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ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING – A SOUTH AFRICAN  
CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE WITH  
SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE TERTIARY SECTOR

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**ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING – A SOUTH AFRICAN CORPORATE  
COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE  
TERTIARY SECTOR**

**ABSTRACT**

Change and the management thereof has become an integral part of management. To survive and prosper in the future, organisations have to understand the internal and external forces of the constantly changing world in which they operate.

One example of the implications of change is the role of the communication practitioner that evolved from that of a technician to a strategist during recent decades. The communication practitioner has to realise that research is an effective tool to prove the value of the communication function.

This study explores the use of environmental scanning as a strategic tool for an organisation to obtain a competitive edge. Knowledge management and the measurement of relationships in communication are closely related to environmental scanning.

Environmental scanning is a process by which an organisation learns about events and trends in the internal and external environment. It helps establish relationships between these trends and considers the main implications for problem identification and decision making.

Any scientific research should be done against a theoretical framework. The systems theory and the information gap theory provide the theoretical framework for this study.

Empirical research was conducted amongst the principals, marketing directors; information technology directors and scenario planners of all universities, technikons and registered private universities in South Africa. A total response rate of 58.7% was realised. A major finding was that, although most universities and technikons conduct environmental scanning and rate it as very important, there is no formalised, strategically aligned effort to integrate the findings with the strategic direction of the institution.

The impact of environmental scanning on the respondents' institutions is rated as significant to very significant.

A revised model of environmental scanning was subsequently proposed. This model can also serve as a basis for future research and development. In spite of the different ways in which environmental scanning is conducted and applied, it has potential as a strategic tool - specifically to improve the role and contribution of the communication practitioner in the realisation of organisational goals.

**OMGEWINGSVERKENNING – 'N SUID-AFRIKAANSE KORPORATIEWE  
KOMMUNIKASIE PERSPEKTIEF MET SPESIFIEKE FOKUS OP DIE  
TERSIËRE SEKTOR**

**ABSTRAK**

Verandering en die bestuur daarvan het 'n integrale deel van bestuur geword. 'n Voorvereiste vir die oorlewing en vooruitgang van maatskappye, is 'n begrip van die voortdurend veranderende interne en eksterne omgewings.

'n Enkele voorbeeld van die implikasies van verandering is die rol van die kommunikasiepraktisyn wat die afgelope aantal dekades gegroei het van tegnikus tot strateeg. Die kommunikasiepraktisyn moet beseft dat navorsing 'n effektiewe hulpmiddel is om die waarde van die kommunikasiefunksie uit te wys.

Hierdie studie ondersoek die gebruik van omgewingsverkenning as 'n strategiese hulpmiddel vir 'n organisasie. Dit doen aan die hand dat, indien omgewingsverkenning en kennisbestuur korrek uitgevoer, aangewend en strategies belynd is, die kennis wat op hierdie wyse ingewin word, as 'n kompeterende voordeel vir 'n organisasie kan dien.

Omgewingsverkenning is 'n proses waardeur kennis aangaande die gebeure en neigings in die interne en eksterne omgewing ingewin word. Verhoudings wat deel van hierdie proses vorm, word geïdentifiseer. 'n Voorbeeld van die waarde van omgewingsverkenning is dat dit 'n organisasie in staat stel om te onderskei tussen ingrypende en nie-ingrypende veranderinge. Dit voorsien inligting wat 'n organisasie in staat stel om veranderinge te antisipeer en pro-aktief op te tree. Dit stel die organisasie dus in staat om voordeel uit verandering te trek in plaas daarvan dat verandering ten koste van die organisasie plaasvind.

Enige wetenskaplike navorsing behoort teen die agtergrond van 'n teoretiese raamwerk te geskied. Die sisteemteorie en die inligtinggaping-teorie voorsien die teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie.

Empiriese navorsing is onder die rektore, bemerkings- en inligtingtegnologiesdirekteure en scenario-beplanners van al die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite, teknikons en geregistreerde privaat-universiteite uitgevoer. 'n Noemenswaardige bevinding is dat, hoewel die meeste teknikons en universiteite omgewingsverkenning uitvoer, dit in baie min gevalle formeel gedoen word of strategies belyn is met die strategiese rigting van die universiteit of teknikon.

Respondente het aangedui dat die impak van omgewingsverkenning op hul instansies belangrik tot baie belangrik is.

'n Model vir omgewingsverkenning is voorgestel. Hierdie model kan ook dien as 'n basis vir toekomstige navorsing en ontwikkeling dien. Ten spyte van die verskillende maniere waarop omgewingsverkenning uitgevoer en toegepas word, het dit waarde as 'n strategiese hulpmiddel. Dit kan in die besonder help om die rol en bydrae van die kommunikasiepraktisyn in die bereiking van organisasiedoelwitte te verhoog.

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