────────╯
```
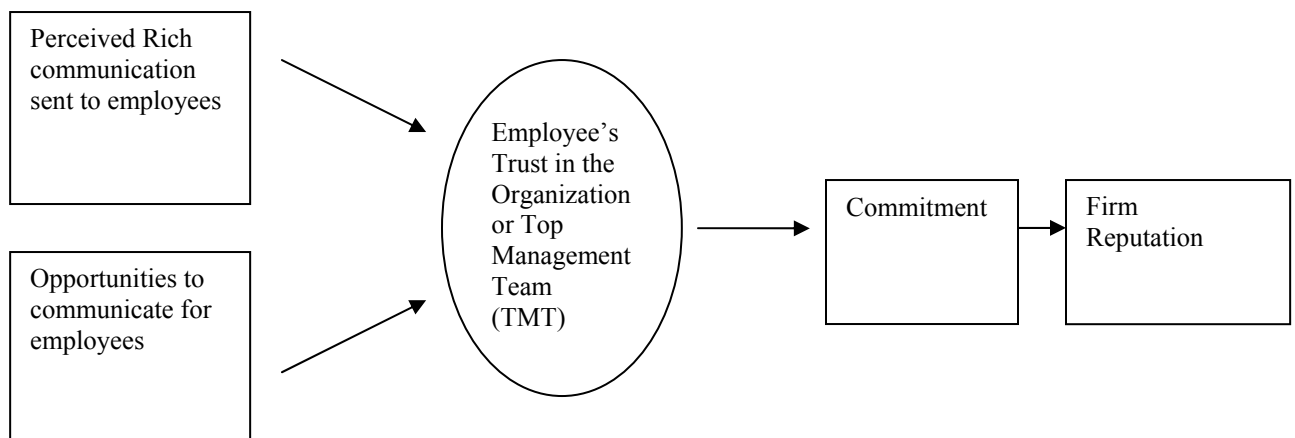
Research Questions

Based on a review of the previous literature, the following research questions are proposed.

RQ: How do organizations communicate with employees to create trusting relationships with employees?

RQ: How do organizations communicate with employees to create a sense of commitment with employees?

RQ: How do organizations communicate with employees to create a positive reputation with employees and with customers?

In addition, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Employees are more likely to receive rich communication from their managers when their firms convey new product information.

H2a: Employees' perceptions of control mutuality will be positively related to their sense of a communal relationship.

H2b: Employees' perceptions of control mutuality will be negatively related to their sense of an exchange relationship.

H2c: Employees' perceptions of communal relationships will be negatively related to their sense of an exchange relationship

H3: A higher use of internal communication with employee publics will be positively related to employee trust in the organization.

H4: Internal communication with employee publics enhances employee commitment to the organization.

H5: Internal communication with employee publics results in a stronger firm reputation among internal publics.

H6: Trust will be positively related to commitment.

These research questions and hypotheses will be explored and tested using a mixed-methods approach of interviews and surveys. The particulars of the method and procedure are detailed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods (or mixed-methods) to examine the research question and hypotheses. The study began with in-depth interviews with managers and employees to better understand the current climate of communication in the organizations. Interviews provide a basis for understanding the organization, the language they use, as well as to better understand the issues examined in the employee surveys. Employee surveys provide a breadth of understanding not available through interviews. The mixed-methods approach, while more time-consuming, provides a richer interpretation of the phenomena being studied due to the complementarity of the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Each approach is described in the sections below, beginning with the qualitative component of the research.

Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). Denzin and Lincoln stress the value placed on ascertaining how participants make meaning. This approach is important in order to understand the nuances of communication, trust and commitment that are not easily

discovered through quantitative analysis. Geertz (1973) described the strength of qualitative research as getting at "thick description" (p. 6), or better understanding the context of the issue(s). In addition, qualitative research is useful for theory building prior to theory testing with surveys (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

Three research questions form the basis of this qualitative research.

RQ1: How do organizations communicate with employees to create trusting relationships with employees?

RQ2: How do organizations communicate with employees to create a sense of commitment with employees?

RQ3: How do organizations communicate with employees to create a positive reputation with employees and customers?

This study features in-depth interviews with executives and employees from several organizations about their perceptions of the importance of the link between internal and external communication, namely how effective internal communication builds trust and commitment that employees then share through their relationships with external customers.

I conducted six executive interviews and four employee interviews.   All interviewees consented to participate. While executive interviews sought to understand how executives believe employees view internal communication, the employee interviews provide a better understanding of how employees perceive internal communication.

Participants

The following executives participated in this study: the Vice President and Communications Manager for a large financial services institution, the Internal Corporate Communications manager of a software firm, a District Manager of a global retail firm, and a

Vice President of Corporate Communications for an energy firm, the Employee

Communications manager for a utility firm, and the corporate secretary for a manufacturing

firm. These organizations all appear to approach employee communication in a proactive,

positive manner based on initial discussions and interest by these organizations, as well as by

the fact that they are often referred to in the business press as examples of firms with positive

reputations, as evidenced by the fact that two of the firms are ranked in Fortune's "Most

Admired" ranking for 2006.

Data Collection and Recruitment

Interview data was collected both in-person and via phone. Phone interviews are less

expensive and more cost-effective, yet they fail to provide the nuances and subtleties of body

language that are most effective in in-person interviews (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Both

options were offered to participants because they are geographically wide-spread and their

schedules made it difficult for us to meet in person. Three of the six executive interviews

were conducted via phone due to travel distance, one was conducted via email, and the

remaining two interviews were conducted in person. Interviews were recorded and

transcribed for analysis.

All executive participants were recruited via email. Interviewees will receive a

personal email note of invitation to participate (Form G). Survey participants received an

invitation to participate via their intranets or through email (Forms H and I). The invitation

email introduced myself and my research and invited them to voluntarily participate in an

interview about communication in their organization. It asked for their reply to participate to

set up a convenient time and place to meet and discuss communication in their organization.

Interviewees were contacted once for an invitation, once to set up a mutually convenient time

to talk, and once to be thanked for their participation. All of these contacts were made via email.

The interviewees are from Charlotte, North Carolina; Research Triangle Park, North Carolina; Durham, North Carolina; Butner, North Carolina; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Atlanta, Georgia. There were no inducements for interview participation.

All employee interviews were recruited in person and conducted at their place of employment.

Consent

Consent was obtained from interviewees prior to conducting the interviews. See Consent Form A.

Qualitative method

In order to better understand how employees feel about organizational communication, in-depth interviews were conducted with six managers from different organizations and four employees from one retail organization. While Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have said that "we live in an interview society" (p. 633), the in-depth interview was chosen as the method to use that would best get to the viewpoint of the participants. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, audio-taped, and transcribed for analysis. Each interview lasted no more than one hour. Each person who agreed to participate was invited to talk at a time and place convenient to both them and myself. The interviews were conducted in either their office, on the phone, or another setting that was mutually agreed upon by the interviewee and the interviewer.

After signing the consent form, the semi-structured interview questions (Fontana & Frey, 2000) ask (see Appendix B) about their employment at their organizations and how

their organizations communicate with employees on a daily basis. With the semi-structured interview, primary questions were the same for each participant, and the interviewer took opportunities as they presented themselves to ask each interviewee to expand on specific answers they gave that were unique to their understanding and interpretation of their job using probes or prompts. This unstructured interviewing style "attempts to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (p. 653). Hence, allowing participants to define their use of terms and explain their processes and meanings is one of the strengths of using a qualitative research method.

Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the respondents. All interviewees are be volunteers and were thanked with a personal, hand-written note. I approached our time together as one who wants to learn, and not one who has all of the answers. Participants were offered results from the study, if interested.

Qualitative Data analysis

Interview data from the two groups of interviewees (executives and lower-level employees) were analyzed separately because they are drawn from two separate groups of employees who are at different levels of the organization. The qualitative data were analyzed using an analytic induction technique. That is, the qualitative data were analyzed from the perspective of relationship management theory, as opposed to grounded theory, in which the research begins with no specific theory in mind.

As qualitative researcher Grant McCracken (1988) suggests, the objective of qualitative analysis is to determine the categories and relationships that exist in the interviewee data, based upon an understanding of the theory that is being tested as well as

based on the interviewer's own self-awareness. The investigator must be prepared to understand the data in light of the theory being tested, look for negative cases, as well as be open to new interpretations of the data (McCracken, 1988). This new perspective, including an analysis of negative cases, helps to add to theory.

Cluster Analysis

The interview data were coded using cluster analysis (Foss, 2004). Cluster analysis is a subset of rhetorical analysis. Foss describes rhetorical analysis, as an "attempt to create identification by naming or defining situation for audiences. It may provide a vocabulary of thoughts, actions, emotions, and attitudes for codifying and thus interpreting a situation" (p. 70). Foss describes the benefit of rhetorical analysis is that we can decode or make sense of the terms that others use to describe their reality.

In this cluster analysis, first, the interviews were analyzed for key terms used by the participants, which are known in qualitative research as emic terms of phrases. Key terms were selected based on both frequency and intensity, which represent how strongly the interviewee feels about the particular subject. Second, the interviews were mapped for other terms clustered around the key terms, such as those that are found nearby a key term or that may connect to a key term. These terms might be found near each other because they explain each other, further define each other, or because they explain a cause-and-effect relationship. For instance, employees might use talking and listening in close proximity to explain that they feel more like talking when they feel their boss is listening. Finally, the analysis examined patterns of association or linkages to identify which clusters are most interesting or of greatest importance for the participants. Again, a pattern of intensity or frequency might help explain which explanation has the most value for analyzing the interview data. Finally,

once this cluster analysis was finished, a visual representation of the data was laid out in order to "see" the patterns of association and linkages. Northcutt and McCoy (2004) call this a system influence diagram, or mindmap, which is a "visual representation of an entire system of influences and outcomes" (p. 48). They describe this as a method for "seeing" how the links in system work together and might be changed if one component is modified.

Mindmaps.

This study will present mindmaps for each set of interviews—one for the employee interviews and one for the executive interviews. In order to understand the relationship between these two sets of employees, a collective map will be drawn to demonstrate the points of similarity and dissimilarity between the interviewees.

<div align="center">Quantitative Research</div>

Quantitative analysis is used to test theory. It has the strengths of asking a consistent set of questions of each respondent, in order to test the differences across respondents. Surveys are effective for understanding the attitudes, behaviors and beliefs of respondents, and are able to be distributed without any geographic constraints. In addition, surveys permit the collection of mass amounts of data at relatively low costs. Surveys do have some weaknesses, however, including no flexibility in the questions asked, and the difficulties in locating appropriate samples (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

An electronic survey of employees will examine the role that internal communication plays in employee relations and how it correlates with trust, commitment, and reputation. Surveys across organizations will provide a much richer understanding of how different organizations, though with a similar outlook, might approach communication in different ways.

This study utilized online surveys and there are varying opinions as to the strengths and weaknesses between using paper or online surveys. An anonymous author at the University of Texas (2006) identified the following strengths and weaknesses of online surveys. The strengths include reduced material costs, the respondent may feel less inhibited if not responding in a group, and the time required for data entry and analysis is usually reduced, producing faster results. The strengths of using an online survey are balanced by their weaknesses which include a lower response rate, anonymity is somewhat harder to guarantee, some technical ability is required to format the survey and related database, respondents may need additional instruction or orientation before they are able to complete the survey, technology failures are possible, and responses may be more difficult to modify.

Statistical method.

The survey was sent to 300 employees. The survey data was analyzed using SPSS software that analyzes statistical data. In addition to assessing frequencies and means, correlation and regression analyses were used to determine what relationships exist between the variables being studied. Correlation analysis ensures that the concepts being studied are distinct from one another. Regression analysis demonstrates how a change in one variable affects the others.

Participants.

The participants include employees from one retail firm and executives from all six firms whose executives are participating in the interviews, a software firm, an energy firm, a retail firm, a utility firm, a manufacturing firm, and a large financial services firm. While employees were not coerced into participating, they were self-selecting whether or not to

participate, based on things such as their mood or their time availability, which may limit the generalizability of these findings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

Consent.

Implied consent was obtained from the survey participants as they begin the survey process. When they click on the link for the survey the first thing they saw is a description of the study and the implied consent paragraph outlining their rights as participants. They were informed that by continuing to participate in the survey, they were indicating their consent. They were also informed that the survey was voluntary and that they could quit at any time. Finally, they were informed that their comments will be confidential and analyzed in aggregate so that no one may see their individual responses. See Consent Form C.

Recruitment.

Survey participants received an invitation via their intranets or through email to voluntarily participate in an online survey (Forms H and I). The invitation explained the purpose of the study and how their viewpoints will help further an understanding of the importance of employee communications in reputation management. Additionally, the potential pool of participants were alerted of their rights to participate or not, and the option to discontinue their participation or skip questions if they so desire. After they agreed to participate by replying to the email invitation, they were then be contacted via email once more with instructions on how to complete the on-line survey, which they completed from their own offices or from home. There were no inducements for the employees to participate in the survey.

Data Collection.

Survey data was collected using Zoomerang's (www.zoomerang.com) electronic survey program which is used extensively by individuals and organizations to collect data on a variety of topics. This researcher and the respondents found Zoomerang easy to use. Data will be kept confidential because access to it will require password protection both to access Zoomerang as well as to access my personal laptop. Analysis will be done in aggregate, and no identifiers will be included in data collection that could expose a subject's identity.

Data Analysis.

Statistics provides a way of analyzing opinions at one point in time and provides a method for organizing and understanding information more easily (Salkind, 2004). Survey data is helpful because it provides a "general 'feel' for what the data show" (Hansen et al., 1998, p. 300). While statistical analysis is useful for providing a method for "discovering relationships and differences" (p. 312), the researcher is still responsible for the final analysis of the data. Data analysis includes descriptive statistics, along with correlation and regression analyses to interpret the survey data.

The survey features questions previously validated by other authors which are modified and expanded in this study. To answer the first hypothesis, "Employees are more likely to receive rich communication from their managers when their firms convey new product information" questions from Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987); and Trevino, Webster, and Stein (2000) were modified and adapted. Those questions are:

	When your company communicates to you about new products, services, or initiatives…	
	1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree	
1.	My manager uses face-to-face communication.	Media Richness 1
2.	My manager uses the telephone to communicate.	MR2
3.	My manager uses email to communicate.	MR3
	In general, how much do you agree or disagree with these statements:	
4.	My manager understands customer's needs well.	Relational Perform/ Org-Public
5.	My manager understands employee's needs well.	Rel Perf/ Org-Pub
6.	My manager cooperates with us to help do the job well.	RP2
7.	My manager provides valuable feedback.	RP3
8.	My manager makes recommendations for continuous improvement on an ongoing basis.	RP4
	To what extent would you characterize *face-to-face communication* as having the ability to:	
	Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)	
9.	Give and receive timely feedback	
10.	Provide non-verbal feedback (facial gestures, posture, etc.)	
	To what extent would you characterize *written communication* (such as memos or letters) as having the ability to:	
11.	Give and receive timely feedback	
12.	Provide non-verbal feedback	
	To what extent would you characterize *electronic communication* (such as email or intranets) as having the ability to:	
13.	Give and receive timely feedback	
14.	Provide non-verbal feedback	

To examine hypothesis 2a and 2b, "H2a: Employees' perceptions of control mutuality will be positively related to their sense of a communal relationship. H2b: Employees' perceptions of control mutuality will be negatively related to their sense of an exchange relationship", and H2c: "Employees' perceptions of control mutuality will be negatively related to their sense of an exchange relationship", the Likert-scale questions of control mutuality, communal, and exchange relationships by Grunig and Hon (1999) were

used. These questions pertain to issues of how both the organization and the employee

public view each other, as well as questions about the nature of their relationship.

	Control Mutuality	Grunig & Hon (1999)
	To what extent to you agree with these statements? *Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)*	
15.	This company and people like me are attentive to what each other say.	
16.	This company believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.	
17.	In dealing with people like me, this company has a tendency to throw its weight around.	Reversed
18.	This company really listens to what people like me have to say.	
19.	The management of this company gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.	
20.	When I have an opportunity to interact with the management of this company, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation.	
21.	This company won't cooperate with people like me.	Reversed
22.	I believe people like me have influence on the decision-makers of this company.	
	Communal Relationships	Grunig & Hon (1999)
23.	This company does not especially enjoy giving others aid.	Reversed
24.	This company is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.	
25.	I feel that this company takes advantage of people who are vulnerable.	Reversed
26.	I think that this company succeeds by stepping on other people.	Reversed.
27.	This company helps people like me without expecting anything in return.	
28.	I don't consider this to be a particularly helpful company for me.	Reversed
29.	I feel that this company tries to get the upper hand.	Reversed
	Exchange Relationships	Grunig & Hon (1999)
30.	Whenever this company gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.	
31.	Even though people like me have had a relationship with this company for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.	
32.	This company will compromise with people like me when it knows that it will gain something.	

| 33. | This company takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization. | |

Questions modified and expanded from Grunig and Hon (1999) were correlated with questions from Mishra (1996) and Mayer and Gavin (2006) to examine H3: "A higher use of internal communication with employee publics will be positively related to employee trust in the organization."

	PR/Company Trust	Grunig & Hon (1999)
	Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)	
34.	This company treats people like me fairly and justly.	Integrity
35.	Whenever this company makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	Integrity; faith
36.	This company can be relied on to keep its promises	Dependability
37.	I feel very confident about this company's expertise.	Competence
38.	This company has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	Competence
39.	Sound principles seem to guide this company's behavior.	Integrity
40.	This company does not mislead people like me.	Integrity
41.	I am very willing to let this company make decisions for people like me.	Dependability
42.	I think it is important to watch this company closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.	Dependability; reversed
43.	This company is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.	Competence
	Managerial Trust	Mishra (1996)
44.	My manager is straightforward with me	
45.	My manager is competent and knowledgeable	
46.	My manager does not try to get out of his/her commitments	

47.	My manager does not take advantage of me	
48.	My manager communicates honestly with me	
49.	My manager can contribute to my company's success	
50.	My manager behaves consistently	
51.	My manager does not exploit me	
52.	My manager does not mislead me in his/her communications	
53.	My manager can help my company survive during the next decade	
54.	My manager is reliable	
55.	My manager cares about my best interests	
56.	My manager does not withhold important information from me	
57.	My manager is concerned for my welfare	
58.	My manager can be counted on	
59.	My manager can help solve important problems faced by my company	
60.	My manager can be trusted	
	Company Trust	Mayer & Gavin 2006
61.	If I had my way, I wouldn't let my company have any influence over issues that are important to me.	
62.	I would be willing to let my company have complete control over my future in this company.	
63.	I really wish I had a good way to keep an eye on my company.	
64.	I would be comfortable giving my company a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor his/her (its) actions.	
65.	If someone questioned my company's motives, I would give my company the benefit of the doubt.	

Hypotheses H4: "Internal communication with employee publics enhances employee commitment to the organization" were examined by correlating questions from Meyer and Allen (1997).

	Affective Commitment	Meyer & Allen 1997
66.	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this company	
67.	I enjoy discussing my company with people outside it	
68.	I really feel as if this company's problems are my own	
69.	I think I could easily become as attached to another company as I am to this one	Reversed
70.	I do not feel like "part of the family" at this company	Reversed
71.	I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this company	Reversed
72.	This company has a great deal of personal meaning for me	
73.	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this company	
	Continuance Commitment	Meyer & Allen 1997
74.	It would be very hard for me to leave this company right now, even if I wanted to	
75.	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my company now	
76.	It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave this company in the near future	Reversed
77.	Right now, staying with this company is a matter of necessity as much as desire	
78.	I believe that I have too few options to consider leaving this company	
79.	If I leave this company now, I would have few alternatives.	
80.	I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up	
81.	One of the major reasons I continue to work for my company is that another company may not match the overall benefits I have here	

Hypothesis five: "Internal communication with employee publics results in a stronger firm reputation among internal publics" was tested correlating *Fortune's Most-Admired* rankings as well as asking:

	Describe your agreement with this statement: *Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)*	
82.	My company has an outstanding reputation.	Mishra, 2006

The final hypothesis, H6 will examine the trust and commitment measures to determine whether "Trust will be positively related to commitment."

In addition, in order to better understand communication preferences and to understand if there are differences between positive and negative news delivery, respondents were asked,

83.	If you are getting bad news from your manager, do you prefer • Face-to-face communication • Written communication • Email communication
84.	If you are getting good news from your manager, do you prefer • Face-to-face communication • Written communication • Email communication
85.	If you are giving bad news to your employees, do you prefer using • Face-to-face communication • Written communication • Email communication
86.	If you are giving good news to your employees, do you prefer using • Face-to-face communication • Written communication • Email communication

Finally demographic information was requested of each respondent, such as:

87.	What is your age?
88.	What is your gender?
89.	What is your ethnicity?
90.	What is your level of education?
91.	What company and/or industry do you work for?
92.	How would you describe your job in this organization?
93.	How many people are under your direct supervision?
94.	How long have you worked at this company?
95.	How much longer do you expect to work at this company?

Limitations

This study has several limitations, including the measures available and access to survey data.

First of all, this study was limited by the measures already available to study public relations relationships, trust, and communication. To enhance validity, pre-existing measures were used for all of the survey constructs. However, additional aspects or dimensions of each construct may be important to fully understand commitment and reputation. In the future, new item measures should be developed to better understand how managers talk to employees and vice-versa as well as how those behaviors lead to trust, commitment, and firm reputation.

Second, this study was limited by the use of both convenience and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling was used due to the hesitation by many firms to participate in this type of survey. The questions appeared to be rather sensitive in nature, and some of

the firms originally scheduled to participate in the survey ultimately declined to participate. In order to get sufficient survey data, this author was able to secure cooperation from executive students and alums from the University of North Carolina and Wake Forest University as well as one manufacturing firm led by a Wake Forest University alum.

Results were similar across both sets of survey data, however, increasing the robustness of results. This type of sampling prevents cross-analysis of firm-specific reputation data (such as J. D. Power) with the survey data, as there are too many firms involved in completing the survey to be able to match reputation data with survey data. In the future, it would be beneficial to identify one large company to be able to correlate specific survey data with specific reputation data from ACSI or J. D. Power.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

This chapter reports both the qualitative findings from the in-depth interviews of employees and executives and quantitative results from a survey of employees. This mixed-methods approach was critical to understanding the nuances of the survey findings through the qualitative stories. The interview data were analyzed using cluster analysis (Foss, 2004) as defined in the methods section. The survey data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. The employee interviews were conducted first to find out how employees feel about their companies internal communication efforts. Then, the executive interviews were conducted to assess the level of agreement between employees and executives. Finally, the responses from both sets of interviews were used to help select survey questions that were administered to employees. The interview responses helped provide direction for developing survey questions as well background for understanding the survey results. Appendix B sheds light on the process as it unfolded.

It was hypothesized that richer (face-to-face) communication flowing two-ways between both employees and management would enhance feelings of trust between management and employees, ultimately resulting in stronger commitment to each other and to the organization. As employees have been demonstrated to have more credibility with other stakeholders than corporate communications efforts (Keller and Berry, 2003), their opinions will influence external stakeholders to have a more positive opinion about the

reputation of the firm. That is, if employees are happy to be employed by the organization, they in turn, share their positive feelings with customers and other stakeholders.

The analysis begins with the results of the employee interviews, followed by the results of the executive interviews. Lastly, the results of the employee survey is reported.

Qualitative Results

Employee Interviews

The employee interviews were conducted in-person, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed prior to the executive interviews and employee surveys, to better understand how employees think about communication within their company. The employee interviews also provided insights into what type of survey questions to use, since employees would be completing the surveys. In addition, the employee interviews provided a platform to create the executive questions.   It became clear during the interviews and analysis what was important to employees, and the intent of the executive interviews was to ascertain whether or not there was a link between employee needs and company efforts.

The interview data were coded using cluster analysis (Foss, 2004). First, the interviews were analyzed for key terms based on frequency or intensity. Second, the interviews were mapped for other terms clustered around the key terms, such as those that are found nearby a key term or that may connect to a key term. Finally, the analysis examined patterns of association or linkages to identify which clusters are most interesting or of greatest importance. To visualize the clusters, a mindmap (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) of the analysis was developed.

All four interviewees were young women, under the age of 30. Alex, Deserai, Jessica, and Sharon had all worked in more than one location for a retail operation, yet at the

time of the interviews, were all working at the same store. Last names are not given to preserve their confidentiality. Three are Caucasian and one is Black. Alex was from Lebanon and so she brought an international outlook to her job. In addition, she was a shift supervisor, which meant that she had some supervisory responsibilities while also having duties similar to her employee. All four had worked for this retail operation for less than five years, but had worked at multiple stores within this same chain, providing them with a variety of viewpoints. In this type of retail firm, employees work closely together, often as a team, to complete a customer transaction.

Using cluster analysis, several themes emerged analyzing the text of each employee interview: talking with their manager, open-minded managers, getting feedback, the people, and their impact on the customer.   Clusters of words that described both shared and individual world views surrounded those themes. Overall, employees focused on the interpersonal aspect of their relationships to explain how communication works in their firm. The themes that emerged, however, are in their own words.

Talking with their manager

All four employees mentioned the importance of being able to "talk" to their manager. They felt that this openness allowed them to not only become better employees, but enabled them to enjoy their job more. In one conversation, Jessica mentioned that people often ask her what it is like working for an impersonal Fortune 500 company. She noted that despite working for a Fortune 500 retail firm, she still feels the benefit of working for a smaller organization. Specifically, it provides an opportunity for her to interact with her manager during her shifts.

A lot of people say if you're working for a really big company you're just a number and people aren't thinking of what you want and they aren't listening. But I haven't found that at all. Because each store – you're never going to work with more than about 15 to 20 people I guess. Like at this store I think we only have like 12 people working. You're going to know everyone and if you have something to talk about with your manager you're most likely going to work a shift with them and you can just discuss it with them right away and every manager I've had has been helpful.

Sharon acknowledged that this intimate store structure did not always ensure clear communication, however, between managers and employees.

Sometimes it trickles down through the shift supervisors like the managers will speak to the shift supervisors and it's up to the shifts to kind of educate everybody else on that. Communication isn't always that clear though. Sometimes people get overlooked or missed. It's not clear that you were supposed to tell anybody else that. Communication can be a difficult problem.

When asked about the ways they communicate at work, either in person or via email, the four employees at this retail firm all said that face-to-face communication was the way they enjoyed talking to their manager and to each other. Jessica described her communication with her manager as face-to-face, rather than by another communication means, such as email. "It's always face to face. If they had a problem with what an employee is doing they'd definitely – like when you're here they'd ask you to come in a little bit early."

All four employees explained that the managers that they had worked for had sought them out and asked questions about how they felt their work was going. Deserei said that she appreciated this proactive approach by her manager.

This store is so small – no emails. Which is really cool because I like – the thing about (my company) too is it's very easy – most of the managers are very approachable. They actually encourage that. Like they have a day where they set up all admin stuff and they actually encourage – they have one on one's with partners. Not necessarily a shift but maybe a [colleague] and you

can sit down and they'll ask how you're doing, what's going on. That's cool. Recently Alex (her shift supervisor) and I had a one-on-one. She was like "What's going on? How do you feel?" Then she was helping me with my PDP- kind of a thing – an outline they set up things to work towards to be an assistant. She was like "oh let's work on that. What do you feel you need to be doing?"

As a shift supervisor, Alex has some supervisory duties in addition to doing the same job duties as her employees. She communicates with her employees mostly face-to-face through on-the-job training. She trains them and then watches them while they work to provide feedback on what works or what does not work. She finds that the other employees provide feedback to each other, too, so that they can all work together as a team more effectively. She said that this is because each person's work affects the other's work.

Although the other three employees had positive things to say about their relationships with their managers, Sharon was the one employee who described how miscommunication had affected her company experience.

The same problems occur here as well like sometimes there's miscommunication and sometimes I think we all feel as though our opinions and our personal interests, requests aren't really appreciated and sometimes you feel your work is not appreciated. But it goes both ways as well. I'm sure managers need some encouragement once in a while.

Overall, employees said they appreciate the opportunity to talk face-to-face with their manager. These employees articulated, however, that the degree of openness in that face-to-face discussion depended on the willingness of their manager to engage with them.

Open-minded Managers

They all agreed that it was obvious which managers were truly "open" to a give-and-take discussion and which mangers were not able to handle openness as well. Deserei described the managers she has worked for as open-minded and willing to listen.

Whenever I have an issue, I just go to talk to them and the door is always open. I never feel like there's a time when I can't. And that's with every manager that I've worked with – they're always open-minded. That's one thing I would say that (my company) looks for. It's just odd that every manager – not odd but it's nice that every manager that I've worked for I'm able to – they're so open-minded and willing to listen so I guess that would be one of the things that they look for in talking. A lot of the questions they ask are situational questions as far as manager – when you move up as manager so I guess they see how you react. You respond to different situations. So I guess that's how they evaluate who they move up and who they don't. I guess that would be one of them is to be open minded because a lot of the managers are pretty open minded and pretty approachable.

As a result of the communication in a store, employees said that they can figure out quickly which managers they could trust based on how open they are in their communication, which they feel makes them more committed to those managers. Sharon described one manager who changed from closed-minded to open-minded in her managerial approach, which led her to respect her manager more:

"She (the manager) really learned to listen to us and listen to what we needed and to take that serious. It made the store better and it made us respect her and made us get along better. It made us come to her and open up more. It made her open up to us and become more friendly and respectful. When you see your manager working for you and working to make your job better then you're going to work for them as well."

Jessica also commented on differences between managers in how they provide direction.

I have noticed differences when people tell me what to do. Like some managers are better at being diplomatic like you know what, you didn't make that quite right. "Can I show you how to steam this pitcher of milk better?" Then other managers aren't good at all.

Deserai believes that good communication skills are an important managerial skill and said she knows that her own good communication skills will help her get promoted to the

next level of supervision, "As long as you're interested and you have the drive and they see you work well…it's just that you're able to communicate" she said.

As a shift supervisor, Alex described her rise through the managerial ranks and her training, which included a class in performance communication. She described her communication style as open and honest. All four employees said that they were able to quickly discern which managers were open-minded about communicating with employees. The third theme that emerged from the analysis is the participants' beliefs in the value of asking for and receiving feedback from their managers.

Getting feedback

These four employees felt that any type communication from their manager was more effective if it included regular feedback. Both Jessica and Sharon indicated that they appreciated getting feedback from their bosses about how they were doing. Sharon also noted that some managers are better than others in listening and providing feedback. "So I think depending on what you say to the manager, management is receptive and is not receptive." Alex expressed gratitude to her district manager for teaching her how to give feedback in a constructive way to her employees.

Deserai, an employee who was scheduled by her manager to be promoted to the next level of supervision, believes that positive feedback is necessary to let employees know that they are important to the company, regardless of how long they have been with the company. She thinks that employees recognized, however, that communication suffered when the store was either too busy or understaffed. Deserai worried that "management has gotten away from giving encouragement and recognition for those old [colleagues] as well as new,"

because the managers were being held accountable for so many things in the store that they became distracted from providing that necessary feedback.

> A lot of the old [colleagues] feel as though they might not get the positive feedback because the focus is on the new partners right now so we've got a lot of older [colleagues] that do an awesome job every day but because they do it every day it's kind of expected that - "We know you do a good job – you're fine." But you know sometimes they need that encouragement – not so much feedback but they need that encouragement.

These four participants also suggested that regional differences may also play a role in the amount and type of feedback that they received. Alex said that her own personal communication style is more direct than most southerners, which she attributed to her Lebanese heritage. She believes it is preferable to be honest about an employee's strengths and weaknesses and not to sugar-coat things so that they can also feel comfortable being honest back to her. She thinks this is better for everyone. In addition, the other interviewees said they noticed a difference between the southern store where they currently work and the northern or north-eastern stores they've worked in. They also said that the southern store managers are less direct in how they relate to employees so employees are more likely to be surprised when they get constructive feedback. For instance, they noted that southern store managers may not come out and tell you exactly what it is you are doing wrong, but will only hint that you need to work harder. However, they feel that northern store managers are more forthright in the way they deliver feedback and thus less likely to elicit surprise when providing feedback.

Overall, the employees all said that they appreciated the opportunity to get feedback from their manager on their job performance. They believe that this feedback suffers,

however, when a store is under stress, such as turnover. The next theme mentioned in the employee interviews is about what they agree they enjoy most about their job: the people.

The people

Jessica, one of the youngest employees noted that, "my favorite part of working here is the people-- the [colleagues]. I really like how I can talk to everyone and we're all doing the same job." Sharon agreed,

> I guess the people I work with. You get to know a lot of different people in different areas. We have new people – there's a guy that's 47 years old and he's a really interesting guy. He's had a lot of really cool experiences. At my old store, there was a man who had a daughter my age and we were really good friends. He's a great guy – he was so fun. They also believe that face-to-face communication among their peers was critical for achieving success with the customer but also in making their workplace a pleasant one. Employees believe that face-to-face communication with each other was critical to trusting each other, completing their jobs, and influencing their customer's experiences.

Deserai also described her favorite part of working at her company as the people.

> I love the [employees]. They're awesome. It's like (my company) hires really awesome people. I guess because a lot of – in the mission statement they say promote diversity or whatever so you're not necessarily – there's not a certain type that they look for in the interview. If you have personality – actually what it is, is it's personality. When they interview you they want to see that you have some personality. With that you get so many different walks of life – like people. So it's amazing.

They also feel that smooth communication between the employees served to enhance their own experience as well as their customers' experience. Deserai noted, "The way we interact with each other, the vibe is different when you have those [colleagues] that are happy when they come to work and they love what they're doing." Jessica also noted how she enjoyed both the co-workers and customers and how it brought her out of her shell. "Oh yes,

I love the customers, I love my coworkers, it's just how it's made me be more out-going--like I was a lot more shy when I first started working here at the job."

Overall, the employees agreed that the favorite part of their job is the people they interact with—both their co-workers and their customers, and they believe that good communication is important for the work environment and the customer environment. The final theme the employees described was the way their actions affect their customers.

Customer impact

These employees believe their own communication style or ability would influence their relationships with their customers. Deserai also described a connection between the way she worked with her co-workers and how it affected their customers.

> We all come from different places and we all share different experiences with each other. So I think people see that and that they think it is an easy job. It looks like so much fun so it must be easy. They seem to be laughing and joking but they don't realize we still have to be making things, cleaning up, we have to be getting things prepared for the next person that comes in. … but we still work and we're back there working our butts off just to give you 100% every time you come in. Like just to make sure the store looks good when you come in, just to make sure we have things out there when you come in.

Alex also described the connection between creating a positive environment for both employees and customers. She related a story about a customer she and her co-workers named Grumpy Jim and how the staff decided that they would work harder to make Jim's day better each time he came into her store. "Now, Jim is not so grumpy anymore and he is one of our favorite customers."

Sharon noted how the positive relationships with co-workers and customers made her job meaningful.

That's the best part, the different people and how great they are. You'd never know it. I mean like sure you know they're nice people – people that help you when you're getting your coffee but when you work with them every day and see them and develop relationships, they're the best part.

In addition, Deserai described a connection between employee feedback and customer satisfaction, echoing management's claim that her retail store is a "third place" after work and home where people choose to gather.

We give a good drink but a lot of times just from talking to customers is they enjoy coming in and talking to the partners. They enjoy how they feel – like this is the third place. If we're not giving them (the employees) encouragement behind the scenes, they don't necessarily want to chat with the customer.

Both Jessica and Sharon believe that this customer interaction was one of the positive features of their job. Jessica said that she returns to (her company) each semester during college because of the customers. "I've known a lot of the customers since I started here a long time ago and they remember me. It's just really nice to be able to talk to customers like that. That's why I like to come back." Sharon agreed and said that her customer relationships remained strong from store-to-store.

I got to know a lot of people through the store. I got to be in touch with my community better, the customers as well – you get to be friends and hang out. I have really good friends I'm still in touch with from my old store and I'm sure I will from this store too.

They said they understood that their work behavior directly influenced how customers perceived them and their company. As a result, they felt they were aware that they were highly visible in what they said and did. Jessica described her feelings this way,

That's the best part whether it's interacting with my coworkers or interacting with the customers. That's definitely the best thing. Even if I'm in a bad mood one day – just talking to people and forcing myself puts me in a good

mood because I have to. I'm not allowed to be rude to the customers even if I'm not having a good day. It forces me even in my day-to-day life with other activities to just remember that, "would I treat a customer that way?" No.

Alex talked about the "just say yes" campaign that (her company) implemented last year. It was designed to make every customer experience positive, even if it meant giving a customer a free beverage or replacing one that they thought was not up to the regular standards.

There is no reason to say no to a customer, but there is also no reason a grumpy customer should ruin my day. I don't want a grumpy customer to intrude on my interaction with the next customer, so I work hard to make sure each customer is happy no matter what.

Overall, the employees believed that their actions on their jobs affected their customers. They also believed that those interactions should be positive.

Summary

Overall, five themes emerged from the cluster analysis 1) talking with managers, 2) open-minded managers, 3) getting feedback, 4) the people, and 5) customer impact. First, these four employees described their ideal communication as face-to-face with their manager. It was this "talking" that helped them feel connected to their manager and to their company. This "talking" was what employees experienced with their boss, as managers at this firm have a mandate to schedule times to talk to each employee. There were differences, however, across managers and how they conducted these "talking" sessions. As a result, the second theme emerged from the "talking," as employees quickly figured out which manager was willing to engage in dialogue with them versus the managers who enjoyed hearing themselves talk. The third theme emerged from the employees desire to get something more out of their "talking" sessions with their manager. These employees sought out and

appreciated getting constructive feedback from their manager, as it helped them feel like they were connected to their company's mission and making positive progress towards achieving goals for the company and themselves. They noticed differences, however, between different managers' communication and feedback styles, saying that some managers were more open-minded than others. Employees also articulated the reason they loved their job—the people they worked with and served—colleagues and customers. This interaction with people made their jobs feel worthwhile. Finally, the employees were very aware that a positive communication experience could enhance not only their own work experience, but their customers' experiences as well. Employees understood that their job satisfaction affected customer satisfaction.

One method for visualizing the relationships between the clusters in a qualitative analysis is to put them in a figure. The process of analyzing clusters and relating them to the relationship management literature are found in Appendices B and C. This illustrates some of the process of asking myself questions to create the mindmap. Figure B is a mindmap (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) showing how the clusters from the employee interviews fit together. It is clear that these employees feel that the crux of the experience lies with how open-minded they find their managers to be. Hence, "open-minded managers" is placed at the center of the diagram. They believe that this openness then affects the employee and customer environments. First, it affects how well managers are able to communicate with employees, as well as promote a sense of camaraderie among them. In addition, this open communication fosters an atmosphere of constructive feedback in which employees want to improve how well they do their jobs, but also to provide an enjoyable environment for the customer. The arrows pointing outward indicate that those actions move out from the

manager to the employees and the customers. On the vertical plane, those communications affect the relationship between a manager and the employee, yet on the horizontal axis, those communications affect the relationships with both co-workers and customers.

Figure B. Mindmap of employee's perceptions
of how communication affects personal relationships

Talking

Customer
impact

Open-
minded
mgrs

The people

Feed
back
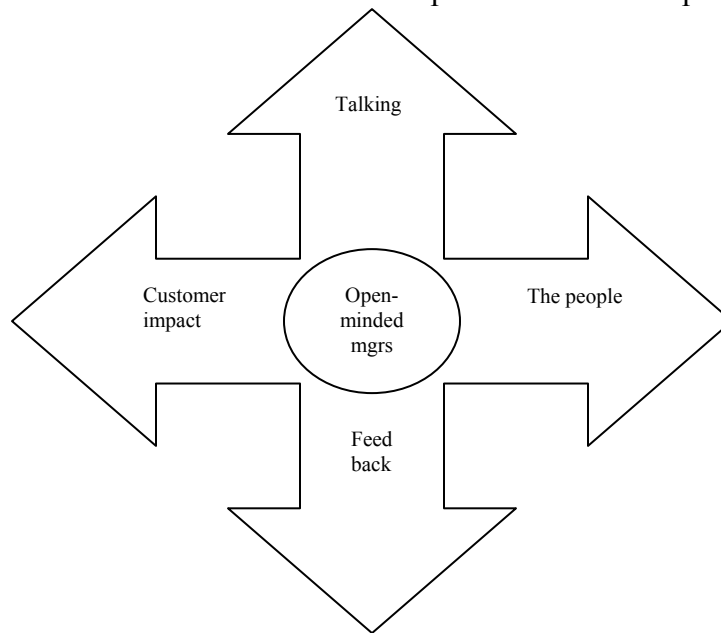
Executive Interviews

The executive interviews were scheduled after the employee interviews were completed. The employee interview responses were used to develop the executive questions (see Appendix A). The employee questions centered on what made their job happy, but the executive questions centered on the employee responses of the importance of communication with their manager. The six executives interviewed for this study came from many different industries and were recruited using a snowball approach. One of the executives is a graduate of the master's program at UNC-Chapel Hill, so she was interested in the topic and volunteered to participate in an interview. Two of the other interviewees were recommended by one of my committee members, and they then agreed to participate. One executive is the

manager of the employees I interviewed and when I thanked her for allowing me to interview them, agreed to participate in an interview herself. One executive filled in for another who had originally agreed to participate in an interview. Finally, one executive leads a company where I sit on its board of directors. One of the interviewees originally scheduled to participate declined once it came time to actually conduct the interview, and two would not to allow their interviews to be included in this study after the interviews were concluded due to their inability in getting their interviews approved by their managers.

Not all executives were able to meet in person, and some preferred phone interviews or the opportunity to answer the interview questions by email. For those answering by email, follow-up or clarifying questions were sent to flesh out their responses. The text of the email messages were used for analysis. Those interviews that were done either in-person or on the phone were recorded, transcribed and later analyzed using cluster analysis (Foss, 2004), as described earlier.

All executives were responsible for employee communications as a significant aspect of their job responsibilities. These executives are:

1. Mary Beth, Vice President of Corporate Communications for a financial services firm

2. Keith, Vice President of Corporate Communications for an energy company

3. Karen, Director of Internal Communications for a software firm

4. Sharon, Manager of Employee Communications for a utility firm

5. Katherine, Corporate Secretary with a medium-sized construction materials firm

6. Gwen, District Manager with an international retail firm

Five of the executives are women and one of the executives is a man. Four of the executives have specific responsibility for corporate or employee communications and two of the executives have other roles which led them to affect communications in their firms.

The themes that emerged from the cluster analysis of the executive interviews were employee engagement, managing reputation, dialogue with key audiences, separate from marketing, owning all channels of communication, and face-to-face communication. Each theme is presented in the sections that follow.

Employee Engagement

When each executive was asked how they defined their job or what their primary role was, three of them, Mary Beth, Keith, and Sharon, all mentioned that they believe "employee engagement" is one of their top priorities. They explained that employee engagement was a fairly new way for their firms to envision their communications role, and they said this perspective was being communicated down to them from their CEOs. All participants believe that employees must feel they are contributing to the company's goals to be "engaged." Engagement can be a process of ensuring employees understand the company mission and "how they fit into it," according to Keith. Similarly, Sharon said she believes it is essential for employees "to be aware of and have access to information" in order to become engaged employees. Mary Beth, the financial services executive, also mentioned that dialogue with employees helps executives better understand employee needs, which can positively affect their job performance. She believes that finding ways to build two-way communication throughout the organization helped to build employee engagement.

> If you look at our CEO's top strategic business priorities, one of his top priorities is employee engagement. And those have been the same for the last several years. I think he would acknowledge and all of our top leaders would acknowledge that if your employees are not engaged at work then you're not

going to get the best product to your customers and you're not going to perform well. So every decision we make is through the lens of "how does this affect our customers?" and "how does this affect our employees?"

Keith, the energy executive mentioned that when he came into his job one year ago, he reorganized the entire corporate communications department and toyed with the idea of making his title "director of employee engagement."

> The bigger, sort of the higher-level picture of the employee communications role is to increase the engagement of employees into what the company's trying to do. Helping the employees understand what the company's goals and objectives are, how they fit into it, helping them buy into the strategy because the research shows the more employees understand and feel like they're contributing or in line with the company strategy, the more productive they are and the higher the morale and lower turnover.

Participants believe that effective communication is a critical element of the employee engagement process, and they play a primary role in message development and delivery. For example, Sharon, the manager of employee communications for a utility firm, believes her department's ability to properly supply their managers with helpful information results in employees feeling fully engaged.

> I feel strongly that an individual manager is responsible for ensuring his/her employees are aware of and have access to information they need to be fully engaged employees. The employees also have a role to actually take action to access that information. Our role in Corporate Communication is to make the information available and understandable.

Gwen, the district retail manager, believes that effective communication with employees begins during the interview process. She used the term "personal learning" to describe the capacity of employees to both acknowledge their mistakes from the past and yet learn from them to become a better employee in the future.

> You know, one of the things we were really trying to emphasize is that we don't expect anyone to be perfect – we always joke about – our assistant

manager basically asks every question like, "tell me how you messed this up, what did you do? Tell me how you messed this up"…it's kind of funny and sometimes people externally have a really hard time answering those questions because they're under some false sense that they can't be human. Because if you're able to learn from your mistakes – you know one of the questions on the interview is tell me about a time that there was a really bad customer service issue and you didn't handle it right – what did you learn from it and what would you do now? Because we have all been there. We've all lost our cool and we've all said something stupid. It doesn't mean we're bad people, but if we can't even look back and see where we've made a mistake then I don't know how I'm going to be able to coach you to grow.

Another means of communication for employee engagement is through research. Mary Beth mentioned that her firm conducts regular employee engagement research studies to "listen" to employee concerns.

One of the things we ask employees about is "do you understand how the work you do contributes to the company's performance?" We often hear that people need to understand how they're contributing to the greater cause. If they don't understand that and they don't have that line of sight it's demotivating. So that's one of the things we look for and then we communicate the results back out to the employees.

Karen, the Director of Internal Communications, also wants her communication efforts to help build employee morale. "They (employees) become more knowledgeable about the company with core communication. It even gives them a better sense of morale about the company." Her definition of "core" is information that is important about her company. Her company sees the influence of managers at all levels contributing to employee morale and so they have introduced a session on "how to communicate better" in their new management development program.

Interestingly, Katherine, the corporate secretary in the family-owned construction materials firm, believes that employee support will result from better communication.

Within the company managerial level employees play an important part in relaying the corporate message in the way it was conveyed to them in order to

represent it best to people at all levels of the company. Without solid communication skills gaining employee support on issues would be a major obstacle.

Katherine was concerned that her father, the owner, was not more visible in the monthly newsletter, such as writing his own column, which is their primary communication vehicle with employees. "I think they want to hear from him—they want to know what he is thinking and planning." She believes her father seems to want the focus off of him, not recognizing the fact that employees look to him as owner of the company, to lead the way both in their personal interactions as well as through the newsletter.

All of these executives said they focused on finding ways to help employees understand their place in the mission of the organization, as well as a means to reducing turnover. Mary Beth indicated that employee engagement's end goal was to reduce employee turnover, and hence, increase employee commitment to her firm. As a result, her firm's managers are evaluated and compensated according to their ability to reduce turnover among their employee ranks.

> So they ask every leader to set a turnover goal and it would be part of what their bonus would look like at the end of the year – whether they met their goal or not. So they were supposed to look at their group and say ok, I anticipate that this person is going to retire so I'm not going to count that and there's certain turnover you can't control. But the turnover they could control – they set a goal of wanting to retain 90% of their people or whatever their goal was. And if they didn't meet it, their bonus was negatively impacted.

Despite these advantages, some participants also see that employee engagement presents them with challenges. Keith believes that this goal of employee engagement is such an important part of his job and what his department does and yet he said he is having a difficult time finding other qualified people to fill new positions for his department. He

believes this challenge is due to the job's new focus on employee relations and away from media relations that has traditionally existed at large companies.

> Media is sexy and visible, but employee relations has impact. There's all kinds of varied defendable numbers to show that an engaged workforce is a happier workforce and a more productive workforce so it's worth the investment. To that end, we end up getting into all those kinds of things from employee meetings, web casts, you know working with senior managers on presentations - they're giving road show presentations to employees. Creating feedback mechanisms for employees and again constantly evaluating our tools to see how we can communicate to employees. Put in context the things that the company's doing.

Gwen also pointed out the challenge of knowing how much communication is most effective. She feels that in her effort to contribute to "personal learning," however, she sometimes "overcommunicates" to her employees in an effort to empower them in building personal relationships with their customers. She worried that sometimes she tells them more than they might need to know and that her focus on the "big picture" might distract them from their day-to-day operational duties.

Employee engagement or employee support was mentioned by all executives as an important goal of their internal communication efforts. The second theme from the executive interviews is their goal of managing their firm's reputation.

Managing Reputation

The second priority many of the executives expressed was a focus on protecting and managing the reputation of their company. Mary Beth said, "I feel like corporate communications is helping a corporation manage its reputation with all of its stakeholders. I think corporate communications is supposed to help manage and maintain the relationship across all of those." Keith also mentioned that managing and protecting his firm's reputation was a critical component of his job.

The corporate communication people are dealing with the issues and reputation of the big company and making sure that you have brand consistency and all that. I think that's one of our most important roles. Managing and protecting the reputation of the company; positioning the company in the marketplace with customers, with key stakeholders, with employees and to some extent with investors and shareholders, although that kind of bleeds over into investor relations. What is our story and how do you promote that story and also reputation protection? How do you protect a company when bad things happen that threaten the image or reputation of the company?

Mary Beth believes that her firm's reputation, both internally and externally, is driven

by behavior and not corporate communication slogans.

The management decisions that you make about how you're going to treat customers and employees will determine what your reputation is no matter what we tell the news media about it. No matter what statement we make, it's really about your behavior and we would always want our statements to be honest and accurate so it starts with your behavior and the decisions you made to determine what we can then say about them.

In contrast, Gwen, the district retail manager, bases her reputation measure on how

well a store is doing financially as well as how close they are to their customers. She

believes that the stores that do best are those with "authentic" employees who are able to be

the same selves at work as they are with friends or colleagues. "It's not authentic if it's not

the voice you use all the time." She reflected on her experience at another retail operation

where the managerial norm was a controlling and abusive manner with employees. She

believed that this negative atmosphere reflected onto the relationship (or lack thereof) that

the store was able to build with customers. She believes that this authenticity in her current

firm is cultivated by the "respect and dignity" in the way they communicate with each other.

She feels like this authenticity is also evident to customers, which keeps them coming back.

Reputation is also an area Mary Beth counsels her internal clients about so that they can understand "the value of the action piece", specifically, the connection between the way they treat both employees and customers and how this affects their firm's reputation. She said that her firm has been able to witness this connection through the American Customer Satisfaction Index. Sine her firm has started focusing on behaviors, their ratings in this index, which is measured independently by the University of Michigan, has improved. She believes that this index has been an important tool to help leaders in her company understand the need to focus on improved communication and service.

> I think if you look at our CEO and our top leaders in the company, they understand the value of the action piece of it because seven or eight years ago, we had some customer service issues and it was really impacting our reputation. In the end, before we could turn our reputation around, we had to turn our service around and the reputation flowed from that and it took years to dig out of that. So once we began to change the way we paved and invested more in service, literally and figuratively, not only in terms of money but also people and resources and processes around how we were going to measure and incense people based on how they gave service – it took years to turn that around but once we did, we began to see our reputation turn around as well.

Keith described the difficulty in quantifying his department's impact on reputation. Like Mary Beth, he finds outside research useful. If possible, he said he prefers to rely on third-party findings from J.D. Powers.

> The one thing that is hard to measure is the impact of public relations and communications on that reputation because you can't measure it. You're kind of in a vacuum. Your reputation evolves and grows and it's all based on sort of not just everything that your company does but things can happen around you that maybe have nothing to do with you. A perfect example of that is what happened to all energy companies in the post Enron era. Certainly at (my company) we saw our reputation numbers go down. We didn't have anything to do with Enron but just a big energy company crook. And we saw it and we took a hit and if you're a corporation, you have reputation challenges just for being seen as just you're a "for profit" big 900-pound gorilla and you don't throw your weight around. So it's kind of hard to put out messages and then see how they will react because it's kind of hard to say well did they react to

that or did they react to something else that was in the marketplace at the same time?

In summary, the second theme that emerged from the executive interviews was a focus on managing and protecting their firm's reputation. The third theme identified in the analysis of the executive interviews is their goal of promoting dialogue with their key audiences.

Dialogue with Key Audiences

Along with managing reputations and promoting employee engagement, these executives believed that it was their role to promote dialogue with their key audiences or stakeholders. For example, Sharon, the utility firm employee communications manager, described her job as promoting "dialogue from the company's leadership with various audiences (media, key leaders, employees). We place a huge emphasis on relationships with our elected officials and regulators. To maintain those relationships, we have to be perceived well by our customers." Yet, the participants generally relayed how dialogue with key audiences had an impact on employee relations. Sharon described the importance of internal relations as well and indicated that employee communication was critical to rebuilding trust in her firm after a recent merger.

> That cynicism is also due to the fact that Florida was acquired in the merger. They feel the previous management team was not straight with them, and so there's a lot of lingering distrust. In the Carolinas, most employees are pretty happy to work for this company. The company pays well, particularly as compared with others in some of the rural communities where our facilities are located, so you start off with most folks feeling pretty positive.

Karen, the Director of Internal Communications for a software firm, also described the goal of her department as "letting them (employees) know the company." She wants her

efforts to help employees become more knowledgeable about the company and their place in it.

In the retail firm, Gwen, the district manager, indicated that her company has a field implementation manager, whose position falls between her and her boss who was responsible for disseminating corporate communications to employees on a regional level. The other person in her organization who contributes to the flow of communication to employees is the Partner Resources manager. They call this the "PR" manager, even though this person's job is located in human resources. This "PR" manager is responsible for communication such as conference calls to all employees or disseminating information sheets about benefits. Otherwise, all employee communication flows through Gwen, the firm's district manager (an operations rather than staff position), to her managers and partners, or store-level employees. Gwen described this communication process as being "rolled out, step-wise" from one level down to another. She liked to call it the "snowball" approach. The type of information that flows in this process includes information about new processes and new promotions. Even though she worked in operations, Gwen believes communications are central to helping her employees understand their critical role in servicing the customer.

These executives identified one of their roles as opening a dialogue with their key audiences, including employees and external stakeholders. The fourth theme that emerged from the executive interviews is their belief that their job is distinct from yet coordinated with the goals and objectives of the marketing department.

Separate from Marketing

In asking each executive to describe their job and role in the organization, they were quick to explain that their department was *not* marketing, yet coordinated their messages *with*

marketing, serving in what Mary Beth called "a strategic role." The executives from the

financial services, energy, utility, and software firms all worked in corporate or internal

communications departments. They saw the world of employee communication from the

lens of its role in corporate communication, along with media relations, public relations,

customer relations, and creative which they said includes both advertising and new media. In

all of these firms, the marketing function was distinct and separate from their focus of

employee communication in their firms.

For instance, Mary Beth identified corporate communications as "managing

relationships with all the stakeholders," and added that her department works with marketing

to make sure that information going to external publics is consistent with the firm's internal

messages.

> We would have a strategic consulting role when it came to how we
> communicate with customers. You know, if there were some sort of customer
> issue and we were going to provide talking points to our frontline about how
> to respond to it, oftentimes corporate communications may write that or even
> if marketing writes it, we would want to see it and have input into what we
> were going to say. So I think it's really about managing your relationship with
> all the stakeholders. So there may be certain specific groups within your
> organization - you have specific responsibility for one stakeholder or the other
> – I think corporate communications is supposed to help manage and maintain
> the relationship across all of those.

Mary Beth, when asked about how corporate communications and marketing work

together, summed up other participant's feelings when she replied,

> It's considered corporate communications and we are in the same division as
> marketing but we're separate departments. We pretty specifically support – I
> always tell people we support employee communications and we support
> news media relations. Those are the key areas. We would partner with
> marketing on things that required a more holistic integrated marketing strategy
> and there may be pieces of it they would own and we would own and we
> would develop the strategy together.

Keith also described marketing at his firm as separate from his department and as performing more tactical than strategic activities. "The only thing I don't have is marketing which is a separate department which is the very specific direct customer outreach. The job that we have is more the reputation image, brand, overall company brand. They focus more on promoting rebates and things like that." Later on, he described more about his thoughts of why he believes marketing and corporate communications should be separate.

> I have no problem with marketing being separate because I think –
> particularly when you look at consumer products and things like that where
> you're actually selling something, the marketing folks are dealing with – not
> to diminish what they're doing but they're dealing with packaging. Consumer
> packaging and what it looks like and ads to sell. Like if you're Proctor and
> Gamble, you're helping – they make Tide I think – how Tide looks and what
> are the display ads and what kind of promotions and coupons.

Sharon mentioned that despite having a separate department responsible for external communication with customers, she feels that her firm does a good job of making sure both sets of messages are coordinated. "We do a pretty good job coordinating our messages so that there is no real difference in the essence of what we say to the media or to employees."

One executive, Katherine, as Corporate Secretary and as a management trainee, explained that she has had a variety of responsibilities, including marketing.

> During the past 2.5 years I spent a lot of time working on improving our company's
> marketing collateral. Most specifically I designed the company's website, corporate
> brochure, redesigned and edited the corporate newsletter, lead a team in
> implementing imaging software, and have acted as a support person to the executive
> management of the Company.

In summary, only one executive had both corporate communications and marketing responsibilities. The other executives had responsibilities that they described as both distinct from yet coordinating with marketing and they believed that this separation was a good thing.

The next theme underscores the executive's belief that they had all channels of

communication at their disposal to share their messages with their stakeholders.

Owning all channels of communication

The executives said they are responsible for all channels of communication with

employees. Keith, the energy executive, described his firm's approach.

> For employee communications, we own all the channels to communicate to
> the employees. All of our electronic communications, we have a daily
> electronic newsletter. We have several other regular communications vehicles
> that go out to employees from human resources and IT and things like that.
> That's one big chunk of the work – it's managing that process of delivering
> the information.

One of the tasks these executives described was working to figure out which

communication vehicles to use when and for what occasions. Mary Beth, the financial

services executive, finds that her internal "clients" whom she counsels on corporate

communication prefer to communicate with their direct reports by issuing memos either in

writing or by email. She believes, however, that there are occasions that call for a more

intimate approach, such as face-to-face communication and tries to help her clients decide

which approach is appropriate for which occasion.

Karen, the Director of Internal Communications, also provides counsel to the

executive leadership team of her company so that they can find more and better ways to

disseminate information to their employees. She asks her managers things like,

> "Who is your intended audience and what is the goal of your message?" So
> there you can even start to talk about well you know what, a pod cast is not
> going to work for this. This can be done through an email or an email is not
> going to work and certainly a story on the web's not going to work because
> we want everybody to hear your voice behind this. We want to hear the
> strength of your voice behind it. It all depends on the content and the
> audience.

She also said that she is concerned that they use the best medium for the message they are trying to disseminate. "We make sure we use the right vehicles for the audience that we're trying to reach."

Keith believes that rather than guessing how employees want to receive communication, he has to ask them. He finds it best to ask employees how they want to receive information on important issues. In his experience, employees want to receive any information about their company benefits in writing, so that they can take them home, read them over and digest them.

> Well, you know, what you have to do is you really have to find out from employees how they like to be communicated to. There's been plenty of research on things that are effective but what you find is there are certain kinds of information that people like to get a certain way. For example, HR information and benefits and things like that, most employees like to get a printed document. If it's to review their health plan and their benefits, we still find that employees like to have something to look at in front of them. But if it's just like quick company information, announcements and things like that, they like email or electronic newsletters.

Several of the executives mentioned that it was also important to match the medium with the message. Sharon, the manager of employee communications, for a utility firm noted that her firm has found that the mode of communication used depends on the circumstance for the communication.

> We've seen in our research a strong and growing preference for electronic communication (for us that means the daily email and the intranet). However, that format works best to inform. Major change management initiatives -- where employees actually have to take action or face radical changes to their work -- are better done through some sort of face-to-face interaction. I think there is also a role for print, particularly if you need to educate employees around a particular set of issues.

Karen, the Director of Internal Communications, for a software firm also echoed the sentiment that the communications vehicle must match the content. She also believes that

multiple communications methods enhance each other quite clearly.   She has learned that

not all employees want to receive all of the e-newsletters that are available, so they

encourage employees to "subscribe" to the e-newsletters that they are most interested in.

> We've just revamped our whole new internal site, we've added RSS feeds to that, we're eliminating all the newsletters that they get in their email by putting those news links on the internet and letting them subscribe to the ones they want to get instead of them getting everything that gets sent out. A man here that's fifty years old sure doesn't want to get a newsletter from healthcare about breast feeding. So what we're doing is giving them the option to sign up for what they want. He probably wants something more geared towards retirement. So we're giving them those options. We're doing a lot of different ways of channeling the communication to the employee so they get the information that they need to know and that they want to know. I'm trying to improve what employees are asking for. At any company we're going to have the same communication problems that other companies have but I think we've got room to improve it.

Gwen, the district retail manager, indicated that her firm is moving towards utilizing a

variety of communication channels in order to stay in touch with employees. She believes

that this move is a result of company growth, especially when she travels so much from store

to store and when messages are coming from different sources in her company.

> Well there is an expectation of information that needs to be disseminated and how you do that is somewhat up to your style. In this age of computers– communication has really changed. We have a lot of different communication vehicles here at (my company). Obviously we have email. We have a voicemail system that basically you put in my extension and leave me a message and I call into it and retrieve the message. All the stores have access. They have their own mailbox as well so I can leave all the stores messages. The other thing is that we obviously – I have a home office that I have a phone at that people can contact me at and I also carry a cell phone. One of things that we're really doing now is we're transitioning much more to cell phones and email.

> So when I first started, the goal for store managers was to check voice mail three times a day and check email once. Now it's really check voice mail once and check email three times because of the way it's changed and it's also a much more cost effective way.

In summary, these executives find that they have a wide range of communication vehicles to choose from when communicating with employees, but they also believe that it is best to ask employees which way they want to receive specific types of information. The next theme is the executives' belief that despite this breadth of communication vehicles to choose from, face-to-face communication still plays an important role in the way they communicate with employees.

Face-to-face communication

Despite the variety of media available to these executives, they all believe in the benefit of maintaining face-to-face communication. Karen, the Director of Internal Communications, for a software firm said, "There is nothing better than face-to-face communication." Mary Beth, the financial services executive, discovered that when her firm conducted its own in-house employee communication study, "face-to-face communication with my boss" was the most satisfactory way employees in her firm said they wanted to get information.

> I think we would say based on what we know from social science and based
> on what we know from our own surveys of employees, that the most effective
> communication is one on one with your manager. And then I would say
> beyond that would be in a meeting – a face-to-face meeting with your
> manager and there are five to ten people there or a hundred people there. A
> face-to-face meeting would be the most effective way because people get the
> body language and they can make a decision as to whether or not they think
> it's credible. They can ask questions if they don't understand something.

Gwen, the district retail manager, believes that face-to-face communication is critical for store-level employees and their bosses. "Our whole goal is respect and dignity in how we communicate and it translates to the partners as well as to the customers."

Face-to-face communication with a supervisor is important in the energy and retail firms where the employees generally do not use computers during their workdays. Keith

believes that the best way his firm keeps those employees "in the loop" is through direct

communication with their supervisor.

> Particularly when you're dealing with a work force like we are, where you've got about 30% or more of the employees who do not have an assigned PC. They don't sit at a desk all day; they're out working in the field. So unlike those of us who are sitting at a computer all day long and an email pops up on your screen and you read it almost immediately when you get back from a meeting, some of these guys might check their email a couple of times a week or something. So you either have to supplement that with print and as you suggested face-to-face communication is the most effective in terms of getting people to understand it. The closer you can get to their supervisor to help being the person delivering the messages the more effective it is. There are certain things you want the CEO and senior managers to talk about but if you really want people to buy and believe it and they need to be hearing things and having it echoed from their day-to-day supervisors or one level up. You really try to equip that middle management level with the same information that senior managers are seeing so they can sort of give it their blessing that it's not like b.s.

Katherine believes this intimate form of communication is also important in the

construction materials firm because most of the employees are working in the plants or are

delivering materials to their customers.

> In our task-focused, operations-driven business consistent management announcements made in weekly meetings along with the proper follow up from management have been successful. Additionally, small groups or one on one meetings have proven to be successful. Even a quick email from a manager when the week's production goals have been met can go a long way. When employees feel like they're important and their contributions matter they feel like a part of the Company's overall success. Most of the time people simply want to feel like they're valued. Whether it's a quick lunch with a supervisor or a well thought out incentive program that has the employee's best interest at heart, good employees will sense when management cares about them. It's up to management to come up with creative ways of communicating with their employees.

In summarizing the executive responses about face-to-face communication, data show

that this type of communication serves a dual purpose. First, it keeps employees informed,

and second, it keeps them secure about their place in the company.

Summary

Executive interviews revealed their primary goals of promoting dialogue with all of their key audiences, managing the reputation of their company's brand and image, along with promoting employee engagement. The executives identified a full-range of communication vehicles they could use to implement these goals with employees, yet believed that face-to-face communication between an employee and his or her manager was preferred and most effective for reducing turnover and promoting a sense of community among employees. Finally, they saw their work as overlapping, yet distinct from the marketing departments, which they saw as more tactical than strategic.

Figure C is a mindmap of the cluster analysis of the executive interviews. This mindmap was created through the cluster analysis of the interviews and relating them back to the relationship management literature. Executives frequently mentioned that the focal point of their activities is engaging in or promoting dialogue among key audiences. Hence, this theme is placed at the center of the diagram. The purpose of their dialogue includes both managing the reputation of the firm and employee engagement, which is reflected in the horizontal arrows of the diagram. In addition, the mindmap illustrates that these communication executives have a range of communication vehicles to choose from when communicating with employees, but that they believe face-to-face communication occupies a distinct and important place in talking with employees, which is reflected in the diagram's vertical arrows.

The executive interviews corresponded more closely with the relationship management and public relations literatures, including aspects of building relationships. The

mindmaps, however, utilize the words of the executives to describe those relationship

management practices.

Figure C. Mindmap of executive perceptions of their role
in promoting open communication

Face
-to-
face

Communication

Managing Reputation

Dialogue with
Key Audiences

Employee Engagement

Own all channels
Of communication
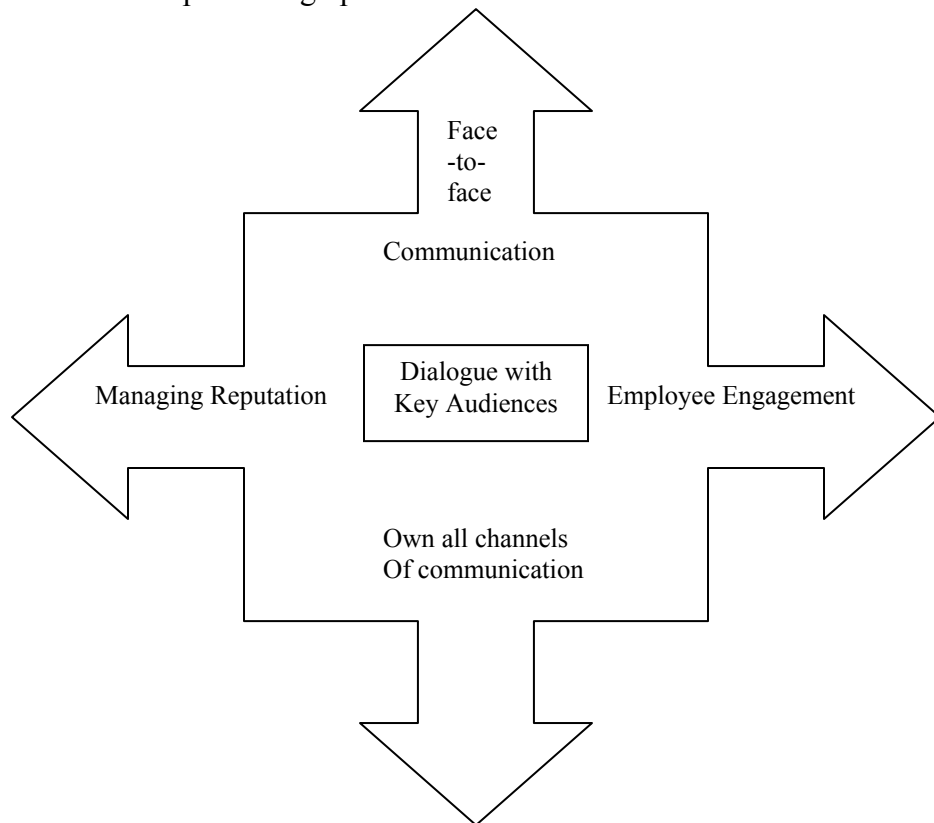
Qualitative Summary

Although new digital forms of communication are emerging, such as email, intranets,

and podcasts, executives believe face-to-face communication helps their firms build trusting

relationships both within and outside of their companies. Employees believe face-to-face

communication is the best way to learn from their manager and build a relationship with that

person. Executives describe internal communication as a way to build better relationships

with employees, so that they feel more engaged in the mission of the organization, will want to remain with the organization, and will share that enthusiasm with their customers.

Appendices B and C illustrate my thought process as I analyzed the employee clusters and then the executive clusters. My goal was to synthesize these responses to create a collective mindmap. I hoped that this would clarify points of difference and similarity across employee and executive responses. The mindmaps were created using terms from each set of interviewees, but it seemed clear that the employee clusters focused on communication as part of the process of building interpersonal relationships, whereas the executive interviews focused less on interpersonal relationships and more on how to instill a sense of employee engagement to meet the goals of the organization or to enhance the firm's reputation.

In order to analyze the similarities and differences across employee and executive interviews, a collective mindmap (Figure D, Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) was developed. In the middle of their thinking, executives see their job as opening dialogue with key audiences, including employees, but employees believe that this type of dialogue doesn't occur unless they happen to work for a manager who is very open-minded. This open-mindedness affects both the formality of communication managers have with employees as well as whether or not they offer the opportunity for employees to get and give feedback. Executives agree that face-to-face communication is important, but employees think of it as an opportunity to talk with their manager. There is the potential for consensus here, if managers understand that employees don't want formal, stuffy communication with their boss, but are seeking informal opportunities to talk with their boss. In addition, although executives see their ability to communicate widely through a variety of channels, employees crave informal opportunities

to get and give feedback with their boss. Both talking and listening are informal methods of

communication employed by these study participants.

Finally, executives see the goals of better communication to be employee engagement

and managing their firm's reputation. Employees agree, but see communication more from

their own perspective of enjoying the people they work with and positively affecting the

customers they serve. Again, employees view these twin goals of internal and external

engagement in a way that is much more informal than executives, yet are more focused on

the bottom line. Employees want to affect customer relationships in a positive way and see

how their own work habits and communication styles can actually improve customer

relationships. Executives seem to intuitively know what their end goal of employee

engagement entails, but don't verbalize it as well as the employees do.

Figure D. Collective mindmap of employee (*italic*) and executive perspectives
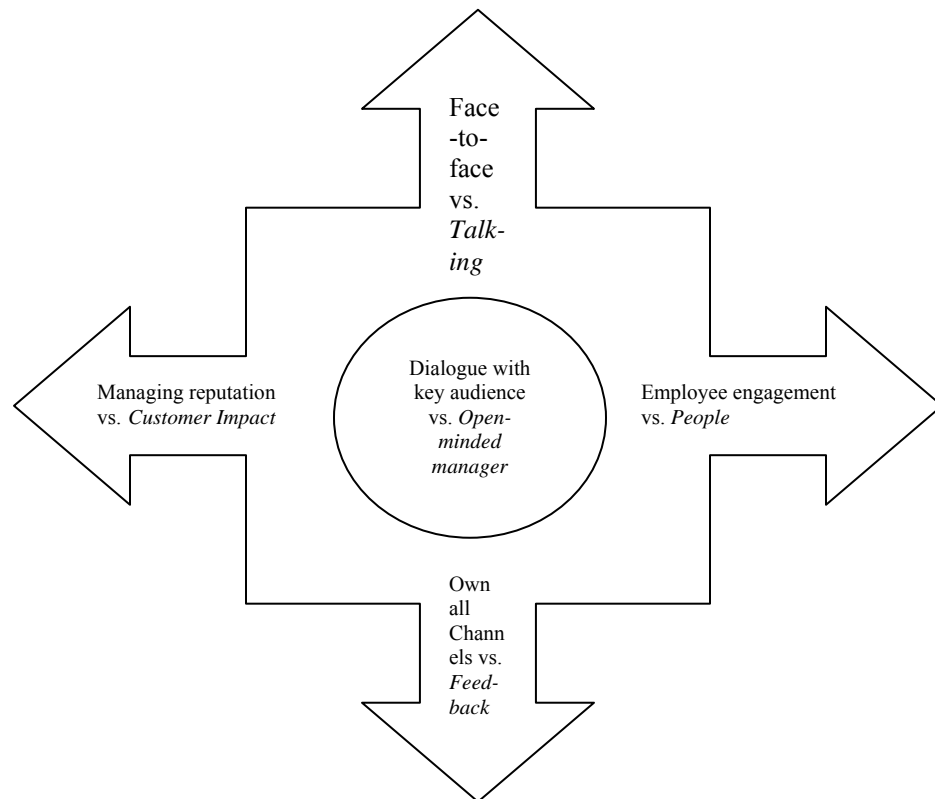
The employee and executive qualitative in-depth interviews served as a guide for both developing the focus of the employee survey questions, but also served to interpret these results. The employee survey results are provided next, with the analysis of those results to follow in the next chapter.

Quantitative Results

The survey was administered after the employee and executive interviews were completed. The survey questions were based on insights from the interviews as well as established questions from the literatures on rich communication, relationship management, publics, trust and commitment. The employee and executive interviews helped to focus the survey questions on what type of communication methods companies used with their employees, as well as whether employees felt as if they were treated like an important audience to their companies. Most of the questions have been used by scholars in public relations and management to study the concepts of rich communication, trust, commitment, and publics. The survey was administered using Zoomerang.com, an online survey product. The survey data were analyzed using the statistical software SPSS in order to answer the proposed hypotheses.

Respondents

Employees who are alumni of Wake Forest University and the University of North Carolina participated in the survey research, as well as employees from one Wake Forest University alumni's manufacturing firm. A total of 210 participants were invited to take the survey and 112 completed the survey for a response rate of 39.7%. Of the respondents, 61% are men, 39% are women. The respondents identified themselves as 93% Caucasian, 3.5% black, and 3.5% Asian; 2.6% identified themselves as having Hispanic ethnicity. A total of 93.3% of respondents revealed their educational level. The majority of subjects, 63%, completed a four-year degree, and another 24% had master's degrees; 4.5% completed an associate's degree; 0.9% had a professional degree, and 0.9% had a doctoral degree.

The mean age of the respondents was 36.02, with a range from 23 to 64 years of age. There was some confusion on the part of employees who thought of themselves as both salaried and professional/technical or as both managers and professional/technical, so meaningful statistics are not available on the professional/managerial categories. Only one respondent was an hourly employee and the rest identified themselves as salaried employees. The respondents had been with their firm for an average of 6.87 years, ranging up to 28 years, and supervised an average of 4.66 people. Each respondent planned to remain with their current firm for an average of 11.24 additional years. For a list of firms and/or industries participants worked for, see Appendix B. The means for the demographic variables are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean demographic responses (N=112)

	Mean
What is your age?	36.02 years Range (23-64)
What is your gender?	39% F 61% M
What is your ethnicity?	93% Caucasian 3.5% black 3.5% Asian 2.6% Hispanic
What is your level of education?	4.5% Associates 63 % Bachelor's 24% Master's .9% Professional .9% Doctorate 6.7% did not report
How would you describe your job in this organization?	.9% Hourly 31.2% Salaried 6.4% Supervisor 48% Manager 14% Prof/Technical
How many people are under your direct supervision?	4.66 people

How long have you worked at this company?	6.87 years (range .5-28)
How much longer do you expect to work at this company? (in years)	11.24 years

The survey data were further analyzed using SPSS software to answer the study's six hypotheses. Each hypothesis is addressed below.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis states "Employees are more likely to receive rich communication from their managers when their firms convey new product information." Questions from Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987) and Trevino, Webster, and Stein (2000) about rich communication were modified and adapted for this study. The results show that email is the most common method of communication used by managers (mean=5.68), followed by face-to-face communication (mean=5.34) and finally telephone (mean=4.63). Table 2 shows the means for each of the nine questions associated with rich communication.

Table 2. Means for rich communication (N=112)

When your company communicates to you about new products, services, or initiatives…	Means
1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree	
My manager uses face-to-face communication.	5.34
My manager uses the telephone to communicate.	4.63
My manager uses email to communicate.	5.69
To what extent would you characterize *face-to-face communication* as having the ability to:	
Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)	
Give and receive timely feedback	5.96
Provide non-verbal feedback (facial gestures, posture, etc.)	5.75
To what extent would you characterize *written communication* (such as memos or letters) as having the ability to:	
Give and receive timely feedback	4.76
Provide non-verbal feedback	3.24
To what extent would you characterize *electronic communication* (such as email or intranets) as having the ability to:	
Give and receive timely feedback	5.71

Provide non-verbal feedback	3.40

In order to determine if the values are significantly different from each other, a one-sample T-test was conducted. The results in Table 3 below show that the means for email and face-to-face communication are not significantly different from one another, as their 95% confidence intervals overlap. Based on this same T-test, the mean use of telephone communication is significantly lower than both face-to-face and email communication.

Table 3. One-Sample T-Test of rich communication measures (N=112)

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Question 1: My manager uses face-to-face communication.	35.860	110	.000	5.342	5.05	5.64
Question 2: My manager uses the telephone to communicate.	27.124	110	.000	4.631	4.29	4.97
Question 3: My manager uses email to communicate.	44.393	111	.000	5.688	5.43	5.94

In examining how employees feel about the richness of the three types of communication, the results in Table 4 show that face-to-face communication is perceived by employees as conveying more timely as well as better non-verbal feedback than either written or electronic communication. Integrating both sets of results, it appears that although face-to-face communication is perceived as more rich, it is used just slightly less than electronic and/or email communication. Even though face-to-face communication is preferred by employees, it is used by them less then email or electronic communication. Thus, there is mixed support for Hypothesis One.

Perhaps this finding reflects advancement in electronic communication. For example, email is richer than it used to be now that it can convey pictures, sounds, results, and data analyses.

Table 4. Means of communication richness (N=112)

	Face-to-face Communication	Written communication	Electronic communication
…gives and receive timely feedback	5.96	4.76	5.71
…provides non-verbal feedback (facial gestures, posture, etc.)	5.75	3.24	3.40

Hypothesis 2

The Likert-scale questions of control mutuality, communal, and exchange relationships developed by Grunig and Hon (1999) were used to examine hypotheses 2a, "Employees' perceptions of Control Mutuality will be *positively* related to their sense of a communal relationship," 2b, "Employees' perceptions of Communal Relationships will be *negatively* related to their sense of an Exchange Relationship," and 2c, "Employees' perceptions of Control Mutuality will be *negatively* related to their sense of an exchange relationship." These questions pertain to issues of how both the organization and the employee public view each other, as well as the nature of their relationship. For each set of questions, factor analysis was conducted to make sure that the multiple items loaded more heavily on their appropriate constructs and that these constructs had an acceptable reliability score. Both Control Mutuality and Communal Relationships' reliabilities exceeded the commonly accepted cut-off value of 0.80, whereas Exchange Relationships approached the cut-off value (see Table 5). One possible reason for the lower reliability for Exchange Relationships is that these questions contain several negatively-worded items.

Table 5. Means and reliabilities for relationships with employee publics (N=112)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control Mutuality	4.1811 (.92)	.82627	112
Communal Relationships	4.8795 (.86)	1.12244	112
Exchange Relationships Cronbach alphas in ()	4.2254 (.66)	1.13870	112

The correlation analysis (see Table 6) shows that both Control Mutuality and

Communal Relationships are negatively related to Exchange Relationships. The correlation

analysis also shows that Control Mutuality and Communal Relationships are positively

related with one another. This means that to the extent that employees sense that they have a

mutual control with the management of their companies, they also feel like they have a

positive relationship with them. Conversely, if they feel they have a transaction-oriented

relationship (Exchange relationship), it is negatively related to their sense of having a more

positive mutual relationship. The tables of means for all items are reported in Table 7. All

hypotheses were supported.

Table 6. Correlations among relationships with employee publics (N=112)

		Control Mutuality	Communal Relation- ships	Exchange Relation- ships
Control Mutuality	Pearson Correlation	1	.526**	-.234*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.013
	N	112	112	112
Communal Relation- ships	Pearson Correlation	.526**	1	-.474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	112	112	112
Exchange Relation- ships	Pearson Correlation	-.234*	-.474**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.000	
	N	112	112	112

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7. Means of employee publics constructs (N=112)

Control Mutuality	Mean
To what extent to you agree with these statements? *Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)*	
This company and people like me are attentive to what each other say.	4.64
This company believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.	4.81
In dealing with people like me, this company has a tendency to throw its weight around. (rev)	4.18
This company really listens to what people like me have to say.	4.43
The management of this company gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.	4.27
When I have an opportunity to interact with the management of this company, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation.	4.36
This company won't cooperate with people like me. (rev)	5.42
I believe people like me have influence on the decision-makers of this company.	4.56
Communal Relationships	
This company does not especially enjoy giving others aid. (rev)	5.36
This company is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.	4.48
I feel that this company takes advantage of people who are vulnerable. (rev)	5.16
I think that this company succeeds by stepping on other people. (rev)	5.63
This company helps people like me without expecting anything in return.	3.47
I don't consider this to be a particularly helpful company for me. (rev)	5.26
I feel that this company tries to get the upper hand. (rev)	4.77
Exchange Relationships	
Whenever this company gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.	4.04
Even though people like me have had a relationship with this company for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.	3.74
This company will compromise with people like me when it knows that it will gain something.	4.00
This company takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization.	5.14

Hypothesis 3

Two different trust constructs (Grunig & Hon, 1999; Mishra, 1996) were used to test

Hypothesis 3: "A higher use of internal communication with employee publics will be

positively related to employee trust in the organization." Testing this hypothesis was a three-

step process, including testing the trust construct for reliability, building an index of internal

communication, and finally correlating the internal communication index with the trust construct.

Construct reliability for the two trust constructs was assessed first. The questions from Grunig and Hon (1999) are labeled as "Company Trust." The reliability for this construct is 0.91 with a mean of 4.84, on a scale of 1 to 7. The individual means are shown in Table 8. The survey items from Mishra (1996) are labeled as "Managerial Trust" below. The reliability for this construct is .98 with a mean of 5.448 on a scale of 1 to 7. All reliabilities exceed the cut-off point of .80. The individual item means are also shown in Table 9.

Table 8. Means for company trust (N=112)

Company Trust	Mean	Grunig & Hon (1999)
Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)		
This company treats people like me fairly and justly.	5.06	Integrity
Whenever this company makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	4.25	Integrity; faith
This company can be relied on to keep its promises	4.74	Dependability
I feel very confident about this company's expertise.	5.08	Competence
This company has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	5.32	Competence
Sound principles seem to guide this company's behavior.	5.04	Integrity
This company does not mislead people like me.	4.84	Integrity
I am very willing to let this company make decisions for people like me.	3.88	Dependability
I think it is important to watch this company closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me. **(rev)**	4.64	Dependability; reversed
This company is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.	5.66	Competence

Table 9. Means for managerial trust (N=112)

Managerial Trust (Mishra, 1996)		Mishra (1996)
My manager is straightforward with me.	5.34	
My manager is competent and knowledgeable.	5.71	
My manager does not try to get out of his/her commitments.	5.47	
My manager does not take advantage of me.	5.35	
My manager communicates honestly with me.	5.56	
My manager can contribute to my company's success.	5.96	
My manager behaves consistently.	5.32	
My manager does not exploit me.	5.34	
My manager does not mislead me in his/her communications.	5.29	
My manager can help my company survive during the next decade.	5.54	
My manager is reliable.	5.63	
My manager cares about my best interests.	5.15	
My manager does not withhold important information from me.	4.96	
My manager is concerned for my welfare.	5.36	
My manager can be counted on.	5.53	
My manager can help solve important problems faced by my company.	5.53	
My manager can be trusted.	5.53	

In addition, the correlations reported in Table 10 show that both trust constructs are positively and significantly related at the 0.01 level, but they are substantively different than each other, because they capture different forms of employee trust. The mean of managerial trust is higher than the mean for company trust, which may reflect an employee's stronger relationship to his or her manager than to his or her company. It might be expected that company trust might mimic managerial trust, but this disconnect might occur because employees relate stronger to the communication and relationship they have with their manager more than with their companies. This relationship will be in direct conflict with the communication executives whose job it is to bridge this gap.

Table 10. Correlation analysis of trust measures

	Company Trust	Managerial Trust
Company Trust	1	.543**
Managerial Trust	.543**	1

Two indices of internal communication were then created. The first index was created by additively combining the measures of face-to-face, telephone, and email communication; the second by weighting each component in terms of its richness, and then summing the weights. Following Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987), face-to-face communication was weighted three times as heavily as written communication, and telephone was weighted twice as much.

As hypothesized, both Company Trust and Managerial Trust are positively related to internal communication, both weighted and unweighted for richness (see Table 11).   This finding means that the ways both managers and companies communicate with their subordinates determine whether or not a trusting relationship develops.

Table 11. Correlation analysis of trust and internal communication measures (N=112)

		Company Trust	Managerial Trust
Internal Communication	Pearson Correlation	.262**	.333**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.000
	N	112	112
Internal Communication Weighted (by richness)	Pearson Correlation	.258**	.378**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000
	N	112	112

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression analysis was then conducted to determine the independent effect of each form of trust on each index of internal communication (see Tables 12 and 13). Hypothesis 3 is partially supported, because only managerial trust is found to be significantly related to internal communication and not company trust. When controlling for both forms of trust, only Managerial Trust is significantly and positively related to each index of internal communication, as evidenced by the Beta standard errors.

Table 12. Regression coefficients for trust and internal communication

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	10.182	1.493		6.818	.000
	Company Trust	.355	.329	.115	1.079	.283
	Managerial Trust	.674	.267	.270	2.526	.013
	R2 adjusted	.10				
	F	7.44***				

a Dependent Variable: Internal Communication *** p <.001

Table 13. Regression coefficients for trust and weighted internal communication

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	18.435	3.179		5.799	.000
	Company Trust	.498	.700	.075	.712	.478
	Managerial Trust	1.817	.568	.337	3.202	.002
	R2 adjusted	.13				
	F	9.38***				

a Dependent Variable: InternalCommWeighted ***p < .001

Hypothesis 4

Hypotheses 4, "Internal communication with employee publics enhances employee commitment to the organization" examined the relationship between the indices of internal communication and two types of organizational commitment--affective commitment and

continuance commitment--as measured by management scholars Meyer and Allen (1997).

Affective commitment measures the degree of attachment an employee has for his or her

company. The most interesting finding here is that the highest score is found for the

statement "I enjoy discussing my company with people outside it." This finding is an

indication that if employees feel a part of the company they work for, they could be strong

advocates for their company. Continuance commitment measures the degree to which

employees feel like they have no other job options, which keeps them with their company.

Overall, it appears that the attachment employees feel is stronger than their confidence in

finding alternate employment. This attachment might actually influence the extent to which

they believe they can leave their firm, because those strong feelings might lead them to

believe that this is their "home." The means for these commitment items are shown in Table

14.

Table 14. Table of means for affective and continuance commitment
(N=112)

Affective Commitment	Means	Meyer & Allen 1997
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this company	4.45	
I enjoy discussing my company with people outside it	5.21	
I really feel as if this company's problems are my own	4.76	
I think I could easily become as attached to another company as I am to this one	3.35	Reversed
I do not feel like "part of the family" at this company	4.86	Reversed
I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this company	4.90	Reversed
This company has a great deal of personal meaning for me	4.80	
I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this company	4.68	Reversed
Continuance Commitment		Meyer & Allen 1997
It would be very hard for me to leave this company	4.18	

right now, even if I wanted to.		
Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my company now.	4.18	
It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave this company in the near future.	4.18	Reversed
Right now, staying with this company is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	3.93	
I believe that I have too few options to consider leaving this company.	2.82	
If I leave this company now, I would have few alternatives.	2.95	
I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up.	3.34	
One of the major reasons I continue to work for my company is that another company may not match the overall benefits I have here.	3.35	

As shown in Table 15, support was not found for Hypothesis 4 based on correlation analysis using a two-tailed test. However, using a one-tailed test, affective commitment was marginally and positively related (p <0.10) with both indices of internal communication. This finding suggests that internal communication can lead to feelings of attachment with employees, but does not affect their confidence about whether or not they can or should find employment elsewhere.

Table 15. Correlations of commitment with internal communication
(N=112)

		Internal Communication	Internal Communication Weighted
Affective Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.137	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.151	.126
	N	112	112
Continuance Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.089	.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.351	.334
	N	112	112

Previous empirical research has documented a relationship between affective commitment and an employee's tenure or seniority with his or her firm (Meyer & Allen,

1997). In my study a strong relationship was also found correlating firm seniority with

affective commitment (see Table 16). Thus, organizational seniority was controlled for in all

subsequent analyses predicting affective commitment. Affective commitment has an alpha

of 0.88 and a mean of 4.62 on the 7-point scale. Continuance commitment has an alpha of

0.56 and a mean of 3.627. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported when controlling for

seniority. This finding suggests that the longer an employee has been with a firm, the more

attachment he or she feels for it.

Table 16. Correlation between firm seniority and affective commitment
(N=112)

		Question 94: How many years have you worked at this firm?	Affective Commitment
Question 94: How many years have you worked at this firm?	Pearson Correlation	1	.367**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	104	104
Affective Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.367**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	104	112

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 17 highlights the regression results for all variables, including tenure, on affective

commitment. These results confirm that tenure does affect affective commitment.

Therefore, communication executives need to be aware that their efforts to communicate

with employees are important for employees with more seniority, and not just new

employees.

Table 17. Regression Table for Influence on Affective Commitment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	.464	.524		.885	.378
	Internal Communication	-.012	.028	-.031	-.410	.683
	Managerial Trust	.204	.081	.217	2.518	.013
	Company Trust	.573	.097	.492	5.929	.000
	Question 94: How many years have you worked at this firm?	.064	.015	.312	4.356	.000

a Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis five, "Internal communication with employee publics results in a stronger firm reputation among internal publics," was tested by asking for employees to answer the extent of their agreement with "My company has an outstanding reputation." The mean of this question was 5.35 on a 7-point scale. The correlation between internal communication (both weighted and unweighted) and reputation showed no significant relationship. This finding could be due to the fact that employees from multiple firms completed the survey and therefore it was not possible to correlate external reputation data from research firms, such as J. D. Power, for each employee who participated in the survey research. Future research should examine one or a limited number of firms that utilize external reputation measures in order to understand this relationship between internal communication and reputation.

Hypothesis Six

Finally, Hypothesis six examines the impact of trust on employee commitment, proposing that "Trust will be positively related to commitment." As hypothesized, affective commitment was both positively and significantly related to both company trust and managerial trust, based on both correlation and regression analyses (see Tables 18 and 19).

Continuance commitment was not significantly related to either form of trust based on correlation analysis, and so regression analysis was not conducted. This finding demonstrates that the relationship employees have with their manager is a stronger indicator of the attachment they feel to their companies, than whether or not they feel able to continue working for that firm.

Table 18. Correlation of trust and commitment
(n=112)

		Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment
Company Trust	Pearson Correlation	.617(**)	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.582
	N	112	112
Managerial Trust	Pearson Correlation	.532(**)	-.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.304
	N	112	112

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 19. Regression coefficients for trust and affective commitment
(N=112)

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	.541	.455		1.187	.238
	Company Trust	.544	.100	.465	5.424	.000
	Managerial Trust	.266	.081	.280	3.269	.001

a Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment

Communication Preferences

In order to better understand employees' communication preferences and to understand if there are differences between positive and negative news delivery, respondents also were asked about their communication preferences via face-to-face, email and written communications. The frequencies for each communication method are reported in Table 20.

Respondents overwhelmingly preferred to use and receive face-to-face communication for both good and bad news. Respondents prefer to give both good and bad news in person just slightly more than they prefer to receive it. Email communication trailed as a distant second most-preferred method for giving and receiving information. Face-to-face communication, then, is confirmed as being the most-preferred way to give information to employees as well as to receive information from a manager.

Table 20. Descriptive statistics of communication preferences
(N=112)

If you are getting bad news from your manager, do you prefer	
• Face-to-face communication	87%
• Written communication	5.0%
• Email communication	6.4%
• Any type of communication (no preference)	1.3%
If you are getting good news from your manager, do you prefer	
• Face-to-face communication	85.6%
• Written communication	0.9%
• Email communication	5.4%
• Any type of communication (no preference)	8.1%
If you are giving bad news to your employees, do you prefer using	
• Face-to-face communication	90%
• Written communication	2.8%
• Email communication	5.5%
• Any type of communication (no preference)	1.8%
If you are giving good news to your employees, do you prefer using	
• Face-to-face communication	90%
• Written communication	0.9%
• Email communication	3.7%
• Any type of communication (no preference)	5.5%

Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Results

Overall, the survey results show that email communication is the method most often used by employees, closely followed by face-to-face communication. However, face-to-face

communication is evaluated by survey respondents to be richer in providing both verbal and

non-verbal feedback. Employee interviews confirm this assessment, as employees

overwhelmingly described a preference for face-to-face communication with their manager

in order to get feedback from them about their job as well as to help build closer relationships

with them. Executive interviews underscored the importance of face-to-face communication,

but they saw their communication toolset to be much wider, including electronic

communication. In addition, these communication executives were not always the ones

providing that face-to-face communication, but instead, were relying on managers to transmit

important company information to employees. Katherine wisely observed that

communication skills are not always a strength of each of her managers.

> Most people would agree that effective communication is important in business.
> Here's the catch: not everyone is a great communicator. That is probably the biggest
> hurdle for our company. Getting the right people in place to carry the message is
> very important. When things are clearly communicated there is less left to the
> imagination.

Based on the survey data as well as the interview data, face-to-face communication

still occupies a large share of the communications pie, but other media are encroaching upon

it (see Figure E). The proportions in Figure E come from the descriptions from the

interviewees as well as the survey questions indicating that respondents prefer face-to-face

communication by 80% over other communication vehicles. In addition, the pie shows how

email, phone and intranet communication is much more closely associated with rich

communication, such as face-to-face communication, whereas blogging, memos or satellite

TV are less rich.

Figure E. Communications pie
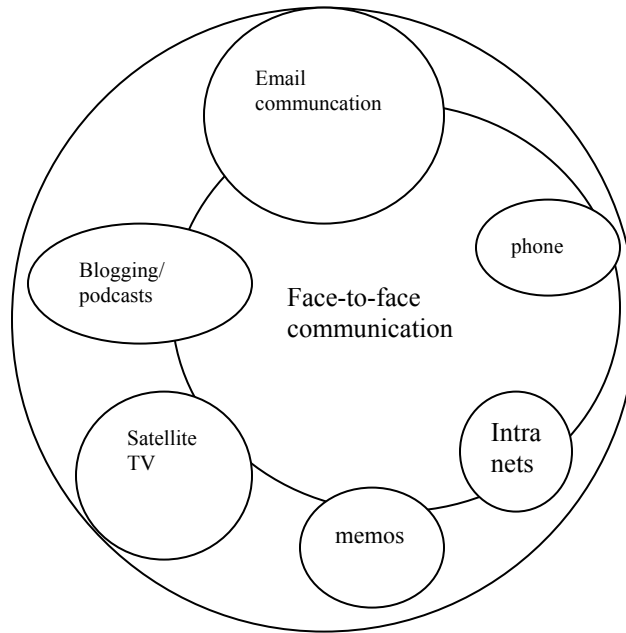
The survey results also show that to the extent that employees sense that they have

mutual control over their jobs with the management of their companies, they also feel like

they have a positive relationship with them. Employees described this mutuality of control

when they talked about how comfortable they felt talking to their manager and how well their

manager listened to them. Conversely, if they feel they have a transaction-oriented

relationship (Exchange Relationship), it is negatively related to their sense of having a more

positive mutual relationship. Employees also verbalized their respect for managers who are

open-minded as opposed to those who are not as willing to listen. Executives did not talk

about this issue much, possibly because they are in essence one step removed from

employees, relying instead on managers to bridge that open-mindedness gap.

The lack of significance for continuance commitment may reflect its more

transaction-based nature, as opposed to the relationship-based nature of affective

commitment. These findings were corroborated by the interviews with both employees and

executives. Employees felt that as they were more able to trust their manager, they were more committed to their jobs. Executives believed that it was important to build better relationships, both between employees and their internal communications departments, as well as between employee and their company, so that employees would remain committed to their firms. The financial services firm even had metrics in place to reward managers who were able to retain employees and reduce turnover.

The strength of the relationship between affective commitment and trust was also reflected in employee comments on communication. Employees described their greater commitment to those managers who were better communicators and executives described their desire to build trust among employees as a reason for striving for improved communication. Employees mentioned feeling closer to their manager when they felt like they had open and positive communications with them.

In addition, executives explained the role of internal communication as building employee engagement, which should also enhance affective commitment. Executives understand the importance of building employee engagement and described it as one of their two primary roles in their organizations. Keith explained,

> I think that is the primary goal of communications is to promote employee engagement with the company's strategy and vision. There's no other reason for anything else that we do. Why do you have an employee newsletter or magazine that talks about everything from the company's business to philanthropy and employee volunteering. Why do you spend that kind of money to put out a publication like that? It's not just to deliver information. You're trying to accomplish something to make people feel part of a team and understand what the company's doing.

In addition, the survey results show that internal communication leads to a stronger sense of managerial trust than company trust. This finding might be because employees get

more of their information directly from their managers and find it easier to develop a perspective on the trustworthiness of their manager. Employees' perspective on internal communication is "talking with my manager" and less about getting information from corporate headquarters. Executives, on the other hand, have the job responsibility for disseminating information from corporate headquarters, so they might not be as attuned to the benefits of building trust between employees and the company because they are one step removed from employees.

Affective commitment was found to be significantly related to internal communication, but not continuance commitment. Therefore, the degree to which employees feel attached to their company might be as a direct result of the type of internal communication they receive. In addition, the longer an employee has been with a firm, the more attached they will feel to their company. Deserei described this phenomenon and said that when a store is hiring new employees, it is easy for managers to forget to communicate positive reinforcement to tenured employees. Executives did not describe a distinction between new and tenured employees.

In the survey, reputation was measured using a self-report item "My company has an outstanding reputation." Limited support was found for a relationship between internal communication and firm reputation. "Managing reputation" was mentioned in the executive interviews as being one of their primary duties. Two of the firms--energy and financial services--used outside measures of reputation to measure their progress towards that reputation goal. While the employees in their interviews did not use the word "reputation" they did agree that one of the goals in their jobs was to make sure their customers were happy. Employees and executives saw reputation as a critical outcome of open

communication, but it is not clear if this is an internal goal or an external one. It is also not clear what universal reputation measure is best to use for this study as there is not one dimension that covers all of the organizations who participated. It is clear, however, that firm reputation or image is important to all individuals interviewed for this study. They care about the way their employees, customers, community and even their suppliers perceive them and their actions.

No relationship could be found for internal communications and reputation, but that could be due to the inability to get external reputation data. Employees understood how their actions affected what their customers thought of them and their firm, and executives were intently focused on managing their firms' reputations through their communication efforts. Again, there might be a disconnect here between the front-line employees who are actually affecting reputation and the executives who are attempting to manage the firm's reputation from afar. Finally, the quantitative analysis showed affective commitment is significantly related to both managerial trust and company trust. The more attached an employee feels to his or her company, the more he or she trusts both his or her manager and his or her company. The employees echoed this finding relating stories of how they felt attached to their company due to the strong relationships they have with their manager. Executives did not focus on trust, per se, in their job responsibilities nor communication goals.

Employee vs. Executive Perspectives

In this study, employees and executives talked about communication differently. Employees talk about communication with their manager and each other as though it is an integral part of their work every day, yet executives talk about communication as something to be managed, like a process or a machine. Employees think face-to-face communication is

the most critical aspect of relating to their manager or company and the executives would agree, but the latter mentioned that they still have to coach their internal clients on how to do a better job relating to employees. These executives have found that their clients would rather send out a memo than walk over and talk to an employee. Executives also see many communication vehicles available to them to send messages to employees, and don't always see that face-to-face is fastest or easiest. The differing pattern of perspectives between employees and executives may reflect the latter's fragmented attention or compartmentalization with multiple employees to manage.

Executives even had specific names or jargon for this process: corporate communication, employee communication, or internal communication. They find it distinct from both marketing and public relations. For these executives, corporate communication or internal communication best describes the work they do to communicate with employee constituents. The implication is that communication is different than marketing or public relations to these executives.

Employees did not use specific names or jargon for this process. They refer to this type of communication as "talking." They recognize that having the ability and comfort level to talk to their boss each day is what makes them feel secure and happy in their jobs. They are very astute in understanding which managers are receptive to this type of open communication and which managers shy away from it.

As a result, employees and executives have different conceptions in how and why they communicate and there is room for miscommunication to occur. Managers might feel that they must present information to employees (as mandated by their supervisors or by the internal communications department), yet employees seek opportunities for informal and

open dialogue with their managers. This alone could contribute to an employee's sense that his or her manager is not open to dialogue because they are always in a presenting mode of communication. This also leaves a void between employees who seek intimate communication and communication executives who plan it—what person or role is there to advocate on behalf of what employees want?

Summary

These survey questions were analyzed last, after the interviews were completed and analyzed. In the discussion chapter that follows, the interview responses and survey results will be triangulated in order to better understand how both employees and executives feel about internal communication and how it relates to the relationship management literature.

The discussion chapter will evaluate how the results relate to the literature presented earlier, as well as how the qualitative and quantitative data relate to each other. The research questions will be evaluated based on the interview data and the survey data will be interpreted in light of the literatures discussed earlier. Finally, the discussion will address issues not posed in the research questions or hypotheses, such as the juxtaposition of the employee and executive perspectives, the formality of communication approaches, the role of ethical communication, the view of multiple stakeholder roles, and the managerial implications of this research. The next chapter will present the discussion of these results and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of internal communication on employee's levels of trust and commitment to their organizations, in addition to its effect on the employee's perspective of his or her firm's reputation. The study used the concept of relationship management in order to understand the role that internal communication plays in building positive relationships with employee publics. The findings begin with an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data within the context of the extant literature.

Findings from the research questions and hypotheses

Understanding the place for rich communication

Role of face-to-face communication

The qualitative and quantitative analysis indicated that both employees and executives believe effective communication is essential to both doing their jobs and appreciating their jobs. These findings support Botan's (1992) conclusion that communication should be the focus of building relationships with publics. Grunig and Huang (2000) also concluded that the two-way nature of communication (such as talking and listening) were important in building relationships between an organization and its public(s). Specifically, interview findings from employees found that they relied heavily on face-to-face communication to both receive and provide information with their manager and with each other. Executive interviews underscored the importance of face-to-face communication

among all communication methods available to them. It appears then that the rich method of face-to-face communication is effective for building relationships between firms and their employees, which supports the contentions of Daft, Lengel, and Trevino's (1987) findings that face-to-face communication is considered the most-rich type of communication. That is, face-to-face communication is better able to provide information back to the listener in terms of both verbal and non-verbal feedback. This study's findings, however, go beyond previous research and point to the different interpretations by executives and employees of the importance of face-to-face communication.

Referring back to the collective mindmap (Figure D), these results diverge where each party defines the importance of face-to-face communication. Executives see this type of communication as one method among many for promoting dialogue with their key audiences, but employees see this as integral for interpreting whether or not they have an open-minded manager who they are able to talk to. The executive interview responses concurred with the importance that employees place on face-to-face communication, yet disclosed that their managers are not always equipped to deal face-to-face with their direct reports. In the software firm, face-to-face communication was deemed important enough that her firm's management development program included training specifically on how managers can be better communicators. Future research should ask managers about their level of expertise in face-to-face communication, as well as ask organizations how they help managers improve this skill.

Role of Feedback

Feedback, one aspect of rich communication as measured by Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987), is not something that this author initially thought was an important part of

internal communication however, employees repeatedly mentioned that feedback from their manager made them feel more connected to their manager and their company. Executives talked about the need to coach their managers on how to give feedback to employees so that it was timely and useful. Finally, the survey results show that employees feel that feedback is indeed considered important and that face-to-face communication provides both timely and non-verbal feedback to employees. Feedback, then is an important aspect not only of rich communication, but of internal communication. The relationship management literature briefly suggests that better communication is important, but does not give specifics on what types of communication are important or the steps that must be taken to improve communication. Grunig's (1993) two-way communication would imply that feedback would be a component of an organization and its public communicating back and forth with each other, but he is not explicit about feedback. Hence, this study contributes an essential component to understand the significance of effective communication, specifically by managers, to employee trust and job satisfaction.

In addition, employees in this study want to talk to their manager in order to get feedback but the executives interviewed were the ones planning the communication, not actually implementing it. In addition, the executives did not factor feedback into their discussion, a determination of which channel to use for which message. Some channels only provide one-way communication which might make it less trusted. Grunig (1983) suggests that publics can perceive a difference between symbolic and behavioral communication and one-way communication is inherently symbolic in that it says something, but does not have to follow-up. Two-way or behavioral communication, on the other hand, suggests that the provider is willing to engage in dialogue and actually make changes as a result of that

dialogue. That discrepancy could also explain a disconnect between what employees and executives agree is important. If the executives are only planning communication and not implementing it, they do not actually know how effective it was or how it was eventually implemented unless they conduct research. Thus, future research should consider how time constraints and training budgets influence the utilization of various communication media. In addition, future research should consider whether employees should have a voice at the planning phase of communications to make sure communication is both planned and implemented in ways that are most effective for them. Future research should also look at whether or not executives use research to consider the employees' voices. Finally, future research should look at which media channels offer the best two-way interactions.

The employee interviews revealed that the participants felt more valued when they have a manager who is willing to listen and provide feedback to them. Toth (2000) described communication as an important component in building interpersonal relationships and listening might be the method to achieve this. As seen in Figure F, a study by Steil, Barker, and Watsoh (1983, p. 5) found that reading and writing are emphasized in formal learning, yet employees spend more of their working days talking and listening. This study may help explain why employees feel that there is a disconnect between what they want from their managers and what their managers can actually do. It also helps to explain why the employees interviewed described some of their managers as open-minded and willing to listen while finding other managers less able to be open-minded and willing to listen. If companies do not provide sufficient time for or access to face-to-face communication or do not have interpersonal or group communication training in place to help managers do a better

job at talking, listening, and providing constructive feedback, then it may be the "luck of the draw" as to whether an employee actually works for a boss with these capabilities.

Figure F. Pie chart of reading, writing, talking and listening
(From Steil, Barker, & Watsoh, 1983, p. 5)

READING
(next least
used,
next most
taught)
16%

WRITING
(least used,
most
taught)
9%

TALKING
(next most
used,
next least
taught)
30%

LISTENING
(most used,
least
taught)
45%
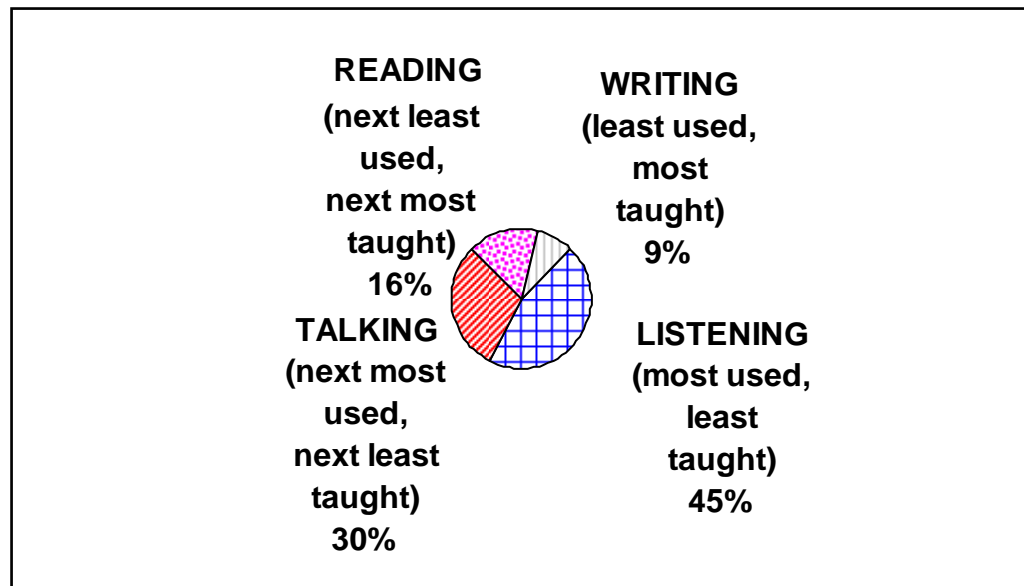
Role of other communication channels

The results of this study show that communication other than face-to-face are employed. The survey responses showed that email communication is also used by managers, just slightly more than face-to-face communication. Greater use of email communication might occur because it is "more rich" in terms of allowing graphics, audio, or video to be included in the email communication. It is also easier and quicker for managers who are under time pressures or who might have many subordinates reporting to them. However, survey respondents demonstrated a preference for using face-to-face communication for many reasons, including giving good and bad news, or getting good or bad news. One reason may be that employees don't necessarily have access to email in the course of their workday. This finding is similar to Toth's (2000) assertion that relationships are built using interpersonal communication. The relationship management literature,

however, did not touch on specific communication methods but insisted on the general importance of communication (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Toth, 2000). Future research should consider what specific methods build positive relationships.

Additionally, results of the executive interviews revealed that these managers found it useful to ask employees how they wished to receive communication, rather than relying on their own views. This finding goes beyond Trevino, Webster, and Stein's (2000) study that found that managers chose which medium to use to disseminate information based on their own perceptions of how rich the media were or how rich the media needed to be for that situation. It appears that while face-to-face communication is perceived as richer, it is used just slightly less than electronic, or email communication. This finding fits with what the executives said; specifically, they felt that they owned an array of communication vehicles to communicate with employees. Perhaps one reason why face-to-face communication is used to a lesser extent is because of the time and effort it takes to do it properly. In order for communication to be decoded properly, it must be encoded carefully. Hall (1980) described this encoding-decoding process in mass communication in the context of television when a message is sent across the airwaves a certain way, hoping that the audience will receive it in as intended. This encoding-decoding process requires thought on the part of the person initiating the communication about how it will be interpreted by the receivers. Email communication does not necessarily require as much thought because it is easy to fire off an email whereas we might stop to consider our words before entering someone's office. In addition, email does not require the person talking to also listen, and does not involve any interpretation of non-verbal messages. This study found, however, that electronic communication is used more frequently by employees and their managers than face-to-face

communication, which may be a function of the increasing potential richness of such communication since the work of Daft et al. (1987) and Toth (2000). It may also be due to the lack of training individuals receive in being effective face-to-face communicators, whether in a formal academic setting or through on-the-job training.

This study finds that despite technological advances in the workplace, and the potential richness of electronic communication, employees still prefer having that face-to-face communications with their manager. In addition, instead of managers deciding for themselves which medium to use, three of the executives spoke of surveying their employees to determine how to best communicate with them. Moreover, some of the firms, seeing the opportunity for using digital technology such as email to communicate better with employees, had the foresight to understand that it is best to ask employees which format they want to receive specific types of information. Negroponte (1995) suggested that the advantage of using multiple media is that each medium can fill information gaps for the others. This study's survey asked only about how firms disseminate new product information. Subsequent research should investigate other types of common information employees receive on a regular basis, including information about employee benefits or corporate strategy. Future research should also examine the impact of digital technology on rich communication and its place in it. Future research should also examine the proportion of face-to-face communication versus other media and how employees feel these media should be allocated in a communications pie (see Figure E). In addition, it would be useful to ask employees who do not use computers as a regular part of their day how they perceive the uses of both face-to-face and email communication.

Employees as Publics

What is significant from this study is how important the executives believe employees are as publics. They indicated that their jobs have shifted from an external public focus to an internal focus, involving employee engagement. This topic has garnered some attention in books (e.g., Axelrod, 2000) and human resources trade publication (e.g., Lockwood, 2007), and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. As mentioned in the study rationale, however, employees have been an understudied public or population in public relations research. Although a few public relations scholars have identified employees as an important public to help fulfill the mission of the organization (Grunig, 1993; Grunig & Huang, 2000), this omission by other scholars may be because the traditional public relations job has focused on building relationships with external constituents, particularly media. Hence, further research may build on these findings and examine practitioner understanding of the significance of the employee role. Public relations scholars have focused on the concepts of mutuality and trust to explain the relationships organizations have with their publics.

Relationship Management

The relationship management definition from Ledingham and Bruning (2000) defines this concept as the focused attention of public relations professionals to create mutually beneficial relationships with their publics. This definition, however, does not include the process of how those relationships are built; for employees, the process is primarily through interpersonal communication such as face-to-face communication. Botan (1992) and Toth (2000) both indicated that communication should be a focal point of building relationships. Ledingham and Bruning agree that communication is important, but do not include it in the definition of relationship management. Both employee interviews and surveys supported this notion of the importance of face-to-face communication in building close relationships with

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their managers. A new definition of relationships management should include the aspect of interpersonal communication. This might make relationship management a more ethical practice (Carroll, 2006).

> Relationship management is the focused attention of public relations professionals to create mutually beneficial relationships *through interpersonal communication* with their publics.

In addition, future research needs to consider how "mutually beneficial" these relationship management efforts truly are, as the benefits to managers are clearer than those for employees. Mutual benefit implies something positive for each party—a balance or equity in the relationship. Interviews reveal that face-to-face communication helps employees to feel secure in their jobs due to a closer relationship with their manager. This is helpful for management, as employees' security might reduce turnover, but it is less clear what benefit employees accrue other than ones that ultimately benefit the organization. This results in an imbalance between management and employees. If mutual benefit is to remain in the definition of relationship management, managers will have to make more of an effort to make sure employees find it as beneficial as they do. If workplace democracy is to be truly realized (Deetz, 1992) then employees need to feel that they have more control in decision-making as well as have opportunities to talk with their manager.

Control Mutuality

Consequently, this study did not find employees and executives talking about mutuality in their relationship. The survey results reveal that mutuality is important to them when asked, but in the forum of an open-ended interview, the word mutual or mutuality did not occur. There was no evidence that relationship management was thought to be a tool of mutual decision-making between employees and their managers. Instead, executives talked

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about employee engagement and employees talked about the interpersonal aspect of their job, including enjoying the people they work with (both co-workers and customers). This finding refutes what Thomlinson (2000) found about the expectation the parties have for each other, aspects of control mutuality, communal relationships, and exchange relationships. Toth (2000) emphasizes the ways parties communicate with each other to build relationships, and this study demonstrates that the more open-minded a manager is, the more likely employees will perceive a positive interaction and will see that face-to-face communication is a means to building a better relationship.

It would appear that firms must find ways to simultaneously increase the level of communal relationships and reduce the level of exchange relationships if they want their employees to feel as though they are equal contributors toward their firms' missions. As exchange relationships are positively related to communal relationships, however, there may be some threshold for exchange relationship below which communal relationships also begin to suffer. Future research should survey employee attitudes about their ability to participate in decision-making in addition to their direct managers' so that discrete differences can be identified between how employees perceive their place in the organization as well as how their manager communicates that to them.

Trust

Another purpose of this study was to determine which communication method(s) were most effective for building trust between the company and its employees. Specifically, research question one asked, "How do organizations communicate with employees to create trusting relationships with employees?" The findings support what public relations scholars Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) suggested--that trust was an attribute of relationships with

publics to be measured and cultivated. Grunig and Huang (2000) found that successful relationships between an organization and its publics emerged from mutual trust, and Bruning and Ledingham (2000) called for more research into a complete definition of trust.

The items used to measure trust in this study come from both public relations (Grunig & Hon, 1999) and business management (Mishra, 1996) scholars. The public relations trust questions (company trust) asked about feelings of trust between the employee and the company, whereas the management trust questions (managerial trust) asked about feelings of trust between the employee and his or her manager. The mean scores are higher for managerial trust than company trust, which may reflect the salience of managers over a company in employees' trust assessments. This finding might also indicate that employees are able to put their trust more easily in a person, such as their manager, rather than their company because it is easier for them to evaluate their managers' actions when it affects them most directly. Their company's actions, however, may be evaluated at a collective level, as well as at a personal level. Company Trust and Managerial Trust appear to enhance one another.

Managerial Trust is significantly and positively related to each index of internal communication but it is most positively related to face-to-face communication. It appears then, that face-to-face communication is the most effective communication method for building trust between employees and their employer. The executive interviewees did not bring up the issue of trust, except for Sharon in relating communication to rebuilding trust after a merger. Employees, however, describe how communication helped to improve their relationships with their managers, co-workers, and customers. Executives did not focus on trust or relationship building in the same way.

In future research, it will be important to construct a more-refined measure of internal communication because there are no published questions discovered that were explicitly relevant for this construct. In refining this measure, I would ask questions about how often managers communicate with employees using each medium, as well as the type of information that is shared with employees. It would also be important to find out whether or not employees feel like they have input as to the type of information they receive and how they would prefer to receive it. Finally, I would ask the employees if they feel that this information is adequate in order to help them in their customer relationships, and if they have the opportunity to provide feedback to their manager. If employees truly understand how their jobs and actions affect their customer's perceptions of them and their company, then it will be important to understand exactly how they use this information in their jobs and how providing feedback to their manager affects their levels of trust and commitment to the organization.

Trust and Commitment

This study also makes a significant contribution to the impact of commitment in employee communication, which was explored through Research Question two, "How do organizations communicate with employees to create a sense of commitment with employees?" While public relations scholars have focused on trust between an organization and its publics, the topic of commitment has not been as widely studied. Grunig and Huang (2000) found that the level of commitment between an organization and its publics could be used as a barometer for the health of the organization. Business management scholars Meyer and Allen (1997) have studied many forms of commitment and found that affective and continuance commitment built trust between parties. Affective commitment is feelings of

attachment to an organization and continuance commitment is a desire to remain with the organization.

Controlling for seniority, internal communication was found to be positively related to trust and affective commitment. This is an important finding because it is easy to lose sight of established employees in favor of spending time training and engaging new employees. In one of the interviews, an employee identified this problem of neglecting established or old employees, thinking that they can function without feedback and encouragement. This employee recognized the link between continual feedback and commitment to creating a positive customer experience. If this link is a barometer of health of an organization, as Grunig and Huang (2000) suggest, then healthy organizations will not neglect more senior employees at the expense of newer ones. Future research should examine the differences in the trust and commitment levels between newer and more senior employees in one organization. It would also be helpful to understand how managers split their time communicating with both new employees versus those with more seniority. In addition, future research should consider what helps an employee feel more attached (or affectively committed) to his or her organization? This study would suggest that seniority contributes to attachment, but that internal communication must be in place to develop those attachments.

Reputation

Additionally, this study contributes to the understanding of reputation and employee communication, as addressed through Research Question three, "How do organizations communicate with employees to create a positive reputation with employees and with customers?" Employees interviewed understood that their work has direct customer impact

and ultimately affected their perception of the firm. Executives talked about protecting and managing the reputation of their company, but believed that they did not necessarily have direct influence on reputation. They believed that their company's behaviors would ultimately be judged and would then affect their firm's reputation. Referring back to the collective mindmap (Figure D), employees feel that they have a direct influence on their firm's reputation, but executives do not. If executives do not feel like they have direct impact on reputation, but employees do feel they have direct impact, it would seem that the employees are actually the ones with the power to either build or destroy reputation, based on their actions.

Grunig and Huang (2000) suggested that an organization's reputation is an outcome of its behaviors that a public remembers.   It makes sense then, that more and more consumers take note of how organizations care for employees and their evaluation of this even affects their purchase decisions (National Consumer's League, 2006). The Consumer's League study found that customers care about how firms take care of their employees and will make purchase decisions based on whether or not those actions are aligned with their own values.

While a firm might consider spending more money on customer relationships (such as advertising) as a way to improve market share or reputation, ultimately, studies have found that employees are more credible to consumers than advertising (Edelman, 2006). It might be time to reconsider the model on page 34 where two-way communication leads to trust, commitment and a positive reputation. Organizations might have to give up some control and put more emphasis on promoting better internal relationships between employees and managers by training managers in interpersonal communication. This training would include

listening skills, feedback skills, and consensus building. If employees are truly engaged in the mission of the organization, they will be a more cost-effective and more compelling ambassador for the organization than advertising.

Summary

One of the reasons for studying two of these firms in particular is that they are on *Fortune's 2006 Most Admired List* of companies to work for, so they already have a reputation for valuing employees as assets. Two of the executives described their employee engagement mandate as coming from their CEOs. Two other executives mentioned how public relations research had guided their communications thinking and planning. Future research should consider how firms make the decision to value employees as a distinct public. In addition, future research should examine the rationale of valuing employees as publics to determine whether or not this is driven internally by a CEO or by a communication professional's knowledge and experience.

Other Findings

In addition to discussing how the findings relate to the extant literature, additional concepts emerged from this study that deserve attention. Specifically, these concepts are internal communication, employee engagement, formal versus informal communication, ethical communication, and stakeholder roles. Contributions from this study are described in this section.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is the word that best describes this process of utilizing face-to-face and other communication vehicles to build mutually beneficial relationships with employee publics. This word is an effective descriptor of this process because it is not

marketing-oriented and it is not public relations-oriented. Despite the emphasis on integrated marketing communication, these two disciplines struggle over who controls information both externally and internally. By utilizing the term internal communication, it does not imply any departmental ownership. It also differentiates itself from external communication, which is focused on customers. The benefit to organizations in promoting internal communication is to turn employees into brand ambassadors (Forrester, 2007). Firms benefit from employees who are enthusiastic advocates for their employer, as the Edelman (2006) study found that employees are more credible to customers than paid advertising. The benefits to employees include a sense of ownership in the firm's activities and goals, which can also enhance self-esteem and confidence in employees.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is not a term used in the relationship management literature (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Toth, 2000). It emerged from the interviews with executives, however, as a critical component of their job responsibilities. The executives in this study described their responsibilities as building dialogue with key audiences, which included both an internal component of employee engagement and an external component of managing their firm's reputation. These executives were aware that their employees are an important public, and considered them equal in value to investors or customers. Three of the firms had departments, in fact, specifically designed to manage relationships with employees. Referring back to the collective mindmap (Figure D), executives focus on engagement as a goal of their communication efforts, while employees focus on relationships with people as an outcome of the communication efforts of the company.

Because employee engagement was not part of the initial literature review, a search was conducted to determine how well entrenched this term is in the public relations literature. Several practitioner articles were found which discussed measuring employee engagement as a result of internal communication efforts (e.g., Sudhakar &Sujit, 2006). The only academic journal found that included articles on employee engagement is *Strategic Communication Management*. One study by Shaw (2006) asked both communication and HR professionals at companies around the world what drives employee engagement in their organizations. "According to over 1000 respondents, senior leadership is the single most important factor in building a committed and loyal workforce" (p. 14).

Employee engagement, then, is a concept that crosses the boundaries of human resources and communications professionals. If this concept is being driven by the goals of CEOs of companies, but is not being taught or researched by public relations scholars, there is an opportunity to provide guidance for our public relations and corporate communications professionals with new research in this area. This concept includes employees' interest and ability in expressing the goals and vision of the company, their commitment to their firm, and how their engagement affects the reputation of the firm. Employee engagement has potential benefits to both the employer and employees.

Formal vs. Informal Communication Approaches

One other noticeable difference among the interviewees was the way the corporate communications executives (from energy, banking, software, and the utility) talked about corporate communications versus how the executives from the more entrepreneurial firms (retail and construction materials) talked about employee communication. The corporate communications executives talked about a more formalized and strategic approach towards

employee communications, having a specific department, roles, and communication vehicles in place to accomplish specific communication goals. This is very similar to the Carroll and Buchholtz (2000) five-step method of stakeholder analysis, as outlined earlier. In addition, these communication executives even relied on public relations research to guide their communications planning.

On the other hand, the more entrepreneurial firms did not have a separate corporate communications department, but handled the employee communications function along with their human resource, management, or operations roles. Those executives recognized that communication is important, but managed communication through employees' immediate supervisors rather than from a corporate perspective. This probably reflects the less-developed organizational structures and fewer distinct roles in these types of organizations. Communication differences might be attributed to the presence of a dedicated communications professional in the organization.

Ethical Communication

This study found that employees interviewed trust managers more who are more open-minded and willing to listen. This finding supports the argument by business ethics scholar Archie Carroll (2006) that ethical organizations take care of their employees, working to build trust with them through open communication efforts, as well as demonstrating respect for employees and acting with integrity in all employee relations. He claims that if management does not demonstrate transparency, supportiveness and a willingness to listen, employees will end up with less trust in management. Trust could also be a mutual benefit to both employer and employee.

Both Carroll (2006) and Deetz (1992) identify open communication as ethical communication, or contributing to an ethical organization. They contend that if companies are willing to engage in dialogue with employees, then that is one way to examine a firm's values. Indeed, one executive mentioned in his interview that this strategy of internal communications was central to his firm's efforts to be an ethical organization.

Future research should measure the ethicality of a firm, its level of open communication in its organization, and the degree to which there is an opportunity for give and take between the company and employees. In addition, future research should ask employees if they prefer to work for employers that are perceived as more ethical. Paine (2003) found that customers want to buy from ethical organizations. Future research should consider whether or not customers and employees agree that open communication is more ethical, if customers are more willing to demonstrate a purchase preference for such firms, and whether customers or employees even care about ethical communication.

In addition, if firms are engaging in ethical communication and hence, ethical behavior, do these new internal communications professionals adhere to ethics codes, such as those for advertising or public relations professionals? A code might help clarify what the overriding goal of internal communication should be. Future research should consider whether a separate code of ethics for internal communications professionals would enhance both their visibility and their strategic performance.

Multiple stakeholder roles

Gronstedt (2000) believes that one impetus for internal communication is the fact that employees as stakeholders now have more than one role with a company. They might be an employee by day, but act as board members by night, representing their company to

nonprofit and governmental organizations. In addition, employees share their positive and negative feelings about their employer with friends and neighbors. This blurring of roles contributes to a sense that employees must be taken more seriously as a public. Future research should ask employees what other roles they play in their communities, to understand this multiple stakeholder role and how it affects both internal and external communication. This is another area that might provide mutual benefit to both employees and organizations.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made regarding the significance of this study on subsequent research, professional training, and development. The following sections discuss what next steps should be considered.

What we should research?

In order to advance the study of employees as publics and how internal communication can build trust and commitment, public relations scholars should study firms in-depth who do a good job of building strong relationships with employees, such as those on the *Fortune's Most Admired* list, whose employees are known for being advocates for their companies. Based on the findings of this study, it would be valuable to hypothesize that employees who feel attached enough to their organization to want to advocate for it must feel trusted by and committed to their organizations. Researchers should investigate if this word "employee engagement" describes what executives are looking for as well as what employees are feeling. Employee engagement is not used in mainstream public relations journals, so there is room to begin a new conversation. Is this a new role for public relations professionals? Does the impetus for this goal come from the professionals themselves, or from CEOs?

Researchers also need to understand if face-to-face communication is the only method for building these close relationships or if any electronic media or other tools can produce similar results. We might find that initial relationships are built face-to-face, but can be maintained through other communication vehicles. Future research should examine how trust is built over time (Mishra & Mishra, working paper) and whether face-to-face communication is the only way to establish and maintain trust. Future research should also consider whether or not face-to-face communication translates well into other communication vehicles. Can email communication become more like face-to-face communication if the other person's face is attached to email or instant messaging communication? Does this add a "sense of presence" (Rappa, personal conversation, 2007), where a photo creates a feeling of intimacy? It would also be valuable to explore the differences between synchronous and asynchronous communication. Does timeliness matter?

In addition, future research should consider which communication methods employees prefer and have access to. Face-to-face communication exemplifies the "high-tech, high-touch" approach advocated by Gronstedt (2000) to build trust internally with employees. Employees seem to crave this type of information and feedback from their bosses and even from each other.   Studies can be conducted to compare internal communication efforts via face-to-face communication with other communication channels. The firms that already employ multiple methods of communicating with employees would be a good place to start. Future research should consider how these communication methods contribute to relationship management efforts to manage relationships thoughtfully. This aspect becomes important in building the proper definition for relationship management.

In addition, researchers should investigate how firms are able to train managers to be good communicators, and if they are not able to, why not. One way to examine this would be to identify the Meyers-Briggs type indicators of the managers to determine if this open-minded manager is related to personality. If Myers-Briggs personality type is correlated with an open or closed-minded manager, then this will help communication executives know how to train managers to use their type to their advantage as well as to relate better to their subordinates of a different type. There might be other measures other than personality that would help predict open versus closed-minded managers.

Future research should also examine the role of middle managers to determine what affect they have on employees trust and commitment to the organization. The model on page 34 is not explicit about the role middle managers play in disseminating communication to employees. This study found that managerial trust was more powerful than company trust, and middle managers play an important role in that process. Examining the roles of employees, middle managers, and communication executives will help uncover the "nexus of tension" (Rappa and May, personal conversation, 2007) that exists at the middle management level as they implement with employees what executives plan.

There is also an opportunity to examine the differences between employees' relationships with business-to-business clients versus business-to-consumer publics. More firms are encouraging their employees to blog as a way to build relationships with customers (Mishra & Li, 2007). Future research should examine whether improving internal communication matter in both contexts by examining the amount of interaction employees have with each set of customers and if these relationships affect purchase intention or customer satisfaction.

Finally, researchers need to study the process of internal communication. Does talking and listening lead to strategizing, planning, and implementation? What steps must occur first to engage employees so that they feel like they are contributing to the mission of the organization?

What should we teach?

As public relations teachers, we need to instruct our students more about face-to-face communication and how it builds trust with others. As mentioned previously, the study by Steil, Barker, and Watsoh, (1983) shows that schools do not teach listening or effective communication as much as they are used in a day-to-day work environment. We also need to teach students how to give and receive feedback, as this seems to be a critical skill that employees seek in a good manager. We can also do a better job of teaching students how to communicate utilizing new media. As employees use email communication more, we need to teach when it is appropriate to use email and for what type of messages. We also need to train students to consider what alternate media is useful, if computers are not accessible during the workday. These types of interpersonal communication and group communication courses are typically taught in organization communication departments, which is separate from business or journalism schools. It might be beneficial to provide an interdisciplinary course in organizational communication that brings together the perspectives of all departments.

One executive mentioned that he was having difficulty finding professionals trained in the field of corporate communications, so teachers could fill this gap by helping students to see the relationship between internal and external communications. In addition, one executive mentioned that it would help if students understood the business aspects of their

jobs more, to be more helpful as counselors to their internal clients. This involves teaching

business skills as well as coaching skills in order to prepare them for this new job that is

developing.

Business schools also need to focus on interpersonal communication skills in addition

to the current emphasis on presentation and negotiation skills typically offered in MBA

programs. While public relations professionals might be the ones to plan internal

communication efforts, managers who typically come from business backgrounds will be the

ones implementing those internal communication efforts. Listening and feedback skills can

be taught in both public relations and business curricula.

What should professionals do differently?

In order to be better prepared to navigate the world of internal communications,

public relations professionals need to understand the similarities and differences between

internal and external publics. So much of their job focus is traditionally on external publics,

almost to the detriment of internal publics. If professionals are able to utilize scholarly

research on benefits of implementing internal communication, they will be able to see how it

can benefit their organizations, instead of waiting for an enlightened CEO to make them

aware.

Internal communications executives from this study see their role as more strategic in

nature, helping to coach their internal leaders on effective methods for communicating with

employees with the goal of greater employee engagement. The good news is that companies

are recognizing that internal communication with important employee publics helps to build

employee engagement and is a worthy goal for an organization, in addition to customer

engagement. Professionals should also create their own code of ethics in order to help them achieve employee engagement in an ethical way.

Employees are more committed to managers who spend time with them in face-to-face communication. The challenge will be for professionals to connect the trust employees have in their managers to trust in the company, in order to build lasting relationships that enhance firm reputation and employee well-being. This might be accomplished through a closer relationship communication executives have with middle managers so that they also feel connected to the company and can make that connection for lower-level employees. This could be accomplished through regular training and feedback with middle managers about the goals and mission of the organization, as well as to solicit their feedback on how the organization is doing to make progress towards those goals.

Researchers, teachers, and professionals can work together to improve the knowledge about internal communication by collaborating in research, teaching, mentoring, and strategy development. This cross-fertilization of knowledge will improve both the processes and implementation of internal communication.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. IRB Application with Appropriate Forms and Documents

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4"><i>For IRB Use</i></td></tr>
<tr><td>Behav</td><td>Biomed</td><td>Nurs</td><td>PH</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">IRB Study #_____</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Rec'd_____</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Full</td><td>Expedited</td><td>Exempt</td></tr>
</table>

Institutional Review Board

APPLICATION FOR IRB APPROVAL OF
HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
Version 30-May-2006

Part A.1. Contact Information, Agreements, and Signatures

Title of Study: The use of communication in Relationship management of employees   **Date:** 6-14-06

Name and degrees of Principal Investigator: Karen Mishra
Department: JOMC   Mailing address/CB #: 3365
UNC-CH PID: 710921930   Pager:
Phone #: 843-5866   Fax #: 962-0620   Email Address: mishra@email.unc.edu

For trainee-led projects: __ undergraduate _X graduate __ postdoc __ resident __ other
Name of faculty advisor: Dr. Lois Boynton
Department: JOMC   Mailing address/CB #: 3365
Phone #: 843-8342   Fax #: 962-0620   Email Address: lboynton@email.unc.edu

Name, phone number, email address of project manager or coordinator, if any:

List **all other project personnel** including co-investigators, and anyone else who has contact with subjects or identifiable data from subjects:

Name of funding source or sponsor:
_X_ not funded __ Federal __ State __ industry __ foundation __ UNC-CH
__ other (specify):   **Sponsor or award number**:

Include following items with your submission, where applicable.
  • Check the relevant items below and include one copy of all checked items 1-11 in the order listed.
  • Also include two additional collated sets of copies (sorted in the order listed) for items 1-7.
  → **Applications may be returned if these instructions are not followed.**

Check	Item	Total No. of Copies
X	1. This application. One copy must have original PI signatures.	3
X	2. Consent and assent forms, fact or information sheets; include phone and verbal consent scripts.	3
☐	3. HIPAA authorization addendum to consent form.	3
X	4. All recruitment materials including scripts, flyers and advertising, letters, emails.	3
X	5. Questionnaires, focus group guides, scripts used to guide phone or in-person interviews, etc.	3
☐	6. Protocol, grant application or proposal supporting this submission; (e.g., extramural grant application to NIH or foundation, industry protocol, student proposal).	3
☐	7. Documentation of reviews from any other committees (e.g., GCRC, Oncology Protocol Review Committee, or local review committees in Academic Affairs).	3

☐	8. Addendum for Multi-Site Studies where UNC-CH is the Lead Coordinating Center.	1
☐	9. Data use agreements (may be required for use of existing data from third parties).	1
X	10. Documentation of required training in human research ethics for all study personnel.	1
☐	11. Investigator Brochure if a drug study.	1

Principal Investigator: I will personally conduct or supervise this research study. I will ensure that this study is performed in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and University policies regarding human subjects research. I will obtain IRB approval before making any changes or additions to the project. I will notify the IRB of any other changes in the information provided in this application. I will provide progress reports to the IRB at least annually, or as requested. I will report promptly to the IRB all unanticipated problems or serious adverse events involving risk to human subjects. I will follow the IRB approved consent process for all subjects. I will ensure that all collaborators, students and employees assisting in this research study are informed about these obligations. All information given in this form is accurate and complete.

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

Faculty Advisor if PI is a Student or Trainee Investigator: I accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this study complies with all the obligations listed above for the PI.

_____   _____
Signature of Faculty Advisor   Date

Department or Division Chair, Center Director (or counterpart) of PI: (or Vice-Chair or Chair's designee if Chair is investigator or otherwise unable to review): I certify that this research is appropriate for this Principal Investigator, that the investigators are qualified to conduct the research, and that there are adequate resources (including financial, support and facilities) available. If my unit has a local review committee for pre-IRB review, this requirement has been satisfied. I support this application, and hereby submit it for further review.

_____   _____
Signature of Department Chair or designee   Date

_____   _____
Print Name of Department Chair or designee   Department

Part A.2. Summary Checklist

Are the following involved?	Yes	No
A.2.1. Existing data, research records, patient records, and/or human biological specimens?	__	_X_
A.2.2. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups with subjects?	_X_	__
A.2.3. Videotaping, audiotaping, filming of subjects (newly collected or existing)?	__	__X

A.2.4. Do you plan to enroll subjects from these vulnerable or select populations:
  a. UNC-CH students or UNC-CH employees? ....
  b. Non-English-speaking? ....
  c. Decisionally impaired? ....
  d. Patients? ....
  e. Prisoners, others involuntarily detained or incarcerated, or parolees? ....
  f. Pregnant women? ....
  g. Minors (less than 18 years)? *If yes*, give age range: to years ....
	
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		X__
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		_X_
		_X_

A.2.5. a. Is this a multi-site study (sites outside UNC-CH engaged in the research)?
  b. Is UNC-CH the sponsor or lead coordinating center?
    If yes, include the ***Addendum for Multi-site Studies where UNC-CH is the Lead Coordinating Center***.
    If yes, will any of these sites be outside the United States?
      If yes, provide contact information for the foreign IRB.
	__
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		X__
		X__
		
		_X

A.2.6. Will there be a data and safety monitoring committee (DSMB or DSMC)?	__	_X_
A.2.7. a. Are you collecting sensitive information such as sexual behavior, HIV status, recreational drug use, illegal behaviors, child/physical abuse, immigration status, etc? b. Do you plan to obtain a federal Certificate of Confidentiality for this study?	__ __	_X_ _X_
A.2.8. a. Investigational drugs? (provide **IND #**) b. Approved drugs for "non-FDA-approved" conditions? *All studies testing substances in humans must provide a letter of acknowledgement from the UNC Health Care Investigational Drug Service (IDS).*	__ __	X__ X__
A.2.9. Placebo(s)?	__	__X
A.2.10. Investigational devices, instruments, machines, software? (provide **IDE #**)	__	_X_
A.2.11. Fetal tissue?	__	_x_
A.2.12. Genetic studies on subjects' specimens?	__	X__
A.2.13. Storage of subjects' specimens for future research? *If yes, see instructions for **Consent for Stored Samples**.*	__	X__
A.2.14. Diagnostic or therapeutic ionizing radiation, or radioactive isotopes, which subjects would not receive otherwise? *If yes, approval by the **UNC-CH Radiation Safety Committee** is required.*	__	X__
A.2.15. Recombinant DNA or gene transfer to human subjects? *If yes, approval by the **UNC-CH Institutional Biosafety Committee** is required.*	__	_X_
A.2.16. Does this study involve UNC-CH cancer patients? *If yes, submit this application directly to the **Oncology Protocol Review Committee**.*	__	_X_
A.2.17. Will subjects be studied in the General Clinical Research Center (GCRC)? *If yes, obtain the **GCRC Addendum** from the GCRC and submit complete application (IRB application and Addendum) to the GCRC.*	__	__X

Part A.3. Conflict of Interest Questions and Certification

The following questions apply to **all investigators and study staff** engaged in the design, conduct, or reporting results of this project **and/or their immediate family members.** For these purposes, "family" includes the individual's spouse and dependent children. "Spouse" includes a person with whom one lives together in the same residence and with whom one shares responsibility for each other's welfare and shares financial obligations.

A.3.1. Currently or during the term of this research study, does any member of the research team or his/her family member have or expect to have:		
(a) A personal financial interest in or personal financial relationship (including gifts of cash or in-kind) with the sponsor of this study?	__ yes	_X_ no
(b) A personal financial interest in or personal financial relationship (including gifts of cash or in-kind) with an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?	__ yes	_X_ no
(c) A board membership of any kind or an executive position (paid or unpaid) with the sponsor of this study or with an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?	__ yes	X_ no
A.3.2. Has the University or has a University-related foundation received a cash or in-kind gift from the Sponsor of this study for the use or benefit of any member of the research team?	__ yes	X_ no
A.3.3. Has the University or has a University-related foundation received a cash or in-kind gift for the use or benefit of any member of the research team from an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?	__ yes	X_ no

If the answer to ANY of the questions above is *yes*, the affected research team member(s) must complete and submit to the Office of the University Counsel the form accessible at http://coi.unc.edu. List name(s) of all research team members for whom any answer to the questions above is *yes*:

_____

Certification by Principal Investigator: **By submitting this IRB application, I (the PI) certify that the information provided above is true and accurate regarding my own circumstances, that I have inquired of every UNC-Chapel Hill employee or trainee who will be engaged in the design, conduct or reporting of results of this project as to the questions set out above, and that I have instructed any such person who has answered "yes" to any of these questions to complete and submit for approval a Conflict of Interest Evaluation Form. I understand that as Principal Investigator I am obligated to ensure that any potential conflicts of interest that exist in relation to my study are reported as required by University policy.**

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

Faculty Advisor if PI is a Student or Trainee Investigator: **I accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the PI complies with the University's conflict of interest policies and procedures.**

_____   _____
Signature of Faculty Advisor   Date

Part A.4. Questions Common to All Studies

For all questions, if the study involves only secondary data analysis, focus on your proposed design, methods and procedures, and not those of the original study that produced the data you plan to use.

A.4.1. **Brief Summary**. Provide a *brief* non-technical description of the study, which will be used in IRB documentation as a description of the study. Typical summaries are 50-100 words.

Purpose: The purpose of this study will be to examine the communication methods organizations use with employees in order to build trusting and loyal relationships.

Participants:
Interviews with: 1) Founder of Wieden & Kennedy; 2) UNC alum who is VP of Corporate Communications with Wachovia, 3) Regional Manager of Starbucks, and 4) VP of Corporate Communications at SAS.
Focus Groups: employees of Wieden & Kennedy, Wachovia, SAS and Starbucks
Surveys of employees: Wieden & Kennedy, Wachovia, SAS and Starbucks

Procedures (methods): Interviews of Corporate executives, focus groups of middle-level employees, surveys of all employees

---

A.4.2. **Purpose and Rationale**. Provide a summary of the background information, state the research question(s), and tell why the study is needed. If a complete rationale and literature review are in an accompanying grant application or other type of proposal, only provide a brief summary here. If there is no proposal, provide a more extensive rationale and literature review, including references.

This dissertation will examine the impact of internal communication in an organization and its effect on employee trust, commitment and firm reputation. The relationship management literature (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) traditionally focuses on external publics to the exclusion of internal publics, such as employees. As a result, employees can often feel left out of the entire production process, thereby hurting the ultimate relationship with the customer (Lowenstein, 2006).

"Only 24 percent of employees consider themselves truly loyal, committed to their organization and its goals" (Lowenstein, 2006). Internal communication between an organization's leadership and its employees can be an important method for building critical relationships that harnesses the enthusiasm, loyalty (Reichheld, 2001) and trust (Mishra &

Mishra, 2005) of an organization's employees. Employees have important knowledge and

skills about both their jobs and the organization, providing employees the opportunity to be

ambassadors to the customer. This type of internal marketing to employees (Schultz,

Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1992) leads them to be better customer ambassadors

(Lowenstein, 2006). In addition, employees are critical stakeholders in terms of corporate

social responsibility (Paine, 2003), and have been overlooked in favor of investors and even

the environment for an organization to be accountable to. It has been demonstrated in the

teams literature that happy employees leads to better service, which leads to happy, loyal

customers (Mathieu, Gilson, & Ruddy, 2006). Finally, digital communication is a prevalent

method for developing relationships both internally and externally, as well as facilitating

information search (Rappa, 2006).

This study will incorporate in-depth interviews with executives from Starbucks, Wieden

& Kennedy, Wachovia, and SAS as well as focus groups with employees about their

perceptions of the importance of the link between internal and external communication.

Finally, a survey of both employees and customers will examine the role that internal

communication plays in employee trust and commitment.

A.4.3. **Subjects.** *You should describe the subject population even if your study does not involve direct interaction (e.g., existing records).* Specify number, gender, ethnicity, race, and age. Specify whether subjects are healthy volunteers or patients. If patients, specify any relevant disease or condition and indicate how potential subjects will be identified.

There will be 4 interviews; 8 focus groups of 10 employees each (2 at each company) and surveys of approximately 500 employees from Wieden & Kennedy, Wachovia, Starbucks, and SAS.

A.4.4. **Inclusion/exclusion criteria.** List required characteristics of potential subjects, and those that preclude enrollment or involvement of subjects or their data. Justify exclusion of any group, especially by criteria based on gender, ethnicity, race, or age. If pregnant women are excluded, or if women who become pregnant are withdrawn, specific justification must be provided.

There are no exclusion criteria. All employees are eligible to participate.

A.4.5. **Full description of the study design, methods and procedures.** Describe the research study. Discuss the study design; study procedures; sequential description of what subjects will be asked to do; assignment of subjects to various arms of the study if applicable; doses; frequency and route of administration of medication and other medical treatment if applicable; how data are to be collected (questionnaire, interview, focus group or specific procedure such as physical examination, venipuncture, etc.). Include information on who will collect data, who will conduct procedures or measurements. Indicate the number and duration of contacts with each subject; outcome measurements; and follow-up procedures. If the study involves medical treatment, distinguish standard care procedures from those that are research. If the study is a clinical trial involving patients as subjects and use of placebo control is involved, provide justification for the use of placebo controls.

The study will begin with in-depth interviews of the four individuals mentioned. Interview questions are in appendix D. Two focus groups will be conducted at each company. Focus group questions are in appendix E. Finally, surveys will be conducted of approximately 500 employees. The e-survey questions are listed in appendix F.

A.4.6. **Benefits to subjects and/or society.** Describe any potential for direct benefit to individual subjects, as well as the benefit to society based on scientific knowledge to be gained; these should be clearly distinguished. Consider the nature, magnitude, and likelihood of any direct benefit to subjects. If there is no direct benefit to the individual subject, say so here and in the consent form (if there is a consent form). Do not list monetary payment or other compensation as a benefit.

There are no known benefits nor risks to the individuals involved. The benefits will accrue to the academic community who are trying to better understand this issue.

A.4.7. **Full description of risks and measures to minimize risks.** Include risk of psychosocial harm (e.g., emotional distress, embarrassment, breach of confidentiality), economic harm (e.g., loss of employment or insurability, loss of professional standing or reputation, loss of standing within the community) and legal jeopardy (e.g., disclosure of illegal activity or negligence), as well as known side effects of study medication, if applicable, and risk of pain and physical injury. Describe what will be done to minimize these risks. Describe procedures for follow-up, when necessary, such as when subjects are found to be in need of medical or psychological referral. If there is no direct interaction with subjects, and risk is limited to breach of confidentiality (e.g., for existing data), state this.

Employee participants will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis. All interviewees have consented to participate. Focus group participants will be drawn from volunteers.

A.4.8. **Data analysis.** Tell how the qualitative and/or quantitative data will be analyzed. Explain how the sample size is sufficient to achieve the study aims. This might include a formal power calculation or explanation of why a small sample is sufficient (e.g., qualitative research, pilot studies).

The interview and focus group data will be analyzed using qualitative analysis for themes and/or trends. The survey will be analyzed using SPSS.

A.4.9. **Will you collect or receive any of the following identifiers?** Does not apply to consent forms.

___ No _**_X_** Yes_ *If yes, check all that apply*:

a. _**_X_**_Names
b. _**_X**_ Telephone numbers
c. ____ Any elements of dates (other than year) for dates directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, date of death. For ages over 89: all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age, except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 and older
d. ____ Any geographic subdivisions smaller than a State, including street address, city, county, precinct, zip code and their equivalent geocodes, except for the initial three digits of a zip code
e. ____ Fax numbers
f. _**_X**_ Electronic mail addresses
g. ____ Social security numbers
h. ____ Medical record numbers
i. ____ Health plan beneficiary numbers
j. ____ Account numbers
k. ____ Certificate/license numbers
l. ____ Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers (VIN), including license plate numbers
m. ____ Device identifiers and serial numbers (e.g., implanted medical device)
n. ____ Web universal resource locators (URLs)
o. ____ Internet protocol (IP) address numbers
p. ____ Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints
q. ____ Full face photographic images and any comparable images
r. ____ Any other unique identifying number, characteristic or code, other than dummy identifiers that are not derived from actual identifiers and for which the re-identification key is maintained by the health care provider and not disclosed to the researcher

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A.4.10. **Confidentiality of the data**. Describe procedures for maintaining confidentiality of the data you will collect or will receive. Describe how you will protect the data from access by those not authorized. How will data be transmitted among research personnel? Where relevant, discuss the potential for deductive disclosure (i.e., directly identifying subjects from a combination of indirect IDs).

Data will be kept confidential because it will require password protection for access to it on my personal laptop.

A.4.11. **Data sharing.** With whom will *identifiable* (contains any of the 18 identifiers listed in question A.4.9 above) data be shared outside the immediate research team? For each, explain confidentiality measures. Include data use agreements, if any.

____ No one
____ Coordinating Center**:**
____ Statisticians**:**
____ Consultants**:**
____ Other researchers**:**
____ Registries**:**
____ Sponsors:
____ External labs for additional testing:
____ Journals:

__ Publicly available dataset:
_X_ Other: My dissertation chair, Dr. Lois Boynton

A.4.12. **Data security for storage and transmission**. Please check all that apply.

For electronic data:
  _X_ Secure network   _X_ Password access   __ Encryption
  __ Other (describe):
  __ Portable storage (e.g., laptop computer, flash drive)
      Describe how data will be protected for any portable device:

For hardcopy data (including human biological specimens, CDs, tapes, etc.):
  __ Data de-identified by research team (stripped of the 18 identifiers listed in question 7 above)
  _X_ Locked suite or office
  __ Locked cabinet
  __ Data coded by research team with a master list secured and kept separately
  __ Other (describe):

A.4.13. **Post-study disposition of identifiable data or human biological materials**. Describe your plans for disposition of data or human biological specimens that are identifiable in any way (directly or via indirect codes) once the study has ended. Describe your plan to destroy identifiers, if you will do so.

Data will be kept locked up for five years.

Part A.5. The Consent Process and Consent Documentation (including Waivers)

The standard consent process is for all subjects to sign a document containing all the elements of informed consent, as specified in the federal regulations. Some or all of the elements of consent, including signatures, may be altered or waived under certain circumstances.

- If you will obtain consent in any manner, complete **section A.5.1**.
- If you are obtaining consent, but requesting a waiver of the requirement for a signed consent document, complete **section A.5.2**.
- If you are requesting a waiver of any or all of the elements of consent, complete **section A.5.3**.

You may need to complete more than one section. For example, if you are conducting a phone survey with verbal consent, complete sections A.5.1, A.5.2, and possibly A.5.3.

A.5.1. **Describe the process of obtaining informed consent from subjects**. If children will be enrolled as subjects, describe the provisions for obtaining parental permission and assent of the child. If decisionally impaired adults are to be enrolled, describe the provision for obtaining surrogate consent from a legally authorized representative (LAR). If non-English speaking people will be enrolled, explain how consent in the native language will be obtained. Address both written translation of the consent and the availability of oral interpretation. *After you have completed this part A.5.1, if you are not requesting a waiver of any type, you are done with Part A.5.; proceed to Part B.*

Consent will be obtained from interviewees prior to conducting the interviews. See Consent Form A.

Consent will be obtained from focus group participants at the start of the focus group session. See Consent Form B.

Implied consent will be obtained from the survey participants as they begin the survey process. They will be informed that the survey is voluntary and that they may quit at any time. See Consent Form C.

A.5.2. **Justification for a waiver of *written* (i.e., signed) consent**. *The default is for subjects to sign a written document that contains all the elements of informed consent.* Under limited circumstances, the requirement for a signed consent form may be waived by the IRB if either of the following is true:	
a. The only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality (e.g., study involves sensitive data that could be damaging if disclosed). **Explain.**	__ yes __ no
b. The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context (e.g., phone survey). **Explain.** *If you checked "yes" to either, will consent be oral? Will you give out a fact sheet? Use an online consent form, or include information as part of the survey itself, etc?*	__ yes __ no

→   If you have justified a waiver of written (signed) consent (A.5.2), you should complete A.5.3 *only* if your consent process will not include all the other elements of consent.

A.5.3. **Justification for a full or partial waiver of consent.** *The default is for subjects to give informed consent.* A waiver might be requested for research involving only existing data or human biological specimens (see also Part C). More rarely, it might be requested when the research design requires withholding some study details at the outset (e.g., behavioral research involving deception). In limited circumstances, parental permission may be waived. This section should also be completed for a waiver of HIPAA authorization if research involves Protected Health Information (PHI) subject to HIPAA regulation, such as patient records.

__ Requesting **waiver of some elements** (specify; see SOP 28 on the IRB web site):
__ Requesting **waiver of consent entirely**
If you check either of the boxes above, answer items a-f.. To justify a full waiver of the requirement for informed consent, you must be able to answer "yes" (or "not applicable" for question c) to items a-f. **Insert brief explanations that support your answers.**

a. Will the research involve <u>no greater than minimal risk</u> to subjects or to their privacy? **Explain.**	__ yes __ no

b. Is it true that the waiver will *not* adversely affect the rights and welfare of subjects? *(Consider the right of privacy and possible risk of breach of*	__ yes __ no

confidentiality in light of the information you wish to gather.) **Explain.**	

c. When applicable to your study, do you have plans to provide subjects with pertinent information after their participation is over? *(e.g., Will you provide details withheld during consent, or tell subjects if you found information with direct clinical relevance? This may be an uncommon scenario.)* **Explain**.	__ yes __ not applicable

d. Would the research be impracticable without the waiver? *(If you checked "yes," explain how the requirement to obtain consent would make the research impracticable, e.g., are most of the subjects lost to follow-up or deceased?).* **Explain.**	__ yes __ no

e. Is the risk to privacy reasonable in relation to benefits to be gained or the importance of the knowledge to be gained? **Explain.**	__ yes __ no

If you are accessing patient records for this research, you must also be able to answer "yes" to item f to justify a waiver of HIPAA authorization from the subjects.

f. Would the research be impracticable if you could not record (or use) Protected Health Information (PHI)? *(If you checked "yes," explain how* not *recording or using PHI would make the research impracticable).* **Explain.**	__ yes __ no

Part B. Questions for Studies that Involve Direct Interaction with Human Subjects

→ *If this does not apply to your study, do not submit this section.*

B.1. **Methods of recruiting.** Describe how and where subjects will be identified and recruited. Indicate who will do the recruiting, and tell how subjects will be contacted. Describe efforts to ensure equal access to participation among women and minorities. Describe how you will protect the privacy of potential subjects during recruitment. *For prospective subjects whose status (e.g., as patient or client), condition, or contact information is not publicly available (e.g., from a phone book or public web site), the initial contact should be made with legitimate knowledge of the subjects' circumstances. Ideally, the individual with such knowledge should seek prospective subjects' permission to release names to the PI for recruitment. Alternatively, the knowledgeable individual could provide information about the study, including contact information for the investigator, so that interested prospective subjects can contact the investigator.* Provide the IRB with a copy of any document or script that will be used to obtain the patients' permission for release of names or to introduce the study. Check with your IRB for further guidance.

All participants will be recruited via email. Interviewees will receive a personal note of invitation to participate (Form G). Focus group and survey participants will see an invitation to participate via their company intranets or through email (Forms H & I).

B.2. **Protected Health Information (PHI).** If you need to access Protected Health Information (PHI) to identify potential subjects who will then be contacted, you will need a *limited waiver of HIPAA authorization.* If this applies to your study, please provide the following information.

a. Will the information collected be limited only to that necessary to contact the subjects to ask if they are interested in participating in the study?

b. How will confidentiality/privacy be protected prior to ascertaining desire to participate?

c. When and how will you destroy the contact information if an individual declines participation?

B.3. **Duration of entire study and duration of an individual subject's participation, including follow-up evaluation if applicable.** Include the number of required contacts and approximate duration of each contact.

The duration of the study will be from July 1, 2006 until May 1, 2007.

Interviewees will be contacted once for an invitation, once to set up a mutually convenient time to talk, and once to be thanked for their participation.

Focus group participants will be contacted once via their company intranets to ask for their voluntary participation. They will then be contacted via email once more to instruct them on the time for the focus group. Finally, they will be contacted with thanks for their participation.

Survey participants will be contacted once via their company intranets to ask for their voluntary participation. They will then be contacted via email once more with instructions on how to complete the on-line survey.

B.4. **Where will the subjects be studied?** Describe locations where subjects will be studied, both on and off the UNC-CH campus.

The interviewees and focus group participants will be studied in Portland, Oregon, Charlotte, NC, RTP, NC, and Durham, NC. The employees may complete the surveys online from their offices or from their home.

B.5. **Privacy.** Describe procedures that will ensure privacy of the subjects in this study. Examples include the setting for interviews, phone conversations, or physical examinations; communication methods or mailed materials (e.g., mailings should not indicate disease status or focus of study on the envelope).

Interviews will be conducted in the privacy of their offices or via telephone.

B.6. **Inducements for participation.** Describe all inducements to participate, monetary or non-monetary. If monetary, specify the amount and schedule for payments and how this will be prorated if the subject withdraws (or is withdrawn) from the study prior to completing it. For compensation in foreign currency, provide a US$ equivalent. Provide evidence that the amount is not coercive (e.g., describe purchasing power for foreign countries). Include food or refreshments that may be provided.

There are no inducements for participation with the interviewees. There will be cookies and bottled water provided for the focus group participants. There are no inducements for the employees to participate in the survey.

B.7. **Costs to be borne by subjects.** Include child care, travel, parking, clinic fees, diagnostic and laboratory studies, drugs, devices, all professional fees, etc. If there are no costs to subjects other than their time to participate, indicate this.

There are no costs to be borne by the participants, except for their time.

IRB Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

Appendix B: Consent form for executive interviewees to participate in interviews

Appendix C: Consent form for employee interviewees to participate in interviews

Appendix D: Implied consent for e-survey

Appendix E: Executive interview questions

Appendix F: Employee interview questions

Appendix G: e-survey

Appendix H: Recruitment message for executive interviewees

Appendix I: Recruitment message for employee interviews

Appendix J: Recruitment message for survey participants

Appendix A. IRB Approval Form

THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS

TO: Karen Mishra
Journalism/Mass Communication
CB:3365 Carroll Hall , Chapel Hill , NC , US

FROM: Behavioral IRB

APPROVAL DATE: 12/15/2006

EXPIRATION DATE OF APPROVAL: 12/14/2007

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review
Submission Type: Initial
Expedited Category: 7.Survey/group chars
Study #: 06-0950
Study Title: Communication Methods Used with Employees

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated.

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other recruitment materials. The expectation is that you will copy these for use with subjects.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification form at ohre.unc.edu/forms). Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB using the adverse event form at the same web site.

Study Description:
Purpose: To examine the communication methods organizations use with employees in order to build trusting and loyal relationships.

Procedures: Interview: 1) Founder of Wieden and Kennedy; 2) UNC alum who is VP of Corporate Communications with Wachovia, 3) Regional Manager of Starbucks, and 4) VP of Corporate Communications at SAS. Cconduct Focus Groups: Employees of Wieden and Kennedy, Wachovia, SAS and Starbucks. Survey Employees of Wieden and Kennedy, Wachovia, SAS and Starbucks. Participants: 4 interviewees; 8 focus groups of 10 employees each (2/company); and 500 survey respondents. N=584.

Procedures: Interviews of Corporate executives, focus groups of middle-level employees, surveys of all employees.

Details:
The following Federal regulation is applicable to this research study.

This research meets the criteria for a waiver of written (signed) consent according to 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2).

If you have any questions or concerns about your study, please contact the Behavioral IRB at 966-3113, or email the office at aa-irb-chair@unc.edu.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), and 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), where applicable.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill holds a Federal Wide Assurance approved by the Office for Human Research Protections, Department of Health and Human Services (FWA # 4801).

Good luck with your interesting study!

****
Lawrence B. Rosenfeld, Ph.D.
Office of Human Research Ethics
Co-Chair, Behavioral Institutional Review Board
CB# 7097, Medical School, Bldg 52
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7097
aa-irb-chair@unc.edu
phone 919-962-7760; fax 919-843-5576
****

CC: Lois Boynton, Journalism/mass Communication, CB:3365 397 Carroll Hall, Faculty Advisor

Appendix B. Consent form for executive interviewees to participate in interviews

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form

_____

IRB Study #_____
Consent Form Version Date: _____

Title of Study: The use of communication in relationship management of employees

Principal Investigator: Karen E. Mishra
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Journalism and Mass Communication
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-843-5866
Email Address: *mishra@email.unc.edu*
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lois Boynton
Funding Source: n/a

Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-5866 or 919-619-0277
Study Contact email: mishra@email.unc.edu

_____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.
You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.
You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn about how organizations communicate with employees about its vision and mission. This study is also interested in how organizations perceive employees as a distinct "public" or stakeholder.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are recognized as an influential communications executive in your community/industry and will be able to provide valuable insights as to the development and dispersion of employee communication.

Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?
You should not be in this study if you prefer your work to remain confidential.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 4 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
This study is expected to last approximately one hour. You will be asked to participate in one extended interview, with follow-up questions asked via email.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
- *If you participate in this study, I will first ask to arrange a time convenient to you to schedule an interview, either in-person or by phone.*
- *Then, I will email follow-up questions as they arise, after we have completed the initial interview.*
- *The process will be completed by the end of April, 2007.*

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may also expect to benefit by obtaining a copy of my paper, if you are interested in the results of my findings.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
There are no known risks to this study, unless you are uncomfortable talking about yourself and your work. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

How will your privacy be protected?
Privacy and confidentiality will be protected, if you wish. I would recommend using a pseudonym and nonspecific title in order to protect your identity. I will be the only person to have specific access to your interview comments. They will be locked in my office, and password protected on my computer.

Participants *will* be identified by pseudonym in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study, other than your time.

What if you are a UNC student?
You may choose not to be in the study or to stop being in the study before it is over at any time. This will not affect your class standing or grades at UNC-Chapel Hill. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you take part in this research.

What if you are a UNC employee?
Taking part in this research is not a part of your University duties, and refusing will not affect your job. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if you take part in this research.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Behavioral Institutional Review Board at 919-962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu.

- -
Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily

agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of Research Participant   Date

_____
Printed Name of Research Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form

_____

IRB Study #JOMC _____

Title of Study: The use of communication in relationship management of employees

Principal Investigator: Karen E. Mishra
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Journalism and Mass Communication
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-843-5866
Email Address: *mishra@email.unc.edu*
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lois Boynton
Funding Source: n/a

Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-5866 or 919-619-0277
Study Contact email: mishra@email.unc.edu

_____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.
You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help professional and academic researchers in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn about how organizations communicate with employees about its vision and mission. This study is also interested in how organizations perceive employees as a distinct "public" or stakeholder.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are recognized as an influential communications manager in your community/industry and will be able to provide valuable insights as to the development and dispersion of employee communication.

Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?
You should not be in this study if you prefer your work to remain confidential.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 4 people participating in a series of interviews in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
This study is expected to last approximately 90 minutes. You will be asked to participate in one interview session, with follow-up questions asked via e-mail.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

- *If you participate in this study, I will first ask to arrange a time convenient to you to schedule the focus group.*
- *Then, the interview will be scheduled and held at a date convenient to you.*
- *After the interview, I will email follow-up questions as they arise.*
- *The process will be completed by the end of March, 2007.*
- *Your participation on any question is voluntary. You may skip any question you choose not to answer and you may also withdraw from participating at any time. The questions include:*

  1. Tell me about your background and work experience.

  2. What is your current role in this organization?

  3. How would you rate your company on the job it does communicating with you?

  4. How would you rate the job your company does communicating to customers?

  5. Are there different messages for employees than customers?

  6. How do you think employees are treated in your company?

  7. How does your company tell you about new products and services? About layoffs?

  8. Where do you get good news from? Bad news?

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may also expect to benefit by participating in this study by obtaining a copy of my paper, if you are interested in the results of my findings.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There are no known risks to this study, unless you are uncomfortable talking about yourself and your work. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher. I will ask that all comments made during the focus group session be kept confidential.

How will your privacy be protected?

Privacy and confidentiality will be protected, if you wish, using a pseudonym. I will be the only person to have specific access to your interview comments. They will be locked in my office, and password protected on my computer.

Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study, other than your time.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Behavioral Institutional Review Board at 919-962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu.

- -

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of Research Participant   Date

_____   _____   _____
Printed Name of Research Participant   email address   mailing address
                                                                       If you want a copy

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix D. Implied Consent for e-survey

By participating in this on-line survey, you agree to participate in a study being conducted by a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Your participation is voluntary and you may quit at any time. All precautions have been taken so that there are no risks to your participation, unless you feel uncomfortable answering questions about the organization you work for and your job. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the principal investigator, Karen Mishra at mishra@email.unc.edu or 619-0277 or the Institutional Review Board at *919-962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu.*

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.
You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help professional and academic researchers in the future.   You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn about how organizations communicate with employees about its vision and mission. This study is also interested in how organizations perceive employees as a distinct "public" or stakeholder.

Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?
You should not be in this study if you prefer your opinions about your workplace to remain confidential.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 500 people participating in this survey in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
This study is expected to last approximately 15 minutes. You will be asked to participate in one survey session.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may also expect to benefit by participating in this study by obtaining a copy of my paper, if you are interested in the results of my findings.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
There are no known risks to this study, unless you are uncomfortable talking about yourself and your work. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

How will your privacy be protected?
Privacy and confidentiality will be protected, as your name will not be asked, only demographic information. I will be the only person to have specific access to your interview comments. They will be locked in my office, and password protected on my computer.

Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal

information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study, other than your time.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare.   If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Behavioral Institutional Review Board at 919-962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu.

Appendix E. Executive Interview Questions
(with probing questions)

1. Tell me about your background and work experience.

2. What is your current role in this company?
    Probes:
        o   What department do you work in?
        o   How many people do you manage?
        o   What other departments do you interact with on a daily basis?
        o   Who do you report to?

3. How do you define corporate communication?
    Probes:
        o   What is that definition based upon?
        o   What is your experience with corporate communication?
        o   Who is responsible for corporate communication at your company?

4. What role does corporate communication play in your company?
    Probes:
        o   Where is the focal point of the company's efforts?
        o   Is it focused on customers?
        o   Is it focused on employees?
        o   Is it focused on investors?
        o   Is it focused on prospective customers?
        o   Is it focused on new product introductions? Brand image?

5. What role do employees play in corporate communication?
    Probes:
        o   Are employees included in the corporate communication efforts?
        o   Do employees help craft the message to customers?
        o   Are employees aware of the message in order to help deliver the message?

6. How would you describe the internal employee relations in your organization?
    Probes:
        o   Do you have a union in your company? Why or why not?
        o   Do you have much turnover here? Why or why not?
        o   What is the turnover rate here in a given year?
        o   What do you attribute that rate to?

7. What is your definition of effective communication or what makes communication with employees effective?

8. What methods are most effective for management to communicate with employees?
    Probes: Face-to-face; email; memos

9. Whose role is it to ensure that there is effective communications between the organization and employees?

 Probes:
- o Each manager
- o Human resources
- o Public relations

10. What is the difference between internal and external communications for your firm?

 Probes:
- o Do you have separate staffs?
- o Do you have separate managers?
- o Do these groups work together in crafting the messages?

11. How does your perception of effective communication impact your perception of your company?

 Probes:
- • Employees who are efficient?
- • Loyal employees?
- • Good retention rate?
- • Good customer relationships?
- • Positive reputation for the firm?

Appendix F. Employee Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your background and work experience.

2. What is your current role in this organization?
     Probe: How long have your worked here?

3. How would you rate your company on the job it does communicating with you?
     Probes:
     • Reason for your rating
     • Do they tell you things?
     • Do they ask you things?
     • How often?
     • What kind of information does the company provide?
     • How trustworthy is your company?

4. How would you rate the job your company does communicating to customers?
     Probes:
     • Reason for your rating
     • Do they tell them things?
     • Do they ask them things?
     • How often?
     • What kind of information does the company provide?
     • How trustworthy is your company?

5. Are there different messages for employees than customers?
     Probe:
     • How do the messages compare?

6. How do you think employees are treated in your company?
     Probe:
     • How do you think you are treated?
     • How happy are most employees?

7. How does your company tell you about new products and services? About layoffs?
     Probe: what are the differences in how the company delivers good or bad news?

8. Where do you get good news from? Bad news?
     Probe:
     • How does the grapevine work?
     • What sources do you trust for good or bad news?

Appendix G. e-Survey of Communication Strategies with Employees as Publics

	When your company communicates to you about new products, services, or initiatives…
	1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree
1.	My manager uses face-to-face communication.
2.	My manager uses the telephone to communicate.
3.	My manager uses email to communicate.
	In general, how much do you agree or disagree with these statements:
4.	My manager understands customers needs well.
5.	My manager understands employees needs well.
6.	My manager cooperates with us to help do the job well.
7.	My manager provides valuable feedback.
8.	My manager makes recommendations for continuous improvement on an ongoing basis.
	To what extent would you characterize *face-to-face communication* as having the ability to:
	Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)
9.	Give and receive timely feedback
10.	Provide non-verbal feedback (facial gestures, posture, etc.)
11.	Provide immediate feedback
12.	Convey multiple types of information (verbal and nonverbal)
	To what extent would you characterize *written communication* (such as memos or letters) as having the ability to:
13.	Give and receive timely feedback
14.	Provide non-verbal feedback
15.	Provide immediate feedback
16.	Convey multiple types of information (verbal and nonverbal)
	To what extent would you characterize *electronic communication* (such as email or intranets) as having the ability to:
17.	Give and receive timely feedback
18.	Provide non-verbal feedback
19.	Provide immediate feedback
20.	Convey multiple types of information (verbal and nonverbal)
	Control Mutuality
	To what extent to you agree with these statements? *Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)*
21.	This company and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
22.	This company believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.
23.	In dealing with people like me, this company has a tendency to throw its weight around.

24.	This company really listens to what people like me have to say.
25.	The management of this company gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.
26.	When I have an opportunity to interact with the management of this company, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation.
27.	This company won't cooperate with people like me.
28.	I believe people like me have influence on the decision-makers of this company.
	Communal Relationships
29.	This company does not especially enjoy giving others aid.
30.	This company is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.
31.	I feel that this company takes advantage of people who are vulnerable.
32.	I think that this company succeeds by stepping on other people.
33.	This company helps people like me without expecting anything in return.
34.	I don't consider this to be a particularly helpful company for me.
35.	I feel that this company tries to get the upper hand.
	Exchange Relationships
36.	Whenever this company gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.
37.	Even though people like me have had a relationship with this company for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.
38.	This company will compromise with people like me when it knows that it will gain something.
39.	This company takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization.
	Trust
	Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)
40.	This company treats people like me fairly and justly.
41.	Whenever this company makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
42.	This company can be relied on to keep its promises
43.	I believe that this company takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
44.	I feel very confident about this company's expertise.

45.	This company has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
46.	Sound principles seem to guide this company's behavior.
47.	This company does not mislead people like me.
48.	I am very willing to let this company make decisions for people like me.
49.	I think it is important to watch this company closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.
50.	This company is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.
	Trust
51.	My manager is straightforward with me
52.	My manager is competent and knowledgeable
53.	My manager does not try to get out of his/her commitments
54.	My manager does not take advantage of me
55.	My manager communicates honestly with me
56.	My manager can contribute to my company's success
57.	My manager behaves consistently
58.	My manager does not exploit me
59.	My manager does not mislead me in his/her communications
60.	My manager can help my company survive during the next decade
61.	My manager is reliable
62.	My manager cares about my best interests
63.	My manager does not withhold important information from me
64.	My manager is concerned for my welfare
65.	My manager can be counted on
66.	My manager can help solve important problems faced by my company

67.	My manager can be trusted
68.	If I had my way, I wouldn't let my company have any influence over issues that are important to me.
69.	I would be willing to let my company have complete control over my future in this company.
70.	I really wish I had a good way to keep an eye on my company.
71.	I would be comfortable giving my company a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor his/her (its) actions.
72.	If someone questioned my company's motives, I would give my company the benefit of the doubt.
	Commitment
	Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)
73.	I feel that this company is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.
74.	I can see that this company wants to maintain a relationship with people like me
75.	There is a long-lasting bond between this company and people like me
76.	Compared to other companies I have worked for, I value my relationship with this company more
77.	I would rather work together with this company than not
78.	I have no desire to have a relationship with this company.
79.	I feel a sense of loyalty to this company.
80.	I could not care less about this organization.
	Affective Commitment
81.	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this company
82.	I enjoy discussing my company with people outside it
83.	I really feel as if this company's problems are my own
84.	I think I could easily become as attached to another company as I am to this one
85.	I do not feel like "part of the family" at this company
86.	I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this company

87.	This company has a great deal of personal meaning for me
88.	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this company
	Continuance Commitment
89.	It would be very hard for me to leave this company right now, even if I wanted to
90.	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my company now
91.	It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave this company in the near future
92.	Right now, staying with this company is a matter of necessity as much as desire
93.	I believe that I have too few options to consider leaving this company
94.	One of the few negative consequences of leaving this company would be the lack of available alternatives
95.	I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up
96.	One of the major reasons I continue to work for my company is that another company may not match the overall benefits I have here
	Normative Commitment
97.	If I had not already put so much of myself into this company, I might consider working elsewhere
98.	I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer
99.	Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave this company right now
100.	I would feel guilty if I left my company right now
101.	This company deserves my loyalty
102.	I would not leave my company right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it
103.	I owe a great deal to this company
	Describe your agreement with this statement: *Not at all (1); To a Very Great Extent (7)*
104.	My company has an outstanding reputation.
105.	If you are getting bad news from your manager, do you prefer • Face-to-face communication • Written communication

	• Email communication

106.	If you are getting good news from your manager, do you prefer
	  • Face-to-face communication
	  • Written communication
	  • Email communication

107.	If you are giving bad news to your employees, do you prefer using
	  • Face-to-face communication
	  • Written communication
	  • Email communication

108.	If you are giving good news to your employees, do you prefer using
	  • Face-to-face communication
	  • Written communication
	  • Email communication

109.	What is your age?
110.	What is your gender?
111.	What is your ethnicity?
112.	What is your level of education?
113.	What is your job at this company? Job Title?
114.	How many people are under your direct supervision?
115.	How long have you worked at this company?
116.	How much longer do you expect to work at this company?

Appendix H: Recruitment message for executive interviewees

My name is Karen Mishra and I'm a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I'm writing my dissertation on employee communication and I would like to interview you about your firm's employee communication and what your philosophy is about employee communication.

The interview would take no more than one hour and I'm happy to schedule it at your convenience, either in-person or on the phone. I'm also happy to send you the list of questions ahead of time in order for you to know exactly what this study entails. I'm hoping that you'll have time early this fall to participate in the interview.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at mishra@email.unc.edu or 919-619-0277.

Thank you.

Karen Mishra
Roy H. Park Fellow
UNC
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
mishra@email.unc.edu

Appendix I: Recruitment message for employee interviews

My name is Karen Mishra and I'm a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I'm writing my dissertation on employee communication and I would like to invite you to participate in an interview about how your firm handles employee communication and what your philosophy is about employee communication.

The interview would take no more than one hour. I'm also happy to send you the list of questions ahead of time in order for you to know exactly what this study entails. I'm hoping that you'll have time early this fall to participate in this interview. The date for your interview is _____.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at mishra@email.unc.edu or 919-619-0277.

Thank you.

Karen Mishra
Roy H. Park Fellow
UNC
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
mishra@email.unc.edu

Appendix J: Recruitment message for survey participants

My name is Karen Mishra and I'm a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I'm writing my dissertation on employee communication and I would like to invite you to participate in a survey about how your firm handles employee communication.

The survey would take no more than 15 minutes to complete and can be completed on-line, as your leisure. I'm hoping that you'll have time in one month to participate in the survey. The survey will be ready for you to take the first week of December.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at mishra@email.unc.edu or 919-619-0277 and send me your email address. I will keep this information confidential and will only use it to send you the link for the survey.

Thank you.

Karen Mishra
Roy H. Park Fellow
UNC
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
mishra@email.unc.edu

Appendix B. Analytical Memo

May 1, 2006

1. If the SB employees I meet are so happy, what causes this? I'm interested because it is one of the things that bring me back to Starbucks.

- Is it the type of communication do they use on a daily basis with their manager? This began in a company that has happy employees, so I figured that the managers and/or company must be doing well in order for the employees to be so happy and to keep their jobs for so long.

- Is it a nice boss?

- Do they feel involved in the mission of the organization?

2. I found that these employees are happier when they have good relationships with their manager, which includes good communication.

- Communication means being able to talk

- Communication also means their boss is a good listener

3. Employees talk more about interpersonal communication being the critical link as opposed to a formal communications plan.

4. I need to ask the Executives I interview how they feel about communication skills and whether they feel that specific efforts to improve communication between employees and managers make an important difference to the company's mission.

5. Maybe the flow of a model looks like this:
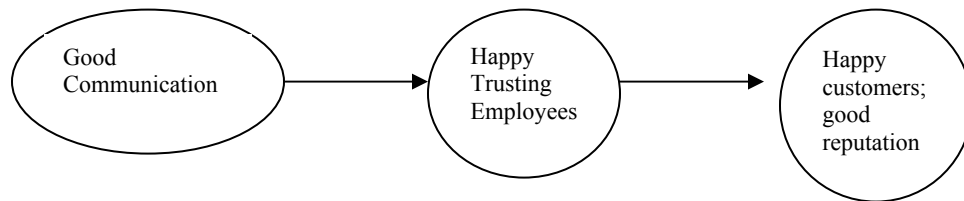
6. The employee concepts of talking, feedback and open-minded manager all fit under the heading of "good communication." The concepts of people and customer impact all have to do with happy employees and reputation.

7. Executives don't seem to use the same words as employees. They talk about the communication tools they have to use to have a dialogue with key audiences, such as face-to-face communication or owning all other communication channels. This could also fit under good communication, but only if it is done well. Executives also talk about their twin goals of employee engagement and managing reputation. Does engagement lead to happy employees? Does managing a reputation automatically mean that a positive one will emerge?

Appendix C. Theoretical Memo

Relationship Management is the concept that relates how public relations professionals build relationships with important publics. The question is: how do they build those relationships? What specific skills are important?

- Organizational communication: used in CSR literature to describe how organizations communicate with employees

- Internal public relations: this is a new term that describes how PR professionals include employees as publics

- Internal marketing: this term is not used much in the marketing literature, but seems intuitive

- Inward marketing: This is what Bob Lauterborn calls internal communication. He feels like this is a missing component of the 4Cs.

1. Who is responsible for this?

2. What is the role of public relations?

3. Is there a role in PR that includes this job?

4. The executive interviews reveal that these corporate communications executives do not use any of these words—they use internal communication to describe what they do. To them, this is a new and distinctive niche. Maybe they are right. How does this fit with the literature on publics, trust and commitment?

5. The survey will use the questions on rich communication as a proxy for internal communication, as well as established measures on publics, trust, and commitment.

Appendix D. List of Respondents' Employers

Question 91: What company or industry do you work for?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	10	8.9	8.9	8.9
ad/pr agency	1	.9	.9	9.8
advertising agency/marketing services	1	.9	.9	10.7
Aircraft systems manufacturing	1	.9	.9	11.6
Automotive Manufacturing Supplier	1	.9	.9	12.5
Bank of America	2	1.8	1.8	14.3
banking	1	.9	.9	15.2
Banking	2	1.8	1.8	17.0
BASF Corporation / Chemical Industry	1	.9	.9	17.9
Capstrat Communications	1	.9	.9	18.8
Chemical Industry	1	.9	.9	19.6
Chemical Multinational Supplier	1	.9	.9	20.5
Commercial	1	.9	.9	21.4
communications	1	.9	.9	22.3
con-e-co	1	.9	.9	23.2
Concrete Equipment Company, Inc.	1	.9	.9	24.1
construction products	1	.9	.9	25.0
Consumer Goods, E & J Gallo Winery	1	.9	.9	25.9
Consumer package goods	1	.9	.9	26.8
Curtiss-Wright Controls - Aerospace and Defense/Industrial	1	.9	.9	27.7
Durable heating/cooling goods	1	.9	.9	28.6
education	1	.9	.9	29.5
Education	1	.9	.9	30.4
Electronics Industry	1	.9	.9	31.3
financial services	1	.9	.9	32.1
Financial services	1	.9	.9	33.0
Financial Services	3	2.7	2.7	35.7
Financial Services Industry, BB&T	1	.9	.9	36.6
Hanesbrands, Inc. Apparel industry	1	.9	.9	37.5

Health Insurance	1	.9	.9	38.4
Heavy duty truck manufacturer	1	.9	.9	39.3
heavy duty truck manufacturer and distributor	1	.9	.9	40.2
HR	1	.9	.9	41.1
Hubbell Inc. Electrical Products and Engineering	1	.9	.9	42.0
IBM	1	.9	.9	42.9
LONDON MACHINERY (0SHKOSH TRUCK CORP)	1	.9	.9	43.8
London Machinery Inc.	1	.9	.9	44.6
London Machinery INc.	1	.9	.9	45.5
manufacturing	3	2.7	2.7	48.2
Manufacturing	1	.9	.9	49.1
MANUFACTURING	2	1.8	1.8	50.9
Marketing	1	.9	.9	51.8
marketing communications	1	.9	.9	52.7
Marketing Communications	1	.9	.9	53.6
McNeilus	3	2.7	2.7	56.3
McNeilus Companies - Refuse Division	1	.9	.9	57.1
McNeilus Companies	3	2.7	2.7	59.8
McNeilus Refuse	2	1.8	1.8	61.6
McNeilus Truck and Manufacturing	1	.9	.9	62.5
Mortgage Industry/Finance	1	.9	.9	63.4
MTM	1	.9	.9	64.3
Non-profit - youth	1	.9	.9	65.2
non profit	1	.9	.9	66.1
nonprofit health field	1	.9	.9	67.0
Optical Retail	1	.9	.9	67.9
Oshkosh Truck	1	.9	.9	68.8
Oshkosh Truck Corporation	3	2.7	2.7	71.4
Oshkosh Truck Corporation, Heavy Manufacturing	1	.9	.9	72.3
Pepsi	1	.9	.9	73.2
pharmaceutical	1	.9	.9	74.1
Pharmaceutical sales	1	.9	.9	75.0
PR	1	.9	.9	75.9
pr, advertising	1	.9	.9	76.8

Public Relations	2	1.8	1.8	78.6
Pulte Homes - Residential Housing.	1	.9	.9	79.5
Railroad	1	.9	.9	80.4
Real Estate	1	.9	.9	81.3
RJ Reynolds	1	.9	.9	82.1
SAS -- computer software/services	1	.9	.9	83.0
software	1	.9	.9	83.9
SouthLight, substance abuse treatment	1	.9	.9	84.8
sports-Baltimore Ravens	1	.9	.9	85.7
St. Jude Medical	1	.9	.9	86.6
Telecom	1	.9	.9	87.5
television	1	.9	.9	88.4
Textile Industry	1	.9	.9	89.3
Time Warner	1	.9	.9	90.2
Tobacco	2	1.8	1.8	92.0
Tobacco Company	1	.9	.9	92.9
Transportation	1	.9	.9	93.8
Truck manufacturing	1	.9	.9	94.6
Wachovia	3	2.7	2.7	97.3
Wachovia Bank	1	.9	.9	98.2
Wachovia Bank / Wachovia Securities	1	.9	.9	99.1
Wake Forest University, Babcock Graduate School of Management	1	.9	.9	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

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