

**THE PERCEPTION OF TOP COMMUNICATORS OF
SENIOR MANAGEMENT'S EXPECTATIONS OF
EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN
ORGANISATIONS**

by

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SYNOPSIS

Communication departments may have the core knowledge to practise excellent communication, but senior management must also share a common understanding of the role and function of communication and communication managers in an organisation for communication to be excellent.

The need for this study originated from the perception that the top communicator is often not at the table when strategic decisions are made. Yet, public relations specialists often have expertise that can contribute to organisational decision-making. They can, amongst others, facilitate dialogue between key publics and members of senior management in order to enhance understanding of the vision and goals of the organisation and the needs of the organisation's clients and stakeholders. This form of two-way symmetrical communication is the basis of excellent communication. Most practitioners agree that the best place for the top communicator is within an organisation's senior management – taking part in strategic decision-making through two-way communication (Dozier, Grunig, L & Grunig, J, 1995).

The three spheres of communication excellence – as identified in the *Excellence Study*, the largest and most intensive investigation ever conducted of public relations and communication management – include the knowledge base of communication departments; shared expectations between the top communicator and senior management; and the culture of the organisation.

The middle sphere of shared expectations between the top communicator and senior management, has three components which will be investigated in this study. The first component is departmental power – the ability to influence members of senior management. Sometimes top communicators are members of senior management, participating directly in strategic management and planning. In other cases, they exert informal influence as providers of information and as process facilitators to senior management. The power of the public relations department is associated with the value members of senior management attach to public relations as a function, as well as the strategic contribution the top communicator and the communication department make to organisational decision-making.

The second component of excellence in this sphere is the demand-delivery loop. Senior managers in excellent organisations demand two-way public relations practices from their communicators to persuade and negotiate, and top communicators are aware of this. This sets up a loop of repeated behaviour, with senior management demanding and communicators delivering excellent communication programmes. In this study, top communicators in South African organisations are asked about their perceptions of these expectations.

The third component of excellence in this sphere is the organisational role played by the top communicator. Top communicators may have formal decision-making authority for communication policy and may be responsible for programme success or failure, which means that they play the manager role. On the other hand, top communicators may play an informal role as senior advisors who outline options and provide research information needed for decision-making by other senior managers. Both manager and senior advisor role-playing, contribute to communication excellence.

However, senior management can also expect the top communicator to play the technician role. Top communication departments from the *Excellence Study* combine knowledge of both manager and technician roles to provide the requisite foundation for excellence. To actually achieve excellence, however, top communicators must play advanced organisational roles of communication manager and senior advisor.

One of the objectives of this study was to establish whether the top communicator in the South African organisation does indeed contribute to excellence in the organisation by being involved in the organisation's strategic management process. For top communicators to be part of the strategic management process, a positive relationship must exist between themselves and senior management. This relationship is investigated by questioning the top communicator on the three components of the sphere of shared expectations, namely departmental power, the demand-delivery loop (and the practising of the four models of communication) and the organisational role played by the top communicator.

The empirical study was undertaken amongst top communicators in South African organisations. A clear exposition is given of the methods and procedures used in the study. Hypotheses have been developed and the testing of these hypotheses attempts to provide a contribution to the scientific knowledge of communication excellence in the South African organisation.

The following assumptions can be made about the findings of the study regarding the perceptions of top communicators in South African organisations in respect of the beliefs and expectations of senior management of the top communicator and the communication department:

- It is the perception of top communicators that senior management expects them to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making by playing the public relations manager role.
- Senior management expects those top communicators predominantly playing the public relations manager role to make use of two-way public relations models in organisational decision-making and communication activities; and those predominantly playing the public relations technician role to make use of one-way public relations models.
- The top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role and using two-way public relations models, can make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. This can lead to excellent communication and can contribute to the communication function being valued and supported by top management.
- Top communicators do not perceive reporting lines to the chief executive officer (CEO) (or any other manager) or senior management (or middle management) to be very good indicators of their strategic contribution to decision-making. These findings support the communication theory that reporting relationships are necessary, but hardly sufficient for making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making as indicated by Dozier et al (1995:84). The critical factor is not whom one reports to, but rather whether one has access to any of the senior (corporate) officers at will.
- Top communicators in small and in large organisations can make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.
- The top communicator can make a bigger strategic contribution in large communication departments, where technical tasks can be delegated.

- Small and large public relations departments predominantly use one-way public relations models in their communication activities, but large departments also use two-way public relations models. It can, therefore, be assumed that two-way public relations models will be practised more frequently in large departments where the top communicator will also be expected to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making (by playing the public relations manager role).
- The highest qualification of the top communicator is a weak indicator of the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making. This could indicate that senior management values skills and knowledge, rather than qualifications, when the top communicator makes a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.
- Senior management, furthermore, expects the top communicator with many years' experience in the communications field to make a bigger strategic contribution than the top communicator with a few years' experience in this field.

SINOPSIS

Vir kommunikasie om uitnemend te wees moet personeel in kommunikasiedepartemente oor die nodige kennis beskik om dit uitnemend te bestuur en senior bestuur moet begrip toon vir die rol en funksie van kommunikasiebestuurders in die organisasie.

Die behoefte aan hierdie studie het ontstaan uit die persepsie dat die topkommunikator dikwels nie by die tafel is wanneer strategiese besluite geneem word nie. Kommunikasiespesialiste het egter dikwels die kundigheid om 'n bydrae tot organisasiebesluitneming te maak. Hulle kan onder andere dialoog tussen sleutelpublieke en senior bestuur fasiliteer om sodoende begrip vir die organisasie se visie en doelwitte, en vir die behoeftes van kliënte en belangegroepe te bewerkstellig. Hierdie vorm van tweerigting simmetriese kommunikasie vorm die grondslag van uitnemende kommunikasie. Die meeste praktisyns is dit eens dat topkommunikators deel van 'n organisasie se senior bestuur behoort te wees sodat hulle deur middel van tweerigting kommunikasie 'n bydrae tot strategiese besluitneming kan maak.

Die drie sferes van kommunikasie-uitnemendheid, soos geïdentifiseer in die *Excellence Study* (Dozier, Grunig L & Grunig J, 1995), die grootste en mees intensiewe ondersoek wat tot nog toe oor skakel- en kommunikasiebestuur gedoen is, sluit die kennisbasis van kommunikasiedepartemente; gedeelde verwagtinge tussen die topkommunikator en die senior bestuur; en die kultuur van die organisasie in.

Die middelste sfeer van gedeelde verwagtinge tussen die topkommunikator en senior bestuur het drie komponente wat in hierdie studie ondersoek word. Die eerste komponent is departementele mag - die vermoë om lede van senior bestuur te beïnvloed. Soms is topkommunikators lede van senior bestuur en neem hulle direk aan strategiese bestuur en beplanning deel. In ander gevalle oefen hulle informele invloed uit as verskaffers van inligting en as prosesfasiliteerders vir senior bestuur. Die mag van die kommunikasiedepartement word geassosieer met die waarde wat senior bestuur aan die kommunikasiefunksie heg, sowel as met die strategiese bydrae wat die topkommunikator en die kommunikasiedepartement tot besluitneming in die organisasie maak.

Die tweede komponent van uitnemendheid in hierdie sfeer is die vereis-verskaf kringloop. Senior bestuurders in uitnemende organisasies vereis tweerigtingpraktyke van hulle kommunikaturs om te oorreed en te onderhandel en topkommunikators is hiervan bewus. Dit stel 'n kringloop van herhaalde gedrag daar, met senior bestuur wat vereis, en kommunikaturs wat uitnemende programme aanbied. In hierdie studie word topkommunikators in Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies oor hul persepsies van hierdie verwagtinge uitgevra.

Die derde komponent in hierdie sfeer is die rol wat die topkommunikator in die organisasie speel. Topkommunikators mag formele besluitnemingsbevoegdheid vir kommunikasiebeleid hê en mag vir die sukses of mislukking van kommunikasieprogramme verantwoordelik wees, wat beteken dat hulle 'n bestuursrol vertolk. Alternatiewelik mag topkommunikators die informele rol van senior adviseur vertolk. In die vertolking van laasgenoemde rol word geleenthede uitgewys en navorsingsinligting verskaf wat vir besluitneming deur ander senior bestuurders benodig word. Die vertolking van die rol van bestuurder en/of dié van senior adviseur dra tot kommunikasie-uitnemendheid by.

Senior bestuur kan egter ook verwag dat die top kommunikator die tegnikusrol vertolk. Uitnemende kommunikasiedepartemente in die *Excellence Study* kombineer kennis van beide die bestuurs- en tegnikusrol om die vereiste grondslag vir uitnemendheid te vorm. Om uitnemendheid te bereik moet topkommunikators egter gevorderde organisasierolle van kommunikasiebestuurder en senior adviseur speel.

Een van die doelwitte van hierdie studie is om te bepaal of die topkommunikator in die Suid-Afrikaanse organisasie tot uitnemendheid in die organisasie bydra deur by die strategiese bestuursproses in die organisasie betrokke te wees. Vir topkommunikators om deel van die strategiese bestuursproses te wees, moet 'n positiewe verhouding tussen hulself en senior bestuur bestaan. Hierdie verhouding word ondersoek deur topkommunikators uit te vra oor die drie komponente van die sfeer vir gedeelde verwagtinge, naamlik departementele mag, die vereis-verskaf kringloop (en die beoefening van die vier modelle van kommunikasie) en die organisasierol wat die topkommunikator vervul.

Die empiriese studie is onder topkommunikators in Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies onderneem. 'n Duidelike uiteensetting word gegee van die metodes en prosedures wat in die studie gebruik is. Hipoteses is ontwikkel en die toetsing daarvan poog om 'n bydrae tot die

wetenskaplike kennis van kommunikasie-uitnemendheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse organisasie te maak.

Die volgende aannames kan gemaak word oor die bevindinge van dié studie ten opsigte van die persepsies van top kommunikaturs in Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies, met betrekking tot senior bestuur se verwagtinge van die topkommunikator en van die kommunikasiedepartement in die organisasie:

- Topkommunikators is van mening dat senior bestuur van hulle verwag om 'n strategiese bydrae tot organisasiebesluitneming te maak deur die kommunikasiebestuursrol te vertolk.
- Senior bestuur verwag van topkommunikators, wat hoofsaaklik die kommunikasiebestuursrol vertolk, om tweerigting skakelmodelle in organisasiebesluitneming en kommunikasie-aktiwiteite te gebruik. Hulle verwag dat topkommunikators wat hoofsaaklik die kommunikasietegnikusrol vertolk, eenrigting skakelmodelle sal gebruik.
- Die topkommunikator wat hoofsaaklik die kommunikasiebestuursrol vertolk en tweerigting skakelmodelle gebruik, kan 'n strategiese bydrae tot organisasiebesluitneming maak. Dit kan tot uitnemende kommunikasie lei en kan daartoe bydra dat die kommunikasiefunksie deur die dominante koalisie waardeur en ondersteun word.
- Topkommunikators beskou nie rapporteringslyne na die hoofuitvoerende beampte (of enige ander bestuurder) of senior bestuur (of middelbestuur) as goeie indikaturs van die lewer van 'n strategiese bydrae tot besluitneming nie. Hierdie bevinding ondersteun die kommunikasieteorie dat rapporteringslyne nodig is, maar nie voldoende is om 'n strategiese bydrae tot organisasiebesluitneming te maak nie, soos aangedui deur Dozier et al (1995:84). Die kritiese faktor is nie aan wie gerapporteer word nie, maar of die topkommunikator toegang tot senior korporatiewe beamptes het.
- Dit is topkommunikators se persepsie dat 'n strategiese bydrae tot besluitneming deur topkommunikators in groot en klein organisasies gemaak kan word.
- Die topkommunikator kan 'n groter strategiese bydrae in groot kommunikasiedepartemente lewer, waar tegniese take gedelegeer kan word.
- Klein en groot departemente gebruik hoofsaaklik eenrigting skakelmodelle in hulle kommunikasiedepartemente, maar groot departemente gebruik ook tweerigting modelle. Daar kan dus aangeneem word dat tweerigting skakelmodelle meer dikwels in groot

departemente gebruik word waar dit ook van top kommunikers verwag word om 'n strategiese bydrae tot organisasiebesluitneming te maak (deur die kommunikasiebestuursrol te vertolk).

- Die hoogste kwalifikasie van die topkommunikator is 'n swak indikator van die strategiese bydrae wat die topkommunikator tot organisasiebesluitneming maak. Dit kan daarop dui dat senior bestuur eerder aan vaardighede en kennis waarde heg wanneer die topkommunikator 'n strategiese bydrae tot organisasiebesluitneming maak, as wat hulle waarde aan kwalifikasies heg.
- Senior bestuur verwag verder van die topkommunikator met baie jare ervaring in die kommunikasieveld om 'n groter strategiese bydrae te lewer as die topkommunikator met min jare ervaring in dié veld.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY PERSPECTIVES

Aim of this chapter:

In this introductory chapter the subject of the study is demarcated, the purpose of the study is discussed and the research problem is stated. Theoretical background information on the problem is offered and the importance of the problem is discussed. Empirical background information is also offered and the problem researched is described by briefly discussing the methodological agenda for the study.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Human activity is always directed towards the achievement of objectives. The objective of a particular act may not be entirely clear at all times to all observers – or even to the actors – but according to Koehler, Anatol & Applebaum (1981:11), it is difficult to conceive of any conscious action that is not aimed at producing some change or achieving some objectives.

With the ascendance of non-physical forms of productive resources, today's economy requires new approaches to pursuing the objective of prosperity. However much that pursuit may be a national or international objective, depends mostly on how organisations define their goals, the strategies they adopt to pursue them, and the criteria guiding business decisions (Morgan, 1998:2).

Organisations exist because goals can be achieved only – or at least more efficiently – through the co-ordinated activity of individuals. Robbins & De Cenzo (1998:3) define an organisation as a structured system of relationships that co-ordinates the efforts of a group of people toward the achievement of specific objectives, or “to accomplish some specific purpose”. An organisation's success depends largely on its ability to process information of appropriate richness to reduce uncertainty and clarify ambiguity that occurs in an environment of constant change (Spicer, in Ströh, 1998:39).

With the effective use of communication, the actions of individuals on whom the survival of the organisation depends can be co-ordinated to achieve the connectivity and alignment of relationships necessary in a global knowledge economy.

Organisations are in more or less continuous interaction with the society in which they exist. They interface with the external environment through an elaborate system of human and non-human intermediaries – products, documents, customers, vendors, directors, stockholders, representatives, competitors, the media, government agencies – which results in the exchange of information that enables the organisation and its environment to respond to one another (Koehler, Anatol & Applebaum, 1981:11). The flow of information, communication and the relationships facilitating it, become horizontal as well as vertical, both internally and between the enterprise and the outside world (Morgan, 1998:2).

In an age of chaos and change, the communication managers of organisations will become facilitators and networkers who will be the integrators and interpreters of such information and managers of such relationships – not only within organisations, but also with publics outside the organisation (Marlow & O'Connor Wilson, in Ströh, 1998:39). According to Grunig (1992:11), this managed interdependence between the organisation and its environment is the major characteristic of successful organisations.

Effective organisations are able to choose appropriate goals for their environmental and cultural context and then achieve those goals. However, strategic constituencies (i.e. stockholders, publics, etc.) within the internal and external environment can constrain the organisation to meet its goals and achieve its mission. Organisations strive for autonomy from these publics and try to mobilise publics that support their goals (Grunig, J, 1992:11). One of the departments most strategically placed in the organisation to support senior management in its endeavour to be successful in a competitive and continuously changing environment is the public relations or communication department.

Excellent communication departments contribute to decisions made by senior management by providing them with information about the environment of the organisation, about the organisation itself, and about the relationship between the organisation and its environment. Excellent departments engage in environmental scanning, have access to senior management, and present information at an appropriate level of abstraction for different levels of management (Grunig, J, 1992:12). Organisations will also be more likely to have excellent communication departments when they face a high level of environmental uncertainty.

The increasing need for business transformation in order to position organisations for the new economy represents a fundamental shift in the relationship of the corporation to individuals and to society as a whole. Gouillart & Kelly (in Verwey, 1998:4) argue that the Communication Revolution not only forms the basis of this new business model, which necessitates the ability to manage the flow of information, but is in actual fact the facilitator of a fundamental social and business influence; an unstoppable trend towards connectivity.

The theory that will be discussed next will serve as a critical guide to thought, research and conceptualisation. This set of interrelated propositions (or generalisations) and definitions serves to conceptually organise selected aspects of the world in a systematic way. In this study, theory, method (conceptualisation) and research activity are interwoven in a contextual and circular process so that theory guides research while research guides theory (Du Plooy, 1996:30). The way in which the research is linked to the theoretical problem for this study will now be discussed.

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This study was undertaken to add to the body of knowledge in the sphere of public relations and corporate communication management. The field of study of public relations and communication management can be distinguished from other fields such as general management, human resource management, marketing management and information management, as well as other communication fields of study such as

business communication, organisational communication and management communication.

According to Kroon (1996:4), general management as a business function differs from the other functions in the sense that it does not exist as an independent department in the business. General management refers to the task of leading, which is performed at all levels of management and which comprises the following:

- The four basic management functions – planning, organising, activating and controlling.
- The six additional management functions – decision making, communication, motivation, co-ordination, delegation and disciplining.

Smit & Cronje (1992: 6) state that management is a process or series of activities that gives the necessary direction to an enterprise's resources so that its objectives can be achieved as productively as possible in the environment in which it functions. Management is also a process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people (Robbins & De Cenzo, 1998:6; Mondy & Noe, 1981:4).

Human resource management or personnel management is concerned with supplying a service to the other functions by determining the manpower needs on the basis of the strategic plan and the recruitment, selection, placement and induction or orientation of employees. It includes the formulation of personnel policy as well as the training and development of existing personnel. Other tasks include the handling of remuneration, promotions, transfers, demotions, resignations and dismissal of employees (Kroon, 1996:5; Mondy & Noe, 1981:5-7; Cherrington, 1983:7-10).

According to Gerber, Nel & Van Dyk (1997:10), the British Institute for Personnel Management defines the concept *personnel management* as follows:

“Personnel management is that part of management concerned with people at work and with their relationships within an enterprise. Its aim is to bring together and develop into an effective organisation the men and women who make up an enterprise

and, having regard for the well-being of the individual and of working groups, to enable them to make their best contribution to its success”.

When compared to other academic business disciplines, the field of information systems (IS) is relatively new. The increasingly important role played by information systems in modern business organisations made the IS discipline itself a necessity. According to Stair (1996:5), we live in an information economy. Information itself has value, and commerce often involves the exchange of information, rather than tangible goods. In IS terms, **data** consists of raw facts, such as an employee’s name and the number of hours worked in a week, inventory part numbers, or sales orders. **Information** is a collection of facts organised in such a way that they have additional value beyond the value of the facts themselves. **Knowledge** is the body of rules, guidelines, and procedures used to select, organise, and manipulate data to make it suitable for a specific task.

According to Van der Walt, Strydom, Marx & Jooste (1996:4), marketing, in its simplest form, is merely an exchange between two people. The activities of the marketing function are based on the transfer of ownership of the goods and services of the business to the consumer and, in so doing, earning an income. Kotler & Armstrong (1990:5) define marketing as the social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others.

The marketing function determines the needs and preferences of the consumer and develops and supplies a suitable product or service to fulfil the identified needs. The marketing task is performed by deciding on a marketing strategy, which includes the choice of a target market and marketing mix or the so-called 4Ps.

By means of the marketing, mix the products or services of the business are presented to the target market in the best possible combination of product, price, distribution (place) and marketing communication (promotion). It is generally accepted that selling forms part of the marketing function (Churchill & Peter, 1995:7; Kroon, 1996:6).

According to Grunig (1992:357), public relations and marketing are both essential functions for a modern organisation. Marketing managers identify markets for the products and services of the organisation. Then they supervise marketing communication programmes to create and sustain demand for the products or services. Public relations managers, in contrast, supervise programmes for communication with publics – groups of people who organise themselves when an organisation affects them or they affect it. Markets are limited to the consumer segment of an organisation's environment. Publics can arise within many stakeholder categories – such as employees, communities, stockholders, governments, students, suppliers, and donors, as well as consumers.

Marketing and public relations serve different functions and public relations cannot be excellent if it is subjugated to the marketing function. When an organisation makes public relations a marketing function, practitioners are reduced to the technician role, and the organisation loses a valuable mechanism for managing its interdependence with its strategic publics (Grunig, 1992:357).

Apart from the distinction from other fields of study as mentioned above, public relations and communication management can also be distinguished from other fields of communication. Groenewald (1998:35), in developing a model for communication management training, distinguishes between four fields of study: business communication, organisational communication, management communication and corporate communication.

Groenewald (1998:35) suggests the following definition of Reinsch (1994) to describe the field of business communication:

“Business communication can be defined as the scholarly study of the use, adaption and creation of languages, symbols and signs to conduct activities that satisfy human needs and wants by providing goods and services for private profit.”

Business communication has explicit ties to management schools, different from organisational communication and corporate communication, for example, that developed from speech communication and journalism respectively (Reinsch in

Groenewald, 1998:35). According to Smeltzer, Glab & Golan (1983:73), the traditional domain of business communication is the structural component of the correct writing style, business letters, competent use of words and formal reporting. It later expanded to include meetings, verbal presentations and interviewing (Krapels & Arnold, 1996:349). However, the focus is still written communication in business, with the emphasis on “the exchange of messages that support the goal of buying and selling goods and services”.

The field of study of business speech, where researchers studied the persuading properties of verbal communication and research, and which was stimulated by the growth in advertising and marketing, led to the inception of organisational communication – a field of study that explained communication structures and systems in organisations (White-Mills & Rogers, 1996:353).

The theoretical foundation of organisational communication is grounded in both organisational and communication theories (Koehler & Taugher in Groenewald, 1998:2). Organisational communication is unique in the sense that it combines the study of organisational theory and behaviour with the study of communication theory in an attempt to understand the communication processes and behaviour in organisations (Redding; Steinberg in Groenewald, 1998:39). This field of study has its roots in management theory and organisational behaviour. The academic home of organisational communication is in speech or communication departments (Mumby & Stohl, 1996:55).

The fact that business, management and corporate communication are business specific, causes these fields of study to stand in a symbiotic relationship to the corporate world and more specifically to management. Research in these fields is therefore pragmatic and aims to deliver results to management. Organisational communication, on the other hand, has no corporate responsibility and represents stakeholders other than management (Mumby & Stohl, 1996:55).

Organisational communication is largely focused on the study of structures in the organisation and the way in which information flows through the different

organisational structures and networks. Typical subjects addressed in organisational communication are: horizontal and vertical communication; communication channels and communication media; network analysis; organisational culture; information processing; communication levels; and formal vs informal communication channels. Because of the emphasis on organisational structures and networks, the relationship aspects of communication in organisations are often disregarded. Sophisticated communication networks without people with the necessary communication skills cannot ensure an effective communication process for the organisation (Groenewald, 1998:43).

Management communication is the only field of study that integrates communication with management. This field of study consists of all forms of communication that enable the manager (and therefore every worker in the information community) to communicate more functionally. Management communication includes aspects of business communication, organisational communication and corporate communication. Although it is not considered a functional area in the business, its focus is to equip each manager as a functional communicator. It consists of the meaningful mixing of the communication skills a manager must have, as well as the knowledge necessary to develop a communication strategy (for the individual) (Feingold, 1987:123).

According to White-Mills & Rogers (1996:359) management communication as a field of study is developing away from communication in the direction of management.

Management communication is based on the theoretical substructure of sister disciplines in the communication science, but the future development in the field of study is largely directed by the communication needs of managers in practice.

According to Groenewald (1998:49), many authors regard corporate communication as a field of study as a mature science. The domain of the field of study, according to Hazleton & Botan (1998:13) and Grunig & Hunt (1984:5), is the social sciences. Corporate communication is an applied social science based on communication. Since communication is a social science, corporate communication can be studied as an applied communication science (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:26). Grunig (1992)

describe corporate communication as a sub-domain of communication, with close ties to management and organisational theories.

Corporate communication developed from press agency and publicity and various terms such as *public relations*, *public affairs*, *corporate communication* and *communication management* distinguish the development of the occupation. Corporate communication represents a functional management terrain in the business and can, therefore, be distinguished from other fields of communication (management communication, organisational communication and business communication).

Pragmatically defined corporate communication is:

- The communication on behalf of a business.
- As managed by people (or a person) in the functional terrain.
- Who has the responsibility for the communication of the business?

The current trend is to replace the term *public relations* with *corporate communication* (Budd, 1995:78). The field of study of corporate communication is known as public relations in academic literature.

The definition that made the biggest contribution to the formation of corporate communication, is the definition of Grunig & Hunt (1984:6), where corporate communication is described as “the management of communication between an organisation and its publics” (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:25). The other authoritative definition of Cutlip et al (1985:4) describes corporate communication as “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends”.

Corporate communication is, therefore, a management function, not a set of activities of individual behaviour manifested through communication, as in the case of management communication (Rubin, 1996:14). The only aim of corporate communication is to make the organisation more effective by creating and maintaining

mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its strategic stakeholders – this coincides with the objective of business and management communication. According to Groenewald (1998:52), three key terms – *organisation*, *public* and *manage* – appear in almost all the definitions.

Different from business and management communication, the literature on corporate communication refers to an organisation rather than a business. Corporate communication is the communication on behalf of a government, a person, or a business (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Grunig (1992:5) includes organisational communication in corporate communication as “communication managed by an organisation”, especially as communication managed for the organisation by communication specialists. The difference between organisational communication and corporate communication is a difference between academic autonomy and a pragmatic orientation to the occupation.

A public is any group influenced by the organisation or that can influence the organisation (Newsom et al in Groenewald, 1998:52). It can include the stakeholders in the organisation (employees, unions, shareholders) or in the external environment (government, competitors, clients, activists) that facilitate the achievement of objectives of the business (Dozier et al, 1995:85). This creates further distinction between corporate communication and organisational communication as the latter focuses largely on interpersonal (dyadic) communication within the organisation (Grunig, 1992:5).

Where the media was initially the most important public for corporate communication, it focused on other external publics like consumers, shareholders and the general public in the 1980s – with the aim of managing a corporate image, and to increase sales. In the 1990s a shift took place to the employee as the most important public. It also stated that internal communication is not only the responsibility of the corporate communication function, but that every manager in the organisation has a responsibility

in this respect. Much emphasis was placed on the corporate communication manager as facilitator or consultant in an internal communication process where every manager's communication is critical (Groenewald, 1998:54).

Budd (1995:178) warns against the use of the word communication since the action/activity is only the last step in the management process of corporate communication – a process that starts with research, policy formation, decision making and objective setting. Not every decision made necessarily requires communication. Issues management and the gathering of strategic information (environmental scanning) – two of the most important functions of corporate communication – are not communication as such (Baskin & Aronoff; Sweep, Cameron & Lariscy in Groenewald, 1998:54). Arber (1986:4) states that "... public relations should be part and parcel of every business decision".

Preference should be given to the term *communication management* as academic field of study, to ensure that it is understood as a management function and not just as a set of techniques (promotion, publicity and industrial journalism). This focus in terminology is confirmed by the trend in modern literature to refer to *public relations and communication management* (Grunig, 1992; Dozier et al, 1995).

According to Grunig, this follows the Grunig & Hunt (1984) definition of public relations as "the management of communication between an organisation and its publics" in which *public relations* and *communication management* are equalised.

By using the terms *public relations and communication management*, academics ensure a clear, broader management approach to communication techniques and/or specialised corporate communication programmes like media relations and publicity (Grunig, 1992:6).

"Public relations and communication management describe the overall planning, execution and evaluation of an organisation's communication with both external and internal publics – groups that affect the ability of the organisation to meet its goals"

(Grunig, 1992:4).

A theoretical perspective on public relations, supplied by Grunig, J, will now be given.

1.2.1 Theory of public relations

Public relations and communication management is based on theories and models of which the following are examples:

1.2.1.1 The normative model for strategic communication management

The normative model, as spelled out by Grunig, J (1992:12), specifies that organisational communication should be practised strategically – a type of communication management that is necessary for public relations to make organisations more effective. An organisation that practises public relations strategically develops programmes to identify and communicate with internal and external publics that provide the greatest threats and opportunities for the organisation and are, therefore, most likely to limit or enhance its autonomy. These strategic publics fit into categories that theorists call stakeholders.

Organisations use strategic management to define and shape their missions. They do so through an iterative process of interacting with their environments. Most theories of strategic management do not suggest a formal mechanism in the organisation for interacting with the environment, nor do they acknowledge the presence of public relations. Excellent public relations departments, however, provide the obvious mechanism for organisations to interact with their environments (Grunig, J, 1992:12).

When public relations is part of the organisation's strategic planning function, it is also more likely to manage communication programmes strategically. According to Grunig, J (1992:11), it provides the integrating link that connects the theory of excellence to the level of public relations programmes. Public relations managers help to identify the stakeholders of the organisation by participating in central strategic

management. They then develop programmes at the functional level of public relations to build long-term stable, open and trusting relationships with these strategic constituencies and to manage the organisation's interdependence with them.

The quality of these relationships is a key indicator of the long-term contribution that public relations makes to organisational effectiveness.

Strategic public relations, therefore, begins when communication practitioners identify potential problems in the relationship with the organisation's stakeholders and define the categories of stakeholders that are affected by the problem. They then segment the publics that respond differently to those problems – publics that arise within stakeholder categories (Grunig, J, 1992:13).

After identifying problems, publics and issues, strategic public relations identifies objectives for communication programmes, uses these objectives to plan communication programmes and evaluates the effects of those communication programmes – that is, whether they achieved the objectives set for them and as a result contributed to organisational effectiveness (Grunig, J, 1992:14).

1.2.1.2 A general theory for public relations

Grunig (1993b:164) states that public relations research has over the years progressed through three levels of problems. The macro (environmental) level refers to explanations of public relations behaviour and the relationship of public relations to organisational effectiveness. The meso (group) level refers to how public relations departments are organised and managed. The micro (individual) level refers to the planning and evaluation of individual public relations programmes.

i. The macro level

At the macro level, researchers have looked at conditions in and around the organisation that explain why some organisations practise public relations in an

excellent way and others do not (Grunig, J, 1993b:167). An integrated theory explains the value of excellent public relations for an organisation. Achieving micro communication objectives helps organisations achieve their missions and goals at the macro level. The literature on organisational effectiveness shows that effective organisations choose appropriate goals and then achieve them. When public relations helps the organisation build relationships, it saves the organisation money by reducing the costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, pressure campaigns, boycotts, or lost revenue that result from bad relationships with publics – publics that often become activist groups. Good public relations also helps make money by cultivating relationships with donors, consumers, shareholders and legislators (Grunig, J, 1993b:170-171; Hunt, 1989:37-40).

ii. The meso level

At the meso level conceptualising public relations as a management function allows scholars to link the micro-level theories of communication planning and evaluation to the meso level of an organisation – the level of a group or department. At this level, researchers have asked how the communication function must be managed in an organisation for public relations to be excellent – that is, to contribute to organisational effectiveness (Grunig, 1993:167).

iii. The micro level

At the micro level individual public relations programmes are managed strategically. Organisations use strategic management to relate their missions to their environments. They plan public relations programmes strategically, therefore, they identify the publics that are most likely to limit or enhance their ability to pursue the mission of the organisation and design communication programmes that help the organisation manage its interdependence with these strategic publics. Grunig, J & Repper (1992) have developed a theory that links strategic management of the public relations function to issues management and to the overall strategic management of the organisation (Grunig, 1993:167; Hunt, 1989:40-42).

Research (for example, Grunig, J & Grunig, L, 1989) has identified four typical ways in which public relations is practised. These practices are depicted in four models which will be discussed next. According to Severin & Tankard (1979:29), a model is a theoretical and simplified representation of the real world. It is a structure of symbols, and operating rules that is supposed to match a set of relevant points in an existing structure or process.

1.2.1.3 Four models for practising public relations

The most common public relations model is the “press agency” or “publicity” model. This is a one-way approach that relies primarily on getting favourable publicity in the mass media. Grunig & Hunt (1984:22-25) state that public relations serves a propaganda function in the press agency/publicity model. Practitioners that follow this model concern themselves most with getting attention in the media for their organisation’s clients.

The second one-way model, the “public information” model, values relatively objective information dissemination from the organisation to the so-called “general public” through the mass media and other controlled media such as newsletters, brochures and direct mail (Grunig, L, 1997:7). Grunig & Hunt (1984:22-25) state that the purpose of this model is the dissemination of information, not necessarily with a persuasive intent. The public relations practitioner using this model functions essentially as a journalist-in-residence, whose job it is to objectively report information about the organisation to the public. These organisations have an active press relations programme, offering news to the media about the organisation. They also produce much communication collateral – all designed to inform publics about the organisation. Like press agency, this approach to public relations is not based on research or strategic planning. Both of these traditional one-way models characterise the average (or worse) departments the *Excellence* team studied (Grunig, L, 1997:7).

Two-way programmes may be asymmetrical, trying to convince publics to change, or symmetrical, assuming that both the organisation and its stakeholders may have to

compromise and collaborate with each other. Most forms of two-way communication involve specialised knowledge about formal and informal research. Two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical communication reflect two distinctly different assumptions, or worldviews, about the nature of relationships between organisations and publics (Dozier et al, 1995:12).

Asymmetrical public relations relies on research to develop the messages most likely to persuade publics, while symmetrical communication, the more effective approach, uses research to manage conflict, to negotiate with publics and to improve understanding all the way around (Grunig L, 1997:7). In the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners serve as mediators between organisations and their publics with the aim of creating mutual understanding.

However, in the work situation communicators alternately negotiate and persuade, depending on the situation. The excellent communicator advises senior management and knows how to use both the symmetrical and asymmetrical models of communication (Dozier et al, 1995:14).

With the general theory and the four models for public relations as background, the objectives of the *Excellence Study* will now be briefly discussed. A literature review that will sharpen our theoretical understanding of the topic and that will acquaint us with the problems, hypotheses and results obtained by previous research will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The aim of this literature review is therefore to place the current research project into a scientific perspective (Dane, 1990:62).

Information concerning communication theory, as well as research methods and data analysis, was gathered and will now be discussed.

1.2.2 The *Excellence Study*

The *Excellence Study*, the largest and most intensive investigation ever conducted of public relations and communication management, was used as a framework for this study. It measured, amongst others, the shared expectations (relationship) between the communication department (and the top communicator) and senior management (and the chief executive officer (CEO)).

As this study has as its main source the findings of the *Excellence Study*, a short history of the latter will suffice. Terms will be defined later in this chapter in much the same way as has been done in the *Excellence Study*.

The *Excellence Study* was conducted in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation in 1992. In 1985, the foundation committed itself to this project that has come to be called the *Excellence Project*. The *Excellence* team began its work with a thorough review of the literature in public relations and related disciplines relevant to the research questions:

- What are the characteristics of an excellent communication department?
- How does excellent public relations make an organisation more effective, and how much is that contribution worth economically (Grunig, 1992:xiii)?

The book *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (1992), edited by JE Grunig, is the product of this first stage of the research.

The team then developed a programme of survey and qualitative research to test the propositions derived from the literature review in order to build theory. What started as a literature review has ended in what Grunig, J (1992) believes is a general theory of public relations – a theory that integrates most of the wide range of ideas about and practices of communication management in organisations. The general theory integrates most of the available body of knowledge in public relations (Grunig J, 1992:xiii).

The book *Manager's Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* by Dozier, Grunig, L and Grunig, J (1995), reports the findings of this \$400 000, three-nation study of public relations and communication management. The *Excellence Study* included a survey of 321 organisations in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States from 1990 to 1991 – the first phase (quantitative) of the research. It also included a second phase: follow-up case studies in 1994 of 24 organisations that participated in the original survey (Dozier, Grunig, L & Grunig, J, 1995:ix).

The *Excellence Study* has helped identify the following key elements of excellent communication:

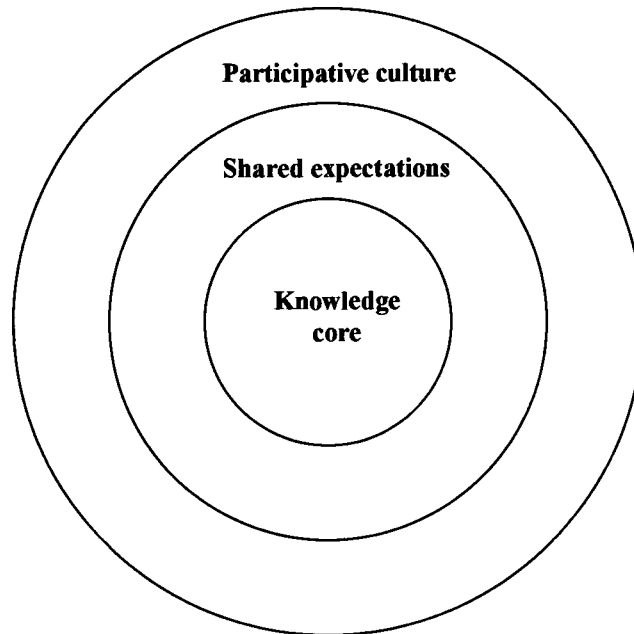
1. It can make an organisation more successful. To do this, it must be developed and managed strategically, and must support the strategic objectives of the organisation.
2. It nurtures relationships with key internal and external publics and stakeholders who provide the greatest threats to and opportunities for the company.
3. It makes a direct contribution to the bottom-line by preventing the costs of conflict with key publics in terms of strikes, litigation and boycotts.
4. It can also help the company make money by enhancing relationships with customers, shareholders and regulators (White & Mazur, 1995:22).

The *Excellence Study* focused on three spheres of communication excellence, i.e. the “knowledge level of the practitioner”, “the shared expectations between senior management and the top communicator” and the “culture of the organisation”.

1.2.2.1 The three spheres of communication excellence

The model that will be used as a framework for this study is the one developed by Dozier et al (1992:10).

Figure 1.1 – The three spheres of communication excellence



The above three spheres of communication excellence are discussed below.

i. The knowledge base of the communication department

Most communication departments, excellent as well as less-than-excellent, have creative technicians who can write and edit, handle technical aspects of production, and know about photography and graphics. However, enhancing these technical skills in itself, does not lead to excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:11).

Smith (in Walmsley, 1998:12) believes that public relations practitioners need to be leaders in understanding and promoting more strategic and integrated communication. “More strategic in that they will help transform the profession from a series of tactics – writing news releases, preparing presentations, drafting speeches – toward a strategic programme that will address the fundamental mission of an organisation” (Walmsley, 1998:12; Potter, 1998:15).

Communicators need to become business managers who specialise in organisational

communication. Organisational leaders respect business managers, and view their experience as necessary and relevant. Potter (1998:15) states that communicators should first become business managers. They should then help other business managers to be more effective and successful with their communication experience.

Communicators need to have more business knowledge to be perceived as equals by the people from marketing, finance, accounting, legal, operations, etc. If they do not understand basic business concepts like ROE (Return on Equity) and brand management, for example, and can't speak "the language of business" properly, they won't be taken seriously.

The IABC's *Excellence Study* found that senior managers felt communicators' most valuable contribution to their organisations could be in identifying trends that might affect business and operations. However, most of those senior managers did not feel that communicators were particularly effective in determining and managing those trends. It is much easier – and safer – for communicators to produce "deliverables" in performing the communication job in the organisation. It is not easy to be knowledgeable and courageous enough to get out in front of strategic issues – even if that is what senior management wants and expects of the public relations practitioner (McGoon, 1998:19).

Practitioners should be able to develop a marketing plan, write a mission statement, run a focus group, perform a content analysis, design an intranet site, use experiential games for team building, create their own consulting company, write the president's speech for the annual shareholder's meeting, etc (Walmsley, 1998:12).

Dozier et al (1995:11) adds to this by stating that the core knowledge base that distinguishes excellent from less-than-excellent communication furthermore involves management role-playing, especially strategic management. The excellent communication department should have the expertise to contribute to strategic planning; have the knowledge base to make policy decisions; be held accountable for programme success and failure; outline communication programme alternatives; and

guide senior management through a logical problem-solving process. The top communicator should consider herself to be the organisation's communication expert, while other managers should also regard the top communicator as a communication expert. More important than anything else that contributes to communication excellence, the communication department's expertise to play the role of communication manager, is paramount (Dozier et al, 1995:11).

ii. The shared expectations of the top communicator and senior management about the role and function of communication

Surrounding the core of the model (the knowledge base) is a larger sphere which represents a set of shared expectations about communication between top communicators and senior managers in organisations. These shared expectations create linkages between the communication department and senior management. One linkage is the demand for communication excellence from senior management. A second reciprocal link is the delivery of such excellence from the communication department (Dozier et al, 1995:10). This linkage is investigated in this study, as it is the necessary foundation for excellence.

The top communicator in any organisation today has certain expectations of senior management. To have excellent communication and public relations in an organisation, it is necessary for the top communicator and senior management to regularly consult each other and for the top communicator to have the freedom to make recommendations and to implement them (Dozier et al, 1995:15).

Potter (1998:15) states that public relations practitioners cannot make anyone – such as senior management – value them, if their values are different. Public relations practitioners must approach management on their own terms and must establish what management values, and what behaviours they must adopt to be valued. Senior leaders value and require results-oriented, strategic management from business managers. Communicators must, therefore, become business managers adept at strategic communication.

CEOs or organisations that have excellent communication programmes, tend to believe that communication should develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects. They support communication and want communicators to research the external environment and tell them what key publics think about the organisation. They want two-way communication and win-win outcomes (Lindeborg, 1994:5).

In an organisation with an excellent communication programme, the top communicator, therefore, makes communication policy decisions (does not primarily function as a technician); participates actively in the organisation's strategic planning and decision-making; works closely with senior management to solve organisational problems that involve communication and relationships; facilitates two-way rather than one-way communication; and uses formal and informal research techniques to monitor trends and to gain understanding of the environment outside the organisation. The knowledge and behaviour of the top communicator is the single-most important factor in creating excellent communication (Lindeborg, 1994:5).

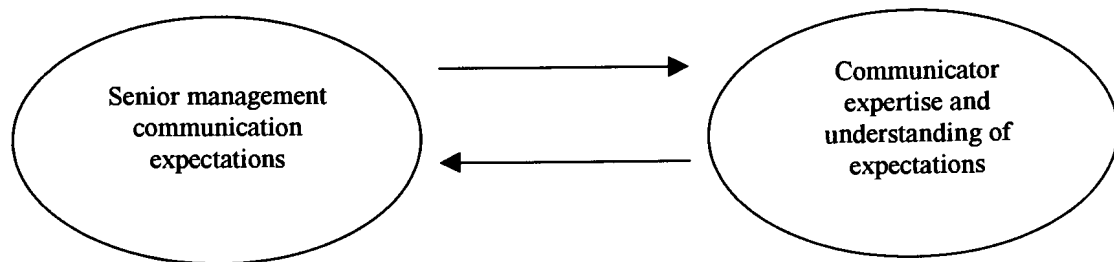
According to Dozier et al (1995:16), senior management sees communication essentially as one-way – from senior management to publics – in organisations with less than excellent communications programmes. Communicators in those organisations, hired largely for their technical expertise as writers, for example, are brought in after decisions are made. Their expertise is sought solely to help disseminate information in support of senior management objectives.

Dozier et al (1995:16) holds that senior management attaches no value in seating a technician at the decision-making table. They need strategic input with regard to the management of relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders.

If senior management understands the meaning of communication excellence and if communicators have the knowledge base to provide such excellence, then critical linkages evolve between the communication department and senior management. When senior management demands excellence from the organisation's communicators and

communicators understand that demand and are able to deliver, a demand-delivery linkage is established. This demand-delivery linkage, displayed below, describes an ongoing relationship between communicators and senior management (Dozier et al, 1995:16).

Figure 1.2 – The demand-delivery linkage for communication excellence



(Dozier et al, 1995:16)

Over time expectations and performance reinforce each other. The knowledge or expertise in the communication department to deliver communication excellence is reinforced when senior management expects communicators to think strategically to solve a problem or conflict with a key public. When communicators respond strategically to help solve a problem important to the senior management, that reinforces the strategic view of communication in the senior management. The senior management comes to value and support the communication department. Such political support from senior management is integral to the set of shared expectations that leads to communication excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:16-17).

iii. The organisation's culture

Both the knowledge core and the sphere of shared expectations are embedded in a larger sphere of organisational culture. Two basic forms of organisational culture emerged from the analysis of the *Excellence Study*: participative and authoritarian. (Dozier et al, 1995:17).

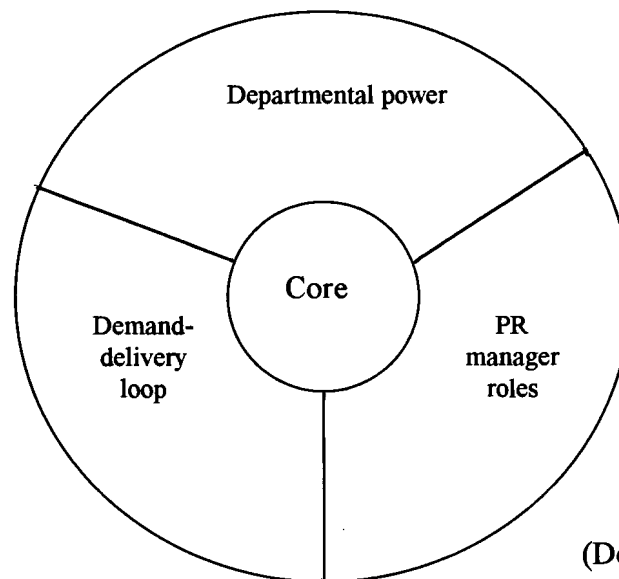
A participative corporate culture fosters excellent communication. Such a culture is decentralised with shared power and decision-making. It values co-operation and equality, including opportunities for women. It welcomes innovation and ideas from the outside. Excellent communication can work in an authoritarian culture but is easier to achieve in a participative culture (Lindeborg, 1994:5).

1.2.2.2 The middle sphere of communication excellence

The middle sphere of communication excellence represents the shared expectations that communicators and senior managers hold about communication. According to Dozier et al (1995:73), communication departments may have the core knowledge to practise excellent communication, but senior management must also share a common understanding about the role and function of communication.

The middle sphere of shared expectations, as described in the *Excellence Study*, has three components for communication excellence which will be addressed in this study, namely departmental power; the demand-delivery loop; expectations of senior management of the communication department and its ability to deliver; and the role played by the top communicator in the organisation. This can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 1.3 – The middle sphere of shared expectations



(The above components will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively. A brief description of each component in this chapter will suffice.)

The first component of excellence in the middle sphere is “departmental power”, the ability to influence members of senior management. Sometimes top communicators are members of senior management, participating directly in strategic management and planning. However, top communicators can also exert informal influence as providers of information and as process facilitators to senior management (Dozier et al, 1995:73).

The second component of excellence in this sphere is the “demand-delivery loop”. In excellent organisations senior managers demand two-way practices from their communicators to persuade and negotiate, and top communicators are aware of this. Excellent communication departments can also deliver on these expectations. This sets up a loop of repeated behaviour, with senior management demanding and communicators delivering excellent communication programmes (Dozier et al, 1995:73).

The third component of excellence in this sphere is the “organisational role played by the top communicator”. In some organisations top communicators may have formal decision-making authority for communication policy; they may be responsible for programme success or failure and may, therefore, play the public relations manager role. On the other hand, the top communicator may play an informal role as senior advisor who outlines options and provide research information needed for decision-making by other senior managers. Both manager and senior advisor role-playing contribute to communication excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:74).

An understanding of the relationship (partnership) between the top communicator and senior management could lead to the top communicator (or communication department) getting involved in strategic decision-making which should lead to communication excellence.

As this middle sphere is embedded between the “knowledge base sphere” and the “culture sphere”, these two spheres cannot be ignored completely and will be referred to throughout the study.

Various other articles on this and other studies were also consulted for this South African study.

The empirical context of this study will now be discussed. The domain phenomena and the aspects, characteristics and dimensions that were researched will be addressed (Mouton & Marais, 1989:37). By using a method of scientific research, a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of natural phenomena, guided by theory and hypotheses about the presumed relations among such phenomena, will be carried out (Du Plooy, 1996:30).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this quantitative descriptive research, which is also of a hypothesis-testing nature, an explicit problem statement and hypotheses will be stated first.

Stating the problem that will be dealt with in this study will include specifying the unit of analysis. This involves the clear specification of the kind of social “entity” to be studied, the variables that the researcher is interested in and the relationship between them. The research objective or purpose and research strategy will also be clarified (Mouton & Marais, 1989:38; Mouton, 1996:91).

The format of the research problem determines what would constitute appropriate evidence to address the problem (Mouton, 1996:81; Du Plooy, 1996:35; Leedy, 1993:60). This is a hypothesis-testing study in which three kinds of reasoning, namely deductive reasoning, inductive support, as well as inductive generalisation, will be used.

Research problem statement: There is a perception amongst public relations and communication professionals that the top communicator is often not at the table when strategic decisions are made. The top communicator is, therefore, not involved in strategic decision-making which could lead to communication excellence and could contribute to the bottom-line of the organisation in order to make the organisation more effective. To be able to contribute to the strategic decision-making process, top communicators need to understand the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution they can make in the organisation in order to practise excellent communication.

1.3.1 A South African perspective

According to Ferreira (1999:30), it is generally accepted in the available literature on public relations theory, that public relations is practised from different perspectives and definitions by different organisations and in different countries, depending on, among other things, the culture of the particular country and the evolutionary level that public relations has attained in that particular country.

If there is one feature that characterises South African society at present, it is that of social change. Therefore, the trends and directions of the change process must be taken into consideration when examining public relations in South Africa (Mersham, Rensburg & Skinner, 1995:7).

The reintroduction of South Africa into the South African market after its exclusion for a few decades, not only gave South African businesses the opportunity to expand their interests to foreign markets, but also led to an influx of foreign businesses into the local market. Suddenly faced with more experienced and well-seasoned competitors on the home front, South African organisations had to explore new and better ways of doing business.

Communication, as the foundation on which the relationship between the organisation and its publics is built, became the obvious focal point for developing programmes that

could face these challenges. As organisations increasingly began to realise the importance of the public relations function, more came to be expected of in-house departments, while those organisations without public relations departments employed consultancies to advise in this regard (Claassen & Verwey, 1997:45).

The public relations environment and the way organisations function in their environment, as well as the nature of communication with political structures that influence the environment, are changing dramatically. It is essential for organisations and their communication managers to be aware of the organisational changes and technological advancements that will determine the future. The South African business environment, as a contextually sensitive environment, needs the public relations function to predict and interpret change. These changes will create opportunities which, if correctly utilised, can improve the living conditions of thousands of South Africans (Claassen & Verwey, 1997:49).

Because of these aspects, Mersham, Rensburg & Skinner (1995:15) state that public relations in South Africa may reasonably be described as being in a transitional phase. It tries to reconcile and situate its activities within the form of an ethical science. In doing so, it strives to adopt a broader, more humane social vision in which accountability to its stakeholders is given its full importance. It is suggested that in the South African context, rapid political and social change has led to more questioning and a closer review of the social purpose and social accountability dimensions of public relations. Public relations is a communication phenomenon that is rooted in the understanding of social issues, and emphasises the integral part it has to play in the constructive engagement of a post-apartheid South Africa.

There is one factor that underlies all social change – communication. Given the complexity of cultures and levels of development in South Africa, it also becomes evident that intercultural communication, an area with which the present generation of South African public relations practitioners is largely unfamiliar, will increasingly require more attention as we move into the post-apartheid era. One could argue that professionals should see themselves as channels of messages from a wide variety of

sources (Mersham et al, 1995:7).

Rhodes & Baker (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:285), add to this by stating that the rate of social and political change in South Africa and in the region, is dramatically altering the scope of our industry, our marketplace, our competition and, consequently, the attitudes and skills that we bring to our individual jobs. With regard to the Southern Africa experience, the practice of public relations is relatively advanced, if not yet well understood in South Africa and Zimbabwe. In other Southern African countries, while public relations is growing in importance, it is served by very few practitioners. This seems to bear a direct relationship to the number and variety of media in a country, whether private or government controlled.

Many disciplines are moving into areas that were traditionally considered to be the field of the public relations practitioner. Management consultants perform communication audits, while advertising agencies handle annual reports, product brochures and social marketing campaigns. The strengths of public relations practitioners in South Africa are limited. They have developed in-depth skills in a few key areas in response to the need of the time, but there is plenty of scope to do more. They are in an industry of generalists turning their hands to almost anything – from writing copy for a radio advert to conducting a climate survey. Their skills have served them well up to now, but they will need to acquire and use other skills to take advantage of the new opportunities which emerge from the changing South African environment. They need additional doses of creativity and innovation as the old South Africa disappears and the new and challenging one emerges (Rhodes & Baker, 1994:287).

Opportunities and threats in this new environment include a proper understanding of the environment; the effects of political and social transition; understanding the levers of change; the need for economic recovery; poor concepts of customer service; threats to the natural environment; social marketing; issue management; cross-cultural communications; culture change management; and social responsibility communications.

The public relations industry can deal with these opportunities and threats by:

- Recruiting differently: Practitioners from other disciplines and diverse backgrounds should be recruited for this profession.
- Skills development: We have much to learn from competent industrial relations specialists – from the legal mind, those with holistic marketing skills, and human resource management. Within the public relations consulting industry, it is high time we learnt from our colleagues and competitors in advertising and management consulting.
- Project management: Project management combines the skills of planning, co-ordinating, directing and controlling as well as delivering on brief, on budget and on time. While the latter requirements are typical of most public relations programmes, the former skills are not conspicuous amongst the ranks of our industry. The public relations component of the marketing mix is often best able to drive the strategy for the programme – not least for the reason that only a fraction of the programme spend typically ends up in public relations, as opposed to advertising.
- Programme evaluation: One of the chief stumbling blocks to growth in our industry is management's unwillingness to take the public relations contribution sufficiently seriously. The counter-strategy is to prove value and the method is via research – whether formative, diagnostic, or evaluative – to get and keep programmes on track and finally to demonstrate results (Rhodes & Baker, 1994:289-296).

Public relations in South Africa also needs to be positioned as a management function. According to Claassen & Verwey (1998:76), communication management in the South African business environment to a great degree still suffers the consequences of traditional interpretations of the function, as that of mainly media liaison and event management. Organisations have not yet fully made the transition in their perception of the function from a basically technical function to a more strategic function. Therefore, communication management is not always acknowledged for the contribution it can make to the organisation's survival in a dynamic global environment.

It is against the above background that this study set out to investigate the perceptions of the top communicator in the South African organisation about senior management's expectations with regard to excellent communication.

1.3.2 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis in this empirical study will be individuals and their orientation towards the subject (opinions, attitudes, values, preferences) as opposed to their conditions or actions (Mouton & Marais, 1989:40; Du Plooy, 1996:39).

The object of study (unit of analysis) is top communicators in South African organisations. More specifically, the cases were top communicators who are members of professional public relations and communication associations and communication managers of the Top 200 companies in South Africa, as ranked by the magazine *Finance Week*, in its *Top 200, 1999*.

Communication departments make significant contributions to strategic planning and management in their organisations when the communication department has communicators with the knowledge to play the manager role; who can contribute to strategic decision-making; and who can execute two-way communication programmes. However, to build excellent programmes, communicators must forge partnerships with the organisation's senior management. In this partnership, shared expectations about communication are developed between top communicators and senior managers in organisations, which culminates in a demand-delivery loop.

The constructs involved in these relationships are: The power of the communication department, which is constructed of the variables "value the senior management attaches to the communication function" and "the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making"; the four models of public relations, namely the "press agency model", the "public information model", the "two-way asymmetrical model" and the "two-way symmetrical model"; and the "public

relations manager” or “public relations technician” role the top communicator plays in the organisation.

1.3.3 The research question

In this study a survey was conducted to establish the top communicator in the South African organisation’s perception of senior management’s expectations with regard to the management of communication in the organisation. This pertains specifically to:

- the power of the communication department and the top communicator in the organisation which can be measured by establishing the value and support it receives from senior management, as well as the strategic contribution it makes because of the knowledge level of the top communicator and members of the communication department;
- senior management’s expectations of the communication department on delivering two-way communication practices (two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication) and the understanding and knowledge of the top communicator and communication department to deliver on those expectations; and
- the communication manager and/or communication technician role the top communicator plays in the organisation, and whether it gives the top communicator an opportunity to contribute to the strategic decision-making process.

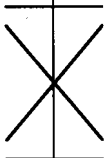
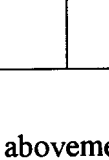
The relationships between the qualitative variables, the building blocks for the constructs, will be measured to come up with an explanation for the practice of communication in South African organisations.

Two or more variables are related, associated or linked to the extent that changes in the one variable are accompanied by systematic and sometimes predictable change in the other (Mouton, 1996:96; Du Plooy, 1996:37).

Although this is a basic or academic study, it also pertains to a typical problem in the social world, which indicates that it also has applied facets (Mouton, 1996:104). The phenomena will be investigated within the public relations and communication

management paradigm, as opposed to the technical public relations and communication paradigm. The relationship between the following variables will be studied (these relationships are depicted in more detail in Chapter 5):

Table 1.1 – Linkages between variables

Power	Public relations models	Role
Value		One-way models
Strategic contribution		Two-way models
		Public relations manager
		Public relations technician

The following research question was derived from the abovementioned constructs:

Primary research question:

What is the perception of top communicators in South African organisations of the expectations of senior management with regard to the management of communication, with specific reference to the power of the communication department, the one-way and two-way public relations models used in communication activities and decision-making in the organisation and the public relations manager and/or public relations technician role the top communicator plays in the organisation?

Secondary research questions:

1. What is the top communicator’s perception of the expectations of senior management of herself and the communication department, with specific reference to the power of the top communicator and the communication department in the South African organisation? The following questions will be addressed:
 - Does senior management value and support the top communicator and the communication department in the South African organisation?

- Do the top communicator and the communication department make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making in the South African organisation?
2. What is the top communicator's perception of the beliefs of senior management with regard to the preferred way of communication by means of the four public relations models, namely the press agency model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model? The following questions will be addressed:
- What is the top communicator's perception of senior management's demand for one-way public relations practices in the South African organisation?
 - What is the top communicator's perception of senior management's demand for two-way public relations practices in the South African organisation?
3. What is the top communicator's perception of senior management's expectations of herself with specific reference to the role she should play in the organisation. The following questions will be addressed:
- Does senior management expect the top communicator to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when she predominantly plays the public relations manager role?
 - Does senior management expect the top communicator to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when she predominantly plays the public relations technician role?

1.3.4 The research objectives

The primary objective of this study was to determine the expectations of the senior management in the South African organisation of the top communicator and the communication department as perceived by top communicators. As mentioned above, the cases – the actual concrete instances of the unit of analysis – were top communicators in South African organisations.

In this case there is a tradition of research, specifically by Dozier et al (1995), in this academic sphere. This study, therefore, aims to test the existing theories and explanations and can be referred to as a validation or confirmatory study (Mouton, 1996:102).

An empirical study was done by conducting a descriptive study of a representative sample of respondents. This descriptive study attempts to describe phenomena in detail – it describes how things are and what happens, as opposed to explanatory studies, which generally attempt to explain a social phenomenon by specifying why or how it happened (Bailey, 1987:38; Mouton, 1996:102; Cooper & Schindler, 1998:141). This study, furthermore, attempts to describe the situation with regard to the set of shared expectations about communication between top communicators and senior managers in the South African organisation.

One of the objectives of this study was to develop a reliable measuring instrument. This instrument was sent to senior communication managers (top communicators) in South African organisations in order to gather data on the following research objectives:

1. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role, and the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role.
2. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator using one-way public relations models in communication activities, and the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator using two-way public relations models in communication activities.
3. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator

- predominantly playing the public relations manager role using one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role using one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.
4. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role using two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role using two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.
 5. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when reporting to the CEO and when reporting to any other manager.
 6. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when reporting to senior management and the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making she makes when reporting to middle management.
 7. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a small organisation, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a large organisation.
 8. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a small public relations department, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a large public relations department.
 9. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the beliefs and

expectations of senior management with regard to the use of one-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a small public relations department, and the use of one-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a large public relations department.

10. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of two-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a small public relations department, and the use of two-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a large public relations department.
11. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators with a graduate qualification and the strategic contribution made by top communicators with a postgraduate qualification.
12. To establish what the top communicator perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators with a few years' experience in the communications field and the strategic contribution made by top communicators with many years experience in the communications field.

The research design follows logically from the research problem and will be discussed next.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is defined as a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem. The degree of structure in this design is a direct function of the research goals stated above (Mouton, 1996:107-109). The planning

and structuring of this project contribute to the eventual validity of the research findings.

1.4.1 Conceptualisation

According to Mouton (1996:109), conceptualisation refers to both the clarification and the analysis (definition) of the key concepts in the problem statement. However, in this section not only concepts in the problem statement will be defined, but also certain concepts that will be referred to often in this study.

According to Mouton (1996:xi), conceptualisation also means 'integrating one's study into a larger conceptual framework' of theoretical and empirical knowledge. One way of doing this is to frame research hypotheses, either by deriving them deductively from well-established theories, or by basing them on observation of phenomena and events in everyday life.

Conceptualisation, through theoretical definition, is a process aimed at achieving internal theoretical or connotative validity in the study (Mouton & Marais, 1989:59).

The conceptual analysis that will be done next involves the clear and unambiguous definition of central concepts (Mouton, 1996:109). This can be considered the first step in the conceptualisation phase.

1.4.1.1 Defining key concepts

The fact that concepts acquire meaning, or even new meaning within a conceptual framework such as a theory, a model or a typology, has led philosophers of science to refer to such concepts as "theoretical concepts" or "constructs". The aim in empirical research is to operationalise such constructs meaningfully by rendering them either measurable or observable.

The following constructs that will regularly be used in this study are clarified with the

aim of being valid, exhaustive and mutually exclusive:

Top communicator: The most senior communicator in the organisation. He/she may be head of a department or may function alone as the most senior communicator in the organisation. These top communicators may carry an array of job titles: vice president, directors, managers and supervisors of communication, public relations, public affairs, corporate communications and so forth (Dozier et al, 1995:x).

Top communicators are key to communication excellence. Through them the expertise of the communications department is brought to bear on strategic issues facing the organisation. The demand of senior management for advanced two-way practices is communicated to the department through top communicators. Top communicators manage the demand and material resources of their departments to deliver excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:117-118).

Senior management: In the *Excellence Study*, Dozier et al (1995) studied the middle sphere of communication excellence: the shared expectations that communicators and senior managers hold about communication. According to Dozier et al (1995:73), communication departments may have the core knowledge to practise excellent communication, but senior management must also share a common understanding about the role and function.

For the purpose of this study the perception of the top communicator with regard to senior management's expectations of excellent communication in the organisation was measured. Senior management refers to senior managers in the organisation who have formal decision-making power and a position of authority in the hierarchy of the organisation.

Expectations: Communicators are linked to senior management in organisations with excellent programmes by a specific set of shared understandings or expectations about the following questions: What is communication management? What should communication do for this organisation? What role does communication play in the

overall management of this organisation? In what ways can communication benefit this organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:14)?

Communication excellence: This describes the ideal state in which knowledgeable communicators assist in the overall strategic management of organisations, seeking symmetrical relations through management of communication with key publics on whom organisational survival and growth depends (Dozier et al, 1995:x).

South African organisation: Any organisation within the borders of South Africa, including corporations, not-for-profit organisations, government agencies and professional-trade associations. According to Dozier et al (1995:vii), communication excellence is a powerful idea of sweeping scope that applies to all organisations, large and small, that need to communicate effectively with publics on whom the organisation's survival and growth depends. The essential elements of excellent communication are the same for corporations, not-for-profit organisations, government agencies and professional trade associations – they apply to organisations globally.

Communication manager: The communication manager role consists of the formal authority to manage the communication function and make communication policy decisions. Top communicators in this role hold themselves accountable for the success or failure of communication programmes, as do others in the organisation. Through their experience and training, top communicators in this role are organisational experts in solving communication and public relations problems (Dozier et al, 1995:107).

Public relations technician: In this study “technician” describes the predominant role of the individual communicator to provide communication products and services, usually at the direction of others. This role is not related to the decision-making processes involved in the selection of the goals and objectives served by those communication activities. For this reason, a technician can be alternately described as a tactician, in contrast with other communicators who play roles as strategists (Dozier et al, 1995:11).

Communication department: Any department that is responsible for public relations and communication management in the organisation, whether referred to as Public Affairs, Corporate Communication, Public Relations, etc.

Dominant coalition: Child (1971) argued that a group – called the dominant coalition – forms in an organisation with the power to make and enforce decisions about the direction of the organisation, its tasks, its objectives and functions. It has the power to set organisational structures and strategies over a sustained period of time. The dominant coalition’s power becomes recognised as legitimate in time by those over whom such power is exercised (White & Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:93). The term senior management is not strictly a synonym for dominant coalition.

Top levels of the dominant coalition typically identify some dominant coalition members, but dominant coalitions are often informal alliances. Such coalitions can include others who are low on the organisational chart or missing from it altogether. Individuals who control a scarce or valued resource can be included in dominant coalitions, as can those who are central to the network of decision makers in organisations (Dozier et al, 1995:15).

Value: Departmental value refers to the value that the top communicator thinks her public relations or communication department has in the organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:80).

Support: Support refers to the support for the function among dominant coalitions in the abstract – somewhat separate from actual performance of communicators in the organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:78).

Public relations, communication management, organisational communication:

In this study no distinction will be made between “public relations”, “communication management” and “organisational communication”. These terms encompass programmes traditionally and more narrowly defined as media relations, government relations or public affairs, employee communication, financial relations, product

publicity, community relations and so forth. The key element to the definition of public relations is the notion of managed communication. In this study then, all of these constructs refer to the management of communication between an organisation and its publics. The common focus of all definitions of public relations is communication and management. The terms “public relations” and “communication” are therefore used interchangeably (Grunig J, 1992:4).

Power of the communication department: Communication departments need power within senior management in order to make strategic contributions. These contributions, in turn, lead to greater power and influence in management decision-making. Power is the capacity to exert influence – a transaction in which one gets others to change their behaviour as one intended. Influence is therefore circular. Power is necessary to be given the opportunity to contribute, while strategic contributions increase the value and support that dominant coalitions give to communication departments (Dozier et al, 1995:88).

Strategy: Strategy in the original Greek refers to the world of military generals where, once the policy is agreed upon, one works out how to position oneself to achieve the political will, or purpose (policy), given the broad deployment of the scarce resources available (Garratt, 1996:44).

Furthermore, the terms “strategy” and “tactics” are often confused. Strategy involves the crucial decisions of a campaign. Tactics are mini-decisions made during the course of the battle and usually result from on-the-spot decisions. In the business arena, strategies have been defined as follows: “... the schemes whereby a firm’s resources and advantages are managed or deployed in order to surprise and surpass competitors or to exploit opportunities.” Tactics are used to implement strategy and do not figure heavily in the planning process. Adherence to this formal process will earn management commitment of resources; establish money and manpower priorities; keep the project on track; and permit mini-course corrections (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:231).

Strategic contribution: Strategic contribution (management and planning) involves the exercising of organisational power at the highest level, because an organisation's mission and long-term goals are "on the table" when dominant coalitions plan strategy. The very purpose and direction of an organisation can be recast when top managers, and specifically the top communicator, plan strategically. If the top communicator proved her worth in strategic planning, her power will increase in time.

The four public relations models:

- Press agency model: The purpose of communication is predominantly to get the organisation's name into the media and to prevent unfavourable publicity for the organisation.
- Public information model: The purpose of communication is predominantly to disseminate information.
- Two-way asymmetrical model: The purpose of communication is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave.
- Two-way symmetrical model: The purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics.

1.4.1.2 Formulation of research hypotheses

As the second step in the conceptualisation phase, this study was integrated into the underlying theoretical framework for the communication science by formulating research hypotheses.

Two important epistemic criteria, namely empirical (testability) and exploratory potential were taken into account when the research question or problem was more specifically formulated in the form of research hypotheses, as will be discussed next (Mouton, 1996:110; Bailey, 1987:41).

The research questions and the hypotheses for the study link directly to the research objectives mentioned above, but were formulated as tentative concrete and measurable assumptions as obtained from the literature study (Bailey, 1987:10; Du Plooy,

1996:36; Mouton 1996:110). Since the hypotheses were derived from an established theoretical framework that was successfully applied to explain similar phenomena in the past, they (potentially) strengthen the conclusions drawn from the research, and meet the criterion of “theoretical validity”.

On the basis of the assumptions generated in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, the hypotheses were formulated and fully motivated in Chapter 5.

Through deductive reasoning, the general research hypotheses were derived from the theory. These relational hypotheses postulate that a certain kind of relationship exists between two or more variables. These are correlational (or descriptive) hypotheses as opposed to causal (or explanatory) hypotheses. The hypotheses also refer to a class of cases and can, therefore, be referred to as general hypotheses, as opposed to singular hypotheses which only apply to one case (Mouton, 1996:122; Du Plooy, 1996:36).

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this study the stated hypotheses were embedded in the body of knowledge by stating assumptions about the literature in the text and linking it to the relevant hypotheses. Assumptions (and presuppositions) have the same epistemic status as hypotheses in that they are also “hypothetical” or “conjectural” statements (Mouton, 1996:123).

The above research problem and objectives, stated in the form of primary and secondary research questions, will now be stated in terms of hypotheses.

The research (alternative) hypotheses that were tested in this study are discussed. (Null hypotheses are stated in Chapter 5.) These hypotheses were formulated about the perceptions of top communicators in South African organisations on the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator; the one-way and/or two-way public relations models used by top communicators and communication departments in communication activities and organisational decision-making; and the public relations manager or public relations technician role senior management expects the top

communicator to play. The formulation of the hypotheses was guided by the research objectives as stated above.

- H1: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role**, makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role**, makes to organisational decision-making.
- H2: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **one-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **two-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making.
- H3: There is a significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.
- H4: There is a significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **two-way public**

relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

- H5: There is a significant difference between the **expectations** of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making **when reporting to the CEO**, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **any other senior manager**.
- H6: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **senior management** in the organisation, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **middle management** in the organisation.
- H7: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **small organisation**, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **large organisation**.
- H8: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **small public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **large public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making.
- H9: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for

communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

H10: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

H11: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with a **graduate qualification**, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made to organisational decision-making by the top communicator with a **postgraduate qualification**.

H12: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with a **few years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with **many years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making.

1.5 OPERATIONALISATION

Operationalisation or operational definition refers to the development of a measuring instrument through which the specific domain phenomenon can be understood. It is a

process aimed at achieving denotative or measurement validity (Mouton & Marais, 1989:7). Operationalisation, therefore, consists of linking the key concepts in the problem statement to the actual phenomena to be studied by constructing a measuring instrument (Mouton, 1996:xi; Broom & Dozier, 1990:163).

1.5.1 The operationalisation of variables

Operational definitions – concrete representations of abstract theoretical concepts – have been created. According to Dane (1990:33) the operational definition of a concept represents the concept and is called a variable – a measurable entity that exhibits more than one level or value.

A variable is a characteristic or attribute of a person, place or object the researcher is studying. In this study the variables that will be operationalised will be qualitative (Mouton, 1996:95). As Wimmer & Dominick (in Du Plooy, 1996:39) and Broom & Dozier (1990:163) point out, variables are classified in terms of their relationship to one another (Du Plooy, 1996:39).

Once operationalised definitions for theoretical concepts have been stated, it is possible to form a hypothesis – a statement that describes a relationship between variables – to be tested in the research. Dane (1990:33) refers to a hypothesis as a concrete statement of an abstract relationship described in a theory.

Care has been taken to ensure validity of measures through criteria validity (and more specifically concurrent validity) and construct validity (Mouton & Marais, 1989:68). Five to six items were used for each variable in order to obtain a scale score. In this study construct validity has been measured by means of the statistical method of factor analysis.

Data or information on theoretical concepts or constructs is gathered through indirect measurement. Items or questions measure aspects of the phenomena “power”, “shared expectations with regard to the use of the four public relations models” and the “role

the top communicator plays in the organisation”. By asking questions on the aspects of the construct, a total image of a person’s position with regard to the construct is measured. The process of operationalisation implies that a list of characteristics denoted by the concept, is compiled (for measurement). In constructing a measuring instrument (scale, questionnaire) the items/questions can be seen as indicators of this list of (denoted) characteristics (Mouton & Marais, 1989:65; Mouton, 1996:126).

The statistical techniques used for the testing of the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument were Cronbach’s alpha and factor analysis and the technique used for hypothesis testing was analysis of variance (ANOVA). The operationalisation of the variables in hypothesis testing is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. However, the following table briefly operationalises the variables as taken up in the questionnaires:

Table 1.2 - Table of operationalised variables

Variable	Items in the questionnaire
Power: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value (5 items) • Strategic contribution (5 items) 	Division A Items 1 - 5 Items 6 - 10
Four public relations models: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press agency (3 items) • Public information (3 items) • Two-way asymmetric (3 items) • Two-way symmetric (3 items) 	Division B Items 1 - 3 Items 4 - 6 Items 7 - 9 Items 10 - 12
Public relations roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public relations manager (6 items) • Public relations technician (6 items) 	Division C Items 1 - 6 Items 7 - 12
Demographic questions (6 items)	Division D, items 1 - 6

As mentioned above, the primary objective of this empirical study was to determine the nature of the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator and communication department make to organisational decision-making. The investigation took the form of a mail survey through questionnaire research with posited hypotheses that were tested. Information was gathered through questionnaires received from 202 respondents.

1.5.2 Development of the measuring instrument

A measuring instrument consists of a set of measuring scales that organise and transform information into numerical data. Multiple measures of constructs were used to compile the measuring instrument for this study, which helps to capture more of what is meant by the construct (Broom & Dozier 1990:165).

An existing standard measuring instrument (as is usually used in communication research) like the Thurstone scale, the Guttman scale, Osgood's semantic differential scale and the Likert scale (Du Plooy 1996:77), was not used for this study. Instead, a measuring instrument with a 0 to 10 scale was developed. Reasons for this are documented fully in Chapter 5.

The process followed to construct the scale was:

- The constructs that had to be measured were established. The constructs that form the building blocks for shared expectations are “departmental power”, “the use of the four public relations models”, namely the press agency model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model in communication activities and organisational decision-making and the top communicator playing the “public relations manager role and public relations technician role”.
- A multi-item battery of the possible scales to measure each construct was compiled. Each of the constructs that was conceptually defined in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, was changed into measurable variables in Chapter 5.
- Through a process of pre-testing, as described in Chapter 5, the final set of scales was chosen.

The final compilation of the measuring instrument and considerations for the questionnaire will be discussed in Chapter 5.

1.5.3 Sample design

Sampling refers to the process of selecting participants for a research project (Dane, 1990:289). The population of top communicators in South African organisations was considered potential respondents in this study. The sample used for this study can therefore be referred to as a probability sample, since the probability of selecting any particular sampling element was known (Walton F, 1990:124; Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:13). The sampling frame (concrete list of the elements in a population), as discussed in Chapter 5, was considered to be the population for the study and no sample was drawn from this frame.

The sampling unit (sample elements) in this study is the top communicator in the South African organisation who is a member of any of the professional public relations institutes in South Africa, namely PRISA, IABC, SAKOMM, Unitech, IMPRO and the Top 200 companies as identified by the magazine *Finance Week*, Top 200, 1999. These sampling units were included in a sampling frame (Bailey, 1987:81; Du Plooy, 1996:50; Dane, 1990:289; Mouton, 1996:135).

1.5.4 Data analysis and interpretation

The data for this study was analysed by identifying patterns and themes in the data and drawing certain conclusions from them. Appropriate statistical techniques were used for certain levels of measurement. Statistical techniques such as item-to-total correlation and Cronbach's alpha were used to do a reliability analysis of the measuring instrument. Factor analysis was used to measure the validity of the instrument and analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypotheses. In terms of computer software necessary for the statistical calculations, *Microsoft Excel* and *Statistica* were used.

Inferences were drawn according to the principles of statistical inference (the whole logic of hypothesis testing). The outcome of the analysis and interpretation are certain

conclusions which followed logically from the empirical evidence. The conclusions can therefore be regarded as valid results (epistemological criteria) (Mouton, 1996:111).

1.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Communication is fast becoming a strategic management function in the South African organisation. When communication programmes help manage relationships with key publics that affect the organisation's mission, goals and objectives, they add value to the positioning of the organisation and become a necessary component of strategic decision-making. Apart from the *Excellence Study* (Dozier et al, 1995), research on the contribution of the top communicator to strategic management in the organisation, is limited. There is a great need in the communications industry for the communications function to be recognised (especially by the CEO) as a management function. The *Excellence Study* showed that among most excellent organisations, both the CEO and top communicators reported that communication departments make highly "significant" contributions to strategic planning. It is, however, necessary to determine what exactly the nature of these "significant" contributions to strategic planning is.

This cross-sectional study will not only provide communication managers with information on how to become involved in strategic management in order to practice excellent communication, but can also be used by anyone wishing to contribute to excellence in the organisation through communication. By studying a cross-section of the population at a single point in time, this study will highlight the importance of the power that the top communicator and the communication department have, the expectations that senior management have of the top communicator and the communication department with regard to the use of one-way and two-way practices; and the role the top communicator should play in the organisation in order to contribute to communication excellence.

Those who will benefit are:

- public relations or communication managers who are uncertain about their role in strategic management in order to contribute to excellence in an organisation;
- general managers in South Africa who are uncertain about the role the public relations or communication manager in the organisation should play; and
- the organised public relations and communication profession.

1.7 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The research project is divided into seven chapters. **Chapter 1** constitutes an introduction to the study. The theoretical background and context, research problem statement, objectives of the study, conceptualisation, an overview of the research methodology employed in the study and the delimitation of the study are presented.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 present the theoretical base of the study. **Chapter 2** focuses on the power of the communication department.

Questions of why we need powerful communication departments, power and empowerment of communicators, top management support for communication, the relative value of the communication department, top communicators in top management and the contribution of communication to strategic planning are discussed.

Chapter 3 provides information on the shared expectations between the top communicator and the top management of the organisation. The demand-delivery loop, the knowledge of the communication department to deliver on the expectations of senior management with regard to the four models of communication, namely press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical are discussed.

Chapter 4 explains the role the top communicator should play in the organisation. The communication manager and senior advisor roles are discussed in detail, as

previous research has shown that top communicators must play these advanced organisational roles to achieve communication excellence. The public relations technician role is also referred to.

The research design is outlined in **Chapter 5**. Sampling design and data collection, the formulation of hypotheses and the statistical techniques used in this study are discussed in detail.

Chapter 6 analyses the results obtained from the reliability analysis (item-to-total correlation and Cronbach's alpha) and the validity analysis (factor analysis) of the measuring instrument, as well as hypothesis testing (ANOVA).

Chapter 7 draws inferences from the findings of the research project and concludes with recommendations and the acceptance of the objectives set for the study.

CHAPTER 2

THE POWER OF THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

Aim of this chapter:

In this chapter the power of the communication department in organisations, represented by the value and support top management attaches to it and the strategic contribution it makes to organisational decision-making, are considered.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication departments that prove their worth to senior management by their strategic contributions are valued and supported by top management. Communication departments need power within senior management in order to make strategic contributions. These contributions, in turn, lead to greater power and influence in management decision-making. Power is the capacity to exert influence: a transaction in which one gets others to change their behaviour as one intended (Dozier et al, 1995:75). Influence is therefore circular. Power is necessary to be given the opportunity to contribute, while strategic contributions increase the value and support top management gives to communication departments (Dozier et al, 1995:88). These constructs are the focus of this chapter.

According to White & Mazur (1995:22) the *Excellence Study* discovered that the top executive and top management understood the strategic role of communication, and wanted to involve the communication function in strategic decision-making for the organisation. However, it appears that the greatest barrier to making this happen is the knowledge level, or at least what senior management perceives to be the knowledge level of the top communicator. In this chapter communicator expertise, the necessary foundation for excellence, is therefore also considered.

At its core, the communication department must have communicators with the knowledge to contribute to strategic decision-making (Chapter 2), to execute two-way communication programmes (Chapter 3) and to play the public relations manager role (Chapter 4) for the organisation and its communication programmes to be excellent (Dozier et al, 1995:14).

However, communicator expertise cannot build excellence in isolation. To build excellent programmes, communicators must forge partnerships with top management (Dozier et al, 1995:14). The communication function in an organisation can be transformed to excellence by a demanding CEO, a powerful top communicator, and increasing expertise in the communication department to complement traditional one-way practices (Dozier et al, 1995:103).

Communicators are linked to senior management in organisations with excellent programmes by a specific set of shared expectations about communication management in the organisation: What role communication plays in the overall management of the organisation and the ways in which communication can benefit the organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:14). Both CEOs and top communicators must agree about the role communication should play in the organisation. Ambiguity and uncertainty about the value and support of communication diminishes the department's ability to contribute (Dozier et al, 1995:88).

The contribution that public relations can make to strategy development requires nurturing. This can happen in a number of ways:

1. Management must recognise that public relations can make a contribution, by broadening its own conception of public relations beyond communication and representation (White & Mazur, 1995:26).
2. It must accept that the contribution that public relations may make is an uncomfortable one which may threaten existing approaches, but produce constructive results (White & Mazur, 1995:26).
3. Practical arrangements need to be made for public relations staff to play their part in strategy development. This means that reporting relationships must be

4. in place for public relations to report findings from contacts.
It also means that public relations staff must be given a recognised status in the strategy development process (White & Mazur, 1995:26).
5. According to Baird (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:124), researching and planning for public relations problems or issues in the dynamic environment in which the organisation exists is not a task which can effectively be undertaken by one person or even one department within the organisation. He suggests an integrated approach to public relations planning which is necessary for the attainment of public relations goals that coincide with and support the organisation's goals. Integrated public relations planning can be described as a holistic, multi-disciplinary and multi-functional approach to planning.

Dozier et al (1995:14) state that the top management of organisations with excellent communication programmes, value communicators for their input before decisions are made. In this strategic role, the communicator acts as boundary spanner, environmental scanner, and an “early warning system”. Such communicators tell top management what publics know, how they feel, and how they may behave to strategic decisions under consideration. In a sense, communicators act as advocates for publics, articulating those external points of view as they counsel top management. When decisions are made, excellent communicators design programmes and craft messages to effectively communicate in a fashion that achieves the top management's desired outcomes among target publics. To play this role as a two-way communicator, the top communicator sits at the decision-making table with other senior managers and contributes to strategic management and planning, either formally or informally. That is, the top communicator plays the manager role. Informed strategic decisions that affect relationships with key publics cannot be made if the organisation's expert on relations is not at the table.

Including a knowledgeable top communicator in the strategic planning circle can therefore contribute to communication excellence in organisations – an idea that will now be discussed further.

2.2 COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE IN THE ORGANISATION

According to Broom and Dozier (1984) the inclusion of practitioners in the organisation's top management is "perhaps more important to the profession of public relations than any other measure of professional growth" (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:484).

However, the *Excellence Study* found that top communicator membership of top management is an important characteristic, but not a mandatory requirement for excellence in communication. According to Grunig, L (1997:6), this finding is a fortunate one, since few organisations – excellent or average – include their top communicators in the power elite. And only slowly, over time, does even the most expert communicator become a true part of this influential group. Key determinants of gaining access to the group of players who make policy decisions hinges on several factors which include past successes in public relations (especially during crises), knowledge of the business or industry and respect on the part of top management (Grunig, L, 1997:6). These factors point to the professionalism of the top communicator.

The majority of communication managers realise the extent of the contribution they can make, but are not offered the opportunity to make these contributions at the strategic level. This is attributed to the fact that organisational management still perceives public relations as a technological function, while its strategic role is viewed with scepticism (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:484).

The communication department cannot be excellent when the CEO is not involved in the communication function. CEOs must be more than just supporters of the function. Top-echelon executives need to get directly and actively involved in shaping and managing the communication process. CEOs need to realise that they are also CCOs – chief communicating officers – as such, they are increasingly expected not only to understand communication's strategic role, but also to help translate strategy into reality (Pincus, 1994:28).

The CEO, because of her standing and unique organisational vantage point, is the key “enabling” communicator. The CEO, therefore, creates the appropriate context in an organisation so that the public relations department can effectively manage the communication systems. This enabling role appears to loosely parallel the environment-enhancing “manager” or “process facilitator” roles described in the public relations roles research (Pincus, Rayfield & Cozzens, 1991:5; White & Mazur, 1995:36).

The CEO’s involvement leads to her buy-in and personal commitment, and ultimately to an embracing of the chief communication officer (CCO) role. Nobody in an organisation possesses the CEO’s understanding of the company’s direction, capabilities, and potential. That insight alone can make the difference between a fuzzy and sharply focused strategy. Pincus & De Bonis (1994:230) state that if others in an organisation, particularly lower-level managers, see the leader personally involved in a communication programme, they will automatically attach more credence to it and want to be part of it.

CEOs seem to be increasingly supportive of public relations and, at the same time, appear to recognise the power of their personal involvement in the communication process (Pincus, Rayfield & Cozzens, 1991:5).

CEO communication strategies should furthermore be tied more directly to organisational objectives so that CEOs can see the linkages between their communication activities and the attainment of organisational goals. There is also a need to develop distinct CEO communication strategies that are incorporated into the organisation’s overall communication plan, not apart from it (Pincus, Rayfield & Cozzens, 1991:29).

As crucial as the CEO’s role is to an organisation’s communication management effort, it is only one of many roles that must be played effectively if the overall communication programme is to be successful. CEOs cannot do it alone. Managers at every level have built-in supporting and reinforcing roles to play. Without co-ordination between the CEO and all other managers, employees are likely to receive inconsistent and confusing

messages.

So essential are manager's augmenting roles that Pincus and De Bonis (1994:235) believe all managers should be held directly accountable for the quality of their communication with employees and those to whom they report.

2.3 POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE TOP COMMUNICATOR AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

Power comes to the public relations department from different sources. The value top management attaches to the public relations function is one key way, while the expertise of practitioners, leading to increased professionalism, is another way. White & Dozier (in Grunig, J, 1992:485) state that to increase their access to top management, public relations practitioners should increase their own expertise via education, experience and professionalism. But top management should also come to appreciate the potential of public relations.

The dominant role played by top communicators, either manager or technician, provides key indicators of the communication department's power. Serving in the manager role means that top communicators influence key strategic decisions of top management. Serving in the technician role means that top communicators implement, as service providers, decisions made by other senior managers (Dozier et al, 1995:76).

Top management comes to accept the top communicator when they see work coming out of the communication department that meets their strategic objectives (Dozier et al, 1995:75).

Too often, public relations practitioners (or any other boundary spanning personnel) lack the formal authority for action. As a result, they rely on subtle means of influence such as expertise and friendship. Scholars have rarely distinguished between power and influence.

One notable exception is the work of Katz and Kahn (1966), who said "... influence is a transaction in which one person (or group) acts in such a way as to change the behaviour of an individual (or group) in some intended fashion. Power is the capacity to exert influence. Power does not have to be enacted for it to exist, whereas influence does; it is the demonstrated power". Influence derives from the informal power of those whose personal attributes result in the ability to persuade others. However, like power, influence often derives as well from the control of resources others value (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:486).

The power of communication departments is frequently informal. This means that excellent communication departments, usually through top communicators, influence the decision-making of top management without having any formal power or authority to do so. Some top managers have formal power explicitly spelled out in organisational charts – a capacity to influence others whether they choose to exercise such authority or not. Communicators, on the other hand, are influential only to the degree that they actually influence decisions of senior management. The power of communicators is therefore dynamic, found in the "doing" of senior management decision-making (Dozier et al, 1995:76).

According to Bryce (1991:33), formal channels in organisations should be used, but the top communicator should not rely on them entirely, as she will find that she then loses out to people who know how to use the informal network.

Power rarely lies with one person; there is usually a group, linked by common experience or values (Hunninger, 1997:27). The values held by these elites are likely to affect what happens at lower levels and, in particular, how participative structures operate (Heller & Wilpert, 1981:15). To get new ideas implemented, one needs to know who has influence and who has access to those with power. The CEO's secretary may have little power, but enormous influence. As well as knowing who makes the decisions, one needs to find out who influences decision-making (Hunninger, 1997:27).

The effective manager is able to form political relationships with others. Few organisations are ruled by a single person, so power coalitions are necessary to implement decisions. Even fewer organisations are pure democracies in which majority rules. Most organisations require strong and skillful coalitions to bring about co-ordinated action. Without them, power is fractionalised and actions are divisive (Huse, 1982: 503).

Child (1971) argued that a group – called the dominant coalition – forms in an organisation with the power to make and enforce decisions about the direction of the organisation, its tasks, its objectives and functions. It has the power to set organisational structures and strategies over a sustained period of time. The dominant coalition's power becomes recognised as legitimate in time by those over whom such power is exercised (White & Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:93).

Top levels of the dominant coalition typically identify some dominant coalition members, but dominant coalitions are often informal alliances. Such coalitions can include others who are low on the organisational chart or missing from it altogether. Individuals who control a scarce or valued resource can be included in dominant coalitions, as can those who are central to the network of decision makers in organisations (Dozier et al, 1995:15).

According to Kroon (1990:354), anyone in a business has power – regardless of the job. Smit & Cronje (1992:337) state that managers should therefore realise that subordinates also have power. An effective manager balances her own power with that of subordinates.

Dependency is also increased when the resource one controls is important and scarce. It has been found, for instance, that organisations seek to avoid uncertainty. We should, therefore, expect that those individuals or groups who can absorb an organisation's uncertainty would be understood to control an important resource. The ability to reduce uncertainty, therefore, increases a group's importance and, hence, its power, but what is important is that it is also situational.

Depending on the situation, certain groups in the organisation will have more power. It varies among organisations and undoubtedly also varies over time within any given organisation (Robbins, 1997:159).

The existence of structural and situational power depends not only on access to information, resources and decision-making, but also on the ability to get co-operation in carrying out tasks. Managers and departments that have connecting links with other individuals and departments in the organisation will be more powerful than those who do not (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1998:279).

Scarcity, furthermore, explains how low-ranking members in an organisation who have important knowledge not available to high-ranking members, can gain power over the high-ranking members. The scarcity-dependency relationship can also be seen in the power of occupational categories. Individuals in occupations in which the supply of personnel is low relative to demand, can negotiate compensation and benefit packages far more attractive than can those in occupations where there is an abundance of candidates (Robbins, 1997:159).

The assumption can be made that:

- The dominant role played by top communicators, either manager or technician, provides key indicators of the communication department's power. Serving in the manager role means that top communicators influence key strategic decisions of senior management. Serving in the technician role means that top communicators implement, as service providers, decisions made by other senior managers. (Refer to H₁ (Hypothesis 1).)

2.3.1 Top communicators in senior management

According to Dozier et al (1995:83), communication departments are more likely to be excellent when top communicators are members of top management, although it is not a prerequisite for communication excellence.

Pollack (1986) discovered that when public relations practitioners are represented in top management, they are likely to practice two-way symmetrical communication. They also conduct more managerial and somewhat more liaison activities (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:493).

In a programme of research that approaches a general systems theory of public relations, Grunig, J and Grunig, L (1989) found that, in general, managerial support for and understanding of public relations correlated with the most sophisticated, two-way models of public relations (both balanced and unbalanced). Based primarily on Pollack's study (1986), Grunig, J and Grunig, L posited two explanations for the inclusion of public relations practitioners in top management: Either public relations departments represented in the power elite are empowered to practice a two-way model of communication or only those practitioners with expertise to practice such a model would be included in that inner circle. Because of the significant correlations between inclusion in top management and both education and experience in public relations, they favoured the latter explanation (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:493).

Professionals, furthermore, state that those who want to influence strategic decisions have more effect when they are part of a group than when they act as organisational entrepreneurs. Thus, the public relations practitioner with the potential to contribute to organisational goals would be more effective as a member of top management than as an independent actor in the organisational system (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:491).

Characteristics of practitioners themselves are a significant factor in their exclusion from top management. Key variables include their lack of broad business expertise; their passivity; their naiveté about organisational politics; and their inadequate education, experience or organisational status. Other determinants of public relations' role in the organisation relative to power, include gender and longevity in the job (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:489).

The assumptions can be made that:

- When public relations practitioners are represented in top management, they are likely to practice two-way symmetrical communication. (Refer to H4.)
- Only those practitioners with expertise to practice the two-way model of communication would be included in the power elite. There is a significant correlation between inclusion in top management and both education and experience in public relations. (Refer to H11, H12.)

2.3.2 Getting into the strategic planning circle

According to Kinkead & Winokur (1992:20), a professional public relations practitioner can break through organisational barriers to top management by having a good strategy and making it work.

2.3.2.1 Targeting the CEO and top management

The CEO, as well as members of top management should be targeted as top priority publics deserving of special attention and treatment by communication managers (Pincus, 1994:28). The secret of getting into top management and staying there is to treat top management as one would any audience. The top communicator should communicate to them with honesty, candour and timeliness and make emotional connections. Top management must be helped to understand the value and benefit of credibility and effective communication. They must understand the difference between communicating for the record and effective communication (Berzok, 1993:25).

That means developing separate CEO/top management communication strategies that are fused with the overall communication and business strategies. Many CEOs remain unenlightened and unconvinced; therefore they hold the communication function at arm's length. They tend not to understand communication's larger purpose and how the process, if executed effectively, can enrich an organisation. A key to sensitising CEOs to the complexities and potential of their transformed communication role is to change the way they think about communication (Pincus, 1994:28).

According to Pincus (1994:28), CEOs have to be prepared (1986) – that is, educated and trained – for this part of the job. If progress is to be made, then responsibility for preparing unprepared CEOs for their communication responsibilities is as much the top communicator's as anybody's.

2.3.2.2 Strategies for getting into the strategic planning circle

Following are strategies which can make the public relations practitioner part of the CEO's inner circle.

1. ***Define the organisation's mission, vision and/or ethics.*** If an organisation does not have a mission or vision statement or a statement of organisational values which is current and relevant, the public relations practitioner can create a powerful mission statement that uniquely describes the company – a statement that outlines the organisation's fundamental purpose (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:20).
2. ***Develop action plans.*** Implement the mission, vision or values or ethics statement. Get top management to sign off on the implementation of specific strategies and develop tactics for communicating them throughout the organisation (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:20).
3. ***Practice what you preach.*** Demonstrate an interest in, and a talent for, strategic planning. Compile a mission statement for the public relations department that parallels and supports the organisation's mission statement, as well as a vision statement outlining where public relations is going and a communications strategy document detailing how you intend to get there (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:20).
4. ***Encouraging debate is also important.*** The public relations executive should help the CEO formulate his overall corporate vision by constantly raising the

issue, debating and discussing it. Then she has to help her communicate it (Foster, 1990:10; Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:22).

5. ***Participants earn their places by individual performance and relationship to the general strategist*** (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:19).

6. ***Contributions to risk management and marketing make powerful arguments for a public relations voice in strategy development.*** Communicators should not neglect the bottom-line strategic potential of public relations. Marketing in most companies has already gained recognition for its strategic value. Therefore, many communicators agree that marketing can provide a level useful for practitioners wanting to pry their way into strategic planning sessions (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:20). However, others counsel caution about “mixing” marketing and public relations.

7. ***Some practitioners hold that asset protection is the strongest argument for being included in strategic planning.*** They argue that the more valuable an asset is, the more strategically important it is. Those who manage valuable assets should help formulate the plans for optimising these assets. One such asset is the company’s reputation. Buildings depreciate, patents expire, but, properly managed, a company’s name and reputation grow in value every year. Reputation is, therefore, a company’s most valuable asset and it must be managed strategically by the public relations practitioner charged with its care (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:20; White & Mazur, 1995:37).

The communicators who aspire to win a place in the company’s senior management council need not only master the craft, learn the company’s business (and that of its industry), but ultimately they must also learn to “think like a chief executive and speak the language of management” (Arnold, 1988:12).

The corporate communicator can take the following seven steps to improve the CEO's appreciation of her capabilities and bring into sharper focus the role of communications as a corporate strategy:

1. ***Develop a strategic communications plan*** tied directly to corporate strategic goals and the business plan, both long range and short term.
2. ***Take a leadership role in developing a comprehensive communication strategy*** integrating all aspects of the corporate communications programme. Establish a rationale for this "seamless communications" plan that will win the support of the major communications players in the company regardless of whether they are positioned in the operating divisions or in other corporate units. Become "owner" of the communications strategy and philosophy for the company – that is, develop a communications strategy so effective that it becomes a corporate strategy, useful to establish and enhance reputation and differentiate the company in the marketplace of products and services, the arena of public policy debate, or the financial markets.
3. ***Learn to be a risk-taker***, which ultimately means being accountable for accomplishing business goals.
4. ***Advocate measurement and evaluation of communication programmes.*** Develop a communication plan that establishes goals linked to the corporate business strategy and use communication tactics that can be quantified and evaluated in terms of business results.
5. ***Become an effective voice for change in the company.*** Make communication the essential, indispensable ingredient in the CEO's strategy to deal with the company's evolution.
6. ***Assume the leadership role in establishing the corporate crisis communications plan*** and make yourself an indispensable part of its execution.

7. ***Speak the language of management.*** Become comfortable with the CEO's vision, the pace of the company, its important milestones for the coming year, its long-range business goals, its short-term plan of action. Learn to translate communication programmes and tactics into terms important to a CEO: return on investment, measurable impact, specific action steps, business strategies and goals. Make communication integral to the corporate strategy, not irrelevant or incidental (Arnold, 1988:12).

2.3.3 Professionalism of the top communicator

The knowledge base of the communication department (and the top communicator) forms the inner core of communication excellence as described by Dozier et al (1995:2). There must be expertise in communication departments to play a senior-level strategic role in managing communication and public relations programmes, as well as contributing to the overall strategic management of the organisation. Dozier et al (1995:21) calls this knowledge, manager role expertise.

According to Berzok (1993:24), this profession includes people who are very experienced communicators, but many do not understand much about the dynamics of business. The top communicator must know the business and the business strategy. One has to know what is going on in the operations of the business: marketing, research and development, manufacturing and the like.

The *Excellence Study*, furthermore, showed that while most departments were capable of one-way communication, they had little experience in more sophisticated two-way models of communication which took into account the interests and views of all internal and external audiences; they tended to practice press agency – the dissemination of favourable information about the organisation – because they mistakenly believed it was what CEOs want, and even more disturbingly, because it is what they know how to do (White & Mazur, 1995:23). Further, their one-way communicative efforts may be inadequate for coping with the turbulent environment. Relegation to a functionary role also inhibits the professional development of individual

practitioners and of the entire field of public relations (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:483).

Howard, E (1995:14) says of communicators that it is up to them to educate themselves so they can effectively convey strategic information to internal and external audiences, because knowledge is power.

The public relations practitioner, in order to develop the perspective that will make her contribution valuable, must also be thoroughly informed about the organisation and outside views of it. This is a demanding requirement, one which requires skills in social analysis, as well as realistic knowledge of business operations. This perspective must develop – and be sustained – regardless of whether the practitioner is working internally, in-house, or as an outside consultant (White & Mazur, 1995:28).

Pollack (1986) found that practitioners included in the inner circle tend to have more training in public relations as opposed to just a few courses or seminars or no formal education in public relations. This finding is consistent with Lawler and Hage (1973), who, more than a decade earlier, established that professional training, along with professional activity, decreases at least felt powerlessness (White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:493).

The result of a lack of relevant knowledge is that organisations sometimes, unfortunately, look outside the ranks of their own communication and public relations technicians to find managers for this important function. Encroachment is the inevitable by-product of a calling that fails to rise above technique. The career failure of top practitioners to assume the management role within the organisation is also a failure to truly emerge as a profession from the communication skill cluster that operationally defines what practitioners do – and what the practice is (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:352).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Public relations in less than excellent organisations tends to practice press agency – the dissemination of favourable information about the organisation – because it mistakenly believes it is what top management wants and because it is what they know how to do. (Refer to H₂.)
- Pollack (1986) found that practitioners included in the inner circle tend to have more training in public relations as opposed to just a few courses or seminars or no formal education in public relations. (Refer to H₁₁.)

2.4 THE VALUE SENIOR MANAGEMENT ATTACHES TO THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

Communication departments that prove their worth to senior management by their strategic contributions are valued and supported by this constituency. In order to make strategic contributions, communication departments need power within senior management. These contributions, in turn, lead to greater power and influence in management decision-making (Dozier et al, 1995:75).

The power-control perspective states that organisations do what they do because the people with the most power in the organisation – top management – decide to do it that way. Organisations practice public relations as they do, therefore, because the top management decides to do it that way (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:483).

2.4.1 Support for the communication function as an indicator of the power of the communication department

Support refers to the support for the communication function in the abstract among top management. This is somewhat separate from actual performance of communicators in the organisation. This is the first among shared expectations or understandings between top communicators and CEOs that define communication excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:79; Malan & L'Estrange, 1973:70).

In the *Excellence Study*, CEOs and top communicators generally provided similar assessments of top management support for the communication function in their respective organisations. Communicators in organisations with excellent communication reported that the communication function has strong support from top management. CEOs in those same organisations recognise that same strong support for the communication function (Dozier et al, 1995:79-80).

2.4.2 Value attached to the communication department as an indicator of the power of this department

Allen (1979) believes that the top management dictates organisational action to a far greater degree than does the environment, a long-cherished predictor of organisational structure and decision-making. He furthermore contends that managers value the organisational roles that are part of their management teams. When public relations is excluded from the decision-making process as it tends to be in the typical traditional organisation, one would expect managers to devalue its role (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:489).

Maples (1981) agreed. She found that managers value organisational roles that demand autonomous decision-making. Thus, the greater the autonomy, the greater the value that managers should hold for public relations practitioners (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:489).

Departmental value refers to the value that the top communicator and the CEO thinks the public relations or communication department has in their particular organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:80). How much CEOs and top management value their communication departments, for example, affects the power of top communicators to retain or expand the departmental budget (Dozier et al, 1995:81).

Companies with a culture to recognise the importance of the so-called “soft side” of strategic development tend to include communicators on their strategic planning teams. The soft side of development tends to formalise such tasks as awareness building, the

creation of teams, free discussion of options, testing of ideas, consensus building, formation of coalitions and organisation politics. In contrast, the “hard side” includes elements such as quantitative risk analysis, hurdle rates, competitive performance and scenario planning (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:19).

Excellent departments are valued by the top management, while mediocre departments are not. Members of the power elite are more likely to include the senior public relations person in organisations with excellent communication initiatives. The most effective programmes the *Excellence* team studied were characterised by a state of equilibrium between top management’s expectations of public relations and the potential of that department. Further, if the head of public relations does not understand the demands or perceptions of top management, frustration and miscommunication are likely; excellent communication is unlikely (Grunig L, 1997:10).

In organisations with less-than-excellent communication programmes, top management sees communication essentially as one-way: from top management to publics. Communicators, hired largely for their technical expertise as writers, are brought in after decisions are made. Their expertise is sought solely to help disseminate information in support of top management objectives. However, top management sees no value in seating a technician or tactician in a support function like communications at the decision-making table, as they reason that they could not contribute to strategy formulation (Dozier et al, 1995:15-16).

Dozier et al (1995:103) asked what comes first – an enlightened top management demanding excellence, or a knowledgeable communication department delivering excellence? They concluded that expertise typically – but not always – comes first. Top management tends to value and support communicators who first demonstrate their worth. Public relations will be considered to be part of top management if it can prove that it can do the job.

Top management should also be convinced (influenced) to redefine its notion of communication from one of “information exchange” to one of “relationship-building”

– which is what many experts view as the gist of potent leadership (Pincus, 1994:29). According to Campbell (1993:16), leadership is what makes the difference between public relations with little impact and public relations that is effective.

Pincus (1994:29) states that the closer communication can be coupled with other strategic business concepts such as leadership, the more apt top managers will be to deem it a strategic force. The top communicator should view herself as a businessperson with special expertise in communication, not only as a communicator first and last.

The assumption can be made that:

- In organisations with less-than-excellent communication programmes, dominant coalitions see communication essentially as one-way. Communicators, hired largely for their technical expertise as writers, are brought in after decisions are made to help disseminate information in support of top management objectives. The top management sees no value in seating a technician or tactician in a support function like communications at the decision-making table, as they reason that she could not contribute to strategy formulation. (Refer to H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄.)

2.4.3 The value communication adds to the organisation

The real reason top communicators and their CEOs value public relations is because they understand that communication works with other managerial functions to build quality, long-term relationships with all strategic publics. To do so, public relations professionals must go beyond their traditional communication role to function as counsellors, negotiators and strategic planners. They must be involved in every dimension of the organisation – and especially with top management. Thus the *Excellence* team considered the “bottom-line” contributions of public relations to combine conventional financial return and social responsibility (Grunig, L, 1997:13).

Grunig, L, Grunig, J and White (1992) found that public relations contributes to the effectiveness of an organisation by helping the organisation to meet its goals, especially

by developing communication programmes that build quality relations with strategic publics. To do this, public relations must be part of the strategic management of the organisation and must manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management. If communication is managed strategically, it will prevent poor publicity, fines, private suits and penetration of the organisation by activist groups and government. This will provide the measure for determining the monetary value of public relations (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:34).

The researchers of the *Excellence Study* believed that the value of a communication programme should be demonstrated by determining its contribution to the effectiveness of an organisation, rather than by attempting to make an account of how efficient the communication programme is. They explored how useful several approaches to organisational effectiveness can be in explaining the economic contribution of communication to an organisation (Lindeborg, 1994:10).

If the effectiveness of communication programmes is to be measured in economic terms, public relations management must not be viewed as a technical task, but must be defined in terms of a mission that is socially defensible, organisationally relevant and quantifiable (Lindeborg, 1994:10).

However, public relations' contribution to the bottom-line is difficult to quantify. Many CEOs believe that, although public relations contributes to the bottom-line, its contribution is intangible and difficult to measure. Campbell (1993:17) states that "If you do figure out a way to measure public relations' return on investment (ROI), it should be measured on an ongoing basis by the same people who measure ROI for the rest of the company."

According to Grunig, L (1997:12) it was found in the *Excellence Study* that both CEOs and their heads of public relations are of the opinion that public relations tends to return more than it costs to implement – on average about 185 percent return on investment (ROI). For every dollar they spent they felt they received back almost two. CEOs and managers of public relations in these organisations tended to value public

relations more highly than “the typical department” in their organisation.

One way of overcoming the problem of determining the economic benefits of public relations to the company is through the process of “compensation variation”. During its research, the team of *Excellence* researchers actually helped participants assign monetary values to communication benefits. The process begins by isolating communication as the primary cause or at least an important contributor to a beneficial outcome. Typical outcomes included rooting out waste in work through employee communication programmes, turning around declining stock prices through financial relations, raising the national ranking of the operation through media relations, unblocking overseas markets formerly frozen because of insensitive intercultural communication, averting lawsuits and restrictive legislation through relationships with activists and regulators, gaining acceptance for rate hikes through customer relations and simply surviving tough economic conditions that doomed competitors with less-effective communication programmes. The second step in compensating variation, is to assess the monetary value of such outcomes (Grunig, L, 1997:12).

Two aspects that further influence the value top management attaches to communication are the handling of a crisis and activism.

2.4.3.1 Handling a crisis

CEOs and communicators in the *Excellence Study* mentioned crises as catalysts for changes in management’s view of communication. These events serve as wake-up calls to senior managers who previously placed little importance on public relations and communication management (Dozier et al, 1995:103). The occurrence of a crisis is an example of what Koehler, Anatol & Applebaum (1981:189) call a power vacuum.

According to them there are many power vacuums in organisations which individuals can fill, initiating decisions and actions that lead to more power and influence for them. Influence and power are derived largely from personal qualities and situational factors. Although formal authority and official power are needed to ratify and implement

decisions, the persons behind those decisions may have considerable influence and informal power even if they do not have any formal authority (Koehler, Anatol & Applebaum, 1981:189).

Kinkead & Winokur (1992:18) state that handling a crisis is a hallmark skill for seasoned practitioners and provides public relations with a crisis showcase. In this case, the most effective way to help management avoid the crisis in the first place is for the top communicator to gain a seat at strategic planning sessions. In this way upper-level management will in time grow comfortable with the public relations operations and gain confidence in the ability of public relations professionals to play an important role in the handling of issues such as a crisis, as well as strategic planning and implementation of that plan on behalf of the company. This will lead to more power and influence for the top communicator and the communication department (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:22).

2.4.3.2 Activism

An act of activism can also be regarded as a crisis. Counter-intuitive as it may be, the *Excellence* team found that activism pushes organisations toward excellence. In fact, activism emerged as the second greatest determinant of the value top management holds for public relations (Grunig, L, 1997:9; Grunig, J, 1991:370).

Activist publics and turbulent conditions inside and outside organisations push organisations toward excellence. When organisations fail to communicate with active publics, members of those publics frequently join activist groups to pressure the organisation for change. Communicating openly with activists and demonstrating a willingness to change rather than simply trying to dominate them may result in an all-important credibility for the organisation. Thus, activist groups constitute the most important part of an organisation's environment and its most strategic publics (Grunig, L, 1997:9; Grunig, J, 1991:370).

2.5 COMMUNICATION AS A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FUNCTION

Strategic communication is a critical success factor in addressing the political, social and economic issues which business management is already addressing and will increasingly have to address in future. A management philosophy that excludes strategic communication is no longer appropriate for the present and likely future environment; and public relations will become a meaningless function unless it complements management strategically at the highest level. To be meaningful, public relations must therefore become a management function (De la Rey, 1994:17).

Strategic management and planning involve the exercise of organisational power at the highest level, because an organisation's mission and long-term goals are "on the table" when top management plans strategy. The very purpose and direction of an organisation can be recast when top managers plan strategically (Dozier et al 1995:84). If the top communicator proved her worth in strategic planning, her power will in time increase.

Beerel (1998:161) states that the strategic planning function is engaged in envisioning the future and co-creating a vision for the organisation that resonates with organisational stakeholders. As part of business leadership, the strategic planning function focuses on the organisation's ability to self-organise by helping it to reframe its assumptions and renegotiate its relationship links.

According to Cutlip, Center & Broom (1985:235), thinking in terms of strategy is at the heart of public relations planning. In a pure sense, a strategy is a plan to use selected means in predetermined ways to attain a desired result. Strategic thinking links the fact-finding phase to the planning and programming.

2.5.1 Characteristics of strategic communication management

According to Kinkead & Winokur (1992:23), the communication manager should work closely with the CEO and his key executives to help formulate policy, as opposed to merely planning the communications aspect of given events.

Strategic public relations and communication management differ from tactical or functionary communication. They involve top communicators in the highest management roles in an organisation, and help top management assess the external environment and respond appropriately to it (Dozier et al, 1995:85).

Change in the external environment impacts directly on the way public relations is being practised. The communication manager has to interpret change in the immediate external environment, as well as globally, and has to initiate adjustments where necessary. The recognition that the communication management function enjoys in the organisation has a significant influence on the extent to which it is allowed to consult directly with management and to initiate changes (Claassen & Verwey, 1997:49).

Communicators who practise excellent communication provide two-way channels of communication from top management to publics and back again. Such feedback loops are crucial to top management assessment of organisational environments and appropriate responses to them (Dozier et al, 1995:85).

Grunig & Grunig (1989) cite research by Cupp (1985), Nelson (1986) and Grunig (1986) which showed that organisations vary their approach to public relations as a function of the issues and publics involved. Even in a generally dynamic and hostile environment, the organisation may utilise two-way symmetrical communication with some groups and other forms of communication for other groups in much the same way that superiors vary their leadership across subordinates (Leichty & Springston, 1993:333).

The strategic communication department develops programmes to communicate with the publics that provide the greatest threats and opportunities to the organisation. Participation in strategic management also elevates public relations from its traditional reactive style of responding to communication crises to a proactive, responsive style of anticipating and then helping reduce emergent conflicts (Grunig L, 1997:5).

Tactical or functionary communication, on the other hand, involves non-strategic dissemination of messages from organisations to their (frequently poorly defined and/or understood) publics. Under such conditions, top communicators need not be managers. A supervising technician, with routine budgeting and personnel supervision skills, will suffice. At best, such one-way practices execute strategies chosen and planned by others in the organisation. At worst, one-way communication is simply functionary, the generation of messages as an end in themselves (Dozier et al, 1995:85).

Beerel (1998:25) distinguishes between adaptive and technical work. She states that in the adaptive age there will be a backlash against our dependence on technical fixes. Adaptive problems will be understood as interconnected and interdependent systemic problems that cannot be grasped or addressed in isolation.

Adaptive work is about understanding the ends to which we are called or driven and working on the value challenges that these might represent. Technical work is the procedural work that is carried out once the adaptive work has been done. Technical work is about means to ends and when it comes to means, we can usually readily make choices (Beerel, 1998:25).

The operation of average departments can be explained as more “historicist,” or doing what they do because they have always done so. For example, the mediocre department may focus on employee relations because at some point in its history employees were the most strategic public. Managers of this kind of static programme fail to conduct the kind of research or engage in the environmental scanning necessary to identify emerging publics that may prove vital to the organisation’s long-term

viability. They may manage their own programmes adequately.

However, they do not tie in their departmental objectives with the larger goals of the organisation. As a result, their contribution to overall organisational effectiveness is minimal (Grunig, L, 1997:5).

According to Beerel (1998:162), the new approach to strategic planning requires a new lens and a new focus in seeing and interpreting the world. In this paradigm, communication managers and planners need to adopt systems thinking and they need to distinguish between adaptive and technical work. They need to place their primary focus on adaptive work. The technical work should be left to the communication technicians in the communication department. Strategic planners should know when the technical work should begin and they should be in tune with the communication department's tendency to go into technical mode before the adaptive work has really been done.

Large-scale, complex organisations have a higher tendency to include public relations in the policy-making process. They usually operate in a highly competitive environment and are more sensitive to policy issues, public attitudes and establishing a solid corporate identity. Consequently there is more emphasis on press conferences, formal contact with the media, writing executive speeches, and counselling management (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1989:66).

In contrast, a small-scale organisation manufacturing a minor product feels few public pressures and little governmental regulatory interest. It has little public relations activity, and staff members are relegated to such technician roles as producing the company newsletter and issuing routine news releases. Public relations has little or no input into management decisions and policy formulation (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1989:67).

According to the *Excellence Study*, the key characteristics of excellence in public relations and communication management are:

1. That these practices are strategic, not historical; excellent communication programmes are created for strategic purposes. They are not just an evolution of what has been done in the past, and they are aimed at groups that are important to the organisation in strategic terms.
2. They are concerned with impact, not process, and aim to influence audience attitudes, opinions or behaviours rather than simply putting processes into motion such as news release production.
3. Excellent public relations uses both formal and informal research to understand its audiences and monitor effectiveness (White & Mazur, 1995:23).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Tactical or functionary communication involves non-strategic dissemination of messages from organisations to frequently poorly defined and understood publics. Under such conditions, top communicators need not be managers. A supervising technician, with routine budgeting and personnel supervision skills, will suffice. Such one-way practices execute strategies chosen and planned by others in the organisation. It is simply functionary – the generation of messages as an end in itself. (Refer to H₁, H₂, H₃.)
- Large-scale, complex organisations have a higher tendency to include public relations in the policy-making process. A small-scale organisation has little public relations activity, and staff members are relegated to technician roles. Public relations has little or no input into management decisions and policy formulation. (Refer to H₇.)

2.5.2 The strategic contribution of the communication department to organisational decision-making

Communicators provide specialised expertise in helping senior management teams make better decisions. Communication excellence comes from the quality of strategic decisions made by senior management that anticipate the impact of decisions on relationships, modifying those decisions appropriately to build or maintain long-term, mutually beneficial relationships (Dozier et al, 1995:129). This is an important aspect

of the strategic contribution that the communication department can make to the organisation.

Decisions in organisations are not based on logic alone: they are also determined by power and influence. A top communicator may be absolutely right in his/her proposals, but can still not contribute to decision-making on senior management level because he/she is not powerful and influential enough in the organisation. Knowledge of the communication management function will give communicators the necessary power to operate on a strategic management level (Dozier et al, 1995:76). Winokur & Kinkead (1993:16) state that public relations professionals, like the proverbial shoemaker's children going barefoot, often ignore the persuasive power of academic research to make a case for including public relations in the decision-making process at the top.

Power is important to implement excellent communication programmes. Lacking the ability to influence the strategic decision-making of top management, communication departments must execute less-than-excellent communication programmes. Such less-than-excellent, one-way communication programmes seek to influence publics on issues important to top management, but cannot exert a reciprocal influence on top management on behalf of publics (Dozier et al, 1995:76).

A powerful communication department can play an important role in mutual adjustments of top management and publics.

Symmetrical practices among communicators require that the communicators act as advocates of their organisation's viewpoint when communicating with publics, and as advocates of public interests when communicating with top management. Communicators help organisations and publics negotiate mutually acceptable resolutions to disputes and building long-term relationships.

The specialist in communication is often called upon to guide and counsel management in determining its objectives and responsibilities and the path it should take in designing its policies and procedures affecting the public interest (Skinner & Von Essen, 1982:7).

The impact of a management decision and the way it is communicated are very closely tied together. Good management decisions are made with a detailed knowledge of the attitudes and probable reactions of the persons affected by the decision; the communication manager should be able to convey information about these persons as the decision is being formulated (Farace, Monge & Russell, 1977:253).

It is, therefore, nearly impossible to separate public relations policy from overall corporate strategy. The bigger the decision, the larger the company, and the greater the number of people that are affected, the more significant the public relations component becomes. More often than not, however, the chief executive officer would not consult with public relations about major policy matters. And yet major public relations problems continually arise from policy decisions in which public relations has had no part. The public relations director may not be sitting at the conference table, but the “publics” are (Mason, 1974:121).

2.5.2.1 Information as basis for decision-making

Top management needs information to help it make decisions. It constructs environments from a subset of the information that flows into the organisation. Ignoring seemingly irrelevant information from the environment can have disastrous consequences for organisations (White & Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:93).

According to Bartha (1994:138), business firms do not usually lack information about the external environment. The underlying reason for inadequate awareness and understanding is that managers, for the most part, do not know what to do with all the incoming signals. Missing is some kind of an analytical framework to help make the environmental information relevant for business decision-making.

Where environments generate a variety of problems or uncertainties, boundary-spanning staff who are able to interpret and make sense of the surroundings, become influential in decision-making. Some management writers, in fact, maintain that control in organisations has passed to those interpreters who often come from staff as

opposed to line groups (White & Mazur, 1995:27; White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:103).

Boundary spanners are individuals within the organisation who frequently interact with the organisation's environment and who gather, select, and relay information from the environment to decision-makers in top management. Communication managers and public relations practitioners are among an organisation's designated boundary spanners (White & Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:93; De la Rey, 1994:21).

Environmental turbulence and uncertainty create opportunities for practitioners to participate in strategic decision-making. Lack of information, ambiguity in information, or uncertainty regarding the likelihood of outcomes in given situations make decision makers uncertain. Top management pays greater attention to information from boundary spanners such as communication managers under conditions of environmental turbulence because decision makers are less certain as to which information to attend to and which information to ignore as they manage the organisation's response to rapid environmental change (White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:93).

Regarding high-level, strategic decisions, boundary-spanning practitioners perhaps play their most important role when they serve as consultants who advise on methods of problem representation.

As environmental scanners, practitioners make important decisions when they decide to present some information (but not other information) to the decision-making session. Other decision makers will tend towards constructing partial representations of the organisational environment, giving importance to only that information that affects their area of specialisation. As generalists, communication practitioners must strive to provide fuller representations of the environment to decision makers (White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:105). In order to do this, Farace, Monge & Russell (1977:252) suggest that the communication manager should be located at the centre of message flow in the organisation.

Public relations can also serve as a sounding board for the rest of the organisation. In a decentralised organisational structure, public relations executives provide a unique framework through which the CEO can listen to the organisation outside of normal reporting channels. This role for public relations is widely known and respected throughout the senior management ranks, because it helps make executive management more responsive to the rapidly-changing climate in which businesses operate. The CEO can also rely on them for honest and candid feedback on any and all issues that affect his ability to successfully lead the organisation (Foster, 1990:9).

Studies of the way in which so-called ‘boundary-spanning’ individuals decide on what they should attend to in the organisation’s environment have found that they do so on the basis of:

- instructions given to them;
- their own skills;
- contacts; and
- their personalities and personal strategy (White & Mazur, 1995:26).

But if the public relations practitioner is not involved, she will have to take the initiative with suggestions and ideas. The CEO must be shown that the public relations practitioner can play a vital role in this ongoing process of decision-making (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:19).

2.5.2.2 Levels of organisational decision-making

Some decisions made by public relations practitioners are relatively low level, involving concrete operational decisions related to technical tasks concretely and physically at hand. Examples include decisions about the cover of the staff magazine, handling technical aspects of producing public relations materials and editing the writing of others in the organisation for grammar and spelling. Such technical decisions are made in relatively short order; frequently involve a single decision maker; and are made within a highly structured “goal-closed small world” (White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:95).

As one moves from the lower level concrete organisational decisions to higher levels, decisions become more social and more abstract (more removed from concrete specifics). Relevant information needed to make higher-level decisions becomes more ambiguous; decision support systems frequently do not exist at higher levels of decision-making. Higher-level decisions are more open from a systems perspective. At the same time, such decisions are frequently more important (White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:95).

Strategic decisions are those that profoundly affect the future success and destiny of the organisation. Mintzberg et al (1976) specified strategic decisions as important ones, in terms of actions to be taken, resources to be committed, and consequences for the organisation and those who make decisions. Keller (1983) suggested that strategic decisions are those that contribute to effective use of organisational resources to deal with environmental competition. Strategic decisions affect the survival and growth of organisations. Such representations become more ambiguous and difficult to construct as decision levels increase (White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:98).

High-level strategic decision problems require abstract thinking and, because they are strategic, such decision problems are dealt with by those high in the organisational structure.

The challenge for communicators and public relations practitioners is to understand and respect the qualitative differences between concrete operational decisions that they routinely make as technicians and abstract strategic decisions they must make as managers (White & Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:98).

2.5.3 The strategic management of the communication function

The strategic management of the communication function takes place on three levels: the macro, meso and micro level. The management of communication on these levels will be discussed next.

2.5.3.1 The macro level

Grunig (1990) suggests that characteristics of public relations at macro level pertain to issues of organisational structure, organisational culture and some environmental influences. A theoretical and literature overview by Holzhausen & Verwey (1996:39), however, suggests a slightly different and extended interpretation of the macro level concept.

In an application of the systems theory, Long and Hazelton (1987) suggest that public relations uses input from environmental supersystems; transforms the input through the public relations decision process; and supplies output through the communication process with target audiences. In this sense then, macro will, according to Holzhausen & Verwey (1996:39), mean environment or environmental supersystems. Pearce and Robinson described the environment in terms of economic conditions, social change, political priorities and technological developments, thereby adding the concept of society to environmental supersystems. This also coincides with the interpretation of one of the three levels of strategic management, namely the corporate or organisational level where the interests of stockholders and society are reflected.

Another supersystem influences public relations practice, namely societal culture, especially as proposed by Sriramesh and White (1992). According to Holzhausen and Verwey (1996:39), culture could, however, be interpreted as part of the social supersystem, and it can therefore be referred to as the socio-cultural supersystem.

These interpretations suggest an umbrella or macro environment consisting of a number of supersystems which influence the organisation. It is in this context that the term macro level will be used, and the following supersystems will apply at this level: legal/political, economic, competitive, socio-cultural and technological (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:41).

Holzhausen's theoretical overview suggests a deeper structure of the public relations function, which is replicated at each of the macro, meso and micro levels. This deeper

structure is constituted by three functional levels of public relations practice, namely a metatheoretical level, an organisational level and a communication level (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:42).

At the macro level, the *functional level of metatheory* pertains to the worldviews and presuppositions of the external environment and those dominant in the organisation, especially as influenced by socio-cultural patterns. It also refers to a number of systems approaches between the organisation and the environment. The metatheoretical level can also be described as the philosophical level. However, at the *macro level*, a *functional level of organisation* can also be identified. This relates to how the external environment impacts on the organisation and what the organisation's stance towards the external environment is. It also explains whether the external environment threatens the autonomy of the organisation or not. The third *functional level* at macro level is that of *communication*. This describes the communication philosophy between the organisation and its environment, and will, for example, stress power relations in the discourse process between the organisation and its environment, such as proposed by Gandy, Rakow, Salmon and an analysis of post-modern theory (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:42).

Two levels that make up the macro level will now be discussed in more detail, namely the corporate level, which includes aspects such as strategic corporate management and strategic plans as communication vehicles; and the communication level which includes aspects such as communication strategies as part of corporate strategy and strategic communication management (issues management, setting of strategic goals and objectives, boundary-spanning, environmental scanning and alignment).

i. The corporate level

To be strategic, public relations must align with the corporate vision and mission – the company's reason for being – and must substantially contribute to achieving the organisation's objectives. Webster (1990:18) states that public relations should ideally be part of the team helping to create the corporate mission and set the objectives.

a. Strategic corporate management

Strategic management is a process that enables any organisation – company, association, non-profit or government agency – to identify its long-term opportunities and threats, mobilise its assets to address them and carry out a successful implementation strategy. According to Forbes (1992:32), it is the flip side of the reactive, short-term thinking that has pervaded so many companies and constrained their ability to compete internationally.

Top management engages in strategic planning when it makes strategic decisions in a proactive manner. Steps in strategic planning include determining the organisation's mission, developing an organisational profile, assessing the external environment, matching the organisational profile with environmental opportunities, identifying best options consistent with the mission, choosing long-term goals, developing short-term objectives, implementing programmes, and evaluating success or failure (Dozier et al, 1995:85). The strategic plan gives direction – it provides the strategy, goals and business policy of the organisation (Kroon, 1996:80).

According to Beerel (1998:162), the strategic planning function within the living organisational network is the key node that drives all organisational self-organisation. As such, the strategic planning process is the organisation's claim not only to what it is, but what it would like to become.

Beerel (1998:162) furthermore states that strategic planning is a formal process designed to interpret the organisation's environment for the purpose of identifying its adaptive challenges and guiding its responses so as to optimise longer-term competitive advantage.

Although planning undoubtedly produces a series of integrated decisions, this serves a secondary purpose. The very process of monitoring and evaluating the environment is the sharp end of the strategic planning process. It is the critical link between the organisation as a living network and the infinite number of networks that defines its environment (Beerel, 1998:162).

Strategic management and planning are high-level organisational functions tightly linked to excellence in public relations and communication management. Higgins (1979) defined strategic management as the “process of managing the pursuit of the accomplishment of organisational mission coincident with managing the relationship of the organisation to its environment”. That is, the purpose and direction of an organisation (its mission) is affected by relationships with key constituents (publics) in the organisation’s environment. These relationships affect an organisation’s autonomy to pursue its mission and accomplish its goals (Dozier et al, 1995:85).

Strategy is, therefore, essentially concerned with the long-term direction and scope of an organisation. It is arrived at through a process of analysis and decision-making, to which many in the organisation will and should contribute. Once developed, it will need to be communicated so that it can be implemented (White & Mazur, 1995:25).

The participation of each member of staff in the implementation of the chosen plan is necessary. To make this possible, each subordinate, in conjunction with her manager, must determine what she must achieve within the overall plan.

This is done by allowing the worker to decide on an end result to be achieved. She must then continually monitor her progress towards attaining the objectives and make adjustments where necessary. Thus, each worker’s performance can be determined effectively and remunerated accordingly (Kroon, 1996:159).

Writers on strategy stress the importance of communication in transmitting and sharing information about key business values and directions. They are, however, much less explicit about how communication is to be made to happen. The question here is one of responsibility for communication, and public relations staff provide one possible source of expertise in communication which can be used for internal as well as external purposes (White & Mazur, 1995:27).

b. Strategic plans as communication vehicles

Plans, as they emerge from strategic programming as programmes, schedules, budgets,

and so on, can be prime media to communicate not just strategic intentions, but also what each individual in the organisation must do to realise them. Formal planning activities are fulfilling certain vital functions in co-ordinating strategies, including awareness building, consensus generating and commitment-affirming. Planning forces managers to communicate systematically about strategic issues (Mintzberg, 1994:352; Middleton & Wedemeyer, 1985:163).

Improvement in communication and co-ordination are not just functional side effects of planning, but the essential reasons to engage in it. According to Mintzberg (1994:352), communication is one of the most important, if not the most important role of strategic planning. Communication through planning provides a means whereby management as a whole, on a regular basis, (can) talk about strategy. It is planning's conceptual tidiness that may provide a better vocabulary for communication within organisations. More specifically, management can convey its intentions, ensure coherence across activities and rationalise the allocation of resources through the strategic plan (Mintzberg, 1994:352).

The strategic plan is a tool of internal and external communication. It can be introduced to employees through mass meetings, the house magazine and the distribution of a shortened version of the plan itself. Often the president of the company is less concerned with what plan the process generates (what are the strategic decisions to make) and more with how committed the key employees are to the implementation of whatever strategic decisions are made. The plan of the firm presents itself ... as a favoured means of communication, providing the personnel with a statement of the organisation's situation, an analysis of the ends and general objectives, and the expression of a clear policy, unblocking the way to concrete actions (Mintzberg, 1994:353).

Mintzberg (1994:354) is not referring to planning as – what he calls – a “public relations exercise” (“planning for show”) because it looks good rather than it is good. Instead, he means informing stakeholders about the substance of the plans so that they can help the organisation realise them.

ii. The communication level

On the communication level, the communication strategy as part of the corporate strategy will be addressed, as well as the strategic management of the communication function.

a. The communication strategy as part of the corporate strategy

The concepts of strategic communication planning and design go beyond isolated, anecdotal message production and consumption activities. Strategic communication planning implies an *a priori*, long-range co-ordination of purposes for organisational communication activities. Analysis of strategic communication planning begins with an understanding of communication management philosophy. Management philosophy influences design selections; design selections influence communication content, division of communication labour, and communication flow (Cummings, Long & Lewis, 1987:89).

Public relations performance should harmonise with business strategy. The public relations executive has the responsibility to implement the corporate communication strategy in harmony with the company's business plan. The communication plan should integrate the employee communications with the messages to all constituencies and the general public. Because these groups interact with and influence each other, it is vital to have consistent, candid messages tailored to the specific audiences with the overall goal of contributing to the success of the business (Foster, 1990:9-12; White & Mazur, 1995:27; Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:18). Public relations practitioners are increasingly called on not only to ensure consistency of voice, but also to have a hand in defining just what the message is.

An important tenet of present-day strategising is that those who do not have 'ownership' of the plan, are least likely to implement the plan effectively. Since modern business plans go well beyond financial forecasts, incorporating strategies that deal with the way in which an organisation ought to interact with its stakeholders, public

relations must inevitably be part of the strategising process. Public relations must help to define the target audiences to be reached by the organisation and to devise and implement the communication plans to reach those audiences (De la Rey, 1994:23). The strategic plan should, therefore, feature a public relations section designed by public relations professionals (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:21).

Communication strategies, as is the case with all other strategies, must be coupled with objectives and the results must be measurable. Management commitment to communication is a prerequisite for the success of any such strategy. If management displays a negative attitude towards company strategies, objectives, goals and decisions, those reporting to it will probably feel the same. Management cannot expect to obtain credibility and acceptance for a communication strategy if it pays lip service to the idea of communication. These decisions will therefore be taken within the parameters of the constraints placed on effective communication (Oberholster, 1993:25).

Organisational and public relations goals are reciprocally related. Public relations goals are the consequence of organisational goals, not the reverse. As such, public relations programmes focus upon complementing organisational productivity, efficiency, member and client satisfaction, adaptation, development and survival through communication management activities (Long & Hazelton, 1987:8).

Even in the absence of a master plan for public relations, a company can emerge with an effective, well co-ordinated programme because of its results-oriented approach. From the beginning, once a public relations initiative is taken in a particular area, it should be strategically supported by research, planning and involvement by many players within the company who would be critical to the programme's success. Public relations should also be managed by objective, and the function should be held accountable for measurable and meaningful results (Webster, 1990:19).

The following are key to putting public relations on a strategic basis:

- The communication strategy/programme must be planned to achieve specific rather than “ad hoc” goals.
- The communication strategy/programme must be aligned with overall corporate goals such as helping to create shareholder value, improve sales and profits, build market share, enhance the company’s reputation, improve productivity and build employee alignment.
- Whenever possible, the strategy/programme should be proactive.
- Results should be quantifiable. It will often exceed the resources being invested in the public relations strategy/programme.
- Many people outside of public relations should contribute to the strategy/programme’s success.
- The public relations activity must have the CEO’s support and that of senior management. Without that, one is almost guaranteed to fail (Webster, 1990:20).

According to Worcester (1987:78), it is important for the corporate communications programme to have the support of senior management; to be communicated to the workforce, so that it can put its muscle behind it; to ensure that shareholders’ goodwill can be tapped and that the other publics of importance can see a co-ordinated effort.

b. Strategic communication management

In the *Excellence Study*, two items measured expertise to play the manager role and involved knowing how to manage communication strategically. These items measured knowledge or ability to:

- manage the organisation’s response to issues; and
- develop goals and objectives for the communication department.

Both items involve the strategic management of relationships with publics. By strategic management, Dozier et al (1995:27-28) mean the balancing of internal processes of organisations with external factors. The strategic management of organisations is inseparable from strategic management of relationships, traditionally the responsibility of the public relations or communication department (Dozier et al, 1995:27-28).

The most strategic functions of the top communicator, therefore, include issues management of which boundary spanning activities and environmental scanning are part. By creating alignment within the organisation, internal and external relationships are reoriented in an effort to influence the organisation's response to internal and external forces.

The focus of strategic symmetrical communication programmes is on relationships – a coming together of the top management and members of strategic publics around issues of mutual interest. Evaluating relationships requires sophisticated expertise in research methods (Dozier et al, 1995:33).

The strategic communication functions, as mentioned above, will now be discussed.

➤ **Managing the organisation's response to issues**

To play a senior role, communicators must know how to manage the organisation's response to issues and must have the knowledge to set goals and objectives. Often desired relationships are affected by the organisation's response to issues important to key publics. By managing responses to key issues strategically, desired relationships can be built or maintained with key stakeholders (Dozier et al, 1995:28).

Issues management is the process that allows organisations to know, understand and more effectively interact with their environments. Lauzen and Dozier (1994) posited and found that issues management is a process linking public relations practices to organisational environments. Public relations practitioners contribute to issues management through boundary-spanning activities (Lauzen, 1995:188).

According to Sadie (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:254), an issues management strategy involves the creation of a programme that includes the following steps: examining all possible issues or trends that could affect the company, identifying specific issues to be considered, in other words prioritising issues, evaluating their potential impact on the company's survival and profitability, defining the corporate position on each,

determining the course of action to be taken, implementing the action plan and monitoring the results so as to modify the programme as required. The evaluation of results is particularly important as findings may contribute to more effective management of issues in the future.

The public relations division can also lead an issues management group that functions as an early warning sentinel for the corporation. The group identifies critical issues and, with the help of company subject matter experts, analyses their impact upon the company, its employees and critical stakeholder groups. In this way public relations can gain company-wide acceptance because “the communications programme that results from the up-front counselling benefit from the environmental scanning the public relations practitioner brings to the executive suite” (Kinkead & Winokur, 1992:23).

Lauzen (1995:188) found that public relations managers are more likely than technicians to be responsible for each step in the issues management process. Public relations managers contribute to environmental scanning (including both issues identification and monitoring) through formal and informal scanning activities. Formal activities include media content analysis, surveys of publics, and focus group studies of key stakeholders. Managers also use informal scanning activities such as media contacts and monitoring written and phone complaints.

➤ **Setting strategic goals and objectives for the communication department**

The communication department sets goals and objectives as a clear bottom-line measure of communication performance for an organisation. This strategic knowledge can be contrasted with tactical knowledge in communication. Traditional expertise in communication involves tactical knowledge which involves the expertise to target messages to publics through appropriate media. Such tactical decisions are important, but in the final analysis, excellence of communication programmes must be judged by the relationships it established or maintained, not by the quality of communication products as an end in themselves (Dozier et al, 1995:29).

Tactical knowledge comes to the fore after strategic knowledge has been employed to make decisions about the relationships desired with key publics. All too often communicators write tactical goals and objectives: the number of issues of the employee publication to be produced next quarter, or the number of news releases to be placed during the next budget cycle. Called process measures, such goals and objectives confuse means and ends. Strategically speaking, communication products are not an end in themselves – they are tools used in the pursuit of desired relationships with key publics. Tactical decisions about messages and media remain important, but are clearly subordinate to the consequence of strategic decisions reflected in the goals and objectives for communication programmes (Dozier et al, 1995:29).

➤ **Boundary-spanning**

What business needs the most for its decisions – especially its strategic ones – is data about what goes on outside of it. It is only outside the business where there are opportunities and threats. And it is here where the communicator as boundary spanner can play a role in strategic communication management (Howard, E, 1995:15).

Public relations scholars and practitioners alike have argued for breaking down the organisation-environment boundary. Krippendorf and Eleey (1986), for example, seem to use the term environment loosely when they argue the need for organisations to “monitor their symbolic environment” using a variety of strategies that analyse, manifest and project their specific interests. Furthermore, Grunig, J (1984) found that many public relations specialists are beginning to appreciate the creative potential of their activities – for crossing and even redefining organisational boundaries (Cheney & Dionisopoulos, in Botan & Hazleton, 1989:146).

Public relations practitioners (and all other corporate communication specialists) are necessary contributors to the “interface” between organisation and environment. “Boundary spanners” whose job is defined as communication, are continually involved in making symbolic connections between the organisation and the environment, gathering information that can be used for decision-making (Cheney & Dionisopoulos, in Botan & Hazleton, 1989:146).

Boundary-spanning activities can be formalised through management information systems. Such systems provide decision makers with information needed to make decisions. It must organise information in suitable forms at appropriate points and levels in the decision-making process. To be useful to decision making, information gathered by boundary-spanning practitioners must be organised in a manner that fits the decision-making structure and process (White & Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:93).

➤ **Environmental scanning**

Strategic, value-added public relations starts with highly qualified input to the most senior decision-making levels and a receptive environment at those levels. Without the public relations input of information about trends and developments in the environment, no meaningful strategies can be constructed (De la Rey, 1994:23; White & Mazur, 1995:25).

Environmental scanning is the study and interpretation of the political, economic, social and technological events and trends which influence a business, an industry or even an entire market. According to Kroon (1996:73), issues in society are often forerunners of trend breaks, but must not be confused with trends. Issues can be very limited in scope and can be a temporary, short-lived reaction to a social phenomenon. An issue usually has a self-rectifying character, but when it keeps recurring, it can become a trend.

Scanning is also the communication activity through which organisations learn about trends and events in their environment. Organisations with formal environmental scanning systems tend to monitor a larger number of issues in their environments for shorter periods of time, when compared to organisations with informal environmental scanning systems (Lauzen, 1995:187).

Environmental scanning has always been recognised as an integral part of any business's successful continued existence. In systems where uncertainty has become one of the primary characteristic scenario's, environmental scanning is the mechanism

that links facts and perceptions, thereby allowing changes in the management environment to be more readily anticipated and understood (Kroon, 1996:73).

According to White & Dozier (in Grunig, J, 1992:103), the role of information gatherer and processor is key to the communication manager's participation in management decision-making. The primary responsibility of the public relations counsellor is to provide a thorough grasp of public sentiment.

The counsellor must gather systematic intelligence, process it against a company's business imperatives and produce strategically focused recommendations for action. She must bring top management to an understanding of broader issues which can affect a company's image and reputation (Osborne, 1994:64). According to Forbes (1992:32), the CEO is looking for public relations professionals for strategic counsel, not for in-house journalism.

➤ **Alignment**

Environmental scanning allows firms to focus on external forces that significantly influence internal relationships. According to King & Cushman (1994:18) the value chain theory allows us the opportunity to reorient an organisation's internal relationships in an effort to influence that organisation's response to external forces.

Competitive advantage in a rapidly changing economic environment will depend upon a corporation's capacity to accurately monitor changes in external economic forces and then to rapidly reorder a firm's internal resources to effectively respond to these external economic forces. King & Cushman (1994:15) state that in order to accurately monitor changes in the external economic forces, an organisation must have a world-class information and communication capability. A high-speed management system is required to successfully employ such an environmental scanning and value chain alignment capability. This must allow an organisation to track and respond in real-time to international changes in the cost of capital, labour and raw materials as well as changes in consumer tastes and competitor response.

Alignment must also manifest in internal and external corporate public messages. A lost sense of place puts all the more emphasis on the intertextual relations among corporate public messages, as the line separating internal and external communications becomes more blurred and corporate messages become more interrelated. Many internal and external messages flow together, in that, for example, employees who receive internal messages also go home to watch corporate messages to the external public on television.

According to Cheney & Dionisopoulos (in Botan & Hazleton, 1989:145), the traditional distinction between corporate communication inside the organisation and public relations outside the organisation, therefore, makes little sense.

Webster (1990:18) and Osborne (1994:64) state furthermore that strategic public relations programming is based on a senior management conviction – articulated in different ways by different managements – that no corporation can hope to succeed and prosper over the long term in a hostile climate, or without the assistance and alignment of those individuals and constituencies who are interrelated and on whom it relies for support.

Such stakeholder and environmental alignment results from research, strategic planning, and the implementation of carefully developed strategic communications and advocacy programmes, designed to achieve a desired result and to create specific perceptions, actions or reaction from each public with whom the company relates (Webster, 1990:18).

According to Labovitz & Rosansky (1997:9), alignment is a response to the new business reality where customer requirements are in flux, competitive forces are turbulent, and the bond of loyalty between an organisation and its people has been weakened. Aligned organisations capture the best of specialisation but are able to respond quickly to change. People in aligned organisations have the capacity to sense change as it happens and the ability to realign themselves rapidly with a minimum of top-down direction. The old linear approach has given way to one of simultaneity – to alignment.

Alignment provides a way of capturing the best of total quality management (TQM) and re-engineering by linking strategy and people and integrating them with customers and process improvement. Leadership and culture become the key drivers that enable an organisation to adjust rapidly to its environment (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997:13).

2.5.3.2 The meso level

Grunig, J (1990) describes the meso level of public relations as the managerial level. Although the theoretical overview of Holzhausen & Verwey (1996:41) supports Grunig, J's general theory at meso level, it also suggests an expansion of this general theory to an inclusion of functional levels of metatheory, organisation and communication at meso level. The overview also yields support for the existence of a persuasion model and a mixed model at this level. Where the functional levels at macro level are directed at the interface between the organisation and its macro environment, as described above, the functional levels at the meso level are directed at the organisation of the public relations function. It will, therefore, describe how the public relations function is influenced at each of the functional levels (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:41).

At meso level the *functional levels of metatheory* again stress worldviews and presuppositions, but at this level only those of the management of the organisation. It also addresses the value systems of management, the impact of culture on the practice of public relations, the approach to problem-solving and the attitude towards women practitioners. The *functional level of organisation* will determine whether the public relations function is independent or whether it is controlled by another department, and whether it is regarded as a bridging function between the organisation and its environment. It will also determine whether it is part of top management, whether public relations is regarded as a technical or management function and what the status of women practitioners is. At the organisational level, the structure of the organisation, i.e. hierarchical or decentralised, will also have an influence on the public relations function (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:43).

Although the *functional level of communication* did not receive as much theoretical attention as the other functional levels at meso level, this might be attributed to a lack of awareness of this functional level.

This pertained to whether management regarded communication as symmetrical or asymmetrical and specifically addressed the communication relationship between the organisation and the public relations agency or the public relations department (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:43).

Aspects of the meso level that will now be discussed in more detail include reporting relationships, the importance of a single integrated communication department, placement of the department in the hierarchy and authoritative and participative cultures in the organisation.

i. Reporting relationships

Dozier et al (1995:83), Seitel (1989:45) and White & Mazur (1995:36) state that reporting relationships provide a way to measure the power and influence of the communication or public relations department in the organisation.

However, when Dozier et al (1995:84) compared reporting relationships to overall excellence scores in the *Excellence Study*, they were surprised by the weak relationships they found. Top communicators who report directly to CEOs have slightly higher overall excellence scores for their organisations than do top communicators who report to CEOs through a longer chain of command.

Direct communicator-CEO reporting relationships are therefore necessary, but hardly sufficient for communication excellence. Reporting relationships alone tell us little about the influence of individuals on top management decision-making. The critical factor is not whom one reports to, but rather whether one has access. As a communicator, one should have access to any of the [corporate] officers at will (Dozier et al, 1995:84).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Reporting relationships provide a way to measure the power and influence of the communication or public relations department in the organisation. (Refer to H5, H6.)
- Top communicators who report directly to CEOs have slightly higher overall excellence scores for their organisations than do top communicators who report to CEOs through a longer chain of command. (Refer to H5, H6.)

ii. A single, integrated communication department

Public relations in the less-than-excellent organisation is often splintered into discrete functions that support other departments (primarily marketing, finance or personnel) or respond to different publics. These departments typically develop from a historicist – rather than strategic – direction. As a result of their fragmented structure, they cannot respond and change as the strategic nature of their publics fluctuates (Grunig, L, 1997:6).

The excellent department is an integrated one. It encompasses all communication functions and thus has the flexibility to shift its resources to respond to the inherent dynamism of today's environment (Grunig, L, 1997:6).

If public relations is to be the interpreter of management, then it must know what management is thinking at any moment on virtually every public issue. If public relations is made subordinate to any other discipline – marketing, advertising, legal, administration, whatever – then its independence, credibility and ultimately, value as an objective management counsellor, will be sacrificed (Seitel, 1989:47).

iii. Placement in the hierarchy

The relationship between placement of the communication department in the hierarchy and the organisation's degree of centralisation is also important according to Grunig, J (1976). He reasoned that public relations departments in centralised structures would

lack power unless they were located at the top of the hierarchy because rigid structures preclude decision-making power at lower levels. In decentralised organisations, the unit's power would be determined less by its location in the hierarchy because discretionary power is distributed throughout the organisation (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:485).

According to the strategic contingency theory (Hickson, Hinnings, Lee, Schneck & Pennings, 1971), participation in decision-making increases departmental centrality in organisations, one of the factors used to explain intra-organisational power. Centrality is the degree to which a department's activities are linked to the larger organisation.

According to Lubbe (1994b) (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:27), the more responsive the public relations department is to the overall strategy and structural arrangements, the broader its scope of operations and impact will be. Conversely, the weaker the fit between the public relations unit and the organisational structure and strategy, the more limited the scope of public relations.

Broom & Dozier (1986) suggested that when public relations practitioners are isolated from decision making, public relations becomes a low-level support function. However, when public relations is involved in decision making, "information about relations with priority publics gets factored into organisational decisions, policies and actions, making public relations more central to the organisation" (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:210).

The research reviewed in the *Excellence Study* indicates the following ways in which the communication function should be structured to be most effective:

1. Position the communication function in the organisation to give it ready access to the managerial subsystem.
2. Integrate all public relations functions into a single department to facilitate strategic management.
3. Develop a dynamic horizontal structure within the department to give it flexibility on new strategic objectives (Lindeborg, 1994:5).

With regard to the point above, the *Excellence* team was impressed with a structure that seems to lead to the most open communication of all – the matrix structure. Levels do exist within the matrix, but they are less hierarchical than most organisational configurations (Grunig, L, 1997:10). This contributes greatly to the integration of the public relations function, as individuals can “go over” into a co-worker’s work territory and *vice versa*, which leads to the sharing of problems and conclusions.

iv. Authoritative and participative cultures

Organisations exhibit characteristics of two basic forms of culture: authoritarian and participative. A participative culture, as opposed to an authoritarian corporate culture, fosters excellent communication.

Authoritarian cultures emphasise centralised control and decision-making by a few powerful managers. Participative cultures, on the other hand, emphasise teamwork, with wide participation in decision-making (Dozier et al, 1995:77).

According to Senge (1990:181), in the traditional authoritarian organisation, the dogma was managing, organising and controlling. In the learning organisation the new “dogma” will be vision, values and mental models. The healthy organisations will be ones that can systematise ways to bring people together to develop the best possible mental models for facing any situation at hand.

Every organisation exhibits characteristics of both authoritarian and participative cultures. The authoritarian side emphasises power rooted in formal authority. The participative side emphasises influence – the informal power to persuade others involved in decision-making (Dozier et al, 1995:77).

Centralised control and decision making often leave many employees powerless. Employees may be accountable or responsible for performing some task or achieving some outcome, but they lack sufficient authority over resources to get the job done.

This leads to job dissatisfaction. Communicators are especially subject to such dissatisfaction from powerlessness. They are responsible for organisational relationships with publics, but cannot influence the decisions of top management that shape those relationships (Dozier et al, 1995:77).

The solution is to empower employees, giving them sufficient control over needed resources to complete the job. The empowerment value runs deep in participative culture. The total quality management (TQM) philosophy, for example, seeks to empower employees, decentralising some aspects of decision-making (Dozier et al, 1995:78).

A participative culture provides a nurturing soil in which communication excellence can grow. The top communicator is more likely to be excluded when a few top managers make centralised decisions by virtue of formal authority. As decision-making expands to include other contributors without formal authority, top communicators are more likely to be influential. Top communicators need such informal power – a form of empowerment for communication departments – for communication excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:78).

On the micro level, which will be examined next, the strategic communication plan and support for the communication strategy will be discussed.

2.5.3.3 The micro level

As Grunig, J points out, public relations at the micro level is the area which traditionally receives the most attention from public relations practitioners. The micro level is the level where the actual communication process between the organisation and its publics is implemented. A contributing factor to this is most probably the fact that this is historically the area where the public relations activity started. Among some practitioners, this still seems to be the only area of concern to public relations, as the many courses that offer technical training to practitioners prove. Although this approach might not be the correct one, the fact remains that communication or

communication management remains a very important function of the public relations discipline and is most often the level where management tests public relations effectiveness (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:42).

The functional levels also emerged at the micro level. As was the case with the other three levels, at the *functional level of metatheory*, worldviews and presuppositions play an important role in determining the public relations process between the organisation and its publics. At micro level it is the worldviews and presuppositions of the practitioners who plan campaigns and execute the public relations function, which are the determining factors in the communication process. At this level too, the systems approach plays a role because the communication process would be different for an open or closed system. This would also determine whether public relations is regarded as functionary or functional and whether an emphasis is placed on conflict resolution or symbolic control over the environment. At the *functional level of organisation*, the model of communication, i.e. press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric or two-way symmetric, would be decided on, as would be the approach to internal communication. The *functional level of communication* will determine which communication theories are applied and which segmentation and evaluation techniques are used (Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:43).

i. The strategic communication plan

Before compiling an effective strategic public relations programme, the company needs to have a clear view of where it is going and what it wants to be. It also has to have established the specific objectives it must achieve to get there. Without corporate direction, the public relations professional is severely handicapped.

The next step is for public relations to develop its own strategic plan for the entire function and ideally, for each sub-function. That plan should include a description of public relations as it is presently constituted at the company; a view of the end state that public relations needs to achieve to advance the company's objectives; and a description of the voids that exist between the department's current status and the

desired goals. The plan should address the strategies and tactics that have to be put in place to reach the firm's overall objectives. Sections of the constituencies the company is trying to influence, and the primary messages it needs to articulate, are often part of the strategic plan. A key section of any strategic public relations plan is what Webster (1990:19) calls a "blueprint for action".

Baird (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:124) suggests a holistic approach to public relations planning, which is an effort to plan in such a way that the sum of the parts makes more than the whole by ordered grouping. According to Baird (1994) integrated planning is a multi-disciplinary approach. Public relations planners not only involve different disciplines in the planning team, but also ensure that they are from different levels in the organisation.

Joint implementation of a public relations plan also demands an integrated approach. Public relations practitioners very often have to rely on their colleagues in the organisation to assist in implementing public relations activities. This is more likely to be accepted with enthusiasm if an integrated approach to planning is followed (Baird, in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:124).

Ferrari & Lauer (2000:19) refer to this integrated approach as participatory strategic planning. The latter implies identifying all an institution's internal and external market segments and engaging stakeholders and opinion leaders from each segment in meaningful conversations about the institution's future.

ii. Getting broad-based support for the communication strategy

It's virtually impossible to develop an effective public relations plan in isolation. If possible, the CEO and other senior managers should be partners in creating the plan. Colleagues in the public relations team should also help develop the plan, particularly if they are going to be asked to help implement it (Webster, 1990:19).

It is precisely this sort of participatory planning process that can ensure that the plan will reflect and support the organisation's goals. Before the plan itself is implemented, a draft ought to be shared with those managers who will be most involved in and responsible for its execution. Since they hold a personal stake in the outcome, their feedback may be the best guarantee that all parties' interests, most notably the CEOs, will be incorporated into the overall plan (Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:232).

The support of the organisation at large is critical. The agreement and willing assistance of a broad-based "team" composed of people within and outside the public relations staff is necessary, if meaningful results are to be achieved. The company must also give the top communication practitioner the resources to execute the programme. Management commitment, no matter how firm, must be matched with adequate human resources (either staff or consultants), an adequate budget and, most important, enough time to succeed (Webster, 1990:19).

The top communicator must also have the discipline to follow the strategic plan, the flexibility to amend it as circumstances warrant, and the determination to stick to the blueprint. The blueprint becomes a contract with the employer, and the top communicator will be expected to deliver the results – on time and on budget (Webster, 1990:19).

Kinhead & Winokur (1992:21) describe strategic planning in public relations terms as follows: "The successful implementation of any strategic plan relies on three very important considerations: communication, communication and communication." The CEO must seize upon every opportunity to reaffirm the strategic direction of the business and articulate where the business is going and the role of each unit in carrying out specific activities related to the achievement of the overall plan. We should keep two thoughts in mind as we think about this communication process: Never lose sight of the fact that the longer-term vision of the business may be very clear to top management but for most of the organisation the focus is on much shorter time frames, usually the 12 month operating plan. In any communication one wants to give the long-term perspective, but also concentrate on the linkage between the currently operating plan or specific projects and the longer-term plan.

2.6 THE EXPLANATION OF VARIABLES

In this section the conversion of the constructs into measurable variables is described. These constructs are the “value that senior management attaches to the communication function” and the “strategic contribution the communication manager makes to organisational decision-making”.

Table 2.1 - Variables that describe the construct “value”

1. Senior management supports the communication function in your organisation.
2. Senior management recognises that communication can make a strategic contribution.
3. You readily have access to senior management.
4. Senior management values your input before it makes decisions.
5. Senior management expects you to make communication decisions fairly autonomously.

Table 2.2 - Variables that describe the construct “strategic contribution”

6. Senior management expects you to contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals.
7. Senior management expects the communications department to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management.
8. Senior management expects you to work closely with it to solve organisational problems that involve relationships with target audiences.
9. Senior management expects you to use (formal and informal) research techniques to monitor trends in the organisation’s environment for use in business decision making.
10. You are in a position to influence key strategic decisions of senior management.

2.7 SUMMARY

Communication departments that prove their worth to senior management by their strategic contribution to organisational decision-making, are valued and supported by top management. These contributions lead to power and influence in management decision making. However, in order to be able to make a strategic contribution, the top communicator and members of the communication department must have the necessary managerial and technical communication knowledge and expertise.

Top communicators are key to communication excellence. Through them, the expertise of the communication department is brought to bear on strategic issues facing organisations. The demand of top management for advanced two-way practices is

communicated to the department through top communicators, and they manage the demand and material resources of their departments on a macro, meso and micro level to deliver excellence. Top management comes to accept the top communicator and communication department when it sees work coming out of the communication department that meets its strategic objectives.

Communicators can also build excellence by becoming more expert in the emerging, more sophisticated aspects of communication practices. Using the two-way models, research and sound budgeting practices empower communicators by placing the most central aspects of excellence directly under their control.

But communicator expertise alone is not enough. Dominant coalitions need to understand excellence in order to enter into a set of shared expectations with the top communicator. Such dominant coalition support must be based on shared expectations regarding public relations manager role-playing and two-way communication practices, both symmetrical and asymmetrical. Such shared expectations presuppose new communicator expertise in strategic knowledge and research knowledge.

Management must recognise that public relations can make a contribution, by broadening their own conception of public relations beyond communication and representation. A management philosophy that excludes strategic communication is no longer appropriate for the present and likely future environment; and public relations will become a meaningless function unless it complements management strategically at the highest level. To be meaningful, public relations must become a management function.

CHAPTER 3

SHARED EXPECTATIONS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO ONE-WAY AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

Aim of this chapter:

This chapter examines the demand-delivery loop of shared expectations between the top communicator and top management with regard to the practising of one-way and two-way communication. If top management understands the meaning of excellence, and if the top communicator has the knowledge base to provide such excellence, then critical linkages evolve between the communication department and top management. This leads to communication excellence in the organisation.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Organisations that achieve excellence, have communication departments with the expertise for both traditional one-way practices and advanced two-way communication to negotiate and persuade both senior management and publics toward mutually beneficial relationships. However, communication departments need a CEO and a top management that understand such practices and expect them from their communication departments (Dozier et al, 1995:89).

Top management needs to understand excellence in order to enter into a set of shared expectations with the top communicator. Organisations achieve excellence only when top management values and supports its communication department. Top management support must be based on shared expectations regarding two-way communication practices, both symmetrical and asymmetrical, and manager role-playing. Such shared expectations presuppose new communication expertise (Dozier et al, 1995:27).

Pincus (1994:27) referred specifically to the CEO when he said that “communication needs the CEO, and the CEO needs communication”. Without the CEO’s genuine backing, public relations has little or no chance to be more than a publicity operation.

According to Pincus, Rayfield & Cozzens (1991:5), the CEO’s support of and participation in public relations programmes, both internally and externally, are vital. As a management function, public relations is an extension of the CEO, the top communicator of the organisation. Obviously, if the CEO doubts the value of public relations, the function will receive little funding or support from top management – and efforts are likely to be ineffective.

McElreath & Blamphin (1994:78) state that members of senior management often have higher expectations of the function than practitioners, and are often disappointed in the qualifications and performance of their public relations managers.

One of the basic tenets of professional public relations is that it must be an integral part of management to succeed. What seems to be missing from this basic ‘Public Relations Law’ is the requirement for management to be an integral part of public relations. If public relations makes a bottom-line contribution, then it is imperative that the CEO be involved in the major decisions of the public relations department (Foster, 1990:7-12).

According to McElreath & Blamphin (1994:78), one of the strongest factors affecting the role and function of public relations within an organisation is the worldview of senior management. CEOs who most value public relations, spend more time in external communication themselves than do CEOs who value it less. Their worldview for excellent public relations is two-way and symmetrical. They are determined that the senior person in public relations should be a strategic manager (Grunig, L, 1997:9).

Management today is insisting that public relations be run as a management process. Like other management processes, professional public relations work emanates from clear strategies and bottom-line objectives, which flow into specific tactics, each with its own discrete budget, timetable, and allocation of resources (Seitel, 1989:45).

The *Excellence Study* provided information on what CEOs and top communicators said their dominant coalitions expect regarding communication and public relations practices. Organisations with high overall *Excellence* scores have CEOs who reported a strong preference for two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices. This is the demand for advanced, two-way practices. Top communicators in these same excellent organisations also reported high top management demand for two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices. Further, communication departments in excellent organisations know how to deliver both two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices (Dozier et al, 1995:102).

If top management understands the meaning of communication excellence, and if the communicators have the knowledge base to provide such excellence, then critical linkages evolve between the communication department and top management. Top management therefore demands excellence from the organisation's communicators. This demand-delivery linkage describes an ongoing relationship between communicators and top management.

Over time, expectations and performance reinforce each other:

- When top management expects communicators to think strategically to solve a problem or conflict with a key public, that reinforces the knowledge or expertise in the communication department to deliver communication excellence.
- When communicators respond strategically to help solve a problem important to top management, that reinforces the strategic view of communication in top management. Top management comes to value and support the communication department. Such political support from top management is integral to the set of shared expectations that lead to communication excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:16).

The communication department must have power and influence within top management to help organisations practice the two-way symmetrical model. Excellent communication programmes incorporate the communicator's ability to influence decisions about an organisation's goods and services, its policies and its behaviour (Dozier et al, 1995:75).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Members of senior management often have higher expectations of the public relations function than practitioners and are often disappointed with the qualifications and performance of their public relations managers. (Refer to H₁₁, H₁₂.)
- Organisations achieve excellence only when top management values and supports communication departments. This support must be based on shared expectations regarding two-way communication practices, both symmetrical and asymmetrical, and strategic manager role-playing. (Refer to H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄.)

The CEO's and top management's demand for communication excellence will now be discussed in more detail.

3.2 THE CEO'S AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT'S DEMAND FOR COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE

Pincus & De Bonis (in Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:22) report widespread agreement among CEOs that communication is a vital and growing part of their responsibilities. The top executive in the future will, more than anything else, be expected to be able to gain the trust of and construct coalitions with people of different cultures and values. Essential to this process of "team-building" is the CEO's ability to use communication strategies and tactics to find the elusive compromise positions that so often separate management from employees and other stakeholder groups.

Excellent company CEOs want communication that is strategically based on research and that involves two-way communication with key publics. Other CEOs talk about the value of long-term relationships between the organisations they run and key constituencies or publics. These relationships are worth everything to organisations, especially in times of crisis (Dozier et al, 1995:122).

The assumption can be made that:

- Top management wants communication that is strategically based on research and that involves two-way communication with key publics. (Refer to H₂, H₄.)

3.2.1 The CEO's and senior management's understanding of communication excellence

Excellent communication programmes occur in organisations in which senior managements understand communication excellence. Senior management teams demand excellence, then provide the necessary support to communication to make excellence happen. In many organisations with the potential for communication excellence, senior managers need to rethink public relations and communication management (Dozier et al, 1995:128).

Every senior manager cannot be an expert on the knowledge, opinions and behavioural predispositions of all the publics affected by an organisation. In excellent organisations, top communicators and their staff provide such expertise. Senior managers in excellent organisations value this expertise and call on it frequently when strategic decisions are made. They value and support communication precisely because communicators help other managers make better decisions. This, in turn, makes organisations more effective (Dozier et al, 1995:129; Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:226).

Top managers appear to be increasingly cognisant of the importance of effective communication in meeting their own objectives. The communication process has become recognised by CEOs as absolutely critical to the accomplishment of their missions. More specifically, Pincus and Rayfield (1985) have argued that the top manager's key responsibilities as chief communicator include (a) serving as "the catalyst" in forming an organisation's communication philosophy; (b) establishing management's credibility with employees; (c) creating forms of two-way communication that foster trust; and (d) selecting the "right" communication medium for each situation (Pincus, Rayfield & Cozzens, 1991:5).

According to Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers (1976:7) communication is the lifeblood of an organisation; if we could somehow remove communication flows from an organisation, we would not have an organisation. Communication pervades all activities in an organisation, represents an important work tool through which individuals understand their organisational role, and integrates organisational subunits.

From an open system perspective, an organisation is an elaborate set of interconnected communication channels designed to import, sort, and analyse information from the environment and export processed messages back to the environment. Communication provides a means for making and executing decisions, obtaining feedback, and correcting organisational objectives and procedures as the situation demands (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976:7).

Not only is communication an essential ingredient in the internal functioning of an organisation, but it is also vital in the organisation's information exchanges with its environment. The communication system serves as the vehicle by which organisations are embedded in their environments (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976:7).

Potentially, key relationships are affected by every strategic decision made in the organisation. Every senior manager can play a role in establishing mutually beneficial relationships with key constituents in the internal and external environment and practising proactive public relations and communication management. However, every senior manager can also do great damage to those same relationships by making decisions in ignorance, without considering how a decision affects the organisation's various strategic relationships. This leads to reactive public relations (Dozier et al, 1995:128; White & Mazur, 1995:37; Foster, 1990:7).

Companies expect their communication practitioners to have initiative. They expect the communication function to take a proactive role in identifying how communication can help them meet the challenges and enable them to recognise and maximise opportunities while avoiding pitfalls (Grates, 1993:20).

All CEOs want a public relations executive who is interested in the business, enthusiastic about the company's prospects, and anxious to work and help achieve success for the company (Woodrum, 1995:10).

Important to the CEO is an understanding of corporate goals, the business plan, the competitive environment, and the ability to produce results. As CEOs seek to solve communications problems and gain a communication advantage, they will turn increasingly to corporate managers who are best able to produce a high return on investment, especially in this period of increasing downsizing, restructuring, refocusing, global markets, international competition and "lean and mean" corporate staffs (Arnold, 1988:12; Howard CM, 1995:6; Osborne, 1994:64).

Just as a company develops a financial plan, a growth strategy, a marketing plan, a distribution plan or a human resources plan, CEOs should expect a co-ordinated, comprehensive communication programme to orchestrate all corporate communication activities: corporate advertising, product and service advertising, public affairs, marketing communications, investor relations, employee communications, lobbying, media relations, customer relations, issues management, corporate identity, publications, trade advertising, community relations, corporate philanthropy, and so on through all the conceivable ways a company might communicate and relate to internal and external audiences (Arnold, 1988:9).

According to Arnold (1988:9), the chief executive wants communications designed for impact and resulting in action. He stated that the CEO is more interested in a "seamless communications strategy" – that is, a co-ordinated communication plan actively using all the appropriate communication channels and tactics such as advertising, public relations, public affairs, marketing communications, etc. in such a way that it gives the company a singular communication advantage over its competitors in the marketplace for goods and services, in public policy debate, and in the financial markets as well.

The CEO's role in corporate communications grows ever larger as communication develops into an important new strategy for business.

The chief executive wants competitive business thinking from good managers who are skilled communication strategists, not good communicators who have to be managed. She wants results for the corporate resources applied to communications – sufficient research and measurement to indicate return on investment (Arnold, 1988:10).

To illustrate the importance of this role, Winokur & Kinkead (1993:23) wrote that Hicks Waldron, CEO of Avon from 1984 to 1989, brought to the company an open communication philosophy that marked his stewardship. “I’ve come to realise that the business of communicating is not just communicating about business,” he said. “It’s communicating to improve business. And a substantial part of that job belongs to top management.”

Arnold (1988:11) states that communications may have become too important to be left (only) to the communicators, just as war is too important to be left (only) to the generals.

The CEO and the public relations practitioner must also strive to “speak the same language”. In a survey Esler (1996:10) did, it was realised that CEOs and communication executives were speaking different languages about communication. When the communication vice-president talked about communication, she generally meant the internal media – the products, programmes and activities she and the communication team have created.

When the CEO reflected on communication, she meant something different. CEOs described communication in terms of results; of solutions to critical problems:

- a shared vision (or the lack of it);
- departments creating co-operation and sharing information (or not);
- an empowered, committed, self-starting workforce; and
- satisfied, if not delighted customers (Esler, 1996:9).

Foster (1990:12) stated the following about top management's expectations:

- Good CEOs have moved into the centre of their corporation's communications decision-making, and they carefully monitor the results.
- They expect their senior managers to have a sensitivity to the public relations aspects of important business decisions.
- Public relations professionals, corporate or agency, who are not fully attuned to the new level of expertise being demanded of them will experience frustrations. These expectations are tied to an intimate knowledge and understanding of the business plan, the ability to work closely with other corporate disciplines, and awareness of the dynamics of global business, and keeping pace with technology.
- The expectations for those holding top positions are higher and more diverse than ever.

Perhaps more than any other relationship among senior executives in a company, the chemistry that exists between the CEO and the senior public relations executive is most critical. If things are working as they should, the public relations person is given the unique opportunity to become the CEO's "loyal opposition," the one who can say, "If you do this you are making a huge mistake" (Foster, 1990:8).

The CEO who worked with a skilled public relations executive, one endowed with good judgement and confident enough to be the "loyal sceptic", is the CEO most likely to make enlightened decisions that are in the public interest (Foster, 1990:12).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Top communicators and their staff provide expertise on the knowledge, opinions and behavioural predispositions of all publics affected by an organisation in excellent organisations. Senior managers in excellent organisations value this expertise and call on it frequently when strategic decisions are made. They value and support communication precisely because communicators help managers make better decisions. (Refer to H₁, H₄.)
- The two-way symmetrical model can be argued to be the technique of choice for the top management of the future. (Refer to H₂.)

3.2.2 Determining the role of public relations

It is important that, in working with public relations managers, senior managers are clear about the contribution they expect these managers to make. If they, for example, expect a comprehensive analysis of the external environment from the practitioner's perspective, then this needs to be made explicit. Experienced practitioners will earn their credibility by providing this kind of analysis, whether asked for it or not, but it is more likely to be used and to be effective, if it has been asked for by senior management (White & Mazur, 1995:26).

In today's environment, every organisation must be cognisant of many factors that can affect its success. Modern management recognises that public relations is a tool for problem-solving as well as attention-getting and expects information analysis, issues management, education and training of management regarding public relations and management expertise. Public relations personnel – at least those who aspire to policy-making positions in an organisation – must master the techniques of management. They must understand such concepts as management by objectives (MBO), allocation of resources, supervision of personnel, and the use of cost-effective communication tools. All public relations strategies and programmes must relate directly to the organisation's overall objectives (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1989:67-68).

Public relations should be managed as an activity that is an adjunct to strategy; in a basic form, it can be controlled and is effective. If management makes too much of it, public relations can get out of control, and begin to dominate the company's activities. If centralised within one department in the company, public relations will be kept independent and critical. That centralisation, and close proximity to top management, should also make the function more controllable, and easily accessible. Managers should understand what they want the public relations function to do – providing clear, but not too strict, boundaries and limits – before they will be able to manage it successfully. Given guidelines, the public relations department can be creative up to a point. Otherwise it will tend to “play it safe” (Dickson, 1984:217).

Most companies today need a top communicator who has the experience to take part in policy making, since most business decisions have some public impact. The public relations director must have corporate stature, however, to make her opinions count. Otherwise other executives will not heed her warnings (Dickson, 1984:218).

According to Dickson (1984:220), the failure of public relations (where it occurs) is a simple failure of management to manage it. All too often, a company buys public relations, without knowing what to do with it, where to put it, or what to put into it. Any corporate function needs clearly defined responsibilities and authority, a visible location in the organisation, and clear-cut channels to other functions. No department head can define the role of her department without guidance – and if she tries to, as many public relations directors are forced to do, then this is a diversion from doing the very job she is trying to define.

Mason (1974:120) adds to this by stating that defining the relationship of the communication manager to the rest of the members of the management team is as important to successful public relations staffing as determining the range of her responsibilities. A company should not hire a new public relations director until they have determined what they have for her to do, how she will work with other top executives, what their public relations goals are, and what public relations can add to their organisation. Such research will show whether they need (or want) someone who can take part in policy making, or simply a public relations technician. The former is more likely to be the case Mason (1974:120) suggests, since nearly every major policy decision has its public relations implications.

3.3 SENIOR MANAGEMENT'S DEMAND FOR ADVANCED PRACTICES

Excellent communication relies on two-way dialogue between the organisation and its publics. It is no longer enough for companies to use one-way communication to inform or try to persuade people to believe what it wants them to believe. Key publics must be able to communicate with the organisation and be heard. Excellent communication,

therefore, requires research to take into account the interests and views of all internal and external audiences, and seek to create understanding and dialogue (White & Mazur, 1995:22).

Excellent communication programmes stress two-way interaction – advanced practices – with strategic publics. Communicators practising these models serve as the eyes and ears of the organisation. They use research and dialogue with stakeholders to “find out what’s going on out there.” As a result, they serve as a kind of early warning system, able to alert the organisation to potential conflicts with strategic publics. (And in the process, to establish a base for themselves in strategic planning and management decision-making.) (Grunig L, 1997:7). The dominant coalition must also demand these practices for communication programmes to be excellent.

3.3.1 One-way practices

The most common public relations model is “press agency” or “publicity.” This is a one-way approach that relies primarily on getting favourable publicity in the mass media. Grunig & Hunt (1984:22-25) state that public relations serves a propaganda function in the press agency/publicity model. Practitioners that follow this model concern themselves most with getting attention in the media for their organisation’s clients.

The “public information” model values relatively objective information dissemination from the organisation to the so-called “general public” through the mass media and other controlled media such as newsletters, brochures and direct mail (Grunig, L, 1997:7). Grunig & Hunt (1984:22-25) state that the purpose of this model is the dissemination of information, not necessarily with a persuasive intent. The public relations practitioner functions essentially as a journalist in residence, whose job it is to report objectively information about her organisation to the public. These organisations carry an active press relations programme, offering news to the media about their organisation. They also produce much communication collateral – all designed to inform publics about the organisations.

Like press agency, the above approach to public relations is not based on research or strategic planning. Both of these traditional one-way models characterise the average (or worse) departments the *Excellence* team studied (Grunig, L, 1997:7).

3.3.2 Two-way practices: Symmetry and asymmetry in organisations

Public relations practitioners and their top management both think of or have a scheme for one model of public relations. Those with an asymmetrical worldview use knowledge about stakeholders to try to gain their compliance, manipulating and dominating both internal and external publics to further the goals of top management. Those with a symmetrical worldview exchange information with stakeholders in an effort to devise win-win solutions to their common problems or issues (Grunig, L, 1997:8).

Asymmetrical worldviews limit the effectiveness of public relations. If, on the other hand, senior managers value symmetrical communication, the department is more likely to be excellent. Similarly, if the worldview for public relations is as a technical function, then it is unlikely to be headed by a strategic manager (Grunig, L, 1997:8).

According to Lindeborg (1994:5) symmetrical public relations is also more ethical and socially responsible than asymmetrical public relations because it manages conflict rather than wages war.

In organisations with excellent communication programmes, the use of symmetrical and asymmetrical practices seems paradoxical. Two-way symmetrical practices provide an ethical basis for public relations and communication management. Purely asymmetrical practices, on the other hand, simply provide more sophisticated tools for manipulating publics. The solution to this seeming paradox is achieved by subordinating asymmetrical and symmetrical practices (Dozier et al, 1995:96).

The two-way models are concerned with scanning the organisation's environment and evaluating the implementation and impact of communication programmes. The two

models differ in goals. The asymmetric model organisations seek environmental domination whereas the symmetric model organisations seek co-operation. These models require practitioners to make communication policy decisions and account for programme success or failure. They help management solve public relations problems and facilitate communication between management and publics. The two-way models require practitioners skilled in expert prescription, problem-solving process facilitation and communication facilitation. Conceptually, the role (manager) and the functions (two-way asymmetric and symmetric models) go hand in hand (Lindeborg, 1994:9).

Grunig (in Lindeborg, 1994:9) lists the following characteristics of organisations that hold asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews:

In organisations with an asymmetrical worldview (persuasion):

- Members do not see the organisation as others see it.
- Efficiency is valued more than innovation.
- The leaders know best; wisdom is not the product of a “free marketplace of ideas”.
- Change is undesirable.
- Tradition provides stability and maintains culture.
- Power is concentrated in the hands of the few, with employees having little autonomy.

In organisations with a symmetrical worldview (excellence):

- Publics and other organisations are not kept out by organisational boundaries.
- Information flows freely between systems.
- Systems seek a moving equilibrium with other systems through co-operation and mutual adjustment.
- The input of all people is valued.
- Employees have great autonomy.
- Innovation is valued over tradition.
- There is a commitment to eliminate the adverse consequences of organisational actions. Conflict is resolved through negotiation and communication.

- The political system is viewed as a mechanism for opening negotiation among interest or issue groups (Lindeborg, 1994:9).

Holzhausen & Verwey (1996:43) furthermore describe which factors determine which public relations model, within the general theory of public relations, as applied in an organisation. These factors are summarised here and have been translated into a step process.

Characteristics of a persuasion model of public relations:

1. Macro level

- Strategic environmental management with the emphasis on control of the environment.
- Top management with asymmetric, masculine worldviews.
- Conservative, autocratic and undemocratic external environment.
- Single, dominant cultural and gender perspective.
- Closed system, or open system aimed at environmental control.
- Environmental autonomy, with few legal/political and competitive constraints.
- Public relations used to change behaviour of environment by imposing own value systems.
- Autocratic, non-participative organisational culture.

2. Meso level

- Asymmetric worldview and management style.
- Internal orientation.
- Fatalistic or problem-solving organisation.
- Technical public relations staff.
- Information used to manipulate and persuade.
- Autocratic and traditional values.
- Power centrally situated.
- Public relations not a boundary-spanning function but a technical function.
- Closed top management.
- Public relations not part of top management.

- Women in technician roles, not part of top management.
- Hierarchical organisational structure.
- Public relations falls under marketing function.

3. Micro level

- Public relations practitioners hold asymmetrical worldviews.
- Information from environment used to control and manipulate.
- Exerts symbolic control over environment through a functionary, synchronic approach.
- Use of press agency/publicity and two-way asymmetric models.
- Psychological paradigm for internal publics, stressing the individual rather than the group.
- Communication with employees emphasises media content.
- Consistent positive portrayal of the organisation, with an emphasis on the use of mass media.
- Public relations function supports the marketing function.
- Use of marketing segmentation techniques.

4. Effects of the persuasion model

- High levels of individualism among employees.
- High levels of conflict with publics.
- High media profile.
- High cost of communication, both in terms of litigation and through the use of marketing techniques.

Characteristics of an excellence model of public relations:

1. Macro level

- Strategic environmental management.
- Democratic external environment.
- Tolerant socio-cultural environment respecting cultural and gender differences and regarding all people as equal (state of dissymmetry).
- Top management with symmetric worldviews.

- Participative organisational culture.
 - Turbulent, complex environment.
 - Open system, prepared to change.
 - Responsible, value-driven public relations function.
2. Meso level
- Symmetric worldview and management style.
 - People-oriented and innovative approach to problem solving.
 - Public relations is a boundary-spanning function, operating as a single integrated public relations function.
 - Support for dissymmetric approach to employees.
 - Group goal oriented.
 - Public relations manager a member of top management.
 - Organic organisation.
 - Strategic organisational management of the public relations function by educated and appropriately trained practitioners.
 - Equal opportunity for men and women in public relations.
 - Responsible symbolic behaviour of practitioners.
3. Micro level
- Strategic communication management.
 - Symmetric worldviews of practitioners.
 - Communication leads to understanding and conflict resolution through a system of mutual persuasion.
 - Microsegmentation of publics through the use of the situational theory.
 - Feedback from publics used to adapt to environment.
 - Two-way symmetric model applied to both internal and external publics.
 - Sociological paradigm applied to internal publics, acknowledging social, cultural, gender and historical perspectives of employees.
4. Effects of the excellence model:
- Contribution of public relations to organisational effectiveness.

- High job satisfaction among employees.
- Low levels of conflict with publics.
- Contribution to organisational survival through management of the change process.

Characteristics of the mixed model of public relations:

1. Macro level
 - Symmetrical and asymmetrical worldviews.
 - Public relations as both persuasion and dialogue.
 - Organisation is an open system.
 - Mixed stance to activist groups.
 - Strategic environmental management.
 - Theories of societal culture.
2. Meso level
 - Symmetric and asymmetric worldviews.
 - Mixed mechanistic/organic organisations and problem-solving organisations.
 - Dual approach to symbolic management of the environment.
 - Open system, using symmetric and asymmetric communication.
 - Mixed marketing/public relations function.
 - Application of social scientific and societal cultural theories.
3. Micro level
 - Use of both excellence and persuasion models, depending on environmental circumstances.
 - Use of public information model and combination of asymmetric and symmetric models of communication.
 - Use of situational theory and VALS segmentation techniques.
4. Effects of the mixed model
 - Public relations' contribution to organisational effectiveness cannot be determined.

- Lack of clear public relations strategy.
- Unsure attitude towards activist publics.

(Holzhausen & Verwey, 1996:43-46)

3.3.2.1 Ethical imperatives versus pragmatic consequences

Selection of symmetrical or asymmetrical practices is based on an ethical commitment by professional communicators to place greater emphasis on mutually beneficial, long-term relationships than other parties might (for example, leadership of activist publics or top management). In game theory terms, the communicator is a co-operative antagonist that seeks to preserve the integrity of the game, often at the expense of a short-term advantage (Dozier et al, 1995:50).

In the interest of building long-term relationships with key publics, communicators may choose to forego asymmetrical practices as an investment in future returns in the form of more symmetrical behaviour from the publics involved. In this way, professional communicators can view short-term asymmetrical practices as necessary tactics for pursuing organisational self-interest in a mixed-motive game. Professional communicators must subordinate such practices, as well as the asymmetrical worldview they support, to a broader, symmetrical worldview. That larger symmetrical worldview is implicit in communicator Arthur W Page's declaration that "All business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval" (Dozier et al, 1995:50).

3.3.3 Expectations regarding two-way asymmetrical practices

According to Dozier et al (1995:95) ignorance probably causes the expectation gap between CEOs and top communicators in least-excellent organisations with regard to two-way asymmetrical practices. Top communicators in these least-excellent organisations are isolated from senior management decision-making. Further, communication departments in these least-excellent organisations do not have the expertise to deliver two-way asymmetrical practices.

Asymmetrical public relations relies on research to develop the messages most likely to persuade publics (Grunig, L, 1997:7). Practitioners of two-way asymmetric public relations have a function more like that of the press agent/publicist, although their purpose can best be described as scientific persuasion. They use what is known from social science theory and research about attitudes and behaviour to persuade publics to accept the organisation's point of view and to behave in a way that supports the organisation. The press agent/publicist's attempts at persuasion, in contrast, are more intuitive than scientific.

The two-way asymmetric model finds most of its adherents in business firms, especially those that face considerable competition. A majority of these firms sell consumer products. The majority of public relations consulting firms also provide two-way asymmetric services to their clients more often than services patterned after the other three models (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:22-26).

Within the range of possible, mutually beneficial relationships, both organisations and publics seek positions of relative advantage. That is, organisations and publics use asymmetrical tactics to better their respective positions, so long as those tactics do not violate the basic integrity of long-term relationships (Dozier et al, 1995:99). In terms of the game theory, organisations play asymmetrical communication as a "zero-sum" game: Your organisation "wins" only if the public or publics "lose" (Dozier et al, 1995:12).

Communicators must protect the integrity of long-term relationships with key publics against inappropriate asymmetrical practices.

3.3.4 Expectations regarding two-way symmetrical practices

Two-way symmetrical public relations is communications (based on research and dialogue) intended to manage conflict, improve understanding and build relationships. With the two-way symmetric model, both the organisation and publics can be persuaded: both may also change their behaviour. This model embraces the notion that

the communicator, using well-documented research, has the option to help the organisation modify its strategy to accommodate public needs and expectations (Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:16; Dozier et al, 1995:92).

To illustrate the role that shared expectations play in excellence, organisations with high overall *Excellence* scores were compared with organisations with low overall *Excellence* scores in the *Excellence Study*. CEOs and top communicators in the most-excellent organisations said their top management had high expectations for two-way symmetrical practices (Dozier et al, 1995:92).

Poor understanding of top management expectations in the least-excellent organisations may have resulted, in part, from the isolation of top communicators from strategic planning and decision-making. In the least-excellent organisations, top communicators reported little expertise to practice the two-way symmetrical model. These communication departments lack the knowledge necessary to provide the advanced practices that their top management expects to a moderate degree (Dozier et al, 1995:94).

(The assumption is that CEOs, as members of top management in their organisations, have a better understanding of these expectations than do top communicators, who are typically not members of top management in these least-excellent organisations (Dozier et al, 1995:94).

The symmetrical practices model addresses the purposes of public relations and communication management: to mediate, to change management as well as publics, and to develop mutual understanding. The actual research techniques used to accomplish these purposes are seen by top communicators as separate from the symmetrical purposes of public relations and communication management (Dozier et al, 1995:100).

Symmetrical communication uses research to manage conflict, to negotiate with publics and to improve understanding all the way around. One immediate pay-off for

balanced, interactive internal communication, for example, is increased job satisfaction among employees (Grunig, L, 1997:7). In the two-way symmetric model, practitioners serve as mediators between organisations and their publics. Their goal is mutual understanding between organisations and their publics. These practitioners, too, may use social science theory and methods, but they usually use theories of communication rather than theories of persuasion for the planning and evaluation of public relations.

The two-way symmetric model is most often practised in large firms that are regulated by government agencies – firms that must provide evidence of socially responsible behaviour to their government regulators.

For example, in press relations, many organisations have replaced the press release with invitations to reporters to come in and develop their own story about the organisation. Others invite reporters to dialogue sessions with organisational officials (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:22).

Two-way symmetrical communication serves as a tool for negotiation and compromise, a way to develop “win-win” solutions for conflicts between organisations and publics. Specifically senior management may change what it knows, how it feels, and the way the organisation behaves as a result of symmetrical communication. In game theory, organisations play symmetrical communication as a positive sum game. Both the organisation and the publics involved can win as a result of negotiation and compromise (Dozier et al, 1995:12).

Symmetrical communication provides one foundation for ethical practices, because communicators play an active role as advocates of the public’s interests in strategic decision making. When symmetrical communication practices prevail, communication and public relations make valuable contributions to society as a whole (Dozier et al, 1995:13).

However, in the work situation, communicators alternately negotiate and persuade, depending on the situation. The excellent communicator advises senior management

and knows how to use both the symmetrical and asymmetrical models of communication.

The assumption can be made that:

- Senior management has high expectations for two-way symmetrical practices. (Refer to H₂, H₄.)

The two-way mixed motive game, which allows for the use of both asymmetrical and symmetrical practices, will now be discussed.

3.3.5 The two-way mixed motive model

The research of Grunig, J and Grunig, L shows that organisations ranked at or near the top of the *Excellence* scale typically combine elements of the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models. These professionals in public relations operate from what game theorists call “mixed motives” or the assumption that they are advocates both for the organisation that employs them and for the publics it affects. However, they tend to emphasise the more balanced, symmetrical model over the asymmetrical advocacy. CEOs participating in the *Excellence Study* rated the two non-excellent, one-way models of public relations low and the two excellent, two-way models high. They responded most affirmatively to the statement that “the purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and publics the organisation affects.” They told the *Excellence* team that they believe research should be an integral part of the communication process. Heads of public relations tended to underestimate the extent to which their CEOs or the dominant coalition value this kind of excellence (Grunig L, 1997:7).

Advanced practices combine two-way communication with negotiation and persuasion. Short-term asymmetrical tactics can be used to stake out more advantageous positions within the larger context of mutually beneficial relationships. Ethical communicators always subordinate asymmetrical methods to broad principles of symmetrical purpose.

In doing so, communicators use both formal and informal research methods (Dozier et al, 1995:104).

The two-way mixed motive model of practices emphasises research before and after execution of public relations and communication programmes. To practice two-way communication, communicators need a body of knowledge about research methods and interpretation derived from the social sciences. Research (the other half of two-way communication) can serve both symmetrical and asymmetrical outcomes. Deciding when to persuade publics and when to negotiate and compromise with publics is more art than science (Dozier et al, 1995:14).

The assumption can be made that:

- Senior management rates the two non-excellent, one-way models of public relations low and the two excellent, two-way models high. (Refer to Hz.)

3.4 KNOWLEDGE IN THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT TO DELIVER ON EXPECTATIONS

It seems that communication managers are not always equipped to deliver the outputs required by top management. This can be the result of a lack of understanding of the full implications of the changes taking place in the business environment, which in turn results in the lack of ability to deliver the required outputs, because the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies have never been acquired or developed (Claassen, 1997:60).

An excellent communication department does its best work when it helps senior management understand organisational constituents. Persuasion cuts two ways. Savvy CEOs let excellent communicators persuade their senior managers as well as constituents. CEOs include excellent communicators in all strategic decisions, because nobody else knows better how those decisions will affect key constituents. On that basis, senior managers come to value the communication department in a new way,

and support the communication function as an important component of organisational effectiveness (Dozier et al, 1995:124).

3.4.1 The communication department's understanding of the expectations of the CEO and senior management

For public relations to be valued by the organisation it serves, practitioners must be able to understand what is expected of them. They must also be able to demonstrate that their efforts contribute to the goals of the organisation by building long-term behavioural relationships with strategic publics – those that affect the ability of the organisation to accomplish its mission.

To do so, public relations practitioners must demonstrate effectiveness at two levels – the micro level of individual programmes to communicate with different publics, and the macro level of overall organisational effectiveness (Grunig J, 1993a:136).

Public relations practitioners often do not have the training to be communication managers, but rather to be communication technicians. Thus, top executives frequently do not delegate autonomy to the public relations department (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:101).

As a result, many public relations departments are forced to provide press agency or public-information functions, even though the organisation would benefit most from one of the two-way models of public relations. The public relations department, therefore, continues to function with a structured hierarchy, under which managers merely oversee the work of communication technicians low in professionalism (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:101).

The public relations department, as a result, suffers in prestige and power in the organisation. And, because the public relations functions provided are not the most appropriate for the organisation's environment, the public relations department suffers budget and personnel cuts when funds are scarce (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:101).

The top communicator is the main link between the top management and the communication department. She must be able to translate the expectations of the top management to the communication department and must help them understand those expectations and deliver on them.

3.4.2 The communication department's expertise to deliver on the expectations of senior management

Public relations practitioners are at present insufficiently prepared for business and management careers, and compared to the other senior managers competing for board or senior management group positions, seem to lack qualifications and stature (White & Mazur, 1995:32).

3.4.2.1 Expertise in the communication department

Three points about communicator expertise should be kept in mind. Firstly, the knowledge base is primary, providing the necessary foundation for all other aspects of communication excellence.

Secondly, knowledge or expertise is a characteristic of the department, not necessarily of a single individual. One-person communication departments require much from a single communication professional. Hiring outside consultants to provide needed expertise to the communication department on an as-needed basis may be one way to expand departmental expertise (Dozier et al, 1995:25).

Thirdly, knowledge alone cannot establish excellent communication programmes. Although knowledge to play the manager role is an essential and necessary requirement for communication excellence, manager role knowledge by itself does not lead to excellent communication programmes. The senior management's understanding of the communication function is also important and participative organisational cultures enhance the opportunities for excellent communication programmes to flourish (Dozier et al, 1995:25).

In some organisations excellence evolves over time, with incremental increases in departmental expertise as communication personnel change. Excellence involves the collective knowledge of the communication department.

Not all managerial knowledge in the department needs to belong to a single “renaissance” communicator who is expert in all aspects of traditional and emerging communication sophistication. As the knowledge base of the profession grows, excellent departments will likely consist of complementary communicators who hold different forms of expertise that work well together (Dozier et al, 1995:26).

According to White (2000:85), innovation in public relations depends, in part, on practitioners claiming a role for themselves which is larger than the role many accept at present – the communication specialist role. This broader role means that public relations consultants will become, in effect, management consultants. Arguably, public relations should be recognised as part of the overall management function, examining and helping to manage important relationships, seeking to influence the development of those relationships and perceptions and behaviour associated with them.

It makes use of managed communication (which is “real”, two-way communication) and, as an anticipatory practice, analyses and addresses the future of the relationships of concern to the organisation (White, 2000:85).

Emerging communicator expertise in strategic planning and research does not replace or diminish the importance of traditional communicator skills in writing, editing, graphics, media relations, and so forth. Rather, the new expertise is added to the traditional communicator’s set of skills to build a well-rounded, excellent communication department (Dozier et al, 1995:27).

This empowers communicators by placing the most central aspects of excellence directly under their control. Communicators can, therefore, build excellence by becoming more expert in the emerging, more sophisticated aspects of communication practices (Dozier et al, 1995:25). Knowledge of research and budgeting forms part of these practices.

Excellent departments and communicators can contribute in the following way to the success of the organisation:

- Excellent departments practice traditional crafts of a communication department better than most.
- Excellent communication departments know how to communicate in two directions, using cutting-edge expertise in public relations research.
- Excellent communicators know how to design appropriate messages and select appropriate media to communicate the organisation's message outward to those groups that affect the organisation's survival and growth.
- Excellent communicators help the CEO anticipate the reactions of publics before they happen, permitting her to act strategically rather than reactively.
- Excellent communicators know how to gather information from constituents through focus groups, surveys of publics, and systematic analysis of what the media says about the organisation and issues important to the CEO. They study opinion polls and media coverage to identify emerging issues and help manage issues already on the organisation's agenda. In other words, excellent communicators help the CEO with strategic planning and decision-making. They are part of the senior management team.
- Generally, however, excellent communicators do their best work when they persuade the CEO to change.
- Top communicators, with the support of the expertise in their departments, make substantial contributions to strategic planning and decision-making. Using formal and informal research techniques, they help with diagnosis and problem solving, then execute effective communication programmes to build lasting, long-term relationships with key constituents (Dozier et al, 1995:128; White & Mazur, 1995:32).

The major issues confronting public relations practitioners today are the need to:

- gain commitment for communication from top management;
- clarify their tasks in organisations that are devolving responsibilities and fragmenting; and
- find ways to measure their effectiveness (White & Mazur, 1995:45).

3.4.2.2 Knowledge about models of public relations practices

Just as roles describe patterns in the activities of individual communicators, models describe the values and a pattern of behaviour (practices) that communication departments use to deal with publics. The press agency/publicity and the public information models involve the generation of messages about organisations that are distributed to audiences or publics. These unsophisticated one-way models date to the turn of the 20th century. The sophisticated, two-way models are evolving with the communication profession itself (Dozier et al, 1995:40).

The two-way models are professional because they are based on a body of knowledge and a set of techniques used for strategic purposes: to manage conflicts and build relationships with publics. The one-way models are “craft”, meaning that communication techniques are used to generate messages as if messages were ends in themselves (Sriramesh, 1999:227-230; Dozier et al, 1995:42).

3.4.2.3 Knowing two-way communication practices

To play the manager role, communicators must know advanced practices that rightfully treat communication as a two-way process. Seitel (1989:167) states that the SMR (sender-message-receiver) approach is therefore fundamental. This model suggests that the communication process begins with the source, who issues a message to a receiver, who then decides what action to take, if any, relative to communication. This element of receiver action, or feedback, underscores that good communication always, involves dialogue between two or more parties.

Communication is, therefore, dynamic, proactive, interactive and contextual (Rasberry & Lemoine, 1985:25). According to Cutlip, Center & Broom (1985:260-261), by communication we mean the interpretation, transmission and receiving of ideas or information – a transaction. To communicate effectively, the sender’s words and symbols must mean the same thing to the receiver than they do to the sender.

A sender can encode a message and a receiver can decode it only in terms of his/her own experience and knowledge. When there has been no communication experience, then communication becomes virtually impossible. Commonness in communication is therefore essential to link people and purpose together in any co-operative system.

Eisenberg & Goodall (1993:22) identify four major definitions of communication that are applicable to organisations: (1) communication as information transfer; (2) communication as a transactional process; (3) communication as strategic control; and (4) communication as balancing creativity and constraint.

Newcomb's symmetry model can also be used to explain two-way communication practices. His approach (1953) to communication is that of a social psychologist concerned with interaction between human beings. His model implies that any given system may be characterised by a balance of forces and that any change in any part of the system will lead to strain toward balance or symmetry, because imbalance or lack of symmetry is psychologically uncomfortable and generates internal pressure to restore balance. Symmetry has the advantage of a person (A) being able to readily calculate another person (B)'s behaviour. Asymmetry is also indicated in Newcomb's model when people "agree to disagree" (Severin & Tankard, 1979:36; McQuail & Windahl, 1981:21).

Measures of expertise in two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical practices complete the knowledge sphere, the core sphere of communication excellence. Knowing how to practise communication using both models makes an important contribution to overall communication excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:39).

Knowledge of two-way symmetrical communication practices includes the following aspects:

- Negotiate with an activist public.
- Use theories of conflict resolution in dealing with publics.
- Help management to understand the opinion of particular publics.
- Determine how publics react to the organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:45).

Knowledge to perform these tasks is deeply rooted in research. The task of helping management understand publics assumes that communicators have such understanding to share. According to Hunt (1989:28), communication involves one person trying to create meaning in another. In order to create understanding, communication must therefore take place to create meaning in the listener and to transfer information (Hunt, 1989:28; Koehler, Anatol & Applebaum 1981:408; Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976:10-14; Farace, Monge & Russel, 1977:43). This comes from strategic research.

Measuring public reactions to the actions of organisations is another source of communicator expertise. Negotiation with activist publics and the use of conflict resolution involve a detailed understanding of publics involved, obtained through strategic research (Dozier et al, 1995:45).

Knowledge of two-way asymmetrical communication practices includes the following:

- Persuade a public that your organisation is right on an issue.
- Get publics to behave as the organisation wants.
- Manipulate publics scientifically.
- Use attitude theory in a campaign (Dozier et al, 1995:46).

These items emphasise persuasion – getting publics to do what management wants them to do. By persuading publics to the organisation’s position on issues, getting them to behave as management wishes, and manipulating publics scientifically, communicators practice a sophisticated form of public relations and communication management (Dozier et al, 1995:46; Sriramesh, 1999:227-230).

Symmetrical and asymmetrical communication use different processes to achieve different kinds of outcomes. In symmetrical practices, communicators use theories and techniques of conflict resolution and negotiation to increase top management understanding of publics. In asymmetrical practices, communicators use attitude theory, persuasion and manipulation to shape public attitudes and behaviours.

Although both models involve two-way communication, two distinctly different worldviews are incorporated in each (Dozier et al, 1995:46; Sriramesh, 1999:227-230).

3.4.2.4 Knowledge of research

Science attempts to provide more reliable answers than those provided by other generally used ways of knowing. To the extent that one can use the scientific method of decision-making in public relations management, one elevates the function from the intuitive enterprise of the artist and makes it part of an organisation's management system. In this approach, research is at the core of how the function is managed (Broom & Dozier, 1990:18).

The knowledge to use research is critical to communication excellence. Specifically when playing the manager role, communication departments need the research expertise, among other things, to segment publics and evaluate programmes (Dozier et al, 1995:30-31).

Seitel (1989:135) states that research is the systematic collection and interpretation of information to increase understanding. He furthermore states that most research in public relations is either theoretical or applied. Applied research solves practical problems; theoretical research aids understanding of a public relations process.

According to Puth (1994b:110-111), research is becoming an increasingly important part of any public relations programme. Research must not only be accepted, but in actual fact practised, as a vitally important function in the public relations process. It provides the initial information necessary for the planning and execution of the public relations campaign, as well as the means and guidelines for the later evaluation of the programme.

Public relations practitioners, like their colleagues in any other area of management, need to measure and justify their contributions to organisational goals and objectives

on the basis of verified information. However, public relations research must become more sophisticated and practitioners better educated in research techniques before they will turn to it more often (Puth 1994:110-111).

Traditionally, communication management research was associated with the evaluation of communication intervention effects and the analysis of publicity. While many practitioners were only equipped to conduct publicity and effects research, the potential of the communication management department to make contributions to the strategic management process, through strategic research, had been ignored or misunderstood by many technician practitioners, communication managers and top managers alike (Ströh & Leonard, 1999:2).

Communication management research had also been criticised for the inferior quality thereof and the limited number of techniques that were used in the process. Practitioners' poor understanding of the importance of this element in the communication management process, as well as their inferior level of research expertise often contributed to the poor credibility of the communication management department in many organisations (Ströh & Leonard, 1999:2).

Communication research takes on many forms. Some organisations use formal and informal techniques to identify emerging issues that may affect their organisations, tracking public opinion regarding those issues, while others seek to define publics based on how they are affected by the organisation and how they may behave toward the organisation. Some organisations hold communication programmes accountable by asking communicators to evaluate the impact of programmes on the awareness, knowledge, opinions and behaviours of publics. Research also plays an important role in two-way practices, both symmetrical and asymmetrical (Dozier et al, 1995:30; Ströh & Leonard, 1999:145).

Three primary forms of public relations research are methods, mostly indirect, of observing human behaviour:

- Surveys are designed to reveal attitudes and opinions – what people think about certain subjects.
- Communication audits are often designed to reveal disparities between real and perceived communication between management and target audiences. Management may make certain assumptions about its methods, media, materials and messages, whereas its targets may confirm or refute those assumptions.
- Unobtrusive measures – such as fact finding, content analysis, and readability studies – enable the study of a subject or object without knowing the researcher or the research as an intruder (Seitel, 1989:137).

According to Cutlip, Center & Broom (1985:202), a research orientation is necessary for those practising public relations in the Information Age. The research attitude calls for fact-finding, listening and systematic problem definition to help bridge gaps between organisations and their publics (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:202; Puth in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:111).

Puchan, Pieczka & L'Etang (1999:168) state that the use of research is linked both to degrees of professionalism and to the potential status of the individual practitioner in the organisation. It is suggested that those capable of providing management with soundly researched evaluation of activities linked to overall communication objectives as well as specific programme objectives, are more likely to gain the ear of top management.

3.4.2.5 Sophistication means strategic research

The more sophisticated professional models require a form of expertise that the less sophisticated craft models do not. To practise either two-way model, the communication department needs expertise regarding strategic research – the ability to systematically collect reliable information about large and small publics that affect the organisation, organise that information into a manageable form, and share that information with senior management to improve strategic decisions (Dozier et al, 1995:42).

According to Gill & Johnson (in Ströh & Leonard, 1999:3) management research is concerned with the process of finding out how to approach a task to be accomplished. They contend that all management research approaches have a problem-solving nature and serve as a systematic check when undertaking research. Cooper & Schindler (in Ströh & Leonard, 1998:14) describe the application of this process in business as follows: “Research is a systematic inquiry aimed at providing information to solve managerial problems ... a systematic inquiry that provides information for management decision-making”.

Seitel (1989:35) states that an organisation must acquire enough accurate, relevant data about its publics, products and programmes to answer the following kinds of questions:

- How can we identify and define our constituent groups?
- How does this knowledge relate to the design of our messages?
- How does this relate to the design of our programmes?
- How does it relate to the media we use to convey our messages?
- How does it relate to the schedule we adopt in using our media?
- How does it relate to the ultimate implementation tactics of our programme?

The research process provides managers with a systematic and disciplined way of solving managerial problems. Not only does research advance knowledge but it contributes to the manager’s self-development as a manager and problem-solver (Ströh & Leonard, 1999:3).

According to Bergen (2000:323), strategic public relations programmes have driven the development of a wide variety of research and measurement capabilities. Public affairs has adopted many of the techniques of market research to identify various audiences and to track the effectiveness of messages designed for those audiences.

Strategic research differs from tactical research – the ability to gather information in order to generate or distribute messages. Checking facts for a news release or gathering library information to help write the annual report are forms of tactical

research. Tactical research even includes doing a scientific survey to generate news releases and media coverage (Dozier et al, 1995:42).

According to Grunig & Hunt (1984:24), the press agent/publicist seldom uses research, unless it is informal observation of whether their publicity materials have been used in the media. At times they may also count the number of people that attend an event they have promoted or the number of people who make use of their products or services.

The traditional public-information specialists also do little research. They follow a journalistic model of preparing informational materials for largely unknown publics. At times, they may do readability tests to see if the information is at the appropriate level of difficulty for their intended audience, and they may also do readership studies, to see if the audience actually uses the information. But, for the most part, public-information specialists have little idea of what happens to the materials they prepare (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:24).

In contrast, research plays an important role in both two-way models – in fact, research is the very reason they are called two-way models. The research is quite different, however. There are two major types of research: formative and evaluative. Formative research helps to plan an activity and to choose objectives. Evaluative research finds out whether the objectives have been met (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:24; Seitel, 1989:133).

In the asymmetric model, the public relations practitioner uses formative research to find out what the public will accept and tolerate. The practitioner identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organisation with the public interest in mind. When two-way asymmetric practitioners do evaluative research, they measure attitudes and behaviour before and after the public relations effort to see what effect the campaign has had (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:25).

In the two-way symmetric model, practitioners use formative research to learn how the public perceives the organisation and to determine what consequences the organisation

has for the public. This research can then be used to counsel management on public reaction to policies and on how those policies could be changed to better serve the public interest. Formative research can also be used to learn how well publics understand management and how well management understands its publics – information that helps a great deal in choosing specific communication objectives. Evaluative research in the symmetric model measures whether a public relations effort has actually improved the understanding publics have of the organisation and management has of its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:25).

i. Types of strategic research

Academics have been urging practitioners to use more research at both strategic and planning levels and to get to grips with evaluation because of the identified value of research to the development of public relations and potential influence at boardroom level (Puchan et al, 1999:169).

Strategic research gathers information about publics to improve strategic decision-making. Such research consists of both formal (scientific) and informal methods or techniques. In reviewing a number of communicator surveys and studies, Dozier et al (1995:43) found that scientific research correlated with the two-way asymmetrical model and to a lesser degree with the two-way symmetrical model. Scientific research involves both scientific scanning (research to detect environmental turbulence – for example, new competition, strikes boycotts, and regulations) and scientific evaluation (research to see if strategic communication programmes worked).

Techniques of scientific research include surveys to track issues, the use of public opinion research agencies and monitoring other research in the public domain. Mixed research consists of both scientific techniques (i.e. formal analysis of media content and complaints by phone or letter) and informal techniques (i.e. media contacts).

Informal research involves keeping in touch with members of publics, calling back people attending an organisation's presentation and checking with field personnel (Dozier et al, 1995:44).

Communicators use informal research most frequently, followed by mixed research. Communicators use scientific research least often. Measures of usage probably reflect the greater cost and time it takes to do more rigorous forms of research. Dozier et al (1995:44) think of the three types of research – scientific, mixed and informal – as a cluster of techniques from which communicators can choose selectively, depending on the circumstances (Dozier et al, 1995:44).

ii. Scanning and evaluation research

There is an increasing recognition in the communication world that, to be taken seriously, there has to be evidence of the contribution made. There is growing evidence that organisations and clients require public relations and the communication function to demonstrate their effectiveness, and that showing a file of press clippings is not enough. The question comes back: "So what? What difference does that make to the organisation?" (Gregory, 1999:6).

Communicators use research to "scan" the organisation's environment, helping to sensitise senior management to changes and potential threats to relationships with key publics. Environmental scanning is a part of the larger management function of strategic planning. An organisation's environment is made up of many groups of people and organisations that affect an organisation's autonomy. Government regulations can sharply curtail corporations' ability to make profits for stockholders. A company can, for example, carefully monitor pending legislation both at the national level and in the state where corporate headquarters are located. Events and issues can affect members of non-profit organisations and their relationship to the organisation. Environmental scanning can be done in these organisations by listening to people in the field (Dozier et al, 1995:43).

Communicators also use research to measure the impact of communication programmes on relationships with key publics, which can be done by means of a questionnaire. The essence of communication evaluation is: Did we accomplish what we planned to accomplish with this programme? To contribute strategically, communication evaluation must focus on measures of outcomes. Evaluations do not measure anything of inherent value to organisations when they focus on such communication process measures as the number of news releases written and/or published (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:291; Dozier et al, 1995:43).

Evaluation starts at the beginning of a programme, not at the end. Setting a benchmark means that there is a clear and demonstrable baseline. Next comes the setting of objectives. These objectives need to contribute towards achieving the organisation's overall goals; for tactical campaigns these can be quite simple. The final stage is an assessment of whether or not the objectives were met: that is, summative evaluation (Gregory, 1999:6).

These process or implementation measures become meaningful to senior management when they are coupled with outcome measures – awareness, knowledge, opinions, and behaviours of publics that affect the organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:43). Lindenmann (1998:67) furthermore states that, to carry out effective public relations measurement and evaluation, what are really needed are mechanisms for measuring awareness and comprehension, recall and retention, opinion and attitude change, and behavioural patterns.

iii. Research to segment publics

Researching the problem situation includes the discovery or confirmation of who is involved and who is affected in the context of their relationship with the organisation. From those identified as somehow contributing to or touched by the problem, one selects and assigns priorities to the target publics of the programme. This is as much part of strategic decision making as any other step.

Too often, however, publics are selected from static “laundry lists” without taking into account the specific problem situation. As seductive as these lists may be – because they reduce the need for research and decision-making – such cross-situational typologies may or may not apply in a particular problem situation (Broom & Dozier, 1990:32).

Publics then, are defined on the basis of their connection to theory in a particular situation. Whereas this linkage is useful for conceptually defining publics, it does not provide the observable attributes needed to identify publics. For that purpose, we need operational measures to help us determine who is “in” and who is “out” of a particular public. The following approaches provide useful referents: geographics, demographics, psychographics, covert power, reputation, membership, role in the decision-making process and communication behaviour (Broom & Dozier, 1990:32).

Several ways have been identified to segment publics. Some strategies, such as identifying publics by organisational membership, geographic area, or demographic characteristics (age, gender, income, education and so forth) require minimal research. Other strategies, such as segmentation by psychographics, covert power, and role in the relevant decision-making processes, require detailed research before segmentation can occur (Dozier et al, 1995:31; Vorster in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:79-81).

To segment publics according to Grunig, J’s situational theory, communicators must conduct research on individuals and organisations to determine if they are affected in any way by organisational behaviour, to learn if those affected are aware of this impact of organisational behaviour, and to learn if those affected are communicating with each other and organising to do something about it. Research is needed on those affected to segment them as latent, aware or active publics. Because active publics are the only ones that generate consequences for organisations, communicators might be tempted to ignore latent and aware publics. However, proactive communicators seek to communicate with latent and aware publics while there is still room for negotiation.

When organisations or groups of individuals in the environment are not affected in any way by an organisation's behaviour, they are a non-public (Dozier et al, 1995:31; Van Heerden in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:94-100).

Research provides one way for senior management to become attuned to strategic publics. It is essential for two-way communication, both symmetrical and asymmetrical. Focus groups and surveys are as much channels of communication as are news releases, press conferences and internal publications. The frugal communicator can use the same focus groups and surveys of publics to set an evaluation benchmark, while educating the senior management in the process. The focus of strategic symmetrical communication programmes is on relationships, a coming together of the senior management and members of strategic publics around issues of mutual interest. Evaluating relationships requires sophisticated expertise in research methods (Dozier et al, 1995:33).

The relationship between an organisation and one of its publics results in part from what the individuals in that public know about the organisation and related issues. Similarly, organisational intelligence about the public and related issues affects the public-organisational relationship. Likewise, how people in the public and organisation feel about each other and issues in common, has impact on the public-organisational relationship. And finally, what people in the public and organisation do to each other and things in common, determines the nature of their relationship. Public reactions to the organisation and organisational reactions to the public result from their respective knowledge, predispositions, and behaviours regarding each other and issues in common (Broom & Dozier, 1990:32).

iv. Research to evaluate communication programmes

One characteristic of the communication manager role is that managers take responsibility for the success or failure of their organisation's communication programmes. Others in the organisation likewise hold communication managers accountable for success or failure of their programmes.

Robinson (1969) viewed the demand for research as coming from outside public relations, from managers schooled in the management-by-objectives philosophy, seeking accountability from communications, public relations, and other staff functions (Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:336).

Mathews (2000:12) states that the only way to know if one's programme increased awareness, is to have a benchmark of the level of awareness by the targeted audience before one's campaign and to survey after the campaign to see if the level increased. Companies cannot afford the luxury of paying for processes and programmes that are not connected with bottom-line successful results. Counting clips measures one's activity, one's output. They have no correlation to the changed or desired behaviour of the audiences one intends to reach.

According to Berzok (1993:25), credibility is gauged by the final element of the communication process: measurement of the effectiveness of communication. Apart from looking at how measurement is related to the bottom-line, one should also ask how much an audience would be willing to pay for the communication product and service that the communication department provides.

There is much hand wringing over the inability to provide management with measurable results in public relations programming (Forbes, 1992:31). Increasingly public relations practitioners believe that public relations can be measured; that the function should be held accountable for results; and that it can provide value to the corporation far in excess of the resources invested in it. Indeed, the return on investment in public relations programming can be among the highest in the corporation (Webster, 1990:18). According to Puchan et al (1999:165), evaluation provides its user with two major advantages: feedback and the documentation of effectiveness.

The more specific the goal, the easier it is to establish a cost/benefit relationship. Therefore, the more specific management is in its expectations of public relations, the easier it will be to evaluate its performance (Mason, 1974:126).

If strategic management is employed, however, one is driven inexorably toward accountability. That is because the entire process is goal-driven. Strategic management of public relations works best when the organisation is driven by the strategic process. If the CEO and the board know where they want to go and how to get there, the role of public relations will be clearly defined. A public relations strategy can then be based on the corporate plan (Forbes, 1992:31).

An “alignment” check can also be made to ensure that communication products serve common strategic goals. Questions such as whether message points are consistent; whether the audience is adequately identified; whether the desired behaviour is defined; and what the benefits are, must be answered. This procedure discourages generating messages for the sake of generating messages. Rather, messages must attempt to do something (Dozier et al, 1995:34; Grunig & Hunt, 1984:183).

The above contrasts the strategic contribution of communication programmes with tactical programme evaluation. Communicators too often set programme goals that are actually tactical objectives to produce and distribute communication products. These “process” goals and objectives are attractive, because producing communication products is largely under the control of communicators. Evaluating such tactical goals and objectives is also attractive, because evaluation may simply mean counting communication products such as news releases and internal publications and comparing the totals to those originally projected. Questions about programme impact on problems, opportunities and issues, remain unanswered (Dozier et al, 1995:34; Broom & Dozier, 1990:23).

The problem with tactical communication alone is that senior management will not settle for processes that do not affect the bottom-line (Dozier et al, 1995:34). If public relations professionals are to survive in an era of mergers, corporate staff downsizing and increasing demand for greater productivity, they must demonstrate their value to the corporation and communicate it to top management in terms they understand and can relate to.

That means measurable benefits such as enhanced cash flow, improved share price and shareholder value, greater productivity, more sales, bigger market share, less employee turnover and higher earnings per share. And that requires thinking and acting strategically in the public relations arena (Webster, 1990:18).

The senior management could well ask what communication actions are worth to the organisation. The answer, in part, is that communication processes can help organisations build strategic relationships with key publics. These relationships, in turn, are crucial to the effectiveness of organisations and, in many instances, have measurable monetary impact. The first step in linking communication to the bottom-line, is planning programmes that focus on outcomes (relationships) and then evaluating them by measuring the maintenance or change in relationships (Dozier et al, 1995:34; Broom & Dozier, 1990:24-32).

It must be established whether members of a key public are knowledgeable or even aware of the organisation's position on an issue of mutual concern; whether members of that public agree or disagree with the organisation's position or behaviour; how members of that public behave towards the issue or the organisation; whether lawsuits have increased or decreased; and whether employee turnover is increasing or decreasing compared to the benchmark. To answer these questions, the communication manager must be a sophisticated practitioner – or at least a sophisticated consumer – of evaluation research (Dozier et al, 1995:32; Broom & Dozier, 1990:32, 36-37).

Although no single design fits all evaluation settings, a minimal design for evaluation research, measures the awareness, knowledge, opinions and behaviours of members of a target public both before the communication programme is executed and after execution. An initial survey of the target public provides a benchmark of awareness, knowledge, opinions and behaviour against which subsequent studies can be compared (Dozier et al, 1995:32; Broom & Dozier, 1990:72-88).

Various research methods (techniques of gathering data) can be used to administer measures of public relations objectives to members of the public or organisational subsystems that one intends to affect. A choice can be made between qualitative and quantitative observations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:184).

Conducting research to appraise the organisation of early warning signs that indicate the need to shift their strategic direction, and developing the organisation's business policy is part of the public relations manager's work today. There is a shift away from a tactical positioning (media relations) toward a strategic one (industry consulting based on behavioural science) (Carrington, 1992:46).

The corporate communications executive who understands how a CEO thinks about communications, will understand the necessity of using research to guide and underpin the entire communications programme (Arnold, 1988:11).

3.4.2.6 Knowledge of two-way models and research usage

In the *Excellence Study*, the researchers tested to see if knowledge of the two-way models affected research usage. Indeed, communication departments with the expertise to practice the two-way models used research much more extensively than did departments with little knowledge of two-way practices. Significantly, departments with the knowledge to practice the two-way models used both formal and informal research much more frequently than did departments without two-way expertise (Dozier et al, 1995:44).

Formal research gathering included:

- Regularly conducted and routine research activities.
- Specific research conducted to answer specific questions.
- Formal approaches to gather information for use in decision-making other than research (Dozier et al, 1995:44).

Informal information gathering included:

- Informal approaches to gathering information.
- Contacts with knowledgeable people outside the organisation.
- Judgement based on experience.

3.4.2.7 Knowledge of budgeting

Knowledge of budgeting techniques is also essential. The more strategic the communication department is, the more sophisticated budgeting issues become. That is because excellent communication departments constantly adjust and restructure programmes to respond dynamically to changing relations with strategic publics. Contemporary trends of downsizing and outsourcing in corporations and other organisations add additional wrinkles of complexity to budgeting in communication departments and for programmes (Dozier et al, 1995:35).

Like any other business activity, public relations programmes must be bolstered with sound budgets and principles of cost control. After identifying objectives and strategies, the public relations practitioner must detail the particular tactics that will help deliver those objectives.

The key to budgeting may lie in performing these two steps:

- Estimating the extent of the resources – both manpower and purchases – needed to accomplish each activity.
- Estimating the cost and availability of those resources (Seitel, 1989:57).

Contrast this strategic notion of structure and budgeting with “historicist” structure and budgeting. Some organisations depend heavily on “what we did last year” to make plans for next year. Such routine favours departmental budgets built around costs of specific communication products and services: the annual report, the employee and stockholder magazines, the media relations staff and so forth. Organisations like historicist routine, because such routine decisions require less effort, and less emphasis is put on justifying the communication department’s existence.

The process of communicating becomes an end in itself; the budgeting is justified by promising to do as much communicating next year as this year (Dozier et al, 1995:35; Grunig & Hunt, 1984:163-165).

Programmes produced through historicist budgeting routines typically cannot satisfy senior management demanding strategic relevance from communication. The communication manager therefore needs to know how to budget strategically. Programme planning starts with identifying the most strategic publics and the kinds of relationships that senior management wants to establish and maintain with those publics. Managers build programme goals and objectives around the desired relationships sought. Budgets are zero-based, designed to implement the most efficient programmes for the most strategic publics (Dozier et al, 1995:36; Grunig & Hunt, 1984:164-165).

The assumptions can be made that:

- The knowledge base is primary for communicator expertise.
- Knowledge or expertise is a characteristic of the communication department and not necessarily of a single individual.
- Emerging communicator expertise in strategic planning and research does not replace or diminish the importance of traditional communicator skills in writing, editing, graphics, media relations, and so forth. Rather, the new expertise is added to the traditional communicator's set of skills to build a well-rounded, excellent communication department. (Refer to H11, H12.)

3.5 THE EXPLANATION OF VARIABLES

In this section, the conversion of the constructs of the four public relations models, the press-agentry model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetric model and the two-way symmetric model (as described above) into measurable variables, is described. These variables were used as items in Section B of the measuring instrument.

One-way models

Table 3.1 - Variables that describe the construct "press agency model"

1. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is predominantly to get your organisation's name into the media.
2. Senior management believes that the success of communication is measured by the number of people who use your products or services.
3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for your organisation in the media.

Table 3.2 - Variables that describe the construct "public information model"

4. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use.
5. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations.
6. Senior management believes that the top communicator is a neutral disseminator of information.

Two-way models

Table 3.3 - Variables that describe the construct "two-way asymmetric model"

7. Senior management believes that in communication, the broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave.
8. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes.
9. Senior management believes you should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept.

Table 3.4 - Variables that describe the construct "two-way symmetric model"

10. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics.
11. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects.
12. Senior management believes communication should provide mediation opportunities to help management and publics negotiate conflict.

3.6 SUMMARY

The public opinion factor has risen to new levels of importance in corporate decision-making. More than ever before, CEOs expect their senior management people to specifically deal with the public relations ramifications of their decisions so that potential problems are not allowed to escalate into major issues. Anticipating issues important to an organisation and setting up communication that prevents crises and

fosters good relations with many different publics are key strategies for successful CEOs.

CEOs often make difficult decisions which are more closely linked to human factors than ever before. The needs and desires of corporate “publics” – with the customer in the forefront – will increasingly influence corporate direction. Present CEOs must be more sensitive, responsive and communication-competent than prior generations. Altered expectations by employees, stockholders, customers and media make that fact unavoidable.

Organisations that achieve excellence have communication departments with the expertise for both traditional one-way practices and advanced two-way communication to negotiate and persuade both senior management and publics toward mutually beneficial relationships.

If indeed, CEOs must be more “communication competent” in the future, they will expect the next generation of public relations executives to supply them with the background and know-how required. The two-way symmetrical model can be argued to be the technique of choice for the CEO and the top management of the future.

CHAPTER 4

ROLE-PLAYING OF THE TOP COMMUNICATOR

Aim of this chapter:

In this chapter the various roles that the top communicator must play in order for communication to be excellent, are discussed. Knowledge of manager and technician roles should be combined to provide the requisite foundation for excellence in communication.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Dozier et al (1995:107) believe that changing the roles that top communicators play in the organisation provides the most direct path to excellence. Top communication departments identified in the *Excellence Study* combine knowledge of both manager and technician roles to provide the requisite foundation for excellence. To actually achieve excellence, however, top communicators must play advanced organisational roles of communication manager and senior adviser. Communicators must develop linkages to CEOs and top management to establish communication excellence. They must acquire the power to contribute to strategic planning and decision-making.

Increasing social demands on business have created a need for public relations professionals to advise management on formulating overall strategies for an organisation. Management is increasingly faced with the consequences of ever-changing relationships with stakeholders. The ability to objectively analyse people's attitudes and to communicate with them effectively in order to promote better understanding between management and its various publics, has become extremely important to every successful business enterprise and non-profit institution (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1989:66).

The *Excellence* team proposed that excellent departments would be headed by senior managers and staffed by technicians skilled in the craft of the field. The team also discovered that there are at least two types of managers. Some merely supervise their department. Others, a more executive type, serve at the highest level of the organisation. They are senior advisers. As such, they become members of top management or have such immediate and frequent access to this power elite that they are in a position to affect policy for the overall company (Grunig L, 1997:7).

The *Excellence* team also found that CEOs prefer their top public relations person to play a manager or communication liaison role rather than a technician role. However, they also preferred the media relations role. (The *Excellence* team thought this reflects top management's continuing preoccupation with the media, despite much evidence suggesting that the media plays a marginal rather than central part in the effectiveness of most organisations (Grunig, L, 1997:7).) Deciding the role of the senior communication officer, depends on the size of the company, the nature of its products and its business objectives (White & Mazur, 1995:37).

Generally, top communicators who play the communication manager and senior adviser roles run excellent communication departments. Dominant coalitions in their organisations support the communication function and value the communication department. Communication makes substantial contributions to strategic management and planning in these organisations (Dozier et al, 1995:113).

Excellent communication departments are made up of communicators who know how to plan strategic programmes based on information they collect about publics. Some communicators in excellent departments have strong expertise in traditional areas of press agency, publicity, and public information practices, but what makes excellent departments stand out is knowledge of two-way practices to negotiate and to persuade (Dozier et al, 1995:115).

The one factor that most influences the playing of advanced roles, is the contribution that communication makes to strategic planning and decision-making through research.

Research provides information about relationships with key publics, a scarce and valued resource that puts top communicators at the decision-making table of top management. At decision-making tables, top communicators make senior managers aware of the knowledge, opinions, and behavioural predispositions of publics who influence the success or failure of organisations. Issues affect relationships with publics. Research helps top communicators identify emerging issues and track established ones, counselling the full range of strategic decisions (Dozier et al, 1995:117).

The manager role involves formal authority to make communication decisions. Managers hold themselves accountable for the success or failure of communication programmes, as do other managers. Through their experience and training, top communicators in this role are organisational experts in solving communication and public relations problems. Manager role-playing cannot occur unless individuals in the department have the knowledge base to perform the tasks of a communication manager (Dozier et al, 1995:17).

The second role, the senior adviser role, does not have formal authority over policy; rather, senior advisers provide senior management with needed information and act as facilitators of the decisions that top management makes. In this role, they exert informal influence. Top communicators who play either role, contribute to the excellence of their departments. Senior advisers require levels of expertise similar to those of managers. They differ from managers in their authority to make communication policy decisions and in their accountability for the success or failure of the resulting communication programmes (Dozier et al, 1995:118).

The only way CEOs can get what they need from their public relations advisers, is to have them at the table when the policies, strategies and programmes are discussed (Foster, 1990:8). Informal advising can lead to more formal influence in strategic decision-making. At first, the top communicator can win the confidence of only one or two members of the organisation's top management, but can still make significant contributions to decision making. Later on, the top communicator will win acceptance

as one of the inner circle of top decision makers (Dozier et al, 1995:108).

As often happens, the top communicator must carve out a new managerial role for herself among senior managers who have different views of communication to earn a permanent place on the strategic team. She has to be comfortable working with senior management and showing them she has the necessary skills to be an asset and an expert in communication decision-making (Dozier et al, 1995:108).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Senior management values the strategic contribution that the communication manager can make to organisational decision making, since they are increasingly faced with the consequences of ever-changing relationships with stakeholders. (Refer to H1.)
- Top management prefers its top communication person to be a manager, rather than a technician. (Refer to H1.)
- Top management values the use of two-way communication by the top communicator and the communication department. (Refer to H4.)
- Top management values the strategic contribution the communication manager makes to organisational decision-making. (Refer to H1.)
- Although communicators in excellent communication departments have strong expertise in traditional areas of press agency, publicity and public information practices, the two-way practices to negotiate and persuade make excellent departments stand out. (Refer to H2.)

4.2 ROLE-PLAYING

Practitioners adopt roles in organisations by taking on sets of behaviours and strategies for dealing with recurring types of situations and other's expectations. Various public relations role models describe the approaches practitioners use in practice. Every practitioner plays some or all of these roles to varying degrees, but a dominant role emerges as she goes about her day-to-day work and deals with others in the work situation (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:68).

Broom and Smith (1978, 1979) introduced the concept of roles to public relations. Roles are abstractions of behaviour patterns of individuals in organisations (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:330). Practitioner roles are indicators of the power of the public relations units in organisations (Lauzen, 1992; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992). Roles indicate whether public relations units participate in strategic decision making of top management, or simply execute decisions made by others (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier, 1986). Roles are linked to environmental scanning (Dozier, 1987, 1990), issues management (Lauzen, 1993) and models of public relations practices (Grunig, J & Grunig, L, 1989). They contribute to the salaries of public relations practitioners and how much satisfaction practitioners derive from public relations work (Broom & Dozier, 1986). Knowledge to enact the manager role was the single-most powerful correlate of excellence in public relations and communication management in the *Excellence Study* (Dozier & Broom, 1995:4).

Roles research plays an important part in our understanding of organisational communication and public relations as an emerging profession. The ambiguity that surrounds the public relations role is reflected in the array of definitions offered to define the function. Yet, systems theory persuasively suggests that the function is essential to the survival and growth of organisations facing increasingly unstable and threatening environments (Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:352).

The assumption can therefore be made that:

- Roles indicate whether public relations units participate in strategic decision making of top management (communication manager) or simply execute decisions made by others (technician role). (Refer to H₁.)

The four public relations roles conceptualised by Dozier and Broom will now be discussed.

4.2.1 Public relations roles conceptualised by Dozier and Broom

Dozier (1984) found a **public relations manager** role that included attributes of

problem-solving process facilitation, expert prescription, and communication facilitation as interchangeable conceptual components of the same empirical role. Managers make policy decisions and are held accountable for public relations outcomes. They view themselves and are viewed by others in the organisation as communication and public relations experts. They facilitate communication between management and publics and guide management through what practitioners describe as a “rational problem-solving process” (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:333). According to Berzok (1993:24), the communication executive has three major responsibilities: consultation, assistance and management. Above all else, she is a consultant to top management.

Broom also conceptualised practitioners as consultants to senior management. Roles that practitioners play are viewed as services provided or processes influenced. Four theoretical roles, first conceptualised by Broom and Smith (1979), include the expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem process facilitator and the communication technician roles (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:330).

According to Dozier & Broom (1995), the communication manager role is an abstraction of a set of repeated behaviours of professional communicators in organisations. The manager role actually consists of three conceptually distinct activities, as first theorised by Broom (1982). The first, the **expert prescriber role**, is similar to the traditional doctor-patient role. The expert prescriber is an acknowledged expert on communication in the organisation, best informed about communication issues, and best qualified to answer communication and public relations questions (Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:333; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:68).

The expert prescriber role was identified in the practitioner literature (Cutlip & Center, 1971; Newsom & Scott, 1976) as the informed practitioner (Dozier et al, 1995:24).

Such practitioners are regarded as experts on public relations, best informed about public relations issues and best qualified to answer public relations questions. Like the doctor-patient relationship, the expert prescribes and management obeys.

Management's passive involvement in communication and public relations problems and solutions leads to dependent relationships. Steele (1969) called such dependency "seductive," because the relationship is gratifying to the consultant and reassuring to management. According to Argyris (1961), such passivity and dependency leads management to regard the programme as "belonging" to the consultant. This role can logically be linked to the two-way asymmetrical and the publicity-press agency models of the practice (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:91; Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:330; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:68).

The second role, the **communication facilitator role**, means acting as a go-between, facilitating communication between management and publics (Dozier et al, 1995:24). Drawing on the consulting literature Broom conceptualised the communication facilitator role as that of a "go-between", facilitating communication. The role concerns the process, the quality and quantity of information flow between management and publics. Broom found this role described in the professional literature when practitioners served as interpreters and communication links. This micro level role is reflected at meso level in Grunig & Hunt's (1984:91) public information and two-way symmetric models of the practice (Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:330; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:69).

Broom (Broom & Smith 1979) again drew on literature to conceptualise the **problem-solving process facilitator** as practitioners helping management systematically think through organisational communication and public relations problems to solutions. The problem-solving process facilitator works carefully with management to solve problems in a step-by-step manner. Painstaking efforts to involve all members of the top management in solving communication and public relations problems is time consuming. In the long run, however, such management-involving solutions work better.

Solutions prescribed by experts leave management "unenthusiastic about the results, divided among themselves on key decisions, and unable to develop commitment". The problem-solving process facilitator role is essential in organisations practising the two-

way symmetric model (Grunig & Hunt 1984:91-92; Dozier, in Grunig, J 1992:330; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:69).

Dozier (1984) also found a **public relations technician** role that closely matched Broom's conceptualisation of the service provider role he called the communication technician. Technicians do not participate in management decision-making. Rather, technicians carry out the low-level mechanics of generating communication products that implement policy decisions made by others (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:333; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:68).

Broom (Broom & Smith 1979) conceptualised the **communication technician** role as that of a technical services provider. Top management makes strategic decisions, specifying organisational actions and designating the communications directed at publics about such actions. The communication technician is then retained to provide those mandated communication services. Broom viewed practitioners playing the media relations role as "journalists-in-residence." Practitioners playing this role are essential players in organisations where the press agency/publicity and public information models are practised (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:92-92; Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:330; Dozier et al, 1995:112). The communication technician role involves the mechanics of implementing communication programmes, for example, producing brochures and pamphlets, taking photographs, etc (Dozier et al, 1995:113; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1985:68).

In addition to the major roles just described, Dozier (1984) found two minor roles. The first role was that of the **media relations specialist**, similar to technicians in salary and organisational status, except that they specialise in external media relations rather than internal communication production activities.

The second minor role was that of **communication liaison**, similar to managers in salary and status, but excluded from management decision-making. Liaisons specialise in linking communications between management and key publics (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:333).

Generally, the problem-solving process facilitator averages highest on satisfaction measures. Communication technicians average second; expert prescribers average third. The communication process facilitator averages fourth (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:331).

The notion of **communication manager** was introduced when factor analysis of several communicator surveys showed that the expert prescriber, communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator roles are played interchangeably by the same communicators. Subsequent research over the last decade has consistently shown that the communication manager role is the most parsimonious way to think of expert prescription, communication facilitation, and problem-solving facilitation in communication roles. According to Dozier & Broom (1995), communicators who predominantly play the manager role tend to earn higher salaries than communicators who predominantly play the technician role, even with equal years of professional experience. Those predominantly playing the communication manager role participate more frequently in top management decision-making. In the late 1980s, several studies indicated that women were less likely than men to predominantly play the manager role, even when they had equal years of professional experience. However, at least one study from the 1990s indicates that such gender discrimination may be waning (Dozier et al, 1995:24).

The department's expertise or knowledge to play the communication manager role refers to the following tasks:

- Manage the organisation's response to issues.
- Use research to segment publics.
- Develop goals and objectives for one's department.

- Conduct evaluation research.
- Prepare departmental budget.

(Dozier et al, 1995:24)

The assumptions can be made that:

- Top communicators who predominantly play the communication manager role participate more frequently in top management decision-making. (Refer to H₁.)
- Technicians do not participate in management decision-making. Technicians generate communication products that implement policy decisions made by others. (Refer to H₁.)

4.2.2 Expertise for advanced role-playing

Many individual and organisational characteristics do not seem to influence advanced role-playing by top communicators. However, one characteristic of the communication department helps top communicators play the communication manager and senior adviser roles (Dozier et al, 1995:115).

Top communicators play the communication manager and senior adviser roles when their departments contribute to strategic planning and decision-making through research, especially formal research. Unlike traditional roles which focus on the implementation of communication programmes, the communication manager and senior adviser roles put communicators at the table before decisions are made. The *Excellence Study* shows that formal and informal research activities in communication departments are strongly linked to advanced role-playing by top communicators. Research activities in support of strategic planning and decision-making seem perfect tools to help top communicators play manager and adviser roles (Dozier et al, 1995:115).

Evaluation activities correlate with practitioner success in increased participation in management decision-making. Both scientific and informal scanning correlate with the manager role; neither style of scanning correlates with the technician role.

This closely parallels findings that managers use both scientific and seat-of-the-pants evaluation styles, whereas technician role scores are unrelated to any style of evaluation (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:338).

Dozier (in Grunig, J, 1992:341) proposed that practitioners enacting the public relations manager role will engage in both scientific and informal programme evaluation and environmental scanning with greater frequency than practitioners not enacting the manager role. Furthermore, enactment of the public relations technician role is not related to frequency of scientific and informal programme evaluation and environmental scanning activities. Practitioner involvement in management decision-making is a separate function of manager role enactment and of the practitioner's use of research (scanning and evaluation). These propositions link practitioner roles to levels of programme evaluation and environmental scanning.

Communication strategies should also be frequently evaluated against the achievement of goals and objectives to ensure that the strategy is in line with the company's mission. A lack of proper evaluation can cause employees to view management as unsupportive and distant from its strategies (Oberholster, 1993:25).

4.2.3 Factors that influence the roles communicators play

We already know a good deal about factors that influence the roles communicators play in organisations. For example, organisational size, as measured by number of employees, does not affect communication manager or senior adviser role-playing as identified by Dozier et al (1995) in the *Excellence Study*. Number of employees in the organisation does not affect media relations or technician role-playing. The number of employees in the communication department does not affect advanced role-playing by top communicators. However, departmental size does impact on traditional role-playing. Not surprisingly, top communicators play the media relations and communication technician roles more frequently in small communication departments, where top communicators cannot easily delegate such tasks (Dozier et al, 1995:113).

Regarding individual characteristics of top communicators, men and women play the communication manager and senior advisor role with equal frequency. Regarding traditional roles, women and men play the media relations role at comparable levels. The communication technician role, however, is played more frequently by female top

communicators than by male top communicators. Younger communicators play the technician role more frequently than do older communicators (Dozier et al, 1995:114).

Education does not influence playing either advanced or traditional roles either. Activities such as attending professional meetings, holding office in professional associations, or making presentations to such associations do not seem to influence role-enactment by the top communicator (Dozier et al, 1995:114).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Organisational size does not affect communication manager role-playing or technician role-playing. (Refer to H7, H8.)
- Top communicators play the media relations and communication technician roles more frequently in small communication departments, where top communicators cannot easily delegate such tasks. (Refer to H9, H10.)
- Education does not influence playing either advanced or traditional roles. Activities such as attending professional meetings, holding office in professional associations, or making presentations to such associations do not seem to influence role enactment by the top communicator. (Refer to H11, H12.)

4.3 THE COMMUNICATION MANAGER ROLE

Practitioners enact two major roles in organisations (as well as several minor roles). Public relations managers make communication policy decisions and are held accountable (by themselves and others in the organisation) for the success or failure of public relations efforts. Managers are regarded by others as public relations experts, facilitating public relations problem-solving among members of top management. Technician role enactment is unrelated to communication policy decision-making.

Although every practitioner enacts both roles to some degree, the practitioner's dominant role is determined by which role-activity set – manager or technician – is enacted most frequently (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:209).

4.3.1 The top communicator as communication manager

Lauzen & Dozier (1992) studied the relationship between the environments of organisations and the consequences that external conditions exert on the public relations function. Specifically, they examined the range and changeability of publics in an organisation's environment, positing that environmental challenges create a demand for enactment of the public relations manager role by the organisation's top communicator. Such manager role enactment, in turn, leads to power consequences for the public relations function. Manager role enactment depresses marketing's involvement in areas traditionally managed by the public relations function. Manager role enactment also reduces encroachment – the assignment of individuals from outside public relations to head the public relations unit (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:205).

In several studies (Fabiszak, 1985; McMillan, 1984, Pollack, RA, 1986), the two-way models of public relations correlated positively with the public relations manager role. These sophisticated models of public relations practice could be theoretically regarded as “positive” consequences of manager role enactment. Building on these findings, Lauzen & Dozier (1992:211) analysed what could be regarded as “negative” consequences of not enacting the manager role. These consequences are marketing involvement and encroachment. Marketing involvement is the expansion of the marketing function into traditional public relations domains (Ehling, 1989; Lauzen, 1990) – actions explicitly mandated by such conceptualisations as “megamarketing” (Kotler, 1986). Theoretically, the movement of marketing into traditional public relations domains can occur at either the managerial or the technical level. When one department provides technical support (production, graphics, photography, etc.) for another, such support need not disrupt unit boundaries or undermine the receiving unit's survival as a separate entity.

Marketing involvement in public relations at the manager level (making policy decisions and solving strategic problems) is of considerable theoretical significance. Such involvement threatens the relative autonomy of the receiving department, reducing its claim on its organisational domain (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:211).

From a power-control perspective, both marketing involvement and encroachment are consequences of the powerlessness of the public relations function. The function, headed by a practitioner who fails (for whatever reason) to enact the manager role, lacks the organisational power necessary to maintain its own domain (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:211).

The qualities that chief communications executives have to possess today, include an interesting mix of functional, managerial, organisational and negotiating abilities. And as they become more senior and increasingly associate with other senior executives as equals, there is greater emphasis on improving the communication skills of all management (White & Mazur, 1995:36).

As decisions about organisational responses to the environment become more novel and non-programmed, practitioner roles change. Practitioners in such organisations shift activities from generating communications to making strategic decisions – or helping management to do so. Such managers make communication policy decisions; and are then held accountable for programme success or failure. They take management through a step-by-step planning and decision-making process (Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:342).

The expert prescription, communication facilitation and problem-solving process facilitation components of the manager role are significantly and positively correlated with strategic decision-making. Technician scores, on the other hand, showed only modest correlation with participation in meetings where decisions were made about implementing communication programmes. The technician role is negatively correlated with participation in meetings where new policies are decided (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:343).

Practitioners in organisations practising the press agency and public information models of public relations will engage in few activities that define the public relations manager role. Practitioners in organisations practising the two-way asymmetric and

two-way symmetric models of public relations are more likely to play the public relations manager role (Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:347).

Problem-solving process facilitation, expert prescription, or communication facilitation are of little value in organisations following a publicity/press agency or public information model. These one-way models generate messages by organisations for distribution to publics. Publicity/press agency model organisations spread favourable propaganda about the organisation with only moderate regard for information accuracy. Public information model organisations disseminate information with traditional journalistic concerns for objectivity and accuracy. Such low-level staff functions do not require practitioners to enact the manager role (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:347).

The following is therefore suggested:

- Manager role enactment is more frequent in organisations practising the two-way symmetric and asymmetric models of public relations.
- Manager role enactment is less frequent in organisations practising the press agency or public information models of public relations.
- Technician role enactment is more frequent in organisations practising the press agency and public information models of public relations (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:347).

One explanation for these findings is that organisations have top managements with different strategic decision-making dynamics and different orientations towards environmental inputs. The process of strategic decision-making can be organised by type. The process is affected by both underlying beliefs of powerful members of the dominant coalition and the relative concentration of power in such coalitions. Both beliefs and power affect the negotiated belief structures of dominant coalitions (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:348).

The open or closed mind-set of senior management strongly mediates the model of

public relations followed and the roles that practitioners play (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:344).

The assumptions can be made that:

- Manager role enactment leads to power consequences for the public relations function. (Refer to H1.)
- The two-way models of public relations correlate positively with the public relations manager role. (Refer to H4.)
- Participation in management decision-making enhances the status of public relations practitioners. (Refer to H1.)
- The manager role is significantly and positively correlated with strategic decision making. The technician role is negatively correlated with participation in meetings where new policies are decided. (Refer to H3.)
- Practitioners in organisations practising the press agency and public information models of public relations, will engage in few activities that define the public relations manager role. (Refer to H3.)
- Practitioners in organisations practising the two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric models of public relations are more likely to play the public relations manager role. (Refer to H4.)

4.3.2 Functions of the communication manager

As boundary-spanner between the organisation and its environment, the communication manager is responsible for the monitoring of changes and emerging issues, the predicting of consequences and the counselling of organisation leaders (Lubbe, 1994a:11)

Managers also control scarce and valued resources (environmental intelligence) that they can leverage for organisational power. Control of scarce resources decreases the department's substitutability, the second factor used in strategic contingencies theory to explain intra-organisational power. Non-substitutability is the departmental ability

to provide skills, products or services no other department can provide (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:210).

From an environmental-imperative perspective, managers frequently use formal and informal research techniques to scan the organisation's environment, to plan public relations programmes, to monitor their execution, and to evaluate their impact (Dozier, 1990). Environmental challenges increase demand for "managers as scanners." Environmental scanning by practitioners reduces both substitutability and uncertainty for organisations. A study by Crozier (1964) suggested that those with the capacity to reduce uncertainty in organisations possess power. Environmental scanning by practitioners reduces uncertainty about future events affecting organisations (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992:210).

According to Seitel (1989:50-51), public relations managers have the following functions:

- They must consider the relationship of the organisation to its environment – the ties that unite business managers and operations support staff, for example, and the conflicts that separate them.
- They must work within organisational confines to develop innovative solutions to organisational problems. Public relations managers must be innovative, not only in proposing communication solutions, but also in making them understandable and acceptable to colleagues.
- They must think strategically. Public relations managers must demonstrate their knowledge of the organisation's mission, objectives, and strategies. Their solutions must answer the real needs of the organisation.
- Public relations managers must also be willing to measure their results. They must state clearly what they want to accomplish, systematically set out to accomplish it, and measure their success. This means using such accepted business school techniques as management-by-objectives (MBO), management-by-objectives-and-results (MOR), and programme evaluation and research technique (PERT).
- Finally, in managing an organisation's public relations system, practitioners must demonstrate a comfort with the various elements of the organisation itself. 1)

functions – the real jobs of organisational components; 2) structure – the organisational hierarchy of individuals and positions; 3) processes – the formal decision-making rules and procedures the organisation follows; and 4) feedback – the formal and informal evaluative mechanisms of the organisation.

- Mintzberg & Quinn (1992:21) furthermore state that it is not just the manager's role in the creation of strategy so much as in its institutionalisation that counts – the establishment of commitment among the people who make up the organisation.

Claassen's (Claassen & Verwey, 1997:56) study on communication management in the South African business environment states that the communication manager in the South African business environment functions at a relatively low-level with threshold competencies. The results of her survey indicate a total lack of understanding of the role of the communication management function in the broader organisational context. However, there is a growing realisation of the value communication managers can add to organisational functioning.

In Claassen's study (Claassen & Verwey, 1997:55) the collection and dissemination of information is perceived as the most important output of communication practitioners, followed closely by knowledge regarding the internal environment, interpersonal communication skills, problem-solving abilities and issues management, knowledge regarding the external environment and media relationships and contacts. These outputs were viewed as the very foundation of communication management, being largely interdependent, and some, such as interpersonal communication skills and problem-solving abilities, being a prerequisite for success in others. Managerial competencies, personal characteristics and the ability to function effectively in a group, have an important influence on the communication manager's managerial effectiveness, while social marketing and integrated communication is considered in the planning and execution of social marketing initiatives.

4.3.3 Managerial positions

There are four positions one can have as a manager in the organisation – leader,

counsellor, implementer and outsider. Leaders are active in the direction and management of a company. Counsellors are valued advisors. Implementers execute tactics and strategies developed by others. Outsiders have been forgotten. Each role has risks and rewards.

Leaders have power and the responsibility to use power well to support top management and the company. They know they can be sacrificed quickly when a mistake is made – whether or not it is due to their actions (Horton, 1991:39).

Leaders: Leaders tend to group subordinates into an “in-group” and an “out-group”. Typically about 20% of subordinates are considered to be insiders and 80% to be outsiders. An insider is typically allowed to develop a more personal relationship with a manager. They give and receive personal disclosure, mutual support, and a fair amount of autonomy/responsibility is delegated to the subordinate (something akin to Blake & Mouton’s high concern for task – high concern for relationship style) (Leichty & Springston, 1993:332).

Counsellors: Counsellors have access, but they know the door to the corporate suite can be slammed if their advice is in error or does not settle well with the CEO or Chairman (Horton, 1991:39).

Implementers: Implementers have departments and a stream of work to keep them busy, but they know during corporate cutbacks they will be forced to justify their existence in the usual competition for the corporate budget (Horton, 1991:39).

Outsiders: Outsiders have a security in being forgotten. They do their jobs and go home, or use their time in activities they like to do. However, according to Horton (1991:39), outsiders know the axe can fall without warning if they are discovered.

Leichty & Springston (1993:333) state that outsiders tend to receive something akin to Blake & Mouton’s high task – low relationship management style. The communicative

exchanges between leader and follower tend to be formal, involve authority and emphasise the formal responsibilities of both parties.

Frustration comes from being trapped in a role which one does not want. An outsider who wants to be a leader or a leader who wants to be an implementer is acutely uncomfortable (Horton, 1991:39).

According to Mintzberg & Quinn (1992:21), three of the manager's roles arise directly from formal authority and involve basic interpersonal relationships: Figurehead role, leader role and liaison role. By virtue of their interpersonal contacts, both with subordinates and with their network of contacts, managers emerge as the nerve centres of their organisational units. They may not know everything, but they typically know more than any member of their unit.

Three roles describe the informational aspects of managerial work: monitor (environmental scanner), disseminator of information and spokesperson. Information is not an end in itself, but is the basic input to decision-making. Managers play a major role in their unit's decision-making system. As its formal authority, only they can commit the unit to important new courses of action; and as its nerve centre, only they have full and current information to make the set of decisions that determine the unit's strategy. Four roles describe the manager as decision maker: entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1992:21).

4.3.4 The top communicator as a leader

A careful comparison of power and leadership reveals that the two concepts are closely intertwined. Leaders use power as a means of attaining group goals (Robbins, 1998:397). Communication practitioners should strive to develop leadership qualities in order to become more influential and professional in the organisation.

There is a tendency today to move beyond the traditional management approach to one of dynamic leadership. Managers' ability to influence is based on the formal, authority

inherent in their positions. In contrast, leaders may either be appointed or emerge from within a group. Leaders can influence others to perform beyond the actions dictated by formal authority (Robbins & De Cenzo, 1998:189; Carr & Johansson, 1995:45).

According to Peters & Waterman (1982:83), transforming leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out separate but related, in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the led, and thus has a transforming effect on both.

John Kotter of the Harvard Business School, argues that management is about coping with complexity. Leadership, in contrast, is about coping with change. Leaders establish direction by developing a vision for the future; then they align people by communicating this vision and inspiring them to overcome hurdles (Robbins, 1998:347; Carr & Johansson 1995:45).

However, Loewen (1999:5) states that it is not enough to have clever insights and innovative strategies if the executive does not understand how to access the ideas and energies of their people as well. Only when a leader realises the need to engage others consistently, fairly and every day, if possible, will his vision be translated into effective actions.

Bennis and colleague Burt Nanus (in Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:84) frame effective leadership in terms of four strategies: attention through vision; meaning through communication; trust through positioning; and deployment of self through positive self-regard.

Senge (1990:340) states that leaders in a learning organisation are designers, stewards and teachers. They are responsible for building organisations where people continually

expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision and improve shared mental models – that is, they are responsible for learning.

According to Puth (1994:146), leading also has to do with influencing others through communication and is, therefore, based on communication. The style and substance of communication distinguish dynamic leadership from traditional management. Leaders not only communicate information, but also attitudes and assumptions. In any leadership situation, the values to be gained and the merits of certain courses of action are either clearly stated or implied. Leaders can articulate the consequences of visions, goals, actions, policies, events, decisions or solutions clearly (Foster, 1990:9; Puth, 1994:146).

Effective leadership depends on having the information necessary for effective decision-making. An effective leader encourages open, direct and accurate communication (Rasberry & Lemoine, 1986:349). Leadership by communication involves using, or attempting to use, all of the channels of communication; trying to keep open all of the avenues of interaction. When communication channels are closed, little can be done to develop compliance to the organisation's goals (Hunt, 1989:172).

Pincus & De Bonis (1994:88) believe that leadership and communication are hand-in-glove processes sharing the common purpose of forming and crystallising meaningful relationships. This core finding defines the perspective they bring to their examination of leadership. The leadership and communication processes share the identical objective of building relationships; however, the types of relationships each seeks to establish are different.

The communication process aims to create relationships of understanding: understanding of purpose, understanding of message, understanding of source, understanding of expected outcome.

The leadership process differs slightly, seeking to construct relationships of commitment: commitment to leader, commitment to organisation, commitment to

cause, commitment to stay committed (Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:88). Communication and leadership are synergistic concepts. Leaders need to foster environments within which people can develop relationships with each other, relationships within work groups, and relationships with clients and customers (Pincus, Rayfield & De Bonis, 1991:22).

Because they are communication professionals, public relations executives should play a key role in the leadership team – developing communication strategies, coaching and counselling on communication tactics and techniques, and providing feedback (Foster, 1990:9).

4.4 THE SENIOR ADVISOR ROLE

Unlike the formal authority of the communication manager role, the senior advisor role involves informal power. As senior counsel to the dominant coalition on matters of communication and public relations, the senior adviser exerts influence through suggestions, recommendations, and plans. Much of the senior adviser's authority comes from close contact with key publics. Senior advisers mediate the flow of two-way communication between organisations and publics. Although she is not a member of the senior management team, the senior advisor's perspective is sought and listened to by senior managers (Dozier et al, 1995:109).

Both formal and informal power serve excellence. Indeed, excellent organisations blur boundaries between communication issues and organisational issues. The formal authority of even the most powerful communicator must be shared with others in top management when issues affect other areas of responsibility in organisations. The formal authority to make policy decisions specific to communication must be matched by informal influence on all issues of strategic planning and decision-making (Dozier et al, 1995:110).

If the public relations practitioner develops a well-planned public relations strategy, she will have taken a significant step towards positioning herself as an indispensable

advisor to the CEO. The traditional public relations departments are gradually giving way to purchased services. What will be left will be strategic counsellors to the CEO (Forbes, 1992:31; Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:233).

4.4.1 The top communicator as senior advisor

There is a growing emphasis on management's evolving relationships with stakeholder groups, especially employees. The CEO's role is being transformed from technical manager to inspirational leader. Leadership and communication are relationship-building processes rather than merely controlling functions. The company's top communicator can be an important sounding board and advisor on both business and personal matters. Pincus & De Bonis theorise that this treatment of the human or spiritual side of the CEO is "the wave of the future" (Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:18).

Pincus & De Bonis stress the importance of the communication or public relations strategist who serves as an "alter ego" to the CEO and as a devil's advocate. As the CEO's primary advisor on communication strategy and implementation, this executive stays close to the centre of decision-making. At the same time the advisor faces the disadvantage of playing a precarious, ever-shifting role fraught with built-in discomforts (Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:22).

And it is in the business-counselling arena where public relations practitioners can add maximum value. The future of communication professionals will continue to be that of being partners and consultants in the boardroom (Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:22).

Every CEO needs a counsellor/mentor. Instead of being the object of the CEO's criticism for not being candid, public relations professionals can exercise the role of CEO counsellor. They can tell CEOs that doing things right is not the same as doing the right things and they can help them communicate more effectively with groups that can make a difference, specifically employees (Fulginiti, 1995:78).

CEOs of the future will demand communication counsellors who can analyse corporate

cultures and understand how to influence their evolution. These counsellors must be as comfortable in the boardroom as they are at the computer keyboard. They must be able to handle a crisis, write a speech and devise a corporate strategy with equal ease (Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:23)

According to Howard, CM (1995:6), the evolution from communicator to counsellor is so natural and so subtle that a public relations practitioner may not be aware of the metamorphosis until it has occurred. When the role of the public relations practitioner changes, she is helping to set the agenda for the organisation.

Harold Burson, founder of Burson-Marsteller and one of the great public relations professionals of our time, describes this evolution: When public relations was in its infancy, clients called on their public relations people and asked, "How should I say it?" As the profession became more sophisticated, the question evolved to, "What should I say?" At the next level it became, "How should we do it?" And at the highest level it became, "What should we do?" As that question has changed over the last few decades, so our function has changed and grown as well (Howard, CM, 1995:6).

Robert A Allen, CEO and chairman at AT&T, once said: "I need public relations people at my side, not in my wake." Public relations practitioners who can close the gap with public relations theorists, are the people most likely to inherit the position at the CEO's side in the future (Winokur & Kinkead, 1993:23).

4.4.2 Counselling the CEO

Pincus & De Bonis (1994:233) state that CEOs who hold close working relationships with their top communication professional, appeared most likely to understand their communication role and how it fits into overall communication strategy. The counsellor, generally a vice president of public relations or corporate communication, usually has prime responsibility for devising and executing the company's communication plan.

Also, that individual needs to have an in-depth knowledge of communication, public opinion and human behaviour, experience as a communication practitioner, and a thorough familiarity with the CEO's managerial and communication style and capabilities.

Trusting CEO-counsellor associations take time to mature. But once trust is established between CEO and advisor, the counsellor's role becomes two-fold: first, to exploit and magnify the CEO's and the organisation's strengths; and second, to minimise exposure of the CEO's and the organisation's weaknesses (Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:234).

In the end, the nature of this relationship depends on what the CEO, far more than the counsellor, allows it to become. But if the CEO and counsellor can agree on what they are trying to accomplish and have faith in each other, they are likely to operate as one mind (Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:234).

The CEO's communication counsellor can earn her trust by understanding the top manager's special position, and by not misusing or wasting her time or stretching communication capabilities past their natural limits (Pincus & De Bonis, 1994:234).

4.5 PLAYING TRADITIONAL ROLES

In addition to the role of communication manager and senior advisor, the *Excellence* research team also examined two traditional communicator roles. As detailed earlier, these roles are essential to executing communication programmes. Indeed, even top communicators in excellent organisations play these traditional roles from time to time (Dozier et al, 1995:112).

The **media relations role** is played by journalists-in-residence, who maintain media contacts, place news releases, and establish what the media will find newsworthy about their organisations.

In the media relations role, top communicators keep senior management posted about media coverage of the organisation and coverage of issues important to the organisation (Dozier et al, 1995:112).

The **communication technician role** involves the mechanics of implementing communication programmes. In this role, top communicators produce brochures, pamphlets and other publications, write communication material, take photographs and create graphics for communication and public relations material, and edit the material written by others in the organisations for grammar and spelling (Dozier et al, 1995:112).

The assumption can be made that:

- Organisations that practise the press agency and public information models need technicians. Communication staff are not involved in strategic planning and problem solving under these models. Once strategic decisions are made and action plans drawn, the technician is brought in to implement outward communication from the organisation to target publics. The process is one-way; the practitioner is a skilled communicator uninvolved with monitoring the environment. The latter simply provides a technical support service (outward communication) for decisions made and actions taken by others. Consistent with theory, the technician role is positively and significantly correlated with the press agency and public information models. The technician role indicates weak, negative correlations with the two-way models. (Refer to H3, H4.)

4.5.1 Knowing traditional communication practices

Dozier et al (1995:53) use craft to name the range of traditional communicator skills associated with the technician role and the press agency/publicity and public information models of public relations and communication practices. How such crafts are used, accounts for the differences in overall communication excellence (Dozier et al, 1995:54).

Knowledge to play the communication technician role include the following:

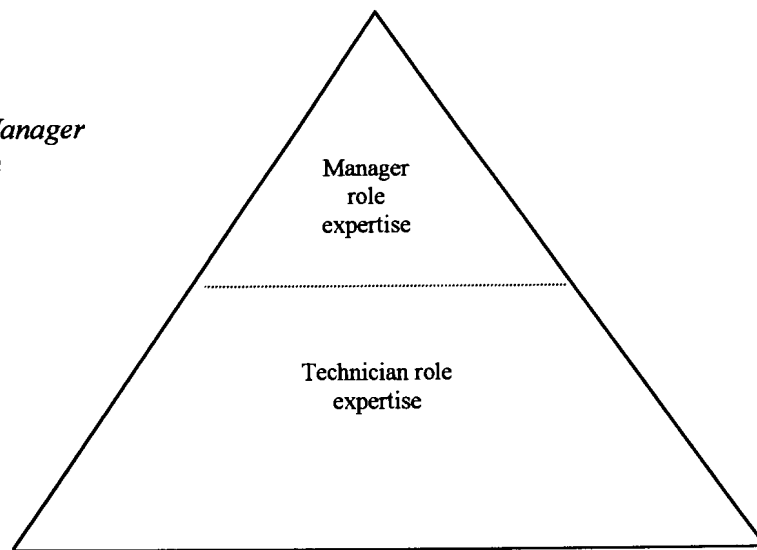
- Write news releases and feature articles.
- Write an advertisement.
- Write speeches.
- Produce publications.
- Produce audio/visuals (graphics, slide shows, videos, radio spots).
- Take photographs.
- Create and manage a speaker's bureau.
- Co-ordinate a press conference or arrange media coverage of an event (Dozier et al, 1995:54).

Departmental expertise to play the communication technician role is strong in those departments that have the expertise to play the manager role. Expertise in the technician role is also strong in departments that know how to practice two-way models. In fact, knowledge of the technician role in communication departments is stronger for organisations with high overall *Excellence* scores compared to organisations with low *Excellence* scores (Dozier et al, 1995:55).

Organisations have less-than-excellent communication when traditional technical expertise is all the department has. This shows up when the organisation's top communicator primarily plays the technician role. Top communicators play this role because top management expects it, or because they lack the knowledge to play any other (Dozier et al, 1995:55).

Knowledge of traditional communicator craft, as indicated by technician role expertise, helps excellent communication departments work. In case study interviews, the *Excellence* research team confirmed that even the most strategically managed departments must still possess the expertise to implement communication programmes, using the technical expertise within the department. Dozier et al (1995:55) thought most departments would be organised in a traditional hierarchy with senior-ranking managers supervising technicians in subordinate positions – see diagram.

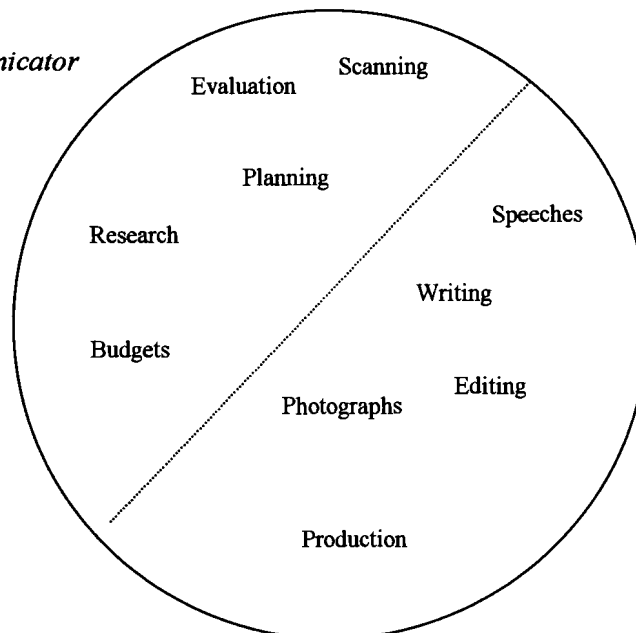
Figure 4.1 - Manager and technician role expertise



(Dozier et al, 1995:55)

However, case study interviews indicated that some organisations use a more organic approach to roles. Tasks are assigned according to the strengths of individual communicators, without great regard to who the supervisor is and who the subordinate is. Roles can also be passed back and forth based on preferences and knowledge. A rigid hierarchical model may therefore be inappropriate. Manager and technician role expertise can be thought of as two fundamentally different principles of communication that work best in tension and balance with each other. The following figure captures this sense of balance and tension (Dozier et al, 1995:55).

Figure 4.2 - Communicator skills



(Dozier et al, 1995:56)

Departmental expertise to practice the press agency/publicity model involves the following:

- Get your organisation's name into the media.
- Get maximum publicity for a staged event.
- Keep bad publicity out of the media.

These tasks focus on the press agency imperative to generate publicity. Only the last one, keeping bad publicity out of the media, deals with the favourable quality of the information. The other two concentrate on generating media coverage, regardless of content. In the *Excellence Study*, these items were combined to create a single measure of press agency/publicity expertise. The greater the department's expertise to practice the two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical models, the greater the department's expertise to practice the press agency/publicity model. Organisations with higher overall excellence scores also posted higher scores on press agency/publicity expertise (Dozier et al, 1995:57-58).

Knowledge of public information practices include tasks that measure the technical expertise expected from a journalist-in-residence – emphasising the communication department's ability to co-operate as a journalistic unit, understanding the news values of reporters and using that understanding to write stories that reporters will use. Objectivity is one such journalistic value incorporated into products of the communication department (Dozier et al, 1995:58).

4.6 THE EXPLANATION OF VARIABLES

In this section the conversion of the constructs of communication manager role and communication technician role (as described above) into measurable variables is described. These variables were used as items in Section C of the measuring instrument.

Table 4.1 - Variables that describe the construct “communication technician role”

1. Senior management expects you to predominantly write communication material such as speeches, articles, advertisements, etc.
2. Senior management expects you to produce brochures.
3. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.
4. Senior management expects you to use your journalistic skills to establish what the media will consider newsworthy about your organisation.
5. Senior management expects you to issue news releases.
6. Senior management expects you to keep others in the organisation informed of what the media report about important issues.

Table 4.2 - Variables that describe the construct “communication manager role”

7. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation’s communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain.
8. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training.
9. Senior management expects you to make communication policy decisions.
10. Senior management expects you to act as counsel to top decision makers when communication issues are involved.
11. Senior management expects you to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various (internal and external) publics.
12. Senior management expects you to represent the organisation at events or meetings.

4.7 SUMMARY

Manager role enactment is both the product of and a contributor to a practitioner’s organisational power – a self-replicating loop. Research indicates that public relations managers, as opposed to public relations technicians, participate significantly more often in meetings with management about adopting new policies, discussing major problems, adopting new procedures, implementing new programmes, and evaluating programme results, than technicians do. From a power-control perspective, a public relations manager who frequently participates in management decision-making may be viewed as a member of the dominant coalition.

Public relations manager roles are, therefore, conceptually related to participation in management decision-making. This involvement of boundary-spanning practitioners in management decision-making is influenced, to some degree, by the instability and threatening nature of the organisation’s environment.

Participation in management decision-making is extremely important for practitioners. Many practitioners agree with this view, because such participation enhances their status. Encroachment is also blocked if practitioners participate in management decision-making.

However, discussions of roles and practices too often focus on what individual communicators know, rather than on the knowledge base of the entire communication department. Within excellent departments, individuals, with strong creative talents in traditional communication crafts, also play an important role. The best-laid plans of top management and top communicators mean nothing without traditional communication skills to implement them. A plan could, for example, be compiled for the organisation to monitor attraction and retention of clients, using ongoing evaluation techniques to keep track of successes and failure of programme goals. The communicator can also play a leadership role in other important projects such as a total quality management programme.

At the core of an excellent communication department, these traditional crafts complement cutting-edge expertise to manage the department strategically and utilise two-way communication practices.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Aim of this chapter:

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the choice of a research design as well as the methodological implications thereof on sampling, data collection and instrument development. Hypotheses are formulated, connected with research objectives and variables are operationalised so that hypothesis testing can take place.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A research design can be defined as the comprehensive planning of procedures for data collection and analysing (Mouton & Marais, 1989:32; Mouton, 1996:x). The structure and particular logic of the research design for this study follows from the research problem as stated in Chapter 1. The degree of structure in this design is a direct function of the research goals. It is a framework for specifying the relationships among the study's variables and it is a blueprint that outlines each procedure from the hypothesis formulation to the analysis of data (Mouton, 1996:108; Cooper & Schindler, 1998:130).

On the one hand the data research design aims to specify the unit of analysis, and on the other hand it aims to describe the conditions under which observation takes place, in such a way that the validity of the research results is increased (Du Plooy, 1996:39; Mouton & Marais, 1989:32).

The research design for this study can be described as follows:

- Research objective: This descriptive study is correlational in that its description takes place in terms of connections between variables. In statistical terms, these connections can be established in various ways.

For this study, the statistical methods of factor analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to establish the connections between the variables (Mouton & Marais, 1989:44; Leedy 1993:122).

- **Research strategy:** The research strategy for this study is ideographic and nomothetic. On a continuum, the focus is on the differences as well as the similarities between phenomena (Mouton & Marais, 1989:48-51).
- A quantitative approach is followed. Variables are operationalised and measured with the aim to describe, predict and explain (Leedy, 1993:143). The study is therefore universal (Mouton & Marais, 1989:52).
- It is applied research that investigates theoretical relationships in order to find a solution to the practical problem of managing the relationship between senior management in the organisation and the communication department.
- As the research investigates the perceptions of respondents at a specific moment, the research design is cross-sectional or synchronic (Du Plooy, 1996:128; Mouton & Marais, 1989:41).

In Chapter 1, the research problem, the research objectives, conceptualisation, operationalisation, sample design, data collection, and analysis and interpretation were briefly discussed. In this chapter, these aspects will be discussed in more detail and a theoretical description of the statistical methods used in this study will be given.

When undertaking a survey in communication research, the researcher collects information from a group of people to describe their abilities, opinions, attitudes, beliefs and/or knowledge with regard to a particular topic or issue. Generally, the purpose of using survey research in communication is to explore and describe what is, rather than to evaluate why an observed distribution (or attitude) exists. This study also has an explanatory purpose in mind, as the researcher will be examining the interrelationships between two or more variables (Du Plooy, 1996:127)

5.2 CONCEPTUALISATION

According to Mouton (1996:109), conceptualisation firstly refers to the clarification

and analysis of the key concepts in the problem statement, and secondly to the integration of the study into a theoretical framework.

The key concepts in the problem statement have already been clarified in Chapter 1. In this chapter, the integration of the study into the underlying theoretical framework for communication management will be addressed in more detail. This integration is done by formulating research hypotheses that are testable and have exploratory potential.

The question surrounding empirical testability is whether one can foresee or indicate how the hypothesis will be tested. The question of explanatory potential refers to the degree of theoretical support or embeddedness enjoyed by the hypotheses (Mouton, 1996:110). The outcome of this conceptualisation phase is research hypotheses which should meet the criterion of “theoretical validity”.

In order to embed or incorporate this research into the body of knowledge that is pertinent to the research problem being addressed, a thorough literature review of previous theoretical and empirical work in this field (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) was done. In Chapter 7, this study will be related to the existing literature.

5.2.1 Hypothesis formulation

The hypotheses for the study links directly with the research objectives, but are formulated as tentative concrete and testable assumptions, as obtained from the literature study. Hypotheses are therefore statements with which answers to the research questions are generalised from the sample to the population, taking into account the sample error. In this study, inferences as to the correctness of the hypotheses will be made from sample information (Du Plooy, 1996: 36; Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:130).

Through deductive reasoning the general research hypotheses were derived from the theory. These relational hypotheses postulate that a certain kind of relationship exists between two or more variables (Mouton, 1996:122; Bailey, 1987:41). The hypotheses

for this study are correlational (or descriptive) hypotheses as opposed to causal (or explanatory) hypotheses. The hypotheses also refer to a class of cases and can therefore be referred to as general hypotheses, as opposed to singular hypotheses which only apply to one case. (Mouton, 1996:122).

When a research hypothesis (alternative hypothesis) is tested, the antithesis of the hypothesis is tested in the form of a null hypothesis. (The term null hypothesis reflects the concept that this is a hypothesis of no difference. It is therefore a statement of equality. As a complementary hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis will include a statement of inequality.) Only when the null hypothesis is rejected totally, can indirect support for the research hypothesis be obtained. If the null hypothesis is not rejected, it eliminates the possibility of an alternative hypothesis in any direction (positive or negative) (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:133-136).

For purposes of this study, the alternative hypothesis was stated first, followed by a null hypothesis. The null hypothesis will be assumed to be true unless it is rejected as a result of the testing procedure.

In the stated hypotheses, the factors, as identified in the factor analysis, were used as variables. The words “significant difference” were used in each hypothesis to indicate that the results are defined to be statistically significant if the research hypothesis is accepted using a test at the 5% level (based on a standard 95% confidence level). In its statistical sense, the word “significance” indicates that random chance has been ruled out. It still remains for the researcher to examine the data to see if the effect is strong enough to be important (Siegel, 1997:327).

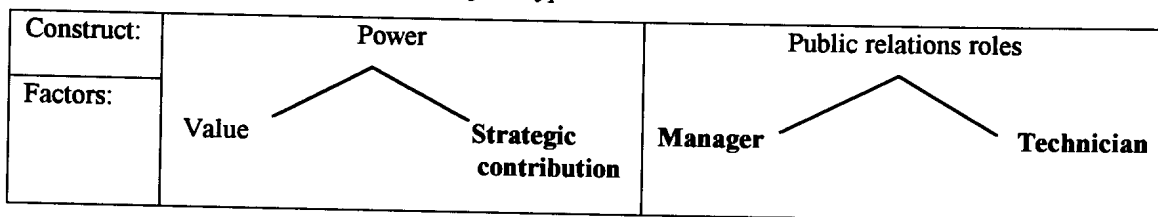
The hypotheses formulated are based on the perceptions of top communicators in South African organisations about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator in these organisations; the one-way and/or two-way models used by top communicators and communication departments in communication activities and organisational decision-making in these organisations; and the public relations manager or public relations technician role that

senior management expects the top communicator to play in these organisations. The formulation of these hypotheses was guided by the research objectives.

From the assumptions made in the literature study, the following hypotheses are stated and motivated. Figures depicting the constructs, factors, variables and differences to be tested are also included with each hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1

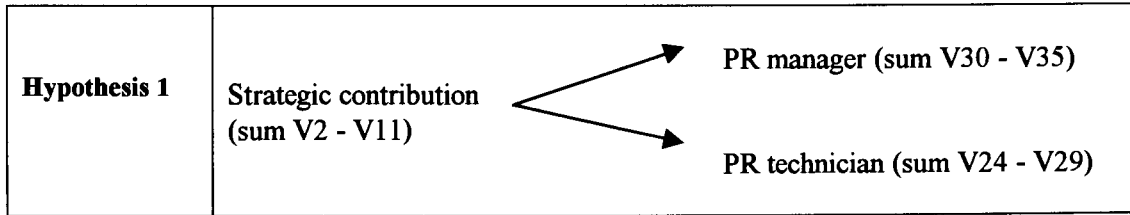
Figure 5.1 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 1



H₁: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** makes to organisational decision-making.

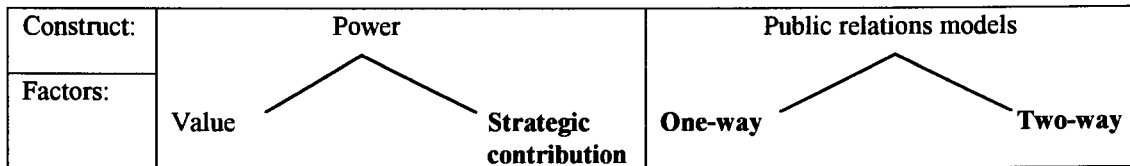
H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** makes to organisational decision-making.

Figure 5.2 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 1



Hypothesis 2

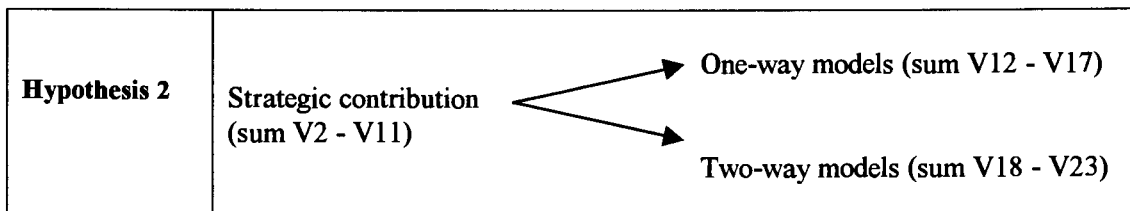
Figure 5.3 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 2



H2: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **one-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **two-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making.

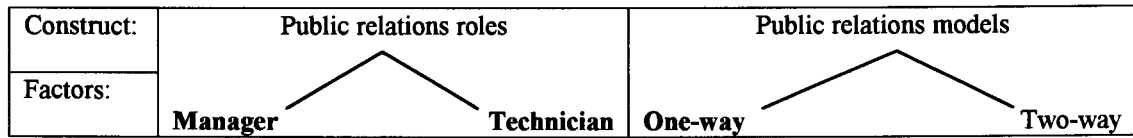
Ho: There is no significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **one-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **two-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making.

Figure 5.4 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 2



Hypothesis 3

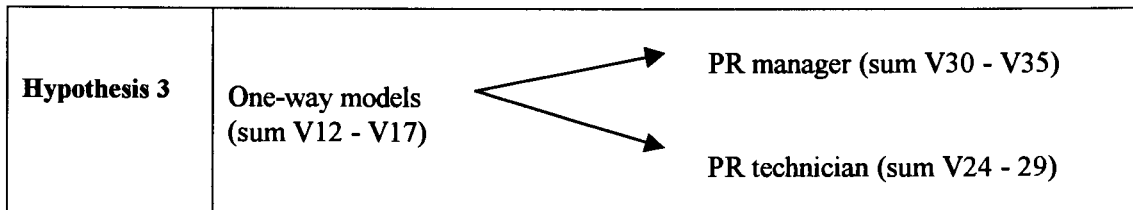
Figure 5.5 - Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 3



H₃: There is a significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

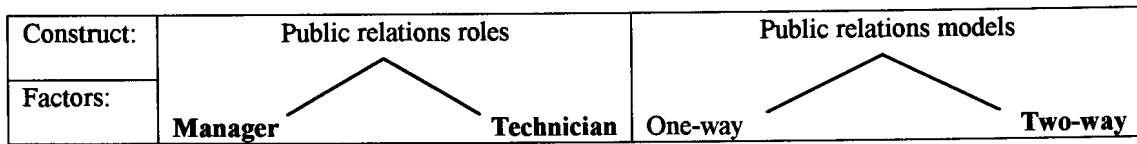
H₀: There is no significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

Figure 5.6 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 3



Hypothesis 4

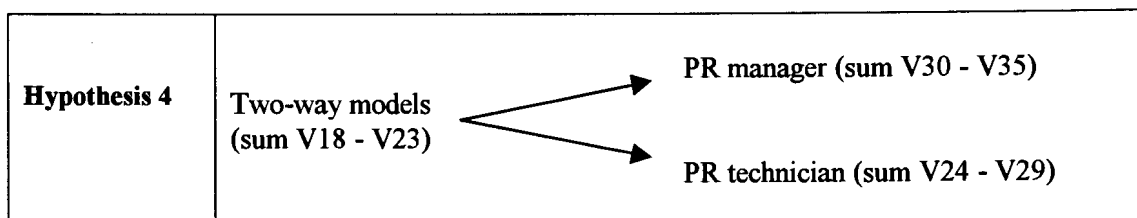
Figure 5.7 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 4



H₄: There is a significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

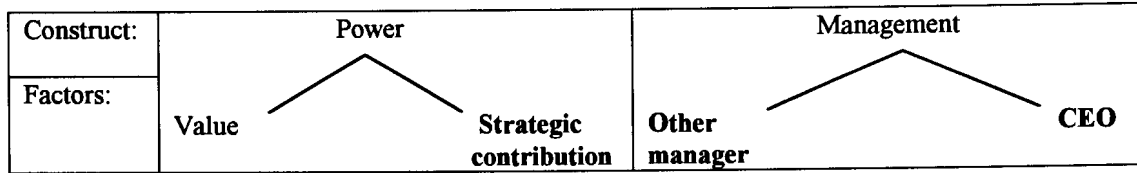
H₀: There is no significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

Figure 5.8 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 4



Hypothesis 5

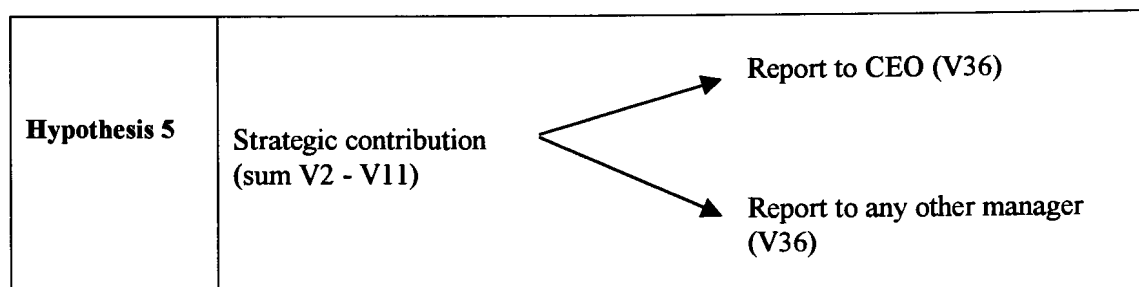
Figure 5.9 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 5



H₅: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to the **CEO** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to any **other senior manager**.

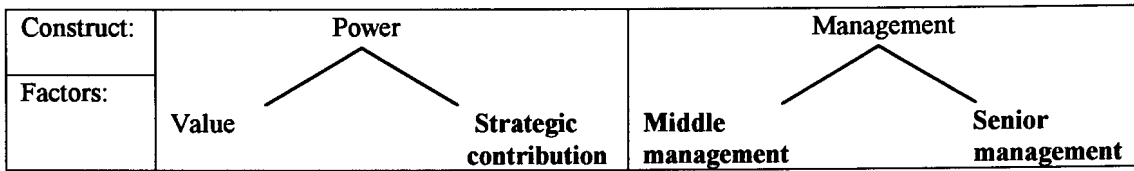
H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to the **CEO** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to any **other senior manager**.

Figure 5.10 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 5



Hypothesis 6

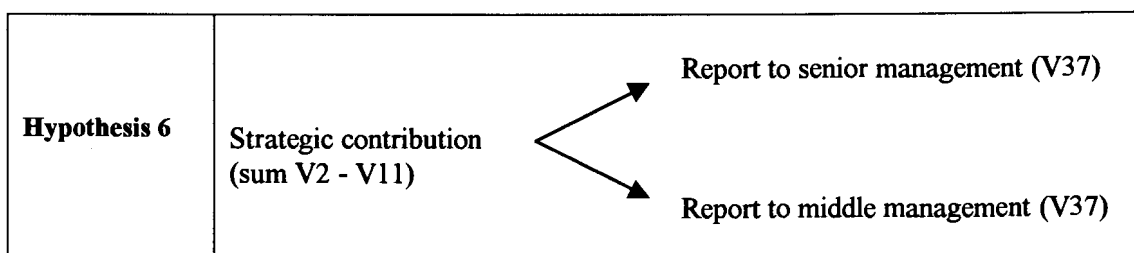
Figure 5.11 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 6



H₆: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **senior management** in the organisation and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **middle management** in the organisation.

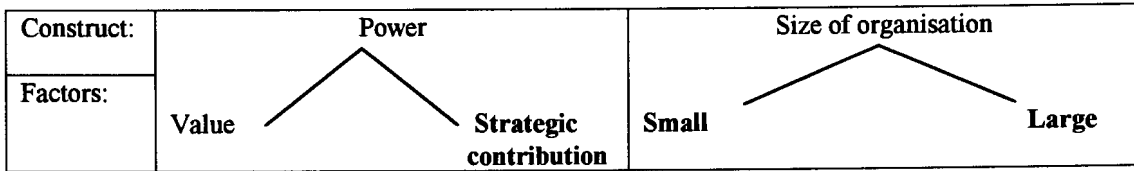
H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **senior management** in the organisation and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **middle management** in the organisation.

Figure 5.12 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 6



Hypothesis 7

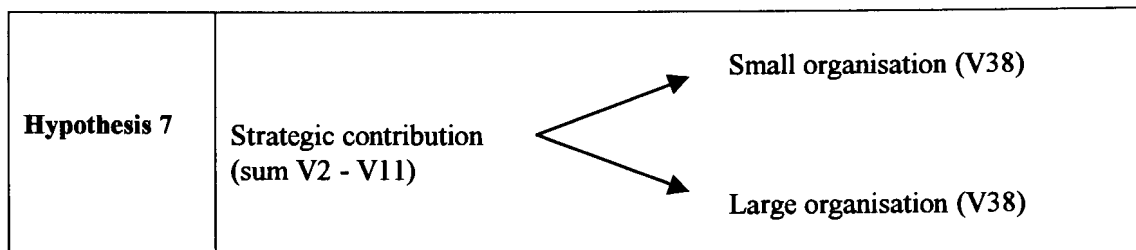
Figure 5.13 - Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 7



H7: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **small organisation** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **large organisation**.

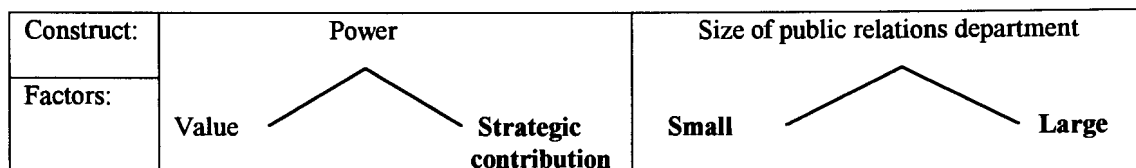
H0: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **small organisation** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **large organisation**.

Figure 5.14 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 7



Hypothesis 8

Figure 5.15 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 8

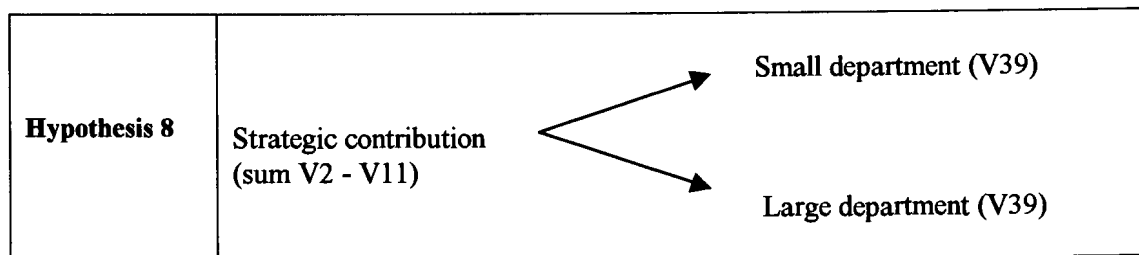


H8: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **small**

public relations department makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **large public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making.

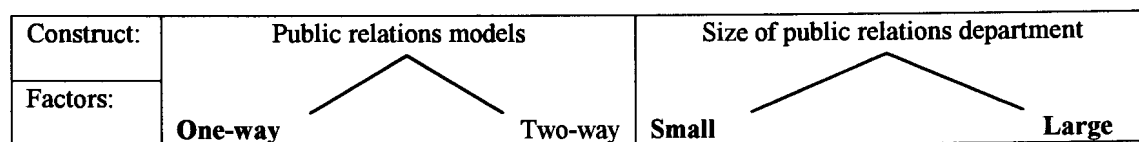
Ho: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **small public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **large public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making.

Figure 5.16 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 8



Hypothesis 9

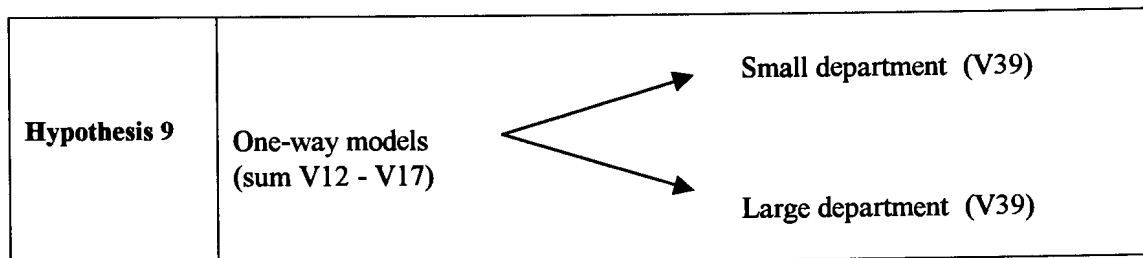
Figure 5.17 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 9



H₉: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

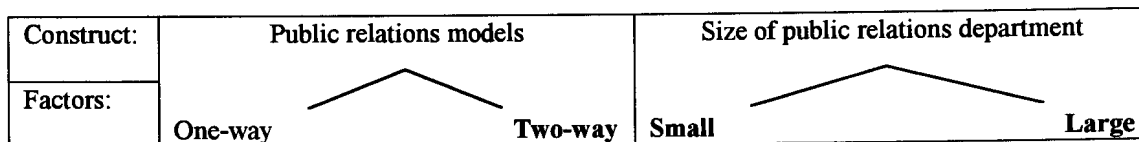
H₀: There is no significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

Figure 5.18 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 9



Hypothesis 10

Figure 5.19 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 10

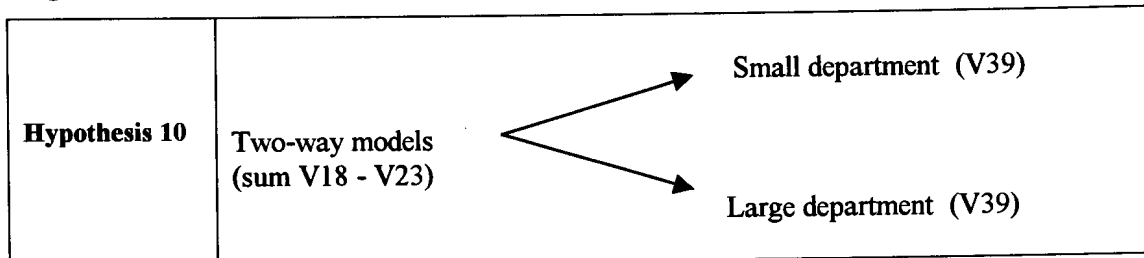


H₁₀: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and

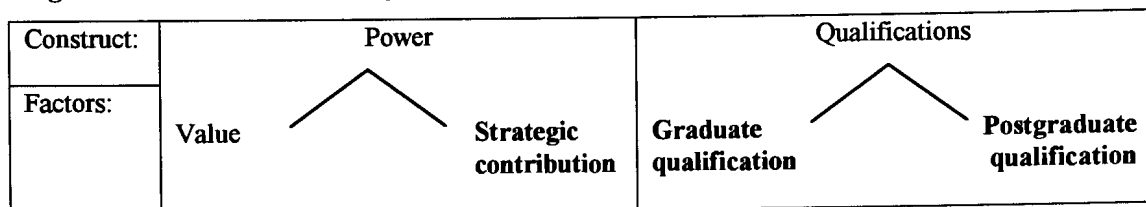
expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

Figure 5.20 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 10



Hypothesis 11

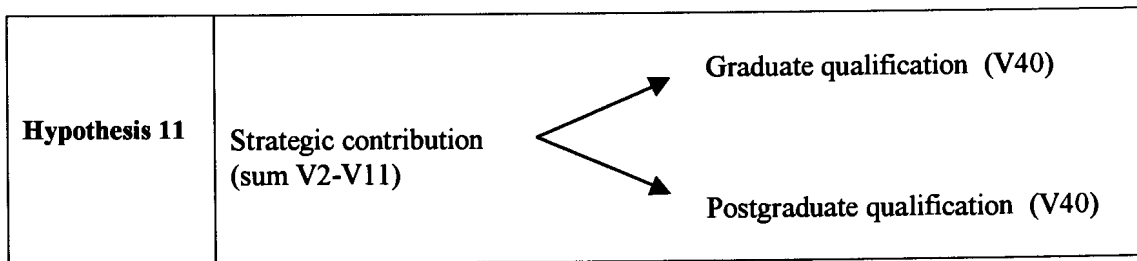
Figure 5.21 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 11



H₁₁: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with a **graduate qualification** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made to organisational decision-making by the top communicator with a **postgraduate qualification**.

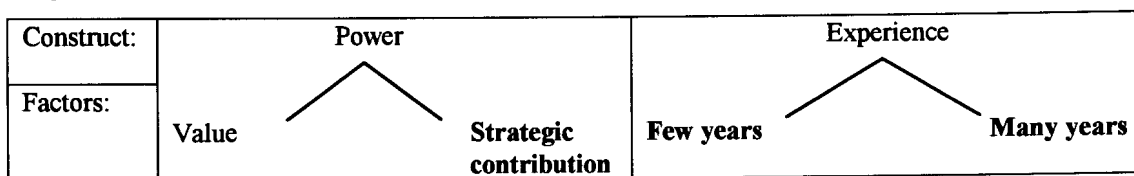
H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with a **graduate qualification** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made to organisational decision-making by the top communicator with a **postgraduate qualification**.

Figure 5.22 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 11



Hypothesis 12

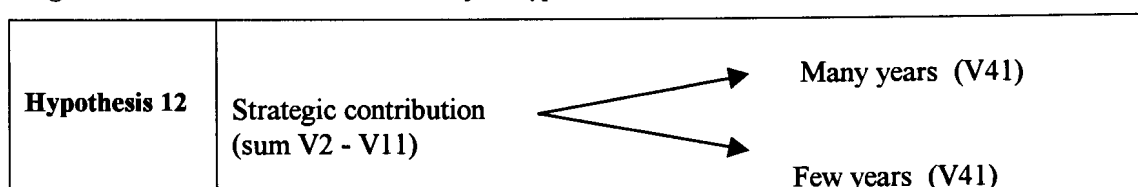
Figure 5.23 -- Constructs and factors for Hypothesis 12



H₁₂: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with a **few years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with **many years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with a **few years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with **many years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making.

Figure 5.24 -- Factors and variables for Hypothesis 12



5.2.2 Statistical procedures

The statistical procedures used to analyse the sample data will now be discussed. A theoretical overview will be given of each of these procedures to serve as background for the presentation and interpretation of the results in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.2.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to reflect the demographic and other data of the population. Pie and bar charts were used to show the distribution of respondents with regard to reporting lines, the size of the organisation and qualifications and experience of the respondents (Section D).

The descriptive statistics applicable to Section A, B and C of the measuring instrument are:

- The average: These measures indicate central location and reflect “middle” points in the sense that they are near the centre of the distribution (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:90).
- The standard deviation: This is a measure of spread that takes all the individual observations into account. It calculates the deviation of each value from a point of reference. The mean is used as a point of reference (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 1999:129).
- The Top2Box% and Low2Box%: These boxes are particularly well suited to the task of comparing distributions, specifically in the higher and lower range of responses.

The results of the descriptive statistics are described in Chapter 6.

5.2.2.2 Statistics for hypothesis testing

As stated in Chapter 1, the research question and hypotheses for the study link directly

to the research objectives, but are formulated as tentative concrete and measurable assumptions as obtained from the literature study.

As stated earlier, the null hypothesis is the antithesis of the research hypothesis or alternative hypothesis. The null hypothesis is a statement of equivalence or no difference. The process of hypothesis testing assumes that the null hypothesis is “true”. All statistical procedures test the null hypothesis (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:133). Researchers confirm or reject research or alternative hypotheses by establishing the “truth” of the null hypothesis. A research or alternative hypothesis can never be tested directly. Only when a null hypothesis is rejected, is indirect support obtained for the alternatives of research hypotheses. If enough proof does not exist to reject the null hypothesis, the null hypothesis is accepted.

The alternative hypotheses in this study are numbered and are indicated as H₁, H₂, H₃, etc., followed by the null hypothesis, indicated as H₀.

i. Explanation of terms used in hypothesis testing

The following terms will be used when indicating the results for the hypothesis testing.

a. Significance level

In hypothesis testing, the researcher must first decide on an appropriate significance level before deciding on the statistical test to be used in conjunction with this level. Since the null hypothesis is always given the benefit of the doubt, H₀ was not rejected in this study unless there was strong evidence against it. The significance level is denoted as α and is used to indicate the maximum risk in rejecting a true null hypothesis: the less risk the researcher is willing to assume, the lower the α .

Typical values for α are 0.10, 0.05., 0.01 and 0.001. In this study 0.05 was used as a level of significance.

A significance level should always be associated with a probability of making a mistake: rejecting the null hypothesis when one shouldn't reject it (because it is true). Thus, when the researcher selects the 5% significance level (i.e. set $\alpha = 0.05$) to conduct a hypothesis test, the test will be conducted in such a way that the null hypothesis will only be rejected when in fact it is true five times out of 100.

If the result of the statistical test is such that the value obtained has a probability of occurrence less than or equal to α , then H_0 is rejected in favour of H_1 and the test result is declared significant. If, on the one hand, the probability associated with the test result is greater than α , the researcher cannot reject H_0 and the test result is denoted as non-significant (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:139).

The significance test (statistical test) used in conjunction with the significance level is analysis of variance (ANOVA).

b. *p*-value

In hypothesis testing problems, the observed value of the test statistic is compared with a critical value. The *p*-value is the probability that the test statistic under H_0 is equal to the observed value of the test statistic, or is more extreme in the direction suggested by the alternative. It is also known as the exceedance probability. This provides the researcher with additional information that will determine the degree of confidence with which the null hypothesis can be rejected or accepted. When using *p*-values, the following rule applies:

Reject H_0 if the *p*-value $\leq \alpha$.

Do not reject H_0 if the *p*-value $> \alpha$.

(Steyn et al, 1999:420)

The lower the *p*-value, the stronger the evidence against the null hypothesis. It therefore shows the researcher the strength of the evidence against the null hypothesis

(Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:147; Siegel, 1997:328; Steyn et al, 1999:413).

ii. Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) provides a general framework for statistical hypothesis testing based on careful examination of the different sources of variability in a complex situation (Siegel, 1997:581). ANOVA is used to test whether the means of a number of populations differ from one another (Steyn et al, 1999:508).

The null hypothesis tested by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is that k groups have equal means in the population; the alternative hypothesis is that at least one mean is different from the others. The alternative hypothesis does not indicate which groups may differ, only that the groups are not all the same; additional analysis is necessary to identify where the identified differences exist (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:187). The software *Statistica* was used to do the calculation.

Analysis of variance, as the name indicates, breaks the total variance up into components or parts. In an ANOVA model, each group has its own average and values that deviate from the average. All the data points of all the groups also have an overall average. The total deviation is the sum of the squared differences between each data point and the overall difference.

The analysis of variance uses an F test, based on the F statistic, a ratio of two variance measures, to perform each hypothesis test. (The F statistic is the ratio of variability measures, indicating the extent to which the sample averages differ from one another (the numerator) with respect to the overall level of variability in the samples (denominator). The F statistic has two numbers for degrees of freedom (df). It inherits the degrees of freedom of both of the variability measures it is based on – the between sample and within sample.

The numerator represents the variability due to the special, interesting effect being tested, and the denominator represents a baseline measure of randomness.

The F test is performed by computing the F statistic and comparing it to the value in the F table. If the ratio is larger than the value in the F table, the effect is significant (Siegel, 1997:587-589; Steyn et al, 1999:513-517).

The results of the hypothesis tests, by using ANOVA, are described in Chapter 6.

5.3 OPERATIONALISATION

During the process of operationalisation a measuring instrument, such as a scale or questionnaire, is developed. Ideally, this instrument constitutes a valid measure of the key concepts in the research question. The outcome is a measuring instrument and the predominant epistemological criterion is measurement validity (Mouton, 1996:110; Grunig, L, in Broom & Dozier, 1990:163).

The methodological criteria applicable to the construction of a valid measuring instrument for this study, were the following:

- The population from which the items were selected to construct the instrument was exhaustive with regard to the phenomena investigated.
- The categories used in the scale/questionnaire were unambiguous and mutually exclusive.
- Scales met the criteria of unidimensionality, which means that a single scale could not be used to measure two or three different dimensions or aspects of a phenomenon (Mouton, 1996:40).

According to Dane (1990:248), measurement is a process through which the kind or intensity of something is determined. The use of multiple measures of constructs in this study helps capture more of what is meant by the construct. Together, these measures triangulate on the abstract constructs (Grunig, L, in Broom & Dozier, 1990:165).

5.3.1 Development of the measuring instrument

To determine the perceptions of communication managers about the expectations top management has of the communication function in the organisation, a measuring instrument was developed. A description of the scale consideration and the compilation of the measuring instrument will now be discussed.

5.3.1.1 Scale consideration

A measuring instrument consists of a set of measuring scales which organises information and transforms it into numerical data. Measurement in research consists of assigning numbers to empirical events in compliance with a set of rules.

It was decided not to use any of the available standard measuring instruments used in communication research, like the Thurstone scale, the Guttman scale, Osgood's semantic differential scale and the Likert scale (Du Plooy, 1996:77) in this study, but to develop a new 0 to 10 point scale. In developing the format for the scale, the respondents on whom the scale was intended to be administered, and the concept measured with the scale, were taken into account (Dane, 1990:268).

The scale (Appendix B) has the following characteristics:

- It consists of a range of items describing a construct, each accompanied by a 0 to 10 point scale. Respondents had to indicate their different degrees of agreement with each statement. Numeral or category 1 (option 0) represents "very unfavourable" (totally disagree) up to numeral or category 11 (option 10) which represents "very favourable" (totally agree).
- It is a forced choice scale, which forces the respondent to select a response from the established set of discrete and mutually exclusive options.
- The scale is flexible and the dimensions of agreement (totally disagree, totally agree) can be adjusted to measure the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational

decision-making, the public relations models used by the top communicator and the role played by the top communicator.

- This scale could be considered a factor scale as defined by Grunig, L (in Broom & Dozier, 1990:180). It is a multi-item measure in terms of the same construct. The index is assumed to be unidimensional, in that items making up the index measure a single construct (Bailey, 1987:60).

i. The process of structuring the scale

A construct is any concept that cannot be isolated or observed directly. Constructs are ideas that are developed specifically as building blocks of the research process. The phenomenon “expectations of senior management” as theoretically supported in the previous chapters, is studied according to three constructs: power (value and strategic contribution); the four public relations models (press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical); and the role the top communicator plays in the organisation (manager and technician). Chapters 2, 3 and 4 studied these constructs in depth.

ii. A multi-item battery of the possible scales to measure each construct was compiled

Each of the three abovementioned constructs was conceptually defined by a multi-item battery which is included in the measuring instrument as statements.

iii. The final set of scales were chosen

Through a process of pre-testing, each multi-item battery was subjected to judgement by 15 respondents. It was consequently decided to adjust the wording of three of the questions and to put in a descriptor stating that the terms “public relations” and “communication” will be regarded as synonyms in the questionnaire.

iv. The discriminatory power of the scale was established

The discriminatory power refers to a scale's ability to measure only the construct that is being studied. This is a test of the unidimensionality as well as the validity of a set of scales. Since the measuring instrument was only subjected to pre-testing and not to a pilot study, the discriminatory power of the scale could only be established in the first phase of data-analysis by doing a reliability analysis of the different constructs (Groenewald, 1998; Cooper & Schindler, 1998:166-174).

5.3.1.2 Compilation of the measuring instrument

The measuring instrument (see questionnaire Appendix B) is organised in accordance with the three constructs from which "expectations from senior management" are hypothetically constructed. The complete measuring instrument that was developed, consists of three sections representing the three constructs. These three sections were treated as three separate measuring instruments combined into one. Section A (Power), Section B (Models) and Section C (Roles) each measures a construct in the form of a multi-item battery which is subjected to measurement on an agreement scale. A fourth division collected demographic data of respondents and consisted of open questions.

Questions/variables/items were grouped together according to the factors expected to be identified through factor analysis. The researcher was sensitive to the fact that the sequence in which questions and statements is arranged could influence individual responses and, consequently, the findings of the survey.

In this study, statements on similar topics were grouped together. Concern about the possibility that a respondent will repeat similar views towards an issue (reflecting earlier answers) may tempt one to randomise items (i.e. not group them together). However, Babbie (in Broom & Dozier 1990:165) warns against this practice, arguing that by randomising, items "will probably strike respondents as chaotic and worthless

... [and] ... they will have difficulty answering ... since they must continually switch their attention from one topic to another”.

The scale used in the measuring instrument reflected the empirical objective of the measuring instrument. The agreement scale is anchored in a bipolar way between “totally disagree” and “totally agree” in order to measure the respondents’ perception of:

Section A: The value top management attaches to the top communicator and to communication management as well as the expectations top management has about the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making.

Section B: The expectations of top management about the use of one-way and two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making. The use of these methods can be regarded as the preferred communication management philosophy in the organisation.

Section C: The expectations of top management with regard to the public relations manager or public relations technician role played by the top communicator in the organisation.

Section D: Demographic information on respondents was gathered in this section. Respondents had to indicate, amongst others, the reporting lines and size of their organisations and departments.

The measurement was done by sending the questionnaire to respondents with a covering letter stating the purpose of the study and an attachment giving background information on the *Excellence Study* on which this study is based, as well as two other similar studies done in South Africa in this regard. (Appendix A)

Each division of the measuring instrument will be discussed next. The variables and items which make up each construct were discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore only the grouping of the constructs and the phase of measurement are referred to here.

Section A

As described at the end of Chapter 2, the construct “power” consists of the two concepts “value senior management attaches to the top communicator and the communication function” and “strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making”. The first five items in this section refers to “value”, whereas items 6 to 10 refer to the “strategic contribution” the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making. These two variables were grouped together since the theory indicated that the power of the communication department comes from the value and support senior management attaches to the communication department and the strategic contribution the communication department and/or the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making. Since the theory indicated that there is a strong link between the knowledge of the communication department and its strategic contribution, as well as the value senior management attaches to it, it was assumed that a high strategic contribution would also be an indication of suitable strategic knowledge in the department. The construct of knowledge was not measured in this study, although a question on the qualifications of respondents was asked in Section D.

Section B

In Section B the construct “public relations models” (items 1 to 12) is measured. The top management’s beliefs with regard to the use of the “press agency” (items 1 to 3), “public information” (items 4 to 6), “two-way asymmetrical” (items 5 to 8) and “two-way symmetrical” (items 9 to 12) models, were measured to establish their philosophy with regard to the use of these models.

Top communicators indicated what senior management believed the task of the top communicator and the communication department to be.

The aim of this multi-item battery was to gain clarity on whether senior management believes that top communicators and communication departments (should) mainly use one-way practices in public relations or whether they (should) also use the more sophisticated two-way practices which lead to excellence in communication management. The use of two-way practices could also lead to a bigger strategic contribution.

Section C

Section C measures the construct “roles the top communicator plays” and consists of items/variables describing the “communication manager” and “communication technician”.

In this section senior management’s expectations with regard to the role the top communicator should play, were measured. Items 1 to 6 are building blocks of “communication technician” and items 7 to 12 make up the “communication manager”. Technical communication skills reflect the typical role of the communication technician, whereas the communication manager also needs general as well as communication management skills.

Section D

Section D consists of six questions that are codified as nominal scale questions. Each of the questions will be briefly motivated.

The first question asked to whom top communicators (respondents) report in their organisations. The designation of the person had to be stated. As a follow-up question, the respondent had to indicate whether that person was regarded as junior, middle or senior management in the organisation.

Motivation for this question: To establish whether it can be assumed that the seniority of the person to whom the respondent reports, influences her strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.

The second question tried to establish how many people work for the organisation.

Motivation for this question: To establish whether it can be assumed that the size of the organisation influences the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making.

In Question 3 the size of the communication department was established by asking how many people are employed in that department.

Motivation for this question: To establish whether the size of the department influences the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making.

The highest qualification of the top communicator had to be stated in the fifth question.

Motivation for this question: To establish whether a graduate or postgraduate qualification of a top communicator influences the strategic contribution she makes to organisational decision-making.

In the last question, top communicators had to state their designation.

Motivation for this question: By asking this question, it could be established whether the top communicator is mainly responsible for corporate communication or whether other responsibilities such as Marketing, Human Resources or Administration are also part of her role. This was also an indication of the popular designations for top communicators in the field. This question was not used for statistical analysis.

5.3.1.3 Questionnaire design

The researcher made use of a self-administered questionnaire which each respondent could complete personally. Various methodological guidelines were considered for the design of the questionnaire (Dane, 1990:119-143; Du Plooy, 1996:129; Mouton & Marais, 1989:91).

- The covering letter of the questionnaire explained the purpose of the study, indicated how the information would be used and motivated why the individual's participation is important. This letter identified the person undertaking the survey, and was aimed at persuading the respondent to complete and return the questionnaire by a specific date.
- To interest respondents, an addendum was attached with background information on the *Excellence Study* on which this study was based, as well as information on

two other similar studies conducted in South Africa.

- The address to which the questionnaire had to be returned was clearly indicated on the front, middle and last page of the questionnaire to facilitate the return of the questionnaire.
- Specific instructions were included in the covering letter. The multi-item battery for each of the divisions was divided by transmission instructions which orientated the respondent with regard to the next section. Clear instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaire.
- On the last page of the questionnaire, an offer was made to send the respondent the results of the study and space to fill in an address was provided.
- Respondents' anonymity was assured and the questionnaires were therefore not numbered. However, respondents could give their particulars if they wanted to receive the results of the study, which meant that those respondents could be identified.
- In designing this self-administered questionnaire, careful attention was given to the types of questions asked and statements made, the wording of the questions and statements, and the formatting of the measuring instrument.
- Multiple measures of constructs were used, as it helps capture more of what is meant by the construct. Taken together, these concrete measures triangulate on the abstract construct. They can be combined to form an index that measures the three constructs "power", "shared expectations with regard to the use of the one-way and two-way models of public relations", and "role-playing" (Grunig, L, in Broom & Dozier, 1990:165).
- The statements in Sections A, B and C required respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements. Respondents were asked to select a category between 0 and 10 to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements (Du Plooy, 1996:133).
- A mixture of direct and indirect statements was made, and specific as opposed to general statements were included.
- The aim was to keep questions short and unambiguous. The words "or" and "and" were not used in any of the items.

- Care was taken to avoid loaded language, leading statements (or questions), negative items, incomplete questions, vague questions (or statements), lengthy questions (or statements), ambiguous language or complex questions (Du Plooy, 139-140).
- Sections A, B and C included closed-ended statements, while open-ended questions were asked in Section D. Question 1 in Section D was a contingency question.
- Open-ended questions on the status of the top communicator in the organisation were kept to the minimum and placed in Section D because of the inherent problems with codifying them.
- The questionnaire was only distributed in English since it was assumed that Afrikaans-speaking communication managers have a very good command of both English and Afrikaans and would therefore be able to complete the questionnaire successfully.

The biggest constraint when using a self-administered questionnaire is a low rate of return. The data collection time is also long, which was specifically the case in this study. Dillman (1978) developed a set of practices to increase the rate of return of questionnaires. These practices are known as the Total Design Method (TDM) and are supported by empirical research (Dane, 1990:134). These practices were used in this study.

Dillman (1978) sees survey research as a social exchange process – “an interpersonal relationship in which an individual’s willingness to enter or remain in the relationship depends on expectations of rewards and costs.” The researcher can therefore increase the rate of return by making the completion of the questionnaire worth it for the respondent with the aim of ensuring an acceptable rate of return for the e-mailed and/or faxed questionnaire. In relation to the above point, PRISA’s standard communication with members was used to keep respondents up to date with the progress of the research project and to communicate the importance of the study. Respondents were also promised the results of the study.

A pre-test was also done in this study. A pre-test differs from a pilot study in that the total research procedure is not subjected to testing. Data gathered in the pre-test is not statistically analysed – only the measuring instrument is tested in advance. The purpose of pre-testing is, amongst others, to establish whether respondents understand the instructions, whether items are not confusing or unclear and whether the length of the questionnaire is realistic. The questionnaire was subjected to 15 communication managers in the Pretoria region. The necessary changes were made. The result of the pre-test was the rewording of three items and a change to the instructions in the covering letter. Where only e-mail was at first considered as a distribution method, it was decided to distribute the questionnaire by e-mail initially, but to follow it up by faxing questionnaires to respondents who did not reply. The reason for this procedure was that the distribution of questionnaires by e-mail could keep the cost down, could be very easy to return and could in some cases be a preferred way for respondents to communicate. It was, however, expected that the rate of return would be lower than if a questionnaire was faxed or posted, which was indeed the case.

Faxes were sent to respondents who did not reply to the e-mail. It was assumed that the rate of return would be higher if a copy of the questionnaire was faxed, which would save the respondent the time to print the document. In some cases the e-mail address was not functional. Cases where the top communicator was not sufficiently electronically literate, or where secretaries received their bosses' e-mails or faxes, could also have had an influence on the rate of return.

5.3.2 Reliability and validity of the measuring instrument

Reliability needs stability and the delivery of consistent measuring over time. Reliability consists of three components: stability, internal consistency and equivalency (Du Plooy, 1996:74; Cooper & Schindler, 1998:166-174).

According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black (1998:117), reliability is an assessment of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable. In this study, two diagnostic measures of reliability were used, i.e. internal consistency, which applies to

the consistency among the variables in a summated scale; and Cronbach's alpha, which is the reliability coefficient that assesses the consistency of the entire scale.

The reliability of research concerns the replicability and consistency of the methods, conditions and results. Internal reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection, analysis and interpretation is consistent, given the same conditions. External reliability deals with the issue of whether or not independent researchers can replicate studies in the same or similar settings and obtain similar results (Du Plooy, 1996:31; Bailey, 1987:71; Grunig L, in Broom & Dozier, 1990:169).

The rationale for internal consistency is that the individual items or indicators of the scale should all measure the same construct and should thus be highly intercorrelated. The individual items for the three constructs "power", "shared expectations with regard to the use of one-way and two-way models" and "role-playing" were measured separately.

Because no single item is a perfect measure of a construct, one must rely on a series of diagnostic measures to assess internal consistency. First, there are several measures relating to each separate item, including the item-to-total correlation (the correlation of the item to the summated scale score) or the inter-item correlation (correlation among items). Rules of thumb suggest that the item-to-total correlations exceed .50 and that the inter-item correlations exceed .30 (Hair et al, 1998:118).

For the purpose of the development of a measuring instrument, the internal consistency is the most important consideration. Items in the measuring instrument can be inconsistent and lead to unreliable measurement if they are vague, confusing or simply irrelevant to the concept. Respondents can also contribute to unreliable measurement because of fatigue, fluctuation in memory, emotional problems and familiarity with the measuring instrument. The latter is known as random error (Du Plooy, 1996:72; Mouton & Marais, 1989:75-89; Cooper & Schindler, 1998:171-174).

There are various methods of establishing the reliability of measurement. All the

methods have a common goal, namely to calculate the reliability coefficient. The reliability of the measuring instrument for this study was tested by using the statistical methods of item-to-total analysis and Cronbach's alpha. In accordance with the guidelines laid down by Du Plooy (1996:72), the reliability coefficient ranges from no reliability (0) to perfect reliability (1). A reliability coefficient of 0.9 or higher is excellent and between 0.8 and 0.89 is good, while a reliability coefficient of between 0.7 and .79 can serve as fair.

When a measuring instrument includes items which measure the perceptions, attitudes or opinions of respondents as in the case of the measuring instrument under discussion, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used (Du Plooy, 1996:74). As respondents' perceptions, attitudes or opinions do not reflect "correct" or "incorrect" options, the Cronbach's alpha measures reliability by establishing the consistency with which respondents reacted to the items on the measurement instrument. It is the more sophisticated computerised application of the "split-halves" method.

Multiple pairs of sub-categories are randomly selected for measurement, after which all these sub-categories are correlated as an index of internal consistency of the measuring instrument as a whole. The reliability analysis is discussed in more detail in the section on data-analysis.

According to Grunig, L (in Broom & Dozier, 1990:165), there are three ways to argue the validity of a variable which supposedly measures a construct. These are face validity, criterion validity and construct validity. Measurement validity and, more specifically, construct validity, confronts the question whether the instrument really measures the specific theoretical construct that is being studied (Mouton & Marais, 1989:94; Du Plooy, 1996:75; Bailey, 1987:66-70). The measuring instrument must be able to differentiate the construct studied from any other similar construct (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:21; Cooper & Schindler, 1998:166-171). A good indication of validity is made possible by a factor analysis of the measuring instrument. Through factor analysis it can be established whether the constructs or factors, as identified by the researcher, measure what they are supposed to measure (Mouton & Marais, 1989:69).

When it is claimed that a measuring instrument is valid, it is at the same time implied that measurement is reliable, as reliability is a prerequisite for validity. In establishing construct validity, the measuring instrument must be related to the theoretical framework as discussed in the literature study to ensure that the measurement logically links with other concepts in the framework. In this study, the following process was followed to ensure construct validity:

- Hypotheses are based on the literature study and objectives for the study were formulated.
- The variables measured were operationally defined.
- The hypotheses were statistically tested.

5.3.2.1 Factor analysis

Factor analysis is the method according to which groups of (linear) related variables are identified with the aim of reducing many variables to a more manageable number of variables to discover multiple underlying dimensions of commonality between variables (the variance) in the data set. To the extent that subsets among original variables reflect a common “core” (i.e. are measuring the same underlying construct) the derived dimensions should be meaningful and interpretable. The original variables can then be described in terms of the common underlying dimensions (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:216).

A single factor solution means that all items were sufficiently intercorrelated to form a single group measuring a single construct. Multiple factors mean that several dimensions of the construct are involved in the item set (Gruning, L, in Broom & Dozier, 1990:180).

Factor analysis therefore implies that a small set of hypothetical causal variables of factors can possibly explain the correlations between observable variables. Because of this, factor analysis begins by constructing a set of variables, based on the relationships in a correlation matrix. The above can be done by various methods, but for the purposes of this study, the most general method – principle components analysis – was

used. Principle components analysis focuses on the total variance (in other words the total variance in the data set) and seeks to reduce the original set of composite variables (“principle components”) which are uncorrelated to one another (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:216).

Each principle component is formed by linearly combining the original variables to explain as much of the original variance in the data as possible by few principle components. The sole aim of principle components analysis is to reduce the original set of variables into a smaller set of composite variables (components). It is a data reduction technique and makes no assumptions regarding the underlying structure of the data (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:216).

As mentioned above, these linear combinations of variables, called factors, account for the variance in the data as a whole. The best combination makes up the first principal component and is the first factor. The second principal component is defined as the best linear combination of variables for explaining the variance not accounted for by the first factor. In turn, there may be a third, fourth and kth component, each being the best linear combination of variables not accounted for by the previous factors (Cooper & Schindler, 1998:577; Hair et al, 1998:106).

The orthogonal (with the axes 90 degrees) Varimax normalised rotational method was used for identifying factors (Hair et al, 1998:106).

The items in each of the sections (A to C) of the measuring instrument were included in the factor analysis. However, items that were eliminated during the reliability analysis because of low internal consistency were not subjected to factor analysis. For the purpose of operationalisation, the variables accompanying items on which factor analysis was done, were described in Chapter 6.

The interpretation of the factor analysis gives a qualitative dimension to the statistical analysis in the study and takes place subjectively in terms of the judgement of the researcher. The information obtained from the factor analysis is, however, valuable in

determining the construct validity and gives depth to the study. The literature study as theoretical basis is used as a frame of reference for interpretation.

Table 5.1 – Operationalisation of variables for statistical analysis: Agreement scale

Variable	Items on questionnaire
Power	Section A
Value	Items 1-5 (Variables 2 - 6)
Strategic contribution	Items 6-10 (Variables 7 - 11)
Four public relations models	Section B
Press agency	Items 1-3 (Variables 12 - 14)
Public information	Items 4-6 (Variables 15 - 17)
Two-way asymmetric	Items 7-9 (Variables 18 - 20)
Two-way symmetric	Items 10-12 (Variables 21 - 23)
Public relations roles	Section C
Public relations manager	Items 1-6 (Variables 24 - 29)
Public relations technician	Items 7-12 (Variables 30 - 35)
Demographic	Section D
Reporting lines, size of organisation and department, highest qualification and experience of respondents	Items 1-6 (Variables 36 - 42)

5.4 SAMPLING

During the process of selecting or sampling, the aim is to get a sample that is as representative as possible of the target population. Representativeness is the underlying epistemic criterion of a “valid”, i.e., unbiased sample. According to Mouton (1996:110), the methodological criteria, applied in the process of sampling, are a clear definition of the population; the systematic drawing of a sample; the drawing of probability rather than non-probability samples; and observing the advantages of multi-stage versus simple random sampling.

When undertaking a survey in communication research, one collects information from a group of people to describe their abilities, opinions, attitudes, beliefs and/or their knowledge with regard to a particular topic or issue. Generally, the purpose of using survey research in communication is to explore and to describe what is, rather than to evaluate why an observed distribution (or attitude) exists. This study also has an explanatory purpose in mind as the researcher will be examining the interrelationships between two or more variables (Du Plooy, 1996:127).

5.4.1 Sampling design

Data collection is the means by which measurement is realised (Du Plooy, 1996:42). In this study primary data was collected through questionnaires sent to and received by respondents who were part of a certain population.

Sampling refers to the process of selecting participants for a research project (Dane, 1990:289). In this study the sampling frame (concrete list of the elements in a population), as addressed later in this chapter, was considered to be the population used for the study and no sample was drawn from this frame. The population of top communicators as defined later in this chapter was considered potential respondents in this study. This sample can, therefore, be referred to as a probability sample, since the probability of selecting any particular sampling element is known (Walton F, 1990:124; Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:13).

The sampling unit (sampling element) in this study is the top communicator in the South African organisation who is a member of any of the professional public relations institutes in South Africa (PRISA, SAKOMM, IABC, Unitech, IMPRO) and the Top 200 companies as identified by the magazine *Finance Week*, Top 200, 1999. These sampling units were included in a sampling frame, the complete list of all units (Bailey 1987:81; Du Plooy, 1996:50; Dane, 1990:289; Mouton, 1996:135).

A distinction is furthermore made in this study between the target population (all top communicators in South African organisations) and the accessible population (all top communicators in South African organisations who are members of professional public relations associations) (Du Plooy, 1996:50).

The population parameters for the accessible population (Du Plooy, 1996:50) “top communicators” can therefore be defined as:

All of the most senior communicators in public and private organisations in South Africa, including corporations, not-for-profit organisations, government agencies and professional trade associations and who are members of the professional public relations institutes in South Africa, namely PRISA (Public Relations Institute of South Africa), IABC (International Association of Business Communicators),

SAKOMM (South African Communication Association), Unitech (Public Relations Association for Universities and Technikons), IMPRO (Institute for Municipal Public Relations Officers) and the Top 200 companies as identified by the magazine Finance Week, Top 200, 1999. The top communicator may be head of a department or may function alone as the most senior communicator in the organisation.

This survey population was chosen because it was assumed that members of professional organisations would strive to practice excellent communication. As will be explained later in this chapter, the sampling frame had to be expanded to also include the Top 200 companies as identified by *Finance Week*, Top 200, 1999.

Findings of this study can be generalised to the accessible population, as the whole accessible population was included in the sampling framework, and was considered participants in this project (Du Plooy, 1996:50; Dane, 1990:289).

The sampling framework (Dane, 1990:289) was reconstructed from the following sources:

- The national membership index of PRISA, comprising 1 250 senior members.
- A list of the South African members of the IABC, comprising 87 members.
- A membership list of SAKOMM, comprising 46 members.
- A contact list of top communicators at Universities and Technikons who are members of Unitech, totalling 42.
- A list of members of IMPRO totalling 119 members.

These lists were consolidated and names appearing more than once on the list were deleted. The sampling units were selected according to their designations and can be considered as representative of the accessible population. The individual had to have a designation such as communication manager, public relations manager, public affairs manager or something similar.

As factor analysis was used as a statistical method to reduce data, the sample size had to take into account the general rule applicable to factor analysis. This is to have at least five times as many observations as there are variables to be analysed (Hair et al,

1998:99). As the measuring instrument contained 40 variables, at least 200 questionnaires had to be realised. (Precisely 202 were realised.)

All 439 sampling units in the sampling frame were contacted to establish whether they were still working for the organisation as indicated on the membership list and whether their particulars were correct. The 364 units that were accessible by e-mail, fax or telephone and who indicated that they were the top communicators in the organisation were regarded as part of the sample.

A self-administered questionnaire (Appendix A) was e-mailed to each respondent over a period of two weeks starting in September 1999. Respondents had two weeks in which to reply, after which the e-mail was followed up with a fax or a personal or telephonic request to complete a questionnaire.

Several questionnaires were returned, but it was not enough to realise the necessary 200 completed questionnaires. Requests were followed up telephonically and by fax for a third time. After receiving 163 questionnaires, it was clear that this sample was depleted and it was consequently decided to expand the sampling framework to also include public relations practitioners of the Top 200 companies in South Africa (*Finance Week*, 1999 Survey) in the sampling framework. This addition to the sampling framework was considered appropriate since it was assumed that public relations practitioners working for the Top 200 companies in South Africa would be practising excellent communication.

Companies that were included in the first sample were deleted from the list. A total of 137 companies remained on the list and were contacted to obtain the particulars of the top communicator and to establish whether this person was indeed the most senior person responsible for communication in the company. Some 120 questionnaires were sent to accessible respondents first by e-mail and then by fax, depending on the preference of the respondent.

Respondents were to reply within two weeks, after which the request was followed up

by e-mail or fax. This process was repeated for a third time in cases where questionnaires were not received. A total of 39 questionnaires were received from this sample, to make up a total of 202 completed questionnaires received in total.

5.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter the research design, methodology, generation of hypotheses and operationalisation of variables have been discussed. The sample design and data collection for the population have been addressed by defining the population, specifying the sampling frame, explaining the method of sample measurement, motivating the sample size and describing the data collection.

The process of measuring instrument development is explained by the development of a scale, the compilation of the measuring instrument and the methodology of the questionnaire design. The reliability and validity of measurement were also addressed.

The hypotheses followed from the literature study and support the research objectives. In the operationalisation of variables, the constructs and items concerned were specified and the statistical techniques such as ANOVA, with which the hypotheses were tested, explained. In the next section, the results of the empirical study will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Aim of this chapter:

In this chapter the data is analysed and interpreted and the findings and results of the empirical study are presented. The first section addresses descriptive statistics, while factor analysis is discussed in the second section. In the third section, hypotheses are tested and evaluated. In conclusion, the main findings of the descriptive statistics are discussed, the results of the factor analysis summed up and the hypothesis testing discussed.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data for the study is analysed by identifying patterns and themes in the data and drawing certain conclusions from them. To analyse the data, statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics for a reliability analysis of the measuring instrument, factor analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used.

Inferences were drawn from the results according to the principles of statistical inference (the logic of hypothesis testing) (Mouton, 1996:111). The outcome of the analysis and interpretation is certain conclusions which followed logically from the empirical evidence and will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The aim of descriptive statistics is to collect, organise and sum up data. Descriptive statistics condenses large volumes of data into a few summary measures. With descriptive statistics, the important characteristics of the sample were identified and a profile of behaviour set. General findings were made on the basis of the descriptive statistics (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:64).

The primary aim of the factor analysis is to reduce the number of variables of expectations in the measuring instrument to a smaller set of underlying dimensions with the minimum loss of information (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995:371).

These dimensions of factors are interpreted with the literature as frame of reference and can be seen as respondents' groupings of the variables from which the measuring instrument is built. For purposes of the study, the factor analysis is exploratory and groups of expectations were identified in the measured constructs.

The aim of hypothesis testing is to put into words the general findings of the samples and to formulate specific statements; to test the general findings and to generalise the results to the accessible population (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:64,65).

To generalise the findings of the samples to the population, inferential statistics was used. Inferential statistics is that area of statistics which extends the information extracted from a sample to the actual environment in which the problem arises. Decision-making on the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses takes place on the basis of statistical procedures that indicate that findings from the sample data are significant for the population in total.

In conclusion, the main findings, as obtained from the descriptive statistics, the results of the factor analysis and the results of the hypothesis testing will be summarised. The results and findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

6.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: BIOGRAPHIC DATA

The data collection for this study was discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The 202 questionnaires received from top communicators were captured on *Microsoft Excel*. The software package used for the analysis of the data was *Statistica*. In order to submit the most important characteristics of the samples, the demographic data, as obtained from Part II of the measuring instrument, will be discussed first. Thereafter the opinion of the sample will be discussed section for section. The descriptive statistics will be concluded with a few general research findings as summarised from the section-to-section analysis.

6.2.1 Biographic data

Biographic data such as reporting lines to senior management, the size of the organisation, the size of the communication department and the top communicator's highest qualification and number of years' experience in the communications field will be discussed next.

6.2.1.1 Reporting lines

Question 1 in Part II consists of two parts and is a classification question to determine who the top communicator reports to in her organisation. The designation of the person had to be stated in the first section in order to establish the position of the top communicator in the hierarchy of the organisation.

It was also important to establish whether the person who is reported to is regarded as being part of junior, middle or senior management, as it is hypothesised that the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making could depend on the reporting line she has to senior management.

From the demographic data it could be inferred that 43% of top communicators indicated that they reported to the CEO, while 57% report to another senior manager. A total of 95% regarded the person they report to as a senior manager, while 5% regarded him/her to be a middle manager. It can therefore be assumed that most top communicators have ready access to senior management and a high percentage of top communicators have direct access to the most senior manager in the organisation, the CEO. The access that top communicators have to senior management is often an indication of the value and support senior management attaches to this function. With 95% of the respondents indicating that the person they report to is part of senior management, it can be assumed that the communication function is valued in the South African organisation.

Figure 6.1 – Reporting lines of top communicator to CEO

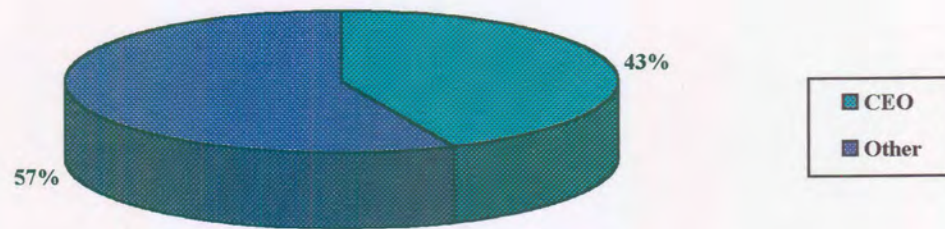
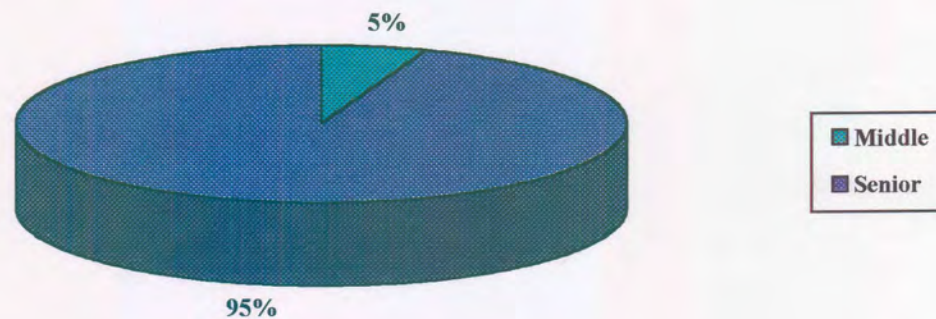


Figure 6.2 – Reporting lines of top communicator to senior management



6.2.1.2 Size of organisation and communication department

Top communicators were requested to indicate how many people are employed by the organisation they work for. Next they had to indicate how many communication practitioners there are in their communication departments.

The aim of these questions was to establish the size of the organisations and of the communication departments that respondents represent. In the literature it is indicated that the size of the organisation and of the communication department could give an indication of the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making, the one-way or two-way public relations models she uses for communication activities and the public relations manager or public relations technician role she plays in the organisation.

The qualitative variable “number of staff in the organisation” was categorised into three categories:

Category 1: 1 to 999 staff members (86 responses)

Category 2: 1 000 to 9 999 staff members (93 responses)

Category 3: 10 000 to 100 000 staff members (23 responses)

The descriptive statistics indicated that most respondents represented organisations with less than 10 000 staff members.

The variable “number of staff in the communication department” was categorised into five categories:

Category 1: 1 to 19 staff members (190 responses)

Category 2: 20 to 39 staff members (8 responses)

Category 3: 40 to 59 staff members (no responses)

Category 4: 60 to 79 staff members (1 response)

Category 5: 80 to 100 staff members (3 responses)

The descriptive statistics also indicated that most respondents are members of relatively small communication departments of less than 20 people.

It was hypothesised that the number of staff in the organisation and in the communication department could have an influence on the way in which communication is practised in the organisation. The results of the cross-tabulation of the means for these responses with the means for the constructs “strategic contribution”, “one-way and two-way models” and “public relations manager role” and “public relations technician role” will be discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 6.3 – Number of staff in the organisation

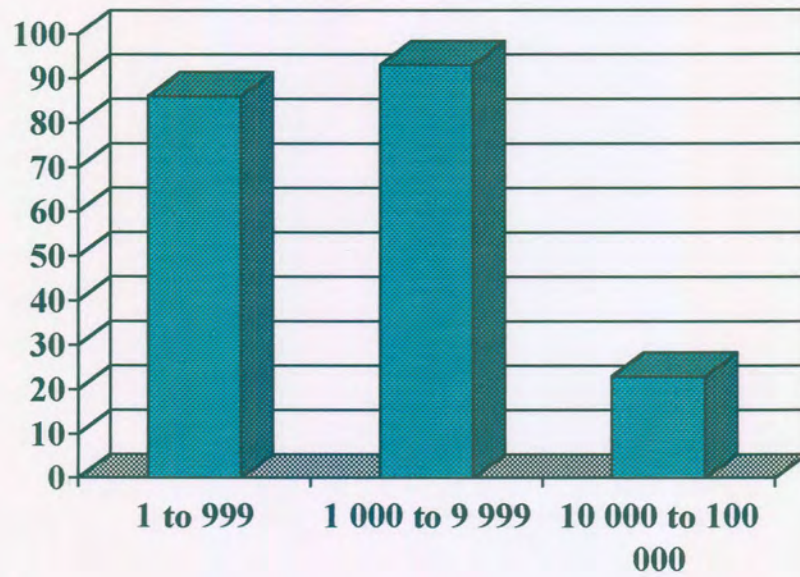
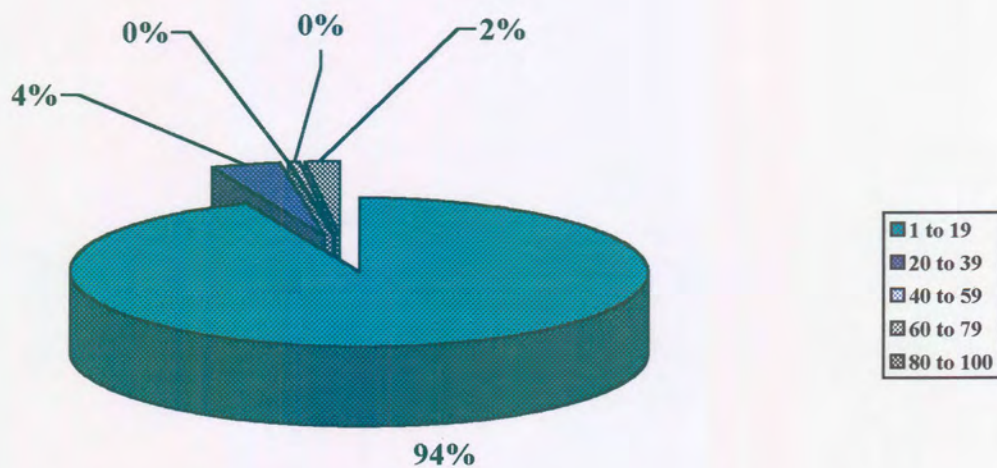


Figure 6.4 – Number of staff in the communication department



6.2.1.3 Highest qualification and number of years' experience in the communications field

The aim of Question 4, “What is your highest qualification”, and of Question 5, “How many years' experience do you have in the communications field”, was to establish the knowledge level of the top communicator. Top management tends to value a strategic contribution coming from a knowledgeable communicator. Knowledge of strategic and technical communication practices is regarded as one of the three principle components of excellent communication.

The qualitative variables “highest qualification of the top communicator” and “number of years' experience of the top communicator in the communications field” were classified. Qualifications were classified into three categories: graduate qualification (degree or diploma), postgraduate qualification (higher diploma, honours degree, masters' degree, doctorate) and other qualifications (certificates, short courses, etc). Eighty-two respondents indicated that they had a graduate qualification, 84 indicated that they had a postgraduate qualification and 34 indicated that they had other qualifications. The mean score of these results was cross-tabulated with the mean score of “strategic contribution” to organisational decision-making to establish whether top communicators' qualifications could be an indicator of the strategic contribution they make to organisational decision-making.

The descriptive statistics indicated that most of the top communicators had between 10 and 19 years' experience, followed by one to nine years' experience. This indicates that most top communicators have less than 20 years' experience in the field of public relations. This finding has been cross-tabulated with the construct “strategic contribution” to determine whether the number of years' experience that top communicators have will influence the strategic contribution they make to organisational decision-making.

Figure 6.5 – Highest qualification of top communicators

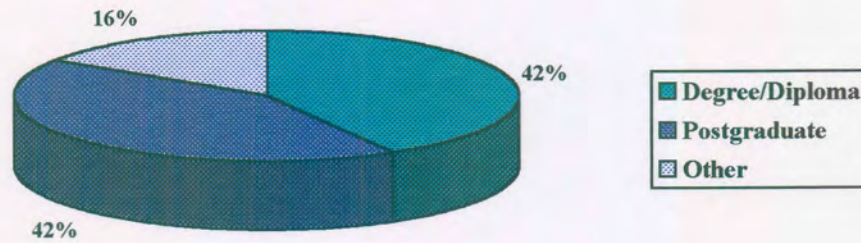
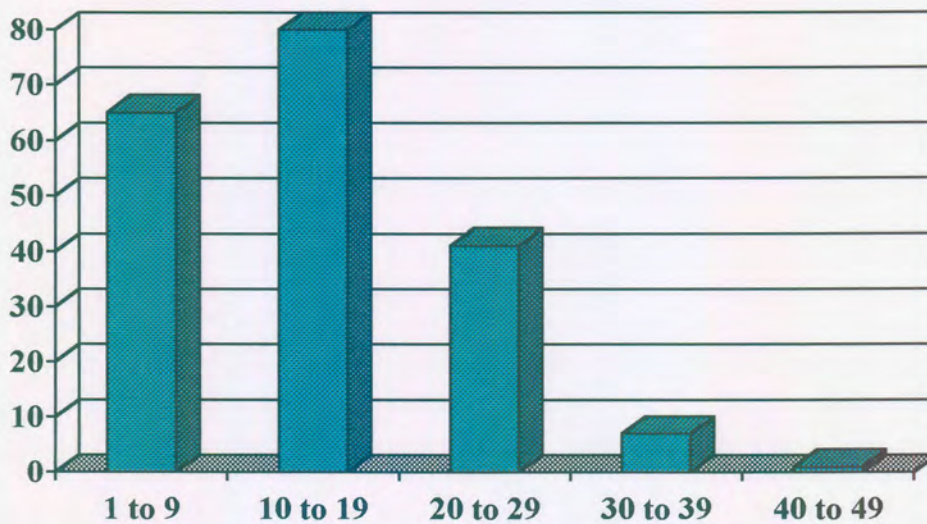


Figure 6.6 – Number of years' experience in the communication field



6.2.1.4 Designation of the top communicator

This is a classification question to establish what the most popular titles of top communicators in organisations are. If they have titles with, for example, marketing as part of the title, this would be an indication of the role marketing principles play in the decisions that top communicators make. Encroachment by individuals from other disciplines could also be established.

However, this item was not considered for measurement, because of the difficulty in classifying the responses to this open-ended question. The findings would also not contribute significantly to the objectives of this study.

The descriptive statistics for the three measuring instruments that were developed, namely Sections A, B and C, will be discussed next.

6.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: SECTIONS A, B AND C

The three sections in the measuring instrument represent the following:

- Section A: Power of the communication department and the top communicator.
- Section B: The use of one-way and two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.
- Section C: The public relations manager and/or public relations technician role the top communicator predominantly plays.

The averages, standard deviations and Top2Box% and Low2Box% were calculated for the sample data. The three sections in the measuring instrument (Section A, B and C) will now be discussed separately. Scores in the three sections will be compared in a summary.

6.3.1 Section A of the measuring instrument

In Chapter 2, the power of the communication department and the top communicator was discussed as manifested in the value top management attributes to the communication department and the top communicator and the strategic contribution communicators make to organisational decision-making.

Value and support come to those communication departments that prove their worth to senior management by their strategic contributions.

Communication departments need power within senior management in order to make strategic contributions. (Dozier et al, 1995:75-88).

Communicators are linked to top management in organisations with excellent programmes by a set of shared expectations about communication management in the organisation – the role communication plays in the overall management of the organisation and the way in which communication can benefit the organisation. Both CEOs and top communicators must agree about the role communication should play in the organisation. Ambiguity and uncertainty about the value and support of communication diminishes the department's ability to contribute (Dozier et al, 1995:14-88).

The three self-explanatory items with the highest average score in the measuring instrument, indicating the three most important responses (as indicated in Table 6.1), were:

1. You readily have access to senior management. (83.23)
2. Senior management expects the communication department to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management. (77.08)
3. Senior management expects you to contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals. (76.93)

It can be assumed from these results that it is the perception of top communicators that they have ready access to senior management, which is an important prerequisite for making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. It is also clear that senior management expects the top communicator to manage the communication function strategically by managing the communication programme in line with the principles of strategic management and by contributing towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals.

The Top2Box% and Low2Box% indicate the highest and lowest percentages of responses in the top and lower sections of the measuring instrument. The three highest percentages in the Top2Box% measurements were:

1. You readily have access to senior management. (61.88%)
2. Senior management expects you to contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals. (40.1%)
3. Senior management expects the communications department to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management. (39.6%)

These results confirm the results obtained from the average scores and indicate that it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that they have ready access to senior management, and that senior management expects them to manage the communication function strategically.

The three highest percentages in the Low2Box% measurements were:

1. You are in a position to influence key strategic decisions of senior management. (11.88%)
2. Senior management expects you to use (formal and informal) research techniques to monitor trends in the organisation's environment for use in business decision-making. (8.42%)
3. Senior management values your input before they make decisions. (6.93%)

According to these results, it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that they are not in a favourable position to influence key strategic decisions and that senior management does not expect them to use research to monitor trends for use in business decision-making. Senior management does not necessarily ask for the input of top communicators before decisions are made, either.

Table 6.1 – Descriptive statistics for Section A of the measuring instrument

	Statement	Average	Standard deviation	Top2-Box%	Low2-Box%
V2	1. Senior management supports the communication function in your organisation	74.36	20.54	31.19%	0.99%
V3	2. Senior management recognises that communication can make a strategic contribution.	70.50	24.14	32.67%	2.48%
V4	3. You readily have access to senior management.	83.23	21.52	61.88%	1.98%
V5	4. Senior management values your input before they make decisions.	61.78	26.52	18.81%	6.93%
V6	5. Senior management expects you to make communication decisions fairly autonomously.	69.31	21.03	24.26%	1.98%
V7	6. Senior management expects you to contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals.	76.93	20.96	40.10%	0.99%
V8	7. Senior management expects the communication department to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management.	77.08	20.51	39.60%	1.98%
V9	8. Senior management expects you to work closely with them to solve organisational problems that involve relationships with target audiences.	68.02	26.56	29.70%	6.44%
V10	9. Senior management expects you to use (formal and informal) research techniques to monitor trends in the organisation's environment for use in business decision-making.	59.75	27.32	20.30%	8.42%
V11	10. You are in a position to influence key strategic decisions of senior management.	61.00	29.48	24.26%	11.88%

6.3.2 Section B of the measuring instrument

In Chapter 3, the shared expectations between the top communicator and top management with regard to the use of the four public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making were discussed. It was concluded that organisations that achieve excellence have communication departments with the expertise for both traditional one-way and advanced two-way communication to negotiate and persuade both senior management and publics toward mutually beneficial relationships. However, communication departments need CEOs and top managements that understand such practices and expect them from their communication departments.

Dozier et al (1995:102) furthermore contended that organisations with high overall excellence scores in the *Excellence Study* reported a strong preference for two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices. Top communicators in these same excellent organisations also reported high top management demand for two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices. Furthermore, communication departments in excellent organisations know how to deliver these practices. Such shared expectations presuppose new communication expertise.

The three items with the highest average score, were:

1. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use. (69.85)
2. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects. (69.46)
3. Senior management believes you should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept. (66.47)

According to these results, it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that the media relations role is still considered very important to senior management. Apart from this one-way practice, the two-way symmetrical practice of facilitation with the aim of gaining mutual understanding between management and its publics is also considered important. Senior management furthermore considers it the top communicator's responsibility to use the two-way asymmetrical practice of making sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept.

The *Excellence* team found that CEOs prefer their top public relations person to play a manager or communication liaison role rather than a technician role. However, they also preferred the media relations role. (The *Excellence* team thought this reflects top management's continuing preoccupation with the media, despite much evidence

suggesting that the media plays a marginal rather than central part in the effectiveness of most organisations (Grunig, 1997:7.)

The three highest percentages in the Top2Box% measurements were:

1. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use. (34.65%)
2. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects. (32.18%)
3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for your organisation in the media. (21.78%)

The importance of the media relations role is confirmed in the Top2Box% results. The first two statements confirm the results for the average scores, while the presence of the third statement further strengthens the perception that the media relations role is important, since management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for the organisation in the media.

The three highest percentages in the Low2Box% measurements were:

1. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations. (14.85%)
2. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes. (12.87%)
3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics. (11.39%)

These results indicate that one can assume that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management to a lesser extent believes that it is the purpose of communication to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics. According to the literature, this two-way symmetrical approach is

one of the key indicators of excellence in communication practices, but it seems as though senior managements in South African organisations do not recognise this.

Although senior managements support the communication function to facilitate mutual understanding between the organisation and the publics the organisation affects (as indicated earlier), they do not believe that it is the purpose of communication to change the attitudes of management and of publics.

It can also be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management does not necessarily believe that research should be done after the completion of communication programmes to determine how effective the programme was in changing people's attitudes. However, it can be assumed that senior management believes that a clipping file is not the only way to determine the success of public relations.

Table 6.2 – Descriptive statistics for Section B of the measuring instrument

	Statement	Average	Standard deviation	Top2-Box%	Low2-Box%
V12	1. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is predominantly to get your organisation's name into the media.	56.19	26.58	15.35%	8.91%
V13	2. Senior management believes that the success of communication is measured by the number of people who use your products or services.	60.00	25.22	17.82%	4.95%
V14	3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for your organisation in the media.	59.41	27.09	21.78%	5.94%
V15	4. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use.	69.85	26.36	34.65%	3.96%
V16	5. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations.	43.61	27.23	6.44%	14.85%
V17	6. Senior management believes that the top communicator is a neutral disseminator of information.	52.80	26.09	12.38%	8.91%
V18	7. Senior management believes that in communication, the broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave.	58.37	26.76	16.34%	8.91%

V19	8. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes.	53.51	27.12	10.89%	12.87%
V20	9. Senior management believes you should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept.	66.47	23.30	21.29%	3.47%
V21	10. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics.	56.08	28.42	15.35%	11.39%
V22	11. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects.	69.46	24.84	32.18%	3.47%
V23	12. Senior management believes communication should provide mediation opportunities to help management and publics negotiate conflict.	55.97	27.70	16.34%	8.42%

6.3.3 Section C of the measuring instrument

In Section C, the public relations technician and/or public relations manager role the top communicator plays in the organisation was addressed. According to Dozier et al (1995:107), changing the roles that top communicators play in the organisation provides the most direct path to excellence. Top communication departments identified in the *Excellence Study* combine knowledge of both manager and technician roles to provide the requisite foundation for excellence. To actually achieve excellence, however, top communicators must play advanced organisational roles of communication manager and senior adviser.

The *Excellence* team proposed that excellent departments would be headed by senior managers and staffed by technicians skilled in the craft of the field. They also found that CEOs prefer their top public relations person to play a manager or communication liaison role rather than a technician role. Top managements in these organisations support the communication function and value the communication department. Communication makes substantial contributions to strategic management and planning

in these organisations (Grunig, L, 1997:7; White & Mazur, 1995:37; Dozier et al, 1995:113).

The three items with the highest average score, as indicated in Table 6.3, were:

1. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain. (81.19)
2. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training. (77.52)
3. Senior management expects you to issue news releases. (76.07)

According to these results, it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management expects them to play a public relations manager role by taking responsibility for the success or failure of communication programmes and by developing strategies for solving communication problems. However, it can once again be assumed that senior management considers the media relations role as important, because of the perception that senior management expects top communicators to issue news releases.

The three highest percentages in the Top2Box% measurements were:

1. Senior management expects you to issue news releases. (50.99%)
2. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain. (50%)
3. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training. (47.52%)

It can again be assumed that senior management considers the media relations role to be important. However, apart from the importance of this technical one-way practice, it is the perception of top communicators that senior management also wants them to play the public relations manager role, as they expect them to take responsibility for the success or failure of communication programmes and to develop strategies for solving communication problems.

The three highest percentages in the Low2Box% measurements were:

1. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation. (12.38%)
2. Senior management expects you to predominantly write communication material such as speeches, articles, advertisements, etc. (8.42%)
3. Senior management expects you to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various (internal and external) publics. (8.42%)

These results indicate that it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management does not necessarily expect them to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various internal and external publics. It also indicates that senior management does not necessarily expect top communicators to write communication material such as speeches, articles and advertisements or to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.

Table 6.3 – Descriptive statistics for Section C of the measuring instrument

	Statement	Average	Standard deviation	Top2-Box%	Low2-Box%
V24	1. Senior management expects you to predominantly write communication material such as speeches, articles, advertisements, etc.	62.52	28.25	24.26%	8.42%
V25	2. Senior management expects you to produce brochures.	70.55	28.55	39.11%	5.94%
V26	3. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.	59.11	30.68	27.23%	12.38%
V27	4. Senior management expects you to use your journalistic skills to establish what the media will consider newsworthy about your organisation.	72.77	25.88	38.12%	4.95%
V28	5. Senior management expects you to issue news releases.	76.07	27.73	50.99%	4.46%
V29	6. Senior management expects you to keep others in the organisation informed of what the media report about important issues.	72.29	27.55	38.12%	6.44%
V30	7. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain.	81.19	20.14	50.00%	1.98%

V31	8. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training.	77.52	23.30	47.52%	2.48%
V32	9. Senior management expects you to make communication policy decisions.	71.68	25.98	39.11%	4.46%
V33	10. Senior management expects you to act as counsel to top decision-makers when communication issues are involved.	69.15	27.74	35.15%	6.44%
V34	11. Senior management expects you to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various (internal and external) publics.	63.51	28.41	26.24%	8.42%
V35	12. Senior management expects you to represent the organisation at events or evenings.	75.79	23.87	42.57%	2.97%

6.3.4 Comparison between results for Sections A, B and C

The highest average scores for the total measuring instrument are the following:

1. You readily have access to senior management (83.23)
2. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain. (81.19)
3. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training. (77.52)

From these results, it can be assumed that the strongest perception of top communicators is that they readily have access to senior management. Senior management also expects them to play the public relations manager role by taking responsibility for the success or failure of the organisation's communication programmes, just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain, and to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of their experience and training.

The highest scores for the Top2-Box% for the total measuring instrument are the following:

1. You readily have access to senior management. (61.88%)
2. Senior management expects you to issue news releases. (50.99%)

3. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain. (50%)

It can be assumed that the strongest perception is again the one that top communicators readily have access to senior management. Senior management also expects top communicators to take responsibility for the success or failure of the organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain. However, apart from these two communication management functions, the technical function of issuing new releases is also considered important, which once again confirms the importance of the media relations role on this level.

The highest scores for the Low2Box% for the total measuring instrument are the following:

1. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations. (14.85%)
2. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes. (12.87%)
3. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation. (12.38%)

According to these results, it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management does not necessarily believe that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations. Senior management does not necessarily believe that research should be done to determine how effective a communication programme was in changing people's attitudes, either, and they do not necessarily expect top communicators to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.

The analysis to determine the reliability of the measuring instrument will be discussed next.

6.4 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

A measuring instrument consists of a set of measuring scales that organise and transform information to numerical data. Multiple measures of constructs were used for the measuring instrument for this study, which help to capture more of what is meant by the construct (Broom & Dozier, 1990:165). The concept “shared expectations” is built up out of multiple constructs, of which three were identified for this study. A multi-item battery was developed to measure these constructs. (Appendix A)

The process followed to construct the scale was the following:

- The constructs that had to be measured were established. The constructs that form the building blocks for the concept “shared expectations” are “power” (value attached to the communication function and strategic contribution made to organisational decision-making); the “shared expectations with regard to the use of the four public relations models” (the press agency model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model); and the “public relations manager role” and “public relations technician role”.
- A multi-item battery of the possible scales to measure each construct was compiled. Each of the constructs that were conceptually defined in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 was changed into measurable variables in Chapter 5.
- Through a process of pre-testing, as described in Chapter 5, the final set of scales was chosen.

The above steps were followed to ensure a reliable and valid measuring instrument.

A complete measuring instrument, divided into three sections representing the three constructs, was developed.

The three sections are treated as three measuring instruments combined into one. Section A (Power), Section B (Models) and Section C (Roles) each measures a construct in the form of a multi-item battery which was subjected to measurement on

an agreement scale. A fourth division collected demographic data of respondents and consisted of open questions.

The internal consistency of the individual items on the three measuring instruments that form part of the overall measuring instrument was, amongst others, measured by means of an item-to-total correlation (the correlation of the item to the summated scale score). The item-to-total correlation should exceed .50. Items that threatened the internal stability of the instrument were eliminated.

The other statistical method used in the reliability analysis was for determining the Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, assesses the consistency of the entire scale. A reliability coefficient of 0.9 or higher is extremely good, between 0.8 and 0.89 is good, while a reliability coefficient of between 0.7 and .79 is fair.

The total measuring instrument, consisting of 34 items, will be discussed in the three sections it has been divided into.

6.4.1 Section A of the measuring instrument

The first measuring instrument (Section A of the questionnaire) consisted of 10 items representing the “value top management attaches to the top communicator and the communication department” (items 1 to 5) and “the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making” (items 6 to 10). All items in this Section had an item-to-total correlation of above .50, which indicates a good correlation of the item to the summated scale score. No item threatened the internal consistency of this measuring instrument and all items were included in the instrument for final measurement.

The Cronbach's alpha for all items was high, and the standardised alpha for variables V2 to V11 was **.936152**, which can be regarded as extremely good (Table 6.4). This indicates a high reliability for this measuring instrument.

Table 6.4 – Total measuring instrument for Section A

Summary for scale: Mean = 701.950 Standard deviation = 191.024 Valid N:202 Cronbach alpha: .934996 Standardised alpha: .936152			
Variables		Item-total correlation	Alpha if deleted
V2	1. Senior management supports the communication function in your organisation.	0.756938	0.928042
V3	2. Senior management recognises that communication can make a strategic contribution.	0.810653	0.924735
V4	3. You readily have access to senior management.	0.6048	0.934446
V5	4. Senior management values your input before they make decisions.	0.824815	0.923836
V6	5. Senior management expects you to make communication decisions fairly autonomously.	0.597916	0.934706
V7	6. Senior management expects you to contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals.	0.766241	0.927518
V8	7. Senior management expects the communication department to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management.	0.765548	0.927683
V9	8. Senior management expects you to work closely with them to solve organisational problems that involve relationships with target audiences.	0.846885	0.922596
V10	9. Senior management expects you to use (formal and informal) research techniques to monitor trends in the organisation's environment for use in business decision-making.	0.654037	0.933487
V11	10. You are in a position to influence key strategic decisions of senior management.	0.823815	0.924342

6.4.2 Section B of the measuring instrument

The second measuring instrument consisted of 12 items representing the four public relations models. Although only the two broad categories of one-way models and two-way models were used for hypothesis formulation, the items in the measuring instrument were arranged in the following manner:

- Press agency model: Items 1 to 3
- Public information model: Items 4 to 6
- Two-way asymmetrical model: Items 7 to 9
- Two-way symmetrical model: Items 10 to 12

The items for the press agency and public information models were grouped together to form the variables for the one-way models and the items for the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models were grouped together to form the variables for the two-way models.

In the second measuring instrument (Section B of the questionnaire) shown below in Table 6.5, the original standardised alpha was **.785051** and only four items originally had an item-to-total correlation of above .50. Two items, V17 and V18, threatened the internal stability of this measuring instrument and were eliminated. This increased the item-to-total correlation of all the items to above .50, except for V13 and V20 (as indicated in Table 6.6 and Table 6.7 below).

After the elimination of items V17 and V18, the standardised Cronbach's alpha for variables V12 to V16 (one-way models) increased to **.819267** and for variables V19 to V23 (two-way models) to **.826477** as shown in Table 6.6 and Table 6.7 respectively.

Table 6.5 – Total measuring instrument for Section B

Summary for scale: Mean = 701.714			
Standard deviation = 172.069			
Valid N:202			
Cronbach alpha: .782899			
Standardised alpha: .785051			
Variables		Item-total correlation	Alpha if deleted
V12	1. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is predominantly to get your organisation's name in the media.	0.425736	0.767277
V13	2. Senior management believes that the success of communication is measured by the number of people who use your products or services.	0.472307	0.762739
V14	3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for your organisation in the media.	0.549379	0.753946
V15	4. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use.	0.542343	0.755064
V16	5. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations.	0.340802	0.77621
V17	6. Senior management believes that the top communicator is a neutral disseminator of information.	0.485393	0.761195

V18	7. Senior management believes that in communication, the broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave.	0.501933	0.759219
V19	8. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes.	0.37207	0.772947
V20	9. Senior management believes you should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept.	0.522735	0.758808
V21	10. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics.	0.220176	0.789306
V22	11. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects.	0.253835	0.783647
V23	12. Senior management believes communication should provide mediation opportunities to help management and publics negotiate conflict.	0.412879	0.768699

Table 6.6 – Dimensional reliability for V12 to V16 (One-way models)

<p>Summary for scale: Mean = 289.059</p> <p>Standard deviation = 101.047</p> <p>Valid N:202</p> <p>Cronbach alpha: .819968</p> <p>Standardised alpha: .819267</p>			
Variables		Item-total correlation	Alpha if deleted
V12	1. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is predominantly to get your organisation's name in the media.	0.729262	0.74891
V13	2. Senior management believes that the success of communication is measured by the number of people who use your products or services.	0.495881	0.816411
V14	3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for your organisation in the media.	0.687586	0.761403
V15	4. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use.	0.602102	0.787425
V16	5. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations.	0.551847	0.802568

Table 6.7 – Dimensional reliability for V19 to V23 (Two-way models)

Summary for scale: Mean = 301.488 Standard deviation = 101.221 Valid N:202 Cronbach alpha: .828267 Standardised alpha: .826477			
Variables		Item-total correlation	Alpha if deleted
V19	8. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes.	0.631479	0.792254
V20	9. Senior management believes you should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept.	0.451162	0.837804
V21	10. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics.	0.643976	0.788905
V22	11. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects.	0.689017	0.776924
V23	12. Senior management believes communication should provide mediation opportunities to help management and publics negotiate conflict.	0.716826	0.766067

6.4.3 Section C of the measuring instrument

This measuring instrument contained 12 variables representing the constructs “public relations technician role” (items 1 to 6) and “public relations manager role” (items 7 to 12). The standardised alpha value was **.821259** and five items had an item-to-total correlation of above .50 (Table 6.8). Two items, V29 and V35, threatened the internal stability and were eliminated. This increased the item-to-total correlation of all the items to above .50, as indicated in Table 6.9 and Table 6.10.

Eliminating the two items also increased the Cronbach's alpha value. The standardised alpha for variables V24 to V28 (public relations technician role) increased to **.838273** (Table 6.9) and for variables V30 to V34 (public relations manager role) it increased to **.870115** (Table 6.10), which can be considered good.

Table 6.8 – Total measuring instrument for Section C

Summary for scale: Mean = 852.173			
Standard deviation = 183.597			
Valid N:202			
Cronbach alpha: .815920			
Standardised alpha: .821259			
Average inter-item correlation: .296094			
Variables		Item-total correlation	Alpha if deleted
V24	1. Senior management expects you to predominantly write communication material such as speeches, articles, advertisements, etc.	0.409259	0.807713
V25	2. Senior management expects you to produce brochures.	0.357623	0.812442
V26	3. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.	0.411915	0.808379
V27	4. Senior management expects you to use your journalistic skills to establish what the media will consider newsworthy about your organisation.	0.621078	0.789051
V28	5. Senior management expects you to issue news releases.	0.467127	0.802359
V29	6. Senior management expects you to keep others in the organisation informed of what the media reports about important issues.	0.544258	0.795337
V30	7. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain.	0.536925	0.799167
V31	8. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training.	0.550921	0.79628
V32	9. Senior management expects you to make communication policy decisions.	0.500684	0.799483
V33	10. Senior management expects you to act as counsel to top decision-makers when communication issues are involved.	0.459201	0.80307
V34	11. Senior management expects you to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various (internal and external) publics.	0.445285	0.804452
V35	12. Senior management expects you to represent the organisation at events or evenings.	0.358565	0.810931

Table 6.9 – Dimensional reliability for V24 to V28 (Public relations technician)

Summary for scale: Mean = 341.026 Standard deviation = 109.691 Valid N:202 Cronbach alpha: .836342 Standardised alpha: .838273			
Variables		Item-total correlation	Alpha if deleted
V24	1. Senior management expects you to predominantly write communication material such as speeches, articles, advertisements, etc.	0.695238	0.7871
V25	2. Senior management expects you to produce brochures.	0.679343	0.79157
V26	3. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.	0.564271	0.826274
V27	4. Senior management expects you to use your journalistic skills to establish what the media will consider newsworthy about your organisation.	0.643925	0.802686
V28	5. Senior management expects you to issue news releases.	0.61747	0.808891

Table 6.10 – Dimensional reliability for V30 to V34 (Public relations manager)

Summary for scale: Mean = 363.067 Standard deviation = 102.193 Valid N:202 Cronbach alpha: .868136 Standardised alpha: .870115			
Variable		Item-total correlation	Alpha if deleted
V30	7. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain.	0.547854	0.872511
V31	8. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training.	0.795454	0.816927
V32	9. Senior management expects you to make communication policy decisions.	0.744641	0.826728
V33	10. Senior management expects you to act as counsel to top decision-makers when communication issues are involved	0.793261	0.813268
V34	11. Senior management expects you to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various (internal and external) publics.	0.611767	0.864307

6.4.4 Summary of results of reliability analysis

With reference to the above explanation of the calculation of the item-to-total correlation and the Cronbach's alpha, the overall reliability of the measuring instrument is considered to be above normal.

According to Hair et al (1998:117), reliability is an assessment of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable. In this study, two diagnostic measures of reliability were used, i.e. internal consistency, which applies to the consistency among the variables in a summated scale; and Cronbach's alpha, which is the reliability coefficient that assesses the consistency of the entire scale.

The rationale for internal consistency is that the individual items or indicators of the scale should all measure the same construct and should thus be highly intercorrelated. The individual items for the three constructs "power", "shared expectations with regard to the use of one-way and two-way models" and "role-playing" were measured separately. Rules of thumb suggest that the item-to-total correlations exceed .50 (Hair et al, 1998:118).

The item-to-total correlation of Section A of the measuring instrument was above .50 for all the items; for Section B it was above .50 for all the items, except for V13 and V20; and for Section C it was above 0.50 for all the items.

The Cronbach's alpha values for the complete measuring instrument were between **.936152** and **.819267** (See Table 6.11). According to Du Plooy (1996:72), a reliability coefficient of 0.9 or higher is excellent and between 0.8 and 0.89 is good.

The results of the reliability analysis for this measuring instrument indicate that it complies with internal and external reliability requirements. The measuring instrument complies with internal reliability requirements, which indicates that the data collection, analysis and interpretation are consistent, and should be consistent in similar studies, given the same conditions.

It also complies with external reliability requirements, which indicates that independent researchers can replicate the study in the same or similar settings and obtain similar results (Du Plooy, 1996:31; Bailey, 1987:71; Grunig L, in Broom & Dozier, 1990:169). For the purpose of developing a measuring instrument, the internal consistency is the most important consideration.

Table 6.11 – Cronbach’s alpha values for the total measuring instrument

Variables	Standardised alpha
Section A	
V2 to V11: Strategic contribution	.936152
Section B	
V12 to V16: One-way public relations models	.819267
V19 to V23: Two-way public relations models	.826477
Section C	
V24 to V28: Public relations technician role	.838273
V30 to V34: Public relations manager role	.870115

6.5 VALIDITY ANALYSIS

Factor analysis was used as a deductive approach in hypothesising about the relationships that exist between factors. The data analysis was aimed at determining the dimensions underlying the measurement obtained by means of the questionnaire. According to Hair et al (1998:97), factor analysis is most efficient when conceptually defined dimensions can be represented by the derived factors.

In this study, issues such as which variables should be grouped together on a factor and the precise number of factors to be extracted, were addressed. In this instance factor analysis takes a confirmatory approach – i.e., assesses the degree to which the data meets the expected structure.

Predetermined criteria such as percentage of variance, latent root criterion and a scree test were used to decide when to stop factoring and to arrive at a specific number of factors to extract (Hair et al, 1998:103).

As a first step principal components analysis, the method used for factor analysis in this study was carried out by means of the software package *Statistica*. This analysis was used as the objective was to summarise most of the original information (variance) in a minimum number of factors for prediction purposes.

Principal components analysis focuses on the total variance (i.e. the entire variation in the data set) and seeks to reduce the original set of variables into a smaller set of composite variables (called principle components) which are uncorrelated (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:216).

The scree option was used in all cases. The scree test is derived by plotting the latent roots against the number of factors in their order of extraction. The shape of the resulting curve is used to evaluate the cut-off point.

The following stepping criteria for the number of factors to extract have been utilised:
Latent root/eigenvalue criterion: Eigenvalues are the sum of the variances of the factor values. When divided by the number of variables, an eigenvalue yields an estimate of the amount of total variance explained by the factor. Only factors having eigenvalues greater than 1 were considered significant; all factors with latent roots less than 1 were considered insignificant and were disregarded (Hair et al, 1998:104).

Percentage of variance criterion: The percentage of variance criterion is an approach based on achieving a specified cumulative percentage of total variance extracted by successive factors (Hair et al, 1998:105). This ensures that they explain at least a specified amount of variance.

Scree test criterion: The scree test is used to identify the optimum number of factors that can be extracted before the amount of unique variance begins to dominate the common variance structure (Hair et al, 1998:104).

Numerical results for the factor analysis are shown in Tables 6.12 to 6.18 below, while the scree tests are shown in Figures 6.7 to 6.9. The values in the tables for Section A,

B and C of the questionnaire are correlation coefficients (loadings) between the factor and the variables.

An unrotated factor solution was considered sufficient for Section A. The Varimax normalised rotational method was used for Section B and Section C. As an orthogonal rotation method, the Varimax criterion centres on simplifying the columns of the factor matrix. This method maximises the sum of variances of required loadings of the factor matrix. Interpretation is easiest when the variable-factor correlations are (1) close to either +1 or -1, thus indicating a clear positive or negative association between the variable and the factor or (2) close to 0, indicating a clear lack of association (Hair et al, 1998:109).

Factor loadings of $\pm .50$ or larger, are considered practically significant. The larger the absolute size of the factor loading, the more important the loading in interpreting the factor matrix. A .30 loading translates to approximately 10% explanation, and a .50 loading denotes that 25% of the variance is accounted for by the factor. The loading must exceed .70 for the factor to account for 50% of the variance (Hair et al, 1998:111).

For a sample size of 202, a factor loading of .40 is significant according to Hair et al (1998:112). For Sections A, B and C, factor loadings of higher than .60 were considered significant.

6.5.1 Section A of the measuring instrument

In Section A, the eigenvalue for **Factor 1** is **6.406358**. This factor accounts for 64% of the total variance.

In this case an unrotated factor solution was considered sufficient for interpreting the factors. Unrotated factor solutions extract factors in the order of their importance. One factor was extracted when the preliminary unrotated factor matrix was computed. The best linear combination was found, since the particular combination of all the

original variables accounts for more of the variance in the data as a whole than any other linear combination of variables (Hair et al, 1998:107). All variables, therefore, loaded high on the factor “strategic contribution” and none were deleted as shown in Tables 6.12 and 6.13.

Rotation was not done for these variables, as the eigenvalue for only one factor was very high and further rotation was not necessary (Hair et al, 1998:107).

A scree test, shown in Figure 6.7, was also used for this principle components analysis, from which it is clear that only one factor, “strategic contribution”, could be extracted. This one factor explained 64% of the total variance.

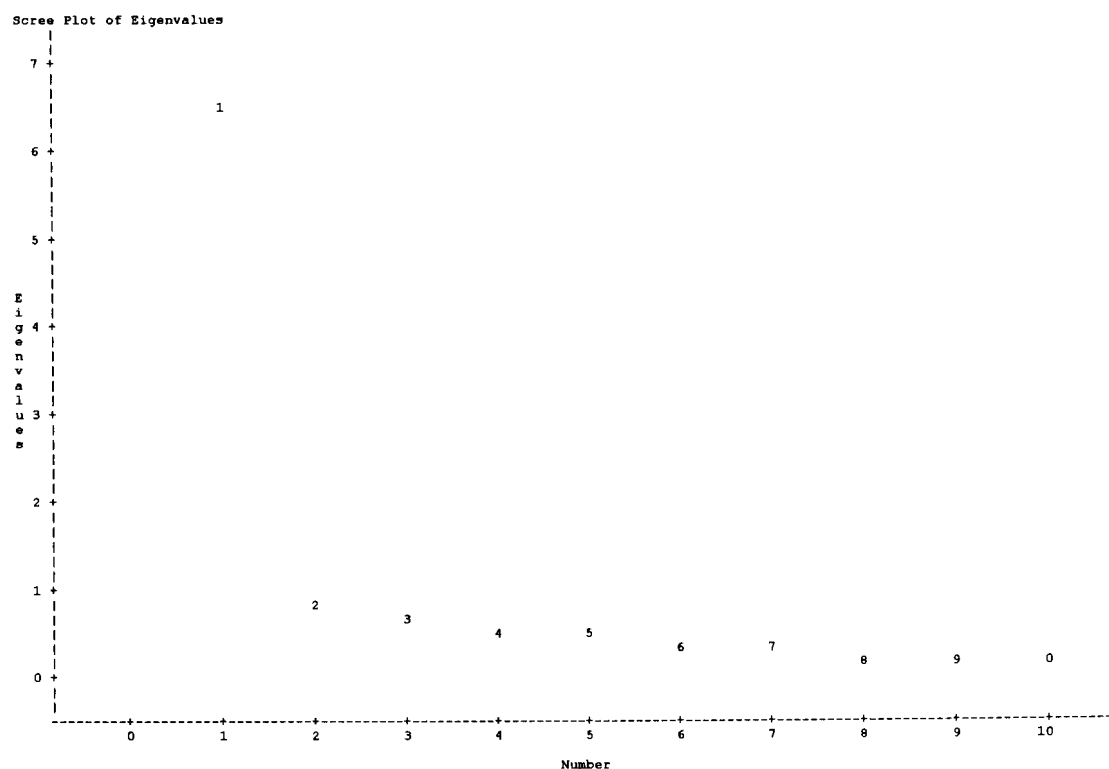
Table 6.12 – Eigenvalues for Section A of the measuring instrument

	Eigenvalue	% total variance	Cumulative Eigenvalue	Cumulative %
1	6.406358	64.06358	6.358406	64.06358

Table 6.13 – Factor loadings (Unrotated) for Section A of the measuring instrument

(Marked loadings are >.700000)		
Variables		Factor 1
V2	1. Senior management supports the communication function in your organisation.	0.812
V3	2. Senior management recognises that communication can make a strategic contribution.	0.860
V4	3. You readily have access to senior management.	0.675
V5	4. Senior management values your input before they make decisions.	0.864
V6	5. Senior management expects you to make communication decisions fairly autonomously.	0.665
V7	6. Senior management expects you to contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals.	0.816
V8	7. Senior management expects the communications department to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management.	0.818
V9	8. Senior management expects you to work closely with them to solve organisational problems that involve relationships with target audiences.	0.883
V10	9. Senior management expects you to use (formal and informal) research techniques to monitor trends in the organisation’s environment for use in business decision-making.	0.713
V11	10. You are in a position to influence key strategic decisions of senior management.	0.861

Figure 6.7 - Scree plot for Section A of the measuring instrument



6.5.2 Section B of the measuring instrument

In Section B, the eigenvalue for **Factor 1** is **3.082499** and for **Factor 2** it is **3.056199**. The percentage of total variance was 30.82499 and 30.56199 respectively. The total variance for the two factors is therefore 61,4%. This indicates that these two factors explain 61,4% of the total variance.

For this Section, a rotated factor solution was used in the form of the orthogonal Varimax normalised rotational method. The first factor that was extracted can be regarded as the single best summary of linear relationships exhibited in the data (Hair et al, 1998:109). Variables V12 to V16, representing the one-way models, loaded on this factor. Variables V19 to V23, representing the two-way models, loaded favourably on the second factor which is defined as the second-best linear combination of the variables, subject to the constraint that it is orthogonal to the first factor. (Variables 17 and 18 had already been eliminated in the calculation of the Cronbach's alpha and were therefore not taken into account for this factor analysis.)

A scree test, shown in Figure 6.8, was also used for this principle components analysis, from which it is clear that two factors: one-way models (Factor 1) and two-way models (Factor 2), could be extracted.

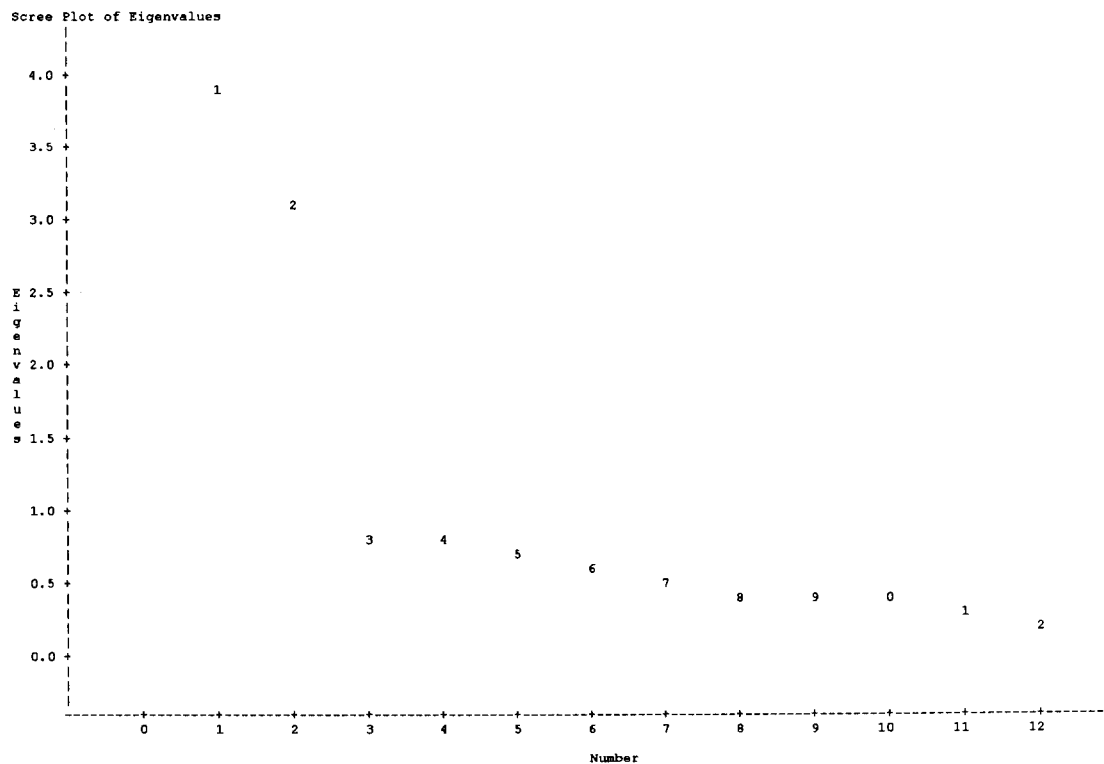
Table 6.14 – Eigenvalues for Section B of the measuring instrument

	Eigenvalue	% total variance	Cumulative Eigenvalue	Cumulative %
1	3.082499	30.82499	3.082499	30.82499
2	3.056199	30.56199	6.138698	61.38698

Table 6.15 – Factor loadings (Varimax normalised) for Section B of the measuring instrument

(Marked loadings are >.700000)			
Variables		Factor 1	Factor 2
V12	1. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is predominantly to get your organisation's name in the media.	0.8434412	
V13	2. Senior management believes that the success of communication is measured by the number of people who use your products or services.	0.655527	
V14	3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for your organisation in the media.	0.819299	
V15	4. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use.	0.764774	
V16	5. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations.	0.700053	
V19	8. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes.		0.77194
V20	9. Senior management believes you should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept.		0.602812
V21	10. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics.		0.787341
V22	11. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects.		0.821654
V23	12. Senior management believes communication should provide mediation opportunities to help management and publics negotiate conflict.		0.84347
Expl. Var		3.082258	3.056439
Prp. Totl		0.308226	0.305644

Figure 6.8 - Scree plot for Section B of the measuring instrument



6.5.3 Section C of the measuring instrument

In Section C, the eigenvalue for **Factor 1** is **3.622883** and for **Factor 2** it is **2.881288**. The percentage of total variance is 36.22883 and 28.81288 respectively. The total variance for the two factors is therefore 65%. This indicates that these two factors explain 65% of the total variance.

For this Section, a rotated factor solution was again used in the form of the orthogonal Varimax normalised rotational method. Variables V30 to V34 loaded on the first factor and can be regarded as the single best summary of linear relationships exhibited in the data. This factor describes the public relations manager role. The second factor loaded on the variables describing the public relations technician role (V24 to V28), and represents a combination that accounts for a smaller amount of variance than Factor 1. (Variables V29 to V35 had already been eliminated in the calculation of the Cronbach's alpha and were not taken into account for this factor analysis.)

A scree test, shown in Figure 6.9, was also used for this principle components analysis, from which it is clear that two factors: the public relations manager role (Factor 1) and the public relations technician role (Factor 2), could be extracted.

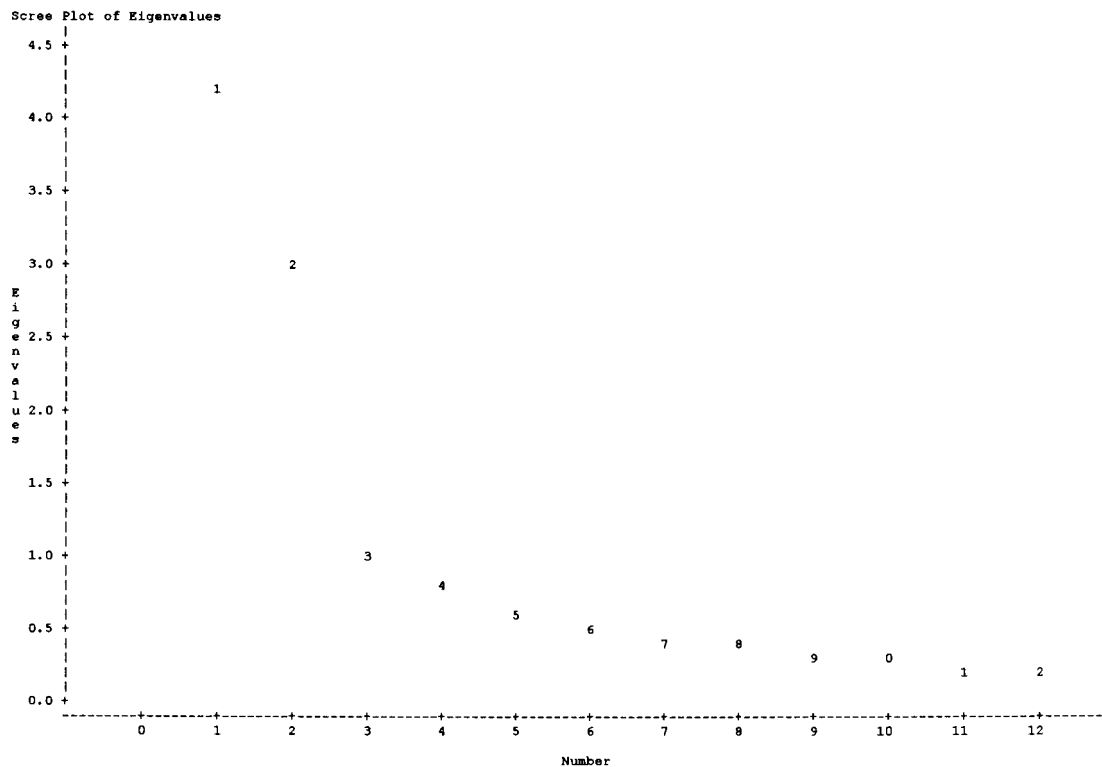
Table 6.16 – Eigenvalues for Section C of the measuring instrument

	Eigenvalue	% total variance	Cumulative Eigenvalue	Cumulative %
1	3.622883	36.22883	3.622883	36.22883
2	2.881288	28.81288	6.504171	65.04171

Table 6.17 – Factor loadings (Varimax normalised) for Section C of the measuring instrument

(Marked loadings are >.700000)			
Variables		Factor 1	Factor 2
V24	1. Senior management expects you to predominantly write communication material such as speeches, articles, advertisements, etc.		0.821
V25	2. Senior management expects you to produce brochures.		0.818
V26	3. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.		0.710
V27	4. Senior management expects you to use your journalistic skills to establish what the media will consider newsworthy about your organisation.		0.760
V28	5. Senior management expects you to issue news releases.		0.771
V30	7. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain.	0.682	
V31	8. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training.	0.882	
V32	9. Senior management expects you to make communication policy decisions.	0.853	
V33	10. Senior management expects you to act as counsel to top decision-makers when communication issues are involved.	0.877	
V34	11. Senior management expects you to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various (internal and external) publics.	0.745	

Figure 6.9 – Scree plot for Section C of the measuring instrument



6.5.4 Summary of results of validity analysis

A good indication of validity was made possible by a factor analysis of the measuring instrument. Through factor analysis it can be established whether the constructs or factors, as identified, measure what it is supposed to measure (Mouton & Marais, 1989:69).

Measurement validity, and more specifically construct validity, therefore confronts the question whether the instrument really measures the specific theoretical construct that is studied (Mouton & Marais, 1989:94; Du Plooy, 1996:75; Bailey, 1987:66-70). The measuring instrument must be able to differentiate the construct studied from any other similar construct (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:21; Cooper & Schindler, 1998:166-171).

To establish the construct validity for this measuring instrument, the instrument was related to the theoretical framework as discussed in the literature study to ensure that the measurement logically linked with other concepts in the framework.

All the items in Section A loaded favourably on Factor 1, strategic contribution, as extracted from the measuring instrument. By using the statistical method principal components analysis, and certain stepping criteria (eigenvalue criteria, percentage of variance criterion and scree test criterion), the one factor that could be extracted in Section A, accounted for 64% of the total variance.

The variables in Section B loaded favourably on two factors. The first factor that was extracted was regarded as the single best summary of linear relationships exhibited in the data. Variables V12 to V16, representing the one-way models, loaded on Factor 1, while variables V19 to V23, representing the two-way models, loaded favourably on Factor 2. The eigenvalues for these two factors were **3.082499** for Factor 1 and **3.056199** for Factor 2.

The variables in Section C loaded favourably on two factors. Variables V30 to V34, representing the construct public relations manager role, loaded on Factor 1, while variables V24 to V25 (public relations technician role) loaded on Factor 2. The eigenvalues for these two factors were **3.622883** for Factor 1 and **2.881288** for Factor 2.

This instrument can be regarded as valid, since the five factors that were extracted, explained 64% (Factor 1 in Section A), 61,4% (Factor 1 + Factor 2 in Section B) and 65% (Factor 1 + Factor 2 in Section C) of the total variance of the three measuring instruments respectively. The constructs or factors as identified can, therefore, be considered to be measuring what they are supposed to measure.

Table 6.18 – Summary of the results for factor analysis

Factors	Eigenvalue	% of total variance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factor 1 extracted from measuring instrument A: Strategic contribution 	6.406358	64%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factor 1 extracted from measuring instrument B: One-way public relations models Factor 2 extracted from measuring instrument B: Two-way public relations models 	3.082499 3.056199	61,4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factor 1 extracted from measuring instrument C: Public relations manager role Factor 2 extracted from measuring instrument C: Public relations technician role 	3.622883 2.881288	65%

6.5.5 Reliability and validity of the measuring instrument

When it is claimed that a measuring instrument is valid, it is at the same time implied that measurement is reliable, as reliability is a prerequisite for validity. The measuring instrument developed for this study can be regarded as reliable and valid, since the measurements for reliability (item-to-total correlation and Cronbach's alpha) and validity (factor analysis) were both above normal.

The item-to-total correlation for all the items, except two, was above .50 for the total measuring instrument; the Cronbach's alpha values for the total measuring instrument were between .936152 and .819267; and the five factors that were extracted from the measuring instrument, explained 64% (Factor 1 in Section A), 61,4% (Factor 1 + Factor 2 in Section B) and 65% (Factor 1 + Factor 2 in Section C) of the total variance of the three measuring instruments respectively.

6.6 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The motivation for the formulation of hypotheses 1 to 12 was discussed in detail in Chapter 5. It was also stated in Chapter 5 that these hypotheses must be tested by using the statistical method ANOVA, which was also described. The procedure

followed in the ANOVA test in order to decide on the rejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis, is described in this Section. The procedure for the testing of hypotheses 1 to 12 can be described as follows:

The alternative hypothesis (i.e. H_1) and the null hypothesis (H_0) were stated. Where, as a result of testing, the null hypothesis was rejected, this was interpreted as signifying support for the alternative hypothesis. A statistical test was used in conjunction with a significance level to decide whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:139).

The significance level is specified as a criterion for the rejection of the null hypothesis and indicates the maximum risk of rejecting the null hypothesis. It is specified as follows:

- For a 99% certainty level ($\alpha = 0.01$), the non-directional null hypothesis 1 to 12 will be rejected if $p < 0.01$.
- For a 95% certainty level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the non-directional null hypothesis 1 to 12 will be rejected if $p < 0.05$.
- For a 90% certainty level ($\alpha = 0.10$), the non-directional null hypothesis 1 to 12 will be rejected if $p < 0.10$.

For this study a 5% significance level (i.e. set $\alpha = 0.05$) was selected to conduct all hypothesis tests. (The null hypothesis was only rejected when in fact it was true five times out of 100.)

The F distribution is also used to identify the acceptance or rejection area for the null hypothesis. This is done by reading the critical F value from the F distribution tables with the help of the degrees of freedom (df).

Different tables exist for each significance level. The critical F values for $\alpha = 0.05$, as they will be used in this study and as they are indicated in the F table, are 3.00 (for degrees of freedom of 1) and 3.84 (for degrees of freedom of 2) (Steyn et al, 1999:686).

The F value is calculated by making use of the ANOVA technique in the *Statistica* software package. The F ratio was calculated by computer.

The associated p -value was also calculated. The p -value can be defined as the exceeding probability, in other words the probability that a Type 1 error will be made. A Type I error occurs when the null hypothesis is rejected while it is actually true. This p -value gives specific information on how far in the area of significance the result will be. It, therefore, has the same function as the critical F value (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1997:138-146).

When deciding to accept or reject the null hypothesis, the following two methods were used:

1. If the calculated F value was better (larger) than the critical F value as read from the F table, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between population means. If the calculated F value was smaller than the critical F value, there was enough evidence not to reject the null hypothesis, in other words to accept that there is not a significant difference between the population means.
2. The p -value, as calculated, must be smaller than 0.05 (or 0.01 or 0.10) to reject the null hypothesis for a 95% (or 99% or 90%) certainty level respectively. If the calculated p -value was larger than 0.05 (or 0.01 or 0.10), the null hypothesis could not be rejected with a significance of 95% or 99% or 90% for the population.

The above steps were followed for each of the hypotheses to decide to accept or reject the null hypothesis. Although the calculated p -value is sufficient to take a decision, the critical F value and the calculated F value were also compared in this study.

The sums of squares (SS), the mean squares (MS) and the degrees of freedom (df) are shown. Dividing the factor MS by the error MS produces the F statistic, followed by its significance level (p -value) in the last column (Siegel, 1997:595).

The following hypotheses are based on the perceptions of top communicators in South

African organisations about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator to organisational decision-making; the one-way and/or two-way models used by top communicators and communication departments in communication activities and organisational decision-making; and the public relations manager or public relations technician role senior management expects the top communicator to play in the organisation. The formulation of these hypotheses is guided by the research objectives as stated in Chapter 1.

6.6.1 Hypothesis 1 to 12

Hypotheses 1 to 12 will now be analysed and the results reported in detail.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 1

- H₁: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** makes to organisational decision-making.
- H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** makes to organisational decision-making.

Table 6.19 - Test data for Hypothesis 1

Summary table of means N = 202	
Strategic contribution	
Both public relations manager role and public relations technician role	71.44
Public relations manager role	79.18
Public relations technician role	51.83

Table 6.20 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 1

Analysis of variance Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>		
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Strategic contribution	18063.87	2	9031.936	55643.39	199	279.615	32.30133	0.00000

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making, was measured by items V2 to V11. These variables loaded favourably on Factor 1 (strategic contribution), as extracted from Section A of the measuring instrument.

The perception of the top communicator with regard to senior management's expectations of her to predominantly play the public relations manager role and/or the public relations technician role was measured by items V30 to V34 and V24 to V28 respectively.

The perception of the top communicator about senior management's expectations with regard to the role that she should predominantly play in the organisation and her strategic contribution to organisational decision-making, was established by calculating the means for responses indicating that the top communicator is expected to predominantly play the public relations manager role, or the public relations technician

role, or both, and cross-tabulating it with the mean for senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator.

The means in the above test data set for Hypothesis 1 indicate that senior management staff, to a greater extent, expect the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making (mean score, 79.18), than they expect the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role to make a strategic contribution (mean score, 51.83).

The third category was created to establish the mean for top communicators predominantly expected to play both the public relations manager role and the public relations technician role. This was done by comparing the scores obtained for responses to items reflecting the public relations manager role and scores reflecting the public relations technician role. Scores that differed less than 20% were included in the category "both". It was assumed that scores that differed negatively by more than 20% indicated public relations manager role-playing, while scores that differed positively by more than 20% indicated public relations technician role-playing.

The mean score of 71.44 indicates that senior management staff, to a greater extent, expect the top communicator who plays both the manager and technician role to contribute strategically to organisational decision-making than they expect the top communicator playing the public relations technician role to make a strategic contribution.

Public relations manager role and strategic contribution correlates the highest, and the assumption can, therefore, be made that it is the perception of top communicators in the South African organisation that senior management expects them to predominantly play the public relations manager role in order to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.

Decision:

The calculated p -value is 0.00000 for Hypothesis 1, which is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This confirms that there is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role makes to organisational decision-making, and the strategic contribution the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role makes to organisational decision-making.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference. However, this can be inferred from the descriptive statistical means as described above. The test data set indicates that it is the perception of the top communicator that senior management expects the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role to make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role.

The calculated F value of 32.30133 is also larger than the critical F value of 3.00 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a level of 5% significance.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 2

H₂: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **one-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **two-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **one-way public**

relations models to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator using the **two-way public relations models** to make a **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making.

Table 6.21 - Test data for Hypothesis 2

Summary table of means N = 200	
Strategic contribution	
Both one-way and two-way public relations models	72.87013
One-way public relations models	54.12788
Two-way public relations models	80.30635

Table 6.22 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 2

Analysis of variance Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>		
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Strategic contribution	21370.51	2	10685.25	49528.99	197	251.4162	42.50025	0.00000

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making was measured by items V2 to V11. The perception of the top communicator about senior management's beliefs with regard to the top communicator using one-way and/or two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making was measured by items V12 to V16 and items V19 to V23 respectively. The latter variables loaded favourably on Factor 1 (one-way models) and Factor 2 (two-way models), as extracted from Section B of the measuring instrument.

The means for responses indicating that senior management believes the top communicator uses one-way models, two-way models or both when contributing to organisational decision-making were cross-tabulated with the means for the responses

indicating the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator.

The third category for the use of both one-way and two-way models was created to establish the mean for the use of both these models by top communicators.

This was done by comparing the scores obtained for responses to items reflecting the use of one-way models, and scores reflecting the use of two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making. Scores that differed less than 20% were included in the category “both”. It was assumed that scores that differed negatively by more than 20% indicated the use of two-way models, while scores that differed positively by more than 20% indicated the use of one-way models.

The mean scores in the above test data set for Hypothesis 2 indicate that the two-way public relations models correlate highly with “strategic contribution”. The assumption can, therefore, be made that it is top communicators’ perception that senior management believes and expects the top communicator who predominantly uses the two-way public relations models to rather make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making (mean score, 80.30635) than the top communicator who predominantly uses the one-way models (mean score, 54.12788).

The mean score of 72.87013 indicates that senior management believes and expects the top communicator using both one-way and two-way models to rather make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator using one-way models.

It can, therefore, be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects that the top communicator will make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when using the two-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making than when using the one-way public relations models.

Decision:

At 0.00000 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 2 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. There is, therefore, a statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making when using the one-way public relations models and the strategic contribution the top communicator makes when using two-way public relations models.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference. However, the direction can be inferred from the test data set as described above, which indicates that senior management expects the top communicator using the two-way public relations models to make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator using one-way models.

The calculated F value of 42.50025 is also larger than the critical F value of 3.00 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected at a level of 5% significance.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 3

H₃: There is a significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

H₀: There is no significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public**

relations manager role using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **one-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

Table 6.23 - Test data for Hypothesis 3

Summary table of means N = 202	
One-way models	
Both public relations manager and public relations technician role	65.22772
Public relations manager role	40.28571
Public relations technician role	67.15789

Table 6.24 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 3

Analysis of variance Marked effects are significant at p <.05000								
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>		
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
One-way models	28225.18	2	14112.59	53867.67	199	270.6918	52.13526	0.00000

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about senior management's expectations with regard to public relations manager role-playing by the top communicator was measured by items V30 to V34. Senior management's expectations with regard to public relations technician role-playing were measured by items V24 to V28. These variables loaded favourably on Factor 1 (technician) and Factor 2 (manager) respectively, as identified in Section C of the measuring instrument.

Items V12 to V16 measured the beliefs of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of one-way models in communication activities and loaded favourably on Factor 1 (one-way models) as identified in Section B of the measuring instrument.

The means for the responses indicating that senior management expects the top communicator to play the public relations manager role, public relations technician role or both, were cross-tabulated with the means for responses indicating that senior management believes that the top communicator predominantly uses one-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

These mean scores, as shown in the above test data set for Hypothesis 3, indicate that senior management, to a greater extent, believes and expects the top communicator playing the public relations technician role (mean score, 67.15789) to use the one-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, than they believe and expect the top communicator playing the public relations manager role to use one-way models in communication activities (mean score, 40.28571).

The third category for playing both the public relations manager role and the public relations technician role was again included in this calculation (for categorisation, see section on Hypothesis 1). The mean score of 65.22772 indicates that senior management, to a greater extent, believes and expects the top communicator playing both the public relations manager role and the public relations technician role to use one-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, than they believe and expect the top communicator as public relations manager to use one-way models (mean score, 40.28571).

The one-way public relations models correlate highly with the public relations technician role. The assumption can, therefore, be made that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects the top communicator playing the public relations technician role, more than the one playing the public relations manager role, or both roles, to predominantly use one-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

Decision:

At 0.00000 the calculated *p*-value for Hypothesis 3 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference

between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role using one-way models in organisational decision-making, and the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role using one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference. However, it can be inferred from the test data as discussed above.

The calculated F value of 52.13526 is larger than the critical F value of 3.00 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected at a significance level of 5%.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 4

H₄: There is a significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

H₀: There is no significant difference between senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations manager role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and senior management's beliefs and expectations of the top communicator predominantly playing the **public relations technician role** using the **two-way public relations models** in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

Table 6.25 - Test data for Hypothesis 4

Summary table of means N = 202	
Two-way models	
Both public relations manager and public relations technician role	63.5396
Public relations manager	66.78571
Public relations technician	41.15789

Table 6.26 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 4

Analysis of variance Marked effects are significant at p <.05000								
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>		
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Two-way model	17633.68	2	8816.84	65246.25	199	327.8706	26.89122	0.00000

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the senior management's expectations with regard to public relations manager role-playing by the top communicator was measured by items V30 to V34. Senior management's expectations with regard to public relations technician role-playing were measured by items V24 to V28. These variables loaded favourably on Factor 1 (technician) and Factor 2 (manager) respectively, as identified in Section C of the measuring instrument.

Items V19 to V23 measured the use of two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making and loaded favourably on Factor 2 (two-way models) as identified in Section B of the measuring instrument.

The means for responses indicating that senior management expects the top communicator to play the public relations manager role, public relations technician role or both, were cross-tabulated with the means for responses indicating that senior management believes that the top communicator predominantly uses two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

The means in the above test data set for Hypothesis 4 indicate that senior management, to a greater extent, believes and expects the top communicator playing the public relations manager role (mean score, 66.78571) to use the two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, than they believe and expect the top communicator playing the public relations technician role to use two-way models in communication activities (mean score, 41.15789).

The mean score for items representing top communicators who play both the public relations manager role and the public relations technician role using two-way models, is 63.5396, which indicates that senior management, to a greater extent, believes and expects the top communicator playing both roles to use two-way models (mean score, 63.5396) in communication activities and organisational decision-making, than they believe and expect the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role to use two-way models (mean score, 41.15789).

The two-way public relations models, therefore, correlate highly with the public relations manager role. The assumption can be made that it is the perception of top communicators in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects the top communicator playing the public relations manager role, more than the top communicator playing the public relations technician role, to predominantly use the two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

Decision:

At 0.00000 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 4 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected at a 95% confidence level. There is a statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of two-way public relations models by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role, and the use of two-way public relations models by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, although it can be inferred from the test data, as indicated in the discussion above.

The F value confirms the statistical significant difference. The calculated F value of 26.89122 is larger than the critical F value of 3.00 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. As indicated above, the null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected at a level of 5% significance.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 5

H₁: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to the **CEO** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **any other senior manager**.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to the **CEO** and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **any other senior manager**.

Table 6.27 - Test data for Hypothesis 5

	Strategic contribution means	Strategic contribution N
CEO	68.23773	86
Marketing, communication or other manager	71.15873	112

Table 6.28 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 5

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>		
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Strategic contribution	415.0645	1	415.0645	72098.27	196	367.8483	1.128358	0.289433

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator to organisational decision-making was measured by items V2 to V11. The reporting line of the top communicator to the CEO or other managers was measured by item V36, which is the first part of the contingency question 1 in Section D of the measuring instrument.

The qualitative responses to the open-ended item 36 were placed in two categories:

- Category 1: Directors or managers, apart from the most senior manager in the organisation (CEO, etc) such as the Marketing Manager, Financial Manager or Human Resources Manager.
- Category 2: Most senior manager in the organisation which were referred to as CEO, Managing Director, Group Executive Chairman, etc.

The mean score for senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator to organisational decision-making was cross-tabulated with the mean scores for responses indicating that the top communicator reports to the CEO or to any other senior manager. However, the difference between the mean scores is not large enough to be statistically significant.

This data set indicates that the strategic contribution made by the top communicator reporting to the other managers is slightly higher (mean score, 71.15873) than the strategic contribution made by the top communicator reporting to the CEO (mean score, 68.23773).

Decision:

At 0.289433 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 5 is larger than 0.05 and the null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator when reporting to the CEO and the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator when reporting to any other senior manager.

The F value supports this finding. The calculated F value of 1.128358 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 6

H_6 : There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **senior management** in the organisation, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **middle management** in the organisation.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **senior management** in the organisation, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making when reporting to **middle management** in the organisation.

Table 6.29 - Test data for Hypothesis 6

	Strategic contribution means	Strategic contribution N
Middle management	60.81818	11
Senior management	70.70273	191

Table 6.30 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 6

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	SS	df	MS	SS	df	MS		
	Effect	Effect	Effect	Error	Error	Error	F	p
Strategic contribution	1016.222	1	1016.222	72691.04	200	363.4552	2.796004	0.096063

The perception of the top communicator in South African organisations about senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator to organisational decision-making was measured by items V2 to V11.

The reporting line of the top communicator to junior, middle or senior management was measured by item 37. Item 37 is the second part of the contingency question 1 of Section D of the measuring instrument. After respondents had indicated to whom they reported in the organisation (V36), they had to indicate whether that person could be considered to be part of three categories of management (junior management, middle management or senior management).

Since no top communicator indicated that the person they report to could be considered part of junior management, this category was eliminated. Only the categories for middle management and senior management were considered for measurement.

The mean score for senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator to organisational decision-making was

cross-tabulated with the mean scores for responses indicating that the top communicator reports to middle management or to senior management.

The test data set indicates that it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators reporting to senior management are slightly higher (mean score, 70.70273) than their expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators reporting to middle management (mean score, 60.81818).

Decision:

At 0.096063 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 6 is larger than 0.05. However, the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 90% level of confidence. (The alternative hypothesis is accepted at a 90% significance level because of the homogeneity of the sample of top communicators.) This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator reporting to senior management, and the strategic contribution made by the top communicator reporting to middle management.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, but it can be inferred from the test data as indicated in the discussion above.

The calculated F value of 2.796004 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. The alternative hypothesis is, therefore, accepted at a 90% level of significance.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 7

H7: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **small organisation**, and the expectations of senior management with regard to

the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **large organisation**.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **small organisation**, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made by the top communicator in a **large organisation**.

Table 6.31 - Test data for Hypothesis 7

	Strategic contribution means	Strategic contribution N
Large organisation (from 201 to 95 000 staff members)	68.86389	160
Small organisation (from 1 to 200 staff members)	75.13158	38

Table 6.32 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 7

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at p <.05000								
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>		
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Strategic contribution	1206.295	1	1206.295	72247.55	196	368.61	3.27255	0.07198

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator was measured by items V2 to V11. The qualitative variable “number of people in the organisation” was measured by V38.

A distinction was made between small and large organisations by classifying a small organisation as one with one to 200 people, and a large organisation as one with 201 to 95 000 people. The mean score for senior management’s expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator to organisational decision-

making was cross-tabulated with the mean scores for the responses indicating that the top communicator works in a small or in a large organisation.

From the above test data set for Hypothesis 7, it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management expects the top communicator in a small organisation to make a slightly bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making (mean score, 75.13158) than the top communicator in a large organisation (mean score, 68.86389).

Decision:

At 0.07198 the p -value for Hypothesis 7 is larger than 0.05. However, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 90% significance level. (The alternative hypothesis is accepted at a 90% significance level because of the homogeneity of the sample of top communicators.) There is, therefore, a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator in a small organisation, and the strategic contribution made by the top communicator in a large organisation.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction in the difference, but it can be inferred from the above test data as indicated in the discussion above.

The F value supports this result. The calculated F value of 3.27255 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the alternative hypothesis can be accepted at a 90% significance level.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 8

H₈: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **small public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic**

contribution the top communicator in a **large public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **small public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator in a **large public relations department** makes to organisational decision-making.

Table 6.33 - Test data for Hypothesis 8

	Strategic contribution means	Strategic contribution N
Small department (1 to 5 staff members)	68.66104	158
Large department (6 to 90 staff members)	75.56313	44

Table 6.34 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 8

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	SS	df	MS	SS	df	MS		
	Effect	Effect	Effect	Error	Error	Error	F	p
Strategic contribution	1639.531	1	1639.531	72067.73	200	360.3387	4.549973	0.034138

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator was measured by items V2 to V11. The qualitative variable "number of people in the department" was measured by V39.

A distinction was made between small and large communication departments by classifying a small department as one with one to five people, and a large department as one with six to 90 people.

The mean score for senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator was cross-tabulated with the mean scores for responses to the item measuring the size of the department, as indicated in the above test data.

According to the test data set for Hypothesis 8, it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management expects the strategic contribution made by top communicators in a small department to be smaller (mean score, 68.66104) than the strategic contribution made by top communicators in a large department (mean score, 75.56313).

Decision:

At 0.034138 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 8 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator located in a small public relations department, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator located in a large public relations department.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, but it can be inferred from the test data, as indicated in the discussion above.

This is supported by the calculated F value of 4.549973, which is larger than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 9

H₉: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top

communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **one-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

Table 6.35 - Test data for Hypothesis 9

	One-way models means	One-way models N
Small department (1 to 5 staff members)	58.35443	158
Large department (6 to 90 staff members)	55.86364	44

Table 6.36 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 9

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>		
	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
One-way models	213.5178	1	213.5178	81879.33	200	409.3967	0.521543	0.471028

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the beliefs of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of the one-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making was measured by items V12 to V16. The qualitative variable "size of the public relations department" was measured by item 39.

As explained above, a distinction was made between small and large departments by classifying a small department as one with one to five people, and a large department as one with six to 90 people.

The mean score for senior management's beliefs and expectations with regard to the top communicator's use of one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making was cross-tabulated with the mean scores for responses to the item measuring the size of the department.

The above test data set for Hypothesis 9 indicates that it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects the use of one-way models by the top communicator in a small department to be slightly higher (mean score, 58.35443) than the use of one-way models by the top communicator in a large department (mean score, 55.863634).

Decision:

At 0.471028 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 9 is larger than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of one-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making in a small public relations department, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of one-way models in a large department.

The result, that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, is confirmed by the calculated F value of 0.521543, which is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 10

H₁₀: There is a significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top

communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **small public relations department**, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of **two-way public relations models** for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a **large public relations department**.

Table 6.37 - Test data for Hypothesis 10

	Two-way models means	Two-way models N
Small department (1 to 5 staff members)	58.60127	158
Large department (6 to 90 staff members)	66.59091	44

Table 6.38 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 10

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	SS	df	MS	SS	df	MS		
	Effect	Effect	Effect	Error	Error	Error	F	p
Two-way models	2196.915	1	2196.915	80683.02	200	403.4151	5.445792	0.020609

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about senior management's beliefs and expectations with regard to the top communicator's use of two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making was measured by items V18 to V23. The qualitative variable "size of the public relations department" was measured by item 39.

As explained above, a distinction was made between small and large departments by classifying a small department as one with one to five people, and a large department as one with six to 90 people.

The mean score for senior management's beliefs with regard to the top communicator's use of two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making was cross-tabulated with the mean scores for responses to the item measuring the size of the department.

The above test data set for Hypothesis 10 indicates that it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects the use of two-way public relations models by the top communicator in a small department to be less (mean score, 58.60127) than the use of two-way models by the top communicator in a large department (mean score, 66.59091).

Decision:

At 0.020609 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 10 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of two-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making in a small public relations department, and the beliefs of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of two-way models in a large department.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, but it can be inferred from the test data, as indicated in the discussion above.

The F value supports this result. The calculated F value of 5.445792 is larger than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 11

H₁₁: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with a **graduate qualification**, and expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made to organisational decision-making by the top communicator with a **postgraduate qualification**.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with a **graduate qualification**, and expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** made to organisational decision-making by the top communicator with a **postgraduate qualification**.

Table 6.39 - Test data for Hypothesis 11

	Strategic contribution means	Strategic contribution N
Other	69.35484	31
Graduate qualification (degree or diploma)	68.71951	82
Postgraduate qualification (higher diploma, honours degree, masters' degree, doctorate)	71.65212	84
All groups	70.06994	197

Table 6.40 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 11

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	SS	df	MS	SS	df	MS		
	Effect	Effect	Effect	Error	Error	Error	F	p
Strategic contribution	375,6679	2	187.8339	71834.01	194	370.2784	0.507278	0.602929

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator to organisational decision-making, was measured by items V2 to V11. The qualitative variable “highest qualification of top communicators” was measured by item V40. The qualitative variable “qualifications” was categorised as other qualifications (certificate, short courses, etc), graduate qualifications (degree or diploma), postgraduate qualifications (higher diploma, honours, masters’ or doctorate) and all groups.

The mean scores for the perception of the top communicator about senior management’s expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators with a graduate qualification; those with a postgraduate qualification; those with other qualifications; and all groups, were cross-tabulated with the mean score for the responses to the items indicating the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator.

The above test data set indicates that the mean scores for the categories “other qualifications” (mean score, 69.35484), “graduate qualification” (mean score, 68.71951), “postgraduate qualification” (mean score, 71.65212) and “all groups” (mean score, 70.06994) differ very little.

Decision:

At 0.602929 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 11 is larger than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator with a graduate qualification and the strategic contribution made by the top communicator with a postgraduate qualification.

The calculated F value of 1.083933 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.00 in the F table on a significance level of 0.05. This also indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis 12

H₁₂: There is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with a **few years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with **many years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with a **few years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the **strategic contribution** the top communicator with **many years' experience** in the communications field makes to organisational decision-making.

Table 6.41 - Test data for Hypothesis 12

	Strategic contribution means	Strategic contribution N
Few years experience (1 to 8 years experience)	66.25794	56
Many years experience (9 to 40 years experience)	71.58413	140

Table 6.42 - Results: Calculation of ANOVA for Hypothesis 12

Analysis of variance								
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$								
	SS	df	MS	SS	df	MS		
	Effect	Effect	Effect	Error	Error	Error	F	P
Strategic contribution	1134.732	1	1134.732	71558.23	194	368.8569	3.076348	0.081018

The perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to

organisational decision-making made by the top communicator was measured by items V2 to V11. The qualitative variable “number of years’ experience of top communicators” was measured by item V41. This was categorised as “few years’ experience” and “many years’ experience” with “few” referring to one to eight years, and “many” referring to nine to 40 years’ experience.

The mean score for responses to items indicating senior management’s expectations with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator was cross-tabulated with the mean scores for top communicators with a few years’ experience and those with many years’ experience.

The test data set for Hypothesis 12 indicates that the mean score for the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with many years’ experience in the communications field is higher (mean score, 71.58413) than the mean score for the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by top communicators with a few years’ experience (mean score, 66.25794).

Decision:

At 0.081018 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 12 is larger than 0.05. However, the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 90% significance level. (The alternative hypothesis is accepted at a 90% significance level because of the homogeneity of the sample of top communicators.) There is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution a top communicator with a few years’ experience can make to organisational decision-making, and the strategic contribution a top communicator with many years’ experience can make to organisational decision-making.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, but it can be inferred from the test data, as indicated in the discussion above.

The calculated F value of 3.076348 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, which also indicates that the alternative hypothesis can be accepted at a 90% level of significance.

6.6.2 Summary of hypothesis testing: Hypothesis 1 to 12

The most important results of the hypothesis testing for the 12 hypotheses will be discussed next.

Hypothesis 1

The calculated p -value for Hypothesis 1 is 0.00000, which is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This confirms that there is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role makes to organisational decision-making, and the strategic contribution the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role makes to organisational decision-making.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference. However, this can be inferred from the descriptive statistics means. From the test data it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management expects the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role to make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role.

The calculated F value of 32.30133 is also larger than the critical F value of 3.00 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a level of 5% significance.

Hypothesis 2

At 0.00000 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 2 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making when using the one-way public relations models, and the strategic contribution the top communicator makes when using the two-way models.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference. However, the direction can be inferred from the test data as described above, which indicates that senior management believes and expects the top communicator using the two-way public relations models to make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator using the one-way models.

The calculated F value of 42.50025 is also larger than the critical F value of 3.00 as indicated in the F table on a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected at a level of 5% significance.

Hypothesis 3

At 0.00000 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 3 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role using one-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role using one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference. However, it can be inferred from the test data set. According to the latter, the one-way public relations models correlate highly with the public relations technician role.

The assumption can, therefore, be made that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects the top communicator playing the public relations technician role, more than the one playing the public relations manager role, or both roles, to predominantly use one-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

The calculated F value of 52.13526 is larger than the critical F value of 3.00 as indicated in the F table at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected at a significance level of 5%.

Hypothesis 4

At 0.00000 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 4 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of two-way public relations models by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role, and the use of two-way public relations models by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, although it can be inferred from the test data set. The latter indicates that the two-way public relations models correlate highly with the public relations manager role. The assumption can, therefore, be made that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management believes and expects the top communicator playing the public relations manager role, more than the top communicator playing the public relations technician role, to predominantly use the two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

The F value confirms the statistically significant difference. The calculated F value of 26.89122 is larger than the critical F value of 3.00 in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. As indicated above the null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected at a level of 5% significance.

Hypothesis 5

At 0.289433 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 5 is larger than 0.05 and the null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator when reporting to the CEO, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator when reporting to any other senior manager.

The test data set indicates that the strategic contribution made by the top communicator reporting to the other managers is slightly higher (mean score, 71.15873) than the strategic contribution made by the top communicator reporting to the CEO (mean score, 68.23773).

The F value supports this finding. The calculated F value of 1.128358 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected.

Hypothesis 6

At 0.096063 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 6 is larger than 0.05. However, the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 90% level of confidence. (The alternative hypothesis is accepted at a 90% significance level because of the homogeneity of the sample of top communicators.) This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator reporting to senior management, and the strategic contribution made by the top communicator reporting to middle management.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, but it can be inferred from the test data set. The latter indicates that it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators reporting to senior management are slightly higher (mean score, 70.70273) than the

expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators reporting to middle management (mean score, 60.81818).

The calculated F value of 2.796004 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. The alternative hypothesis is, therefore, accepted at a 90% level of significance.

Hypothesis 7

At 0.07198 the p -value for Hypothesis 7 is larger than 0.05. However, the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 90% significance level. (The alternative hypothesis is accepted at a 90% significance level because of the homogeneity of the sample of top communicators.) There is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator in a small organisation, and the strategic contribution made by the top communicator in a large organisation.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction in the difference, but it can be inferred from the test data set. From the test data set it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management expects the top communicator in a small organisation to make a slightly bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making (mean score, 75.13158) than the top communicator in a large organisation (mean score, 68.86389).

The F value supports this result. The calculated F value of 3.27255 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the alternative hypothesis can be accepted at a 90% significance level.

Hypothesis 8

At 0.034138 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 8 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator located in a small public relations

department, and the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator located in a large public relations department.

ANOVA does not indicate the direction of the difference, but it can be inferred from the test data set. According to the test data set it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management expects the strategic contribution made by top communicators in a small department to be smaller (mean score, 68.66104) than the strategic contribution made by top communicators in a large department (mean score, 75.56313).

This is supported by the calculated F value of 4.549973, which is larger than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Hypothesis 9

At 0.471028 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 9 is larger than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of one-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making in a small public relations department, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of one-way models in a large department.

The test data set for Hypothesis 9 indicates that it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects the use of one-way models by the top communicator in a small department to be slightly higher (mean score, 58.35443) than the use of one-way models by the top communicator in a large department (mean score, 55.863634).

The result, that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, is confirmed by the calculated F value of 0.521543, which is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 as indicated in the F table, at a significance level of 0.05.

Hypothesis 10

At 0.020609 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 10 is smaller than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of two-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making in a small public relations department, and the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator's use of two-way models in a large department.

The test data set for Hypothesis 10 indicates that it can be assumed that it is the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation that senior management believes and expects the use of two-way models by the top communicator in a small department to be less (mean score, 58.60127) than the use of two-way models by the top communicator in a large department (mean score, 66.59091).

The F value supports this result. The calculated F value of 5.445792 is larger than the critical F value of 3.84 in the F table at a significance level of 0.05. This confirms that the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

Hypothesis 11

At 0.602929 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 11 is larger than 0.05. The null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator with a graduate qualification, and the strategic contribution made by the top communicator with a postgraduate qualification.

The above test data set indicates that the mean scores for the categories "other qualifications" (mean score, 69.35484), "graduate qualifications" (mean score, 68.71951), "postgraduate qualifications" (mean score, 71.65212) and "all groups" (mean score, 70.06994) differ very little.

The calculated F value of 1.083933 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.00 in the F table at a significance level of 0.05. This also indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Hypothesis 12

At 0.081018 the calculated p -value for Hypothesis 12 is larger than 0.05. However, the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis at a 90% significance level. (The alternative hypothesis is accepted at a 90% significance level because of the homogeneity of the sample of top communicators.) There is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution a top communicator with a few years' experience in the communication field can make to organisational decision-making, and the strategic contribution a top communicator with many years' experience can make to organisational decision-making.

The test data set for Hypothesis 12 indicates that the mean score for the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with many years' experience is higher (mean score, 71.58413) than the mean score for the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by top communicators with a few years' experience (mean score, 66.25794).

The calculated F value of 3.076348 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.84 in the F table which also indicates that the alternative hypothesis can be accepted at a 90% level of significance.

6.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the data for this study was analysed by identifying patterns and themes in the data and drawing certain conclusions from them. The further interpretation of

the data will be done in the next chapter. The statistical techniques used for the measurement were also discussed briefly.

To analyse the data, statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics for the reliability analysis of the measuring instrument, factor analysis and ANOVA were used. The data collection of the sample was discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The 202 questionnaires received from top communicators were captured on the software packages *Microsoft Excel* and *Statistica*. In order to submit the most important characteristics of the samples, the demographic data as obtained from Part II of the measuring instrument was discussed. Data on reporting lines of the top communicator, the size of the organisation and communication department of which the top communicator is part, and the qualifications and experience of the top communicator, are visually depicted by means of pie and bar charts.

The descriptive statistics used were averages, standard deviations, Top2Box% and Low2Box % percentages. The reliability analysis of the measuring instrument was done by calculating the item-to-total correlation and the Cronbach's alpha values for Sections A, B and C of the measuring instrument.

The item-to-total correlation of Section A of the measuring instrument was above .50 for all the items; for Section B it was above .50 for all the items, except for V13 and V20; and for Section C it was above 0.50 for all the items.

The Cronbach's alpha values for the complete measuring instrument were between .936152 and .819267 (See Table 6.11). According to Du Plooy (1996:72), a reliability coefficient of 0.9 or higher is excellent and between 0.8 and 0.89 is good.

According to the above results, the measuring instrument can be regarded as reliable.

Factor analysis was done as a validity analysis and a deductive approach in hypothesising about the relationships that exist between factors. The method used for factor analysis was principle components analysis. The latent root/eigenvalue criterion, percentage of variance criterion and scree test criterion were used in this analysis.

The hypothesis testing was done with the statistical method analysis of variance (ANOVA). The means of the various responses were cross-tabulated to obtain a test data set that could be used for the statistical test ANOVA. Hypotheses 1 to 12 were tested and the results described in detail.

CHAPTER 7

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim of this chapter:

In this chapter the specific relationship between the research problem, the evidence collected, and the conclusions drawn on the basis of the evidence, are discussed. The main findings of the descriptive statistics, the implications of the factor analysis and the results of the hypothesis testing, related to the aims of the study, are addressed. The results, as presented in the previous chapter, are discussed, and conclusions on the strategic contribution of the top communicator to organisational decision-making are drawn. The implications of the findings for theory building will be shown. Constraints of the study are also pointed out and proposals are made for further research objectives. Chapter 7 is a final reaction to the research objectives as set out in Chapter 1.

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The constructs “power of the top communicator and the communication department”; “shared expectations between the top communicator and top management with regard to the use of one-way and two-way models of public relations”; and the “public relations manager or public relations technician role the top communicator plays in the organisation” were generated as the synthesis of the concept “shared expectations with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making”. An explanation of the constructs, or building blocks, showed that the concept “strategic contribution” could be academically sound.

By analysing the components knowledge, was gained of the whole. The way in which the components are connected – the synthesis – was also investigated. The constitutive variables or factors relevant to understanding the phenomena were isolated through analysis, while the connections between the variables were again reconstructed to gain insight in the causes and contributory factors to the phenomena (Mouton & Marais, 1989:103).

A deductive strategy was followed in this study. The project was, therefore, started with a clear conceptual frame of reference – a theory. This framework led the conceptualisation, operationalisation and data collection and eventually formed the frame of reference for analysis and interpretation (Mouton & Marais, 1989:103). However, inductive reasoning was also used to establish the connections and patterns in the data.

The construct “power” was generated in Chapter 2 as the synthesis of the constructs “value top management attaches to the top communicator” and the “strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making”.

From the literature review it is clear that value is attached to and support given to those top communicators and communication departments that prove their worth to top management by their strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. The top communicator and communication department need power within senior management in order to make strategic contributions. These contributions, in turn, lead to greater power and influence in management decision-making. Power is the capacity to exert influence – a transaction in which one gets others to change their behaviour as one intended. Power is also necessary to be given the opportunity to contribute, while strategic contributions increase the value and support top management gives to communication departments.

In Chapter 3 the shared expectations between the top communicator and top management regarding the use of one-way public relations models (the press agency model and the public information model) and the two-way public relations models (the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model) were discussed.

It was explained that organisations that achieve excellence have communication departments with the expertise for both traditional one-way practices and advanced two-way practices to negotiate with and persuade both senior management and publics toward mutually beneficial relationships.

The fact that excellent communication departments need CEOs and top managements that understand such practices (especially two-way practices) and expect them from their communication departments, was emphasised.

Top management needs to understand excellence in communication in order to enter into a set of shared expectations with the top communicator. The literature supported the view that organisations achieve excellence only when top management values and supports communication departments.

Chapter 4 focused on the role that the top communicator should play in the organisation to be able to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. Dozier et al (1995:107) believe that changing the roles that top communicators play in the organisation provides the most direct path to excellence. From the literature it is clear that top communication departments combine knowledge of both manager and technician roles to provide the requisite foundation for excellence. To actually achieve excellence, however, top communicators must play advanced organisational roles of communication manager and senior adviser. Communicators must develop linkages to CEOs and top management to establish communication excellence. They must acquire the power to contribute to strategic planning and decision-making.

Generally, top communicators who play the communication manager and senior adviser roles run excellent communication departments. The top management in these organisations support the communication function and value the communication department. Communication makes substantial contributions to strategic management and planning in these organisations.

This study specifically linked to the above theory, aiming to establish whether it is the perception of top communicators in the South African organisation that senior management expects them to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making and add value to the operations of the organisation by using more sophisticated communication techniques such as two-way public relations models in their

communication practices and by playing the public relations manager role more often than the public relations technician role.

In Chapter 5 the research design and methodology of the empirical component of the study were discussed. It was explained how the sample of top communicators were selected; how items on “strategic contribution”, the “use of one-way and two-way models” and the “public relations manager and public relations technician roles” were developed and included in the measuring instrument; and how the propositions generated were formulated as hypotheses. The reliability and validity of measurement were also discussed, as well as the statistical methods that made it possible to obtain the data from the samples and to analyse it.

In Chapter 6 the results of the reliability and validity analysis were reported. The item-to-total correlation and Cronbach’s alpha values for Sections A, B and C of the measuring instrument were discussed. Extraction of five factors (strategic contribution, one-way public relations models, two-way public relations models, the public relations manager role and the public relations technician role), as well as the results of the hypothesis testing was reported.

The item-to-total correlation of Section A of the measuring instrument was above .50 for all the items; for Section B it was above .50 for all the items, except for V13 and V20; and for Section C it was above 0.50 for all the items.

The Cronbach’s alpha values for the total measuring instrument were between **.936152** and **.819267** (See Table 6.11). According to Du Plooy (1996:72) a reliability coefficient of 0.9 or higher is excellent and between 0.80 and 0.89 is good.

The results of these analyses indicate that the reliability of the measuring instrument is above normal and that it complies with internal and external reliability requirements.

A good indication of validity was made possible by a factor analysis of the measuring instrument. Through factor analysis it could be established whether the constructs or

factors, as identified, measured what it was supposed to measure (Mouton & Marais, 1989:69).

To establish the construct validity for this measuring instrument, the instrument was related to the theoretical framework as discussed in the literature study to ensure that the measurement logically linked with other concepts in the framework.

All the items in Section A of the measuring instrument loaded favourably on Factor 1, “strategic contribution”, as extracted from the measuring instrument. The statistical method principal components analysis, and certain stepping criteria (eigenvalue criteria, percentage of variance criterion and scree test criterion), were used to extract this factor.

The variables in Section B loaded favourably on two factors. The first factor that was extracted was regarded as the single best summary of linear relationships exhibited in the data. Variables representing the “one-way models”, loaded on Factor 1, while variables representing the “two-way models”, loaded favourably on Factor 2. The eigenvalues for these two factors were **3.082499** for Factor 1 and **3.056199** for Factor 2.

The variables in Section C also loaded favourably on two factors. Variables representing the construct “public relations manager role” loaded on Factor 1, while variables representing the “public relations technician role” loaded on Factor 2. The eigenvalues for these two factors were **3.622883** for Factor 1 and **2.881288** for Factor 2.

The total measuring instrument for this study can be regarded as valid, since the five factors that were extracted, explained 64% (Factor 1 in Section A), 61,4% (Factor 1 + Factor 2 in Section B) and 65% (Factor 1 + Factor 2 in Section C) of the total variance of the three measuring instruments respectively. The constructs or factors as identified, could, therefore, be considered to be measuring what they were supposed to measure.

The testing of the 12 stated hypotheses was done by means of ANOVA and the results were discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

The interpretation of the results, as reported in Chapter 6, is necessary for the conclusions drawn in this chapter. The results that are important for theory development purposes will be presented here. This will be done through a reaction to the research objectives and hypotheses as stated in Chapter 1.

This chapter and study will be concluded with a discussion of the strategic contribution top communicators can make in the organisation.

7.2 THE LINK TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In this section a clear link will be established between the original study objectives (as described in Chapter 1) and the respective conclusions. The original objectives of the study will be stated again and the conclusions relating to each individual objective presented.

7.2.1 Strategic contribution expected from the top communicator

This study aims to measure the perception of the top communicator in the South African organisation of the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator. Questionnaires were sent to a sample of top communicators, representing professional organisations in South Africa (PRISA, IABC, SAKOMM, Unitech, and IMPRO) as well as the Top 200 companies as identified in the magazine *Finance Week*, Top 200, 1999.

A total of 202 questionnaires were returned, which was enough according to the minimum requirement for factor analysis. It was also sufficient to obtain ample responses to do statistical analysis on all cells.

From the demographic data it could be inferred that 43% of top communicators indicated that they report to the CEO, while 57% report to another senior manager. A total of 95% regarded the person they report to as a senior manager, while 5% regarded him/her to be a middle manager. It can, therefore, be assumed that most top communicators have ready access to senior management and a high percentage of top communicators have direct access to the most senior manager in the organisation – the CEO. The access that top communicators have to senior management is often an indication of the value and support senior management attaches to this function. With 95% of the respondents indicating that the person they respond to are part of senior management, it can be assumed that the communication function is valued in the South African organisation.

The descriptive statistics indicated that most respondents represented organisations with less than 10 000 staff members. It also indicated that most respondents are members of relatively small communication departments of less than 20 people.

It was hypothesised that the number of staff in the organisation and in the communication department could have an influence on the way in which communication is practised in the organisation. The results of the cross-tabulation of the means for the responses to items in the questionnaire measuring the size of the organisation and the size of the communication department with the means for the constructs “strategic contribution”, “one-way and two-way models” and “public relations manager and public relations technician role” will be discussed later in this chapter.

The qualitative variable “highest qualification of the top communicators” was classified. Qualifications were classified into three categories: graduate qualification (degree or diploma), postgraduate qualification (higher diploma, honours degree, masters' degree, doctorate) and other qualifications (certificates, short courses, etc). Some 82 respondents indicated that they had a graduate qualification, 84 indicated that they had a postgraduate qualification and 34 indicated that they had other qualifications. The mean score for these results was cross-tabulated with the mean score for “strategic contribution” to establish whether top communicators’

qualifications could be an indicator of the strategic contribution they make to organisational decision-making.

Respondents also had to indicate the number of years' experience they had in the communications field. The descriptive statistics indicated that most of the top communicators had between ten and 19 years' experience, followed by one to nine years' experience. This indicates that most top communicators have less than 20 years' experience in the field of public relations. This finding has been cross-tabulated with the mean score for the data representing the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making, to determine whether the number of years' experience that top communicators have will influence the strategic contribution they make to organisational decision-making. The results are discussed below.

Research objective 1: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role, and the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role.

It can be assumed from the results of the descriptive statistics (averages, standard deviations, Top2Box%, Low2Box%) used for Section A of the measuring instrument that the strongest perception of top communicators in South African organisations is that they have ready access to senior management in their organisations (average, 83,23; Top2Box%, 61.88%). This is an important prerequisite for making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.

It can also be assumed that senior management expects the top communicator to play the public relations manager role by managing the communication function in the organisation strategically, because the communication department is expected to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management (average, 77.08; Top2Box%, 39.6%). Top communicators are also expected to

contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals (average, 76.93; Top2Box%, 40.1%).

It can furthermore be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that they are not in a favourable position to influence key strategic decisions of senior management (Low2Box%, 11.88%) and that their input is not necessarily valued before senior management makes decisions (Low2Box%, 6.93%). This finding suggests that top communicators in South African organisations cannot sufficiently fulfil their strategic management role by telling top management what publics know, how they feel and how they may behave to strategic decisions under consideration. As strategic public relations managers, communicators can act as advocates for publics, articulating these external points of view as they counsel top management. When decisions are made, excellent communicators design programmes and craft messages to effectively communicate in a fashion that achieves the top management's desired outcomes among target publics. To play this role as a two-way communicator, the top communicator has to sit at the decision-making table with other senior managers.

Dozier et al (1995:14) state that the top management in organisations with excellent communication programmes value communicators for their input before decisions are made. In this strategic role, the communicator acts as boundary-spanner, environmental scanner and an "early warning system".

It is nearly impossible to separate public relations policy from overall corporate strategy. According to Mason (1974:121) the bigger the decision, the larger the company, and the greater the number of people that are affected, the more significant the public relations component becomes. More often than not, however, the chief executive officer would not consult with public relations about major policy matters.

And yet major public relations problems continually arise from policy decisions in which public relations has had no part. The public relations director may not be sitting at the conference table, but the "publics" are

From the data it also seems as though senior management does not often expect the top communicator to use (formal and informal) research techniques to monitor trends in the organisation's environment for use in business decision-making (Low2Box%, 8.42%). This may be because senior management does not see the top communicator as the person who should do environmental scanning in the organisation in order to monitor trends and obtain information for strategic decision-making.

However, Dozier (in Grunig 1992:341) proposes that practitioners enacting the public relations manager role will engage in both scientific and informal programme evaluation and environmental scanning with greater frequency than practitioners not enacting the manager role. Furthermore, enactment of the public relations technician role is not related to frequency of scientific and informal programme evaluation and environmental scanning activities.

The difference between the perception of the top communicator about senior management's expectations with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator can make when playing the public relations manager role and the strategic contribution she can make when playing the public relations technician role was tested in Hypothesis 1.

The ANOVA results of this hypothesis test indicated that there is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator when predominantly playing the public relations manager role and the strategic contribution made when predominantly playing the public relations technician role.

The means in the test data set for Hypothesis 1 indicate that there is a strong correlation between "strategic contribution" and "public relations manager role".

The assumption can, therefore, be made that senior management has higher expectations with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role, than with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator predominantly playing the public

relations technician role. These findings are supported by the theory as discussed in Chapter 2.

Dozier et al (1995:76) report that the dominant role played by top communicators, either manager or technician, provides key indicators of the communication department's power. Manager role enactment leads to power consequences for the public relations function. Serving in the manager role means that top communicators influence key strategic decisions of top management, while serving in the technician role means that top communicators implement, as service providers, decisions made by other senior managers. Participation in management decision-making also enhances the status of public relations practitioners in the organisation.

According to Dozier et al (1995:34) top management will not settle for tactical processes that do not affect the bottom-line. Public relations practitioners should think and act strategically. In Chapter 3 Dozier et al (1995:129) and Pincus & De Bonis (1994:226) state that top communicators and their staff provide expertise on the knowledge, opinions and behavioural predispositions of all publics affected by an organisation in excellent organisations. Senior managers in excellent organisations value this expertise and call on it frequently when strategic decisions are made. They value and support communication because communicators help managers make better decisions.

Dozier (in Grunig, J, 1992:343) states that the expert prescription, communication facilitation and problem-solving process facilitation components of the manager role are significantly and positively correlated with strategic decision-making. Technician scores, on the other hand, show only modest correlation with participation in meetings where decisions are made about implementing communication programmes. The technician role is negatively correlated with participation in meetings where new policies are decided.

Top management also sees no value in seating a technician or tactician in a support function like communications at the decision-making table, as they reason that they could not contribute to strategy formulation.

Allen (1979) furthermore contends that managers value the organisational roles that are part of their management teams. When public relations is excluded from the decision-making process one would expect managers to devalue its role. Maples (1981) found that managers value organisational roles that demand autonomous decision-making. Thus, the greater the autonomy, the greater the value that managers should have for public relations practitioners (Grunig, in Grunig, J, 1992:489).

Knowledge to enact the manager role was the single-most powerful correlate of excellence in public relations and communication management in the *Excellence Study* (Dozier & Broom, 1995:4).

According to the theory, the public relations manager role is, therefore, significantly and positively correlated with strategic decision-making, as was also the finding in this study. The public relations technician role is negatively correlated with participation in meetings where new policies are decided.

7.2.2 Strategic contribution by using one-way and two-way public relations models

Research objective 2: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator using one-way public relations models in communication activities, and the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator using two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

This study aims, amongst others, to measure the perceptions of the top communicator with regard to the expectations of senior management about the strategic contribution made by her and the communication department when using one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making and the

strategic contribution made by them when using two-way models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

According to the theory as discussed in Chapter 3, organisations that achieve excellence have communication departments with the expertise for both traditional one-way and advanced two-way communication to negotiate with and persuade both senior management and publics toward mutually beneficial relationships. However, communication departments need CEOs and top managements that understand such practices and expect them from their communication departments.

Organisations with high overall excellence scores in the *Excellence Study* reported a strong preference for two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices. Top communicators in these excellent organisations also reported high top management demand for two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices. Communication departments in excellent organisations furthermore know how to deliver both two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical practices. Such shared expectations presuppose new communication expertise (Dozier et al 1995:102).

According to the results of the descriptive statistics used for analysing the data in Section B of the measuring instrument (relating to the use of one-way and two-way models), it can be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that the media relations role is still considered very important to senior management (as was also indicated by Grunig, L in the literature study). Respondents indicated that senior management believes that it is the task of the top communicator to prepare news stories that reporters will use (average, 69.85; Top2Box%, 34.65%) and that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for the organisation in the media (Top2Box%, 21.78%).

This corresponds with the findings of the *Excellence* team that, although senior management prefers its top public relations person to play a manager role rather than a technician role, they also prefer them to play the media relations role. As discussed in Chapter 4, Grunig, L (1997:7) states that the *Excellence* team thought this reflects top

management's continuing preoccupation with the media, despite much evidence suggesting that the media plays a marginal rather than central part in the effectiveness of most organisations.

Top communicators also indicated in this study that senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects (average, 69.46; Top2Box%, 32.18%). This practice is typical of the two-way symmetrical model. It can, therefore, be assumed that senior management expects the top communicator to use the more sophisticated two-way models in their communication activities and organisational decision-making. Senior management furthermore believes that the top communicator should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept (average, 66.47), which also indicates a preference for the use of two-way models (two-way asymmetrical models). This coincides with the theory, stating that two-way models are used to a greater extent in excellent organisations.

One can also assume that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management, to a lesser extent, believe that it is the purpose of communication to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics (Low2Box%, 11.39%). According to the literature, this two-way symmetrical approach is one of the key indicators of excellence in communication practices, but it seems as though senior managements in South African organisations do not recognise this. Although it can be assumed that they acknowledge the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics it affects, they do not see the necessity for management to change in order to accommodate publics and to ensure two-way symmetrical communication.

Top communicators can, therefore, to a greater extent, concentrate on sensitising senior management to the needs of clients and stakeholders and the way in which the organisation could respond to these needs. This could be done through formal and informal research.

According to Dozier et al (1995:124), an excellent communication department does its best work when it helps senior management understand organisational constituents. Persuasion cuts two ways. Savvy CEOs let excellent communicators persuade their senior managers as well as constituents. CEOs include excellent communicators in all strategic decisions, because nobody else knows better how those decisions will affect key constituents. On that basis, senior managers come to value the communication department in a new way, and support the communication function as an important component of organisational effectiveness.

As mentioned above, it can also be assumed that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management does not necessarily believe that research should be done after the completion of communication programmes to determine how effective the programmes were in changing people's attitudes (Low2Box%, 12.87%). This could be an indication that, measuring the success of communication programmes in terms of changing people's attitudes towards an issue or towards the organisation, is not very important to senior management. Senior management probably still measures the success of communication programmes in a non-strategic way by looking at the number of people attending events or using the products of the organisation.

However, it can be assumed that senior management believes that a clipping file is not the only way of determining the success of public relations and that other methods could also be used to measure this success (Low2Box%, 14.85%).

Top communicators indicated in this survey that there is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator when using one-way public relations models in organisational decision-making and communication activities and when using two-way models (Hypothesis 2).

Although this ANOVA result does not indicate the direction of the difference, it can be assumed (from the test data set for Hypothesis 2) that senior management expects the top communicator, using two-way public relations models, to make a bigger strategic

contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator using one-way models. “Two-way models” correlate highly with “strategic contribution” in the test data set for Hypothesis 2. This finding is supported by the theory as discussed in Chapter 3.

Organisations that practice the one-way press agency and public information models need technicians who do not necessarily make a contribution to organisational decision-making. Communication staff in these organisations are not involved in strategic planning and problem-solving when using these models. Once strategic decisions are made and action plans drawn, the technician, practising the one-way models, is brought in to implement outward communication from the organisation to its target publics. The process is therefore one-way.

According to Dozier et al (1995:122), excellent company CEOs want communication that is strategically based on research and that involves communication with key publics. Excellent communication relies on two-way dialogue between the organisation and its publics. It is no longer enough for companies to use one-way communication to inform or try to persuade people to believe what it wants them to believe. Key publics must be able to communicate with the organisation and be heard. Excellent communication, therefore, requires research to take into account the interests and views of all internal and external audiences, and seeks to create understanding and dialogue (White & Mazur, 1995:22).

As a result, top communicators can serve as a kind of early warning system, able to alert the organisation to potential conflicts with strategic publics. (And in the process, to establish a base for themselves in strategic planning and management decision-making.) (Grunig, L 1997:7). However, senior management must also demand these practices for communication programmes to be excellent.

7.2.3 The use of one-way and two-way models by public relations managers and technicians

Research objective 3: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role using one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role using one-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

Research objective 4: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role using two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making, and the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role using two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

In Section C of the measuring instrument, which measured the top communicator playing the public relations manager role and/or the public relations technician role, the three most important scores were:

- Senior management expects one to issue news releases (average, 76.07; Top2Box%, 50.99%). (Media relations role)
- Senior management expects one to take responsibility for the success or failure of one's organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain (average, 81.19; Top2Box%, 50%). (Public relations manager role)
- Senior management expects one to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of one's experience and training (average, 77.52; Top2Box%, 47.52%). (Public relations manager role)

From the above results it can again be assumed that senior management expects the top communicator to play the media relations role, apart from the public relations manager role. Playing the manager role scored high and it can, therefore, be assumed that this is also important to senior management.

The ANOVA results of Hypothesis 3 indicated that there is a significant difference between the use of one-way models by the top communicator playing the public relations manager role and the use of one-way models by the top communicator playing the public relations technician role. Consistent with theory, as indicated in Chapter 4, the technician role is positively and significantly correlated with the one-way press agency and public information models in this study, as indicated by the results of the test data set for Hypothesis 3.

The results of ANOVA for Hypothesis 4 furthermore indicate that there is a significant difference between the use of two-way public relations models by the top communicator playing the public relations manager role and the use of two-way models by the top communicator playing the public relations technician role. The test data results indicate that public relations manager role-playing correlates highly with two-way models. This is supported by the theory, as indicated in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 4, Dozier et al (1995:112) state that the technician role indicates weak, negative correlations with the two-way models. However, the two-way models correlate positively with the public relations manager role. Lauzen & Dozier (1992:211) also state that the two-way public relations models correlated positively with the public relations manager role in several studies.

Practitioners in organisations practising the press agency and public information models of public relations will engage in few activities that define the public relations manager role. Practitioners in organisations practising the two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric models of public relations are more likely to play the public relations manager role.

The following is therefore suggested:

- Manager role enactment is more frequent in organisations practising the two-way symmetric and asymmetric models of public relations.
- Manager role enactment is less frequent in organisations practising the press agency or public information models of public relations.
- Technician role enactment is more frequent in organisations practising the press agency and public information models of public relations (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:347).

One explanation for these findings is that organisations have top managements with different strategic decision-making dynamics and different orientations toward environmental inputs. The process of strategic decision-making can be organised by type. The process is affected by both underlying beliefs of powerful members of the dominant coalition and the relative concentration of power in such coalitions. Both beliefs and power affect the negotiated belief structures of dominant coalitions (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:348).

The open or closed mind-set of top management also strongly mediates the model of public relations followed and the roles that practitioners play (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:344).

The assumption can, therefore, be made that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management expects the top communicator, predominantly playing the public relations manager role, to make use of two-way public relations models in organisational decision-making and communication activities and the top communicator predominantly playing the public relations technician role to make use of one-way models.

With the results for Hypotheses 1 and 2 as a point of departure, it can be assumed that the top communicator, predominantly playing the public relations manager role, and using two-way public relations models, can make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.

This can lead to excellent communication and can contribute to the top communicator eventually becoming part of top management.

7.2.4 The top communicator's strategic contribution when reporting to senior management

Research objective 5: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when reporting to the CEO and when reporting to any other manager.

Research objective 6: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when reporting to senior management and when reporting to middle management.

The descriptive statistics showed that 57% of the respondents reported to the CEO in their respective organisations, while 43% reported to other managers. A total of 95% of the respondents regarded the person they report to as part of senior management and 5% regarded them as part of middle management.

In Chapter 2 it was stated that Dozier et al (1995:84) found that top communicators who report directly to CEOs have slightly higher overall excellence scores for their organisations than do top communicators who report to CEOs through a longer chain of command. In this study, top communicators who reported to CEOs through a longer chain of command (i.e. who reported to other senior managers such as the Marketing Manager, the Financial Manager or the Human Resources Manager) had a slightly higher mean score in the test data set for Hypothesis 5 (the mean scores for “reporting lines” were cross-tabulated with the mean scores for “strategic contribution”), than those reporting to the CEO. However, the statistical test ANOVA indicated that the calculated *p*-value of 0.28943 is larger than the significance level of 0.05.

The null hypothesis can, therefore, not be rejected, which means that there is no statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator when reporting to the CEO and the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator when reporting to any other senior manager.

The ANOVA results of the hypothesis test for Hypothesis 6 showed that there is a slight difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution the top communicator can make to organisational decision-making when reporting to middle management and when reporting to senior management. The null hypothesis was accepted at a 90% confidence level for Hypothesis 6. According to the test data set “strategic contribution” correlates higher with “senior management” than with “middle management”.

However, since the test data set for this hypothesis indicates that the mean score for top communicators making a strategic contribution to organisational-decision-making when reporting to senior management is only slightly higher than the mean score for top communicators making a strategic contribution when reporting to middle management, it can be assumed that reporting lines are not a very good indicator of strategic contribution.

It can, therefore, be assumed that these findings support the communication theory and that reporting relationships are necessary, but hardly sufficient for making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making as indicated by Dozier et al (1995:84). Reporting relationships alone tell us little about the influence of individuals on senior management or on organisational decision-making. The critical factor is not whom one reports to, but rather whether one has access to any of the (corporate) officers at will.

Although top management membership of the top communicator was not tested in this hypothesis, it is interesting to note that the *Excellence Study* found that membership of

top management is an important characteristic but not a mandatory requirement for excellence in communication.

This furthermore confirms the fact that formal reporting relationships are important but not sufficient for strategic communication management (Grunig, L, 1997:6).

7.2.5 Strategic contribution and the use of one-way and two-way models in small and large organisations and departments

Research objective 7: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a small organisation, and the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a large organisation.

Research objective 8: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a small public relations department, and the top communicator making a strategic contribution in a large public relations department.

Research objective 9: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of one-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a small public relations department, and the use of one-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a large public relations department.

Research objective 10: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the beliefs and expectations of senior management with regard to the use of two-way public relations models for communication activities and

organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a small public relations department, and the use of two-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making by the top communicator in a large department.

The ANOVA results of Hypothesis 7 indicate that there is a slight difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator in a small organisation (one to 200 people) and the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator in a large organisation (201 to 95 000 people). (The alternative hypothesis for Hypothesis 7 was accepted at a 90% confidence level.)

According to Dozier et al (1995:113), organisational size does not affect communication manager, media relations or technician role-playing. Because of the results of Hypothesis 7, the assumption can, however, be made that organisational size could slightly influence the strategic contribution of the top communicator to organisational decision-making. The test data for Hypothesis 7 indicates that there is a slightly stronger correlation between “small organisations” and “strategic contribution” (mean score, 75.13158), than between “large organisations” and “strategic contribution” (mean score, 68.86389).

According to these results, it can be assumed that the top communicator in a small organisation would have a slightly better opportunity to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator in a large organisation. The reason for this could be because there are many other senior managers in a large organisation, apart from the top communicator, who can also make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. The top communicator’s input would, therefore, not necessarily be valued. In a small organisation every senior manager’s input is usually valued and the top communicator would probably have a better chance of being considered part of top management when she can make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making in this organisation.

The results of Hypothesis 8 indicated that there is a significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator as part of a small public relations department (one to five people) and the contribution made by the top communicator as part of a large public relations department (six to 90 people).

The null hypothesis was, therefore, rejected in this case. The test data for Hypothesis 8 indicates that the construct “large department” correlates highly with “strategic contribution”.

Dozier et al (1995:113) also state that departmental size impact on traditional role-playing. According to them, top communicators play the media relations and communication technician roles more frequently in small communication departments, in which top communicators cannot easily delegate such tasks.

Dozier et al (1995:113) furthermore indicate that the number of employees in the communication department does not affect advanced role-playing by top communicators. However, in this study it was found that the use of “two-way public relations models” correlated highly with “large department” which could indicate that advanced practices are used to a greater extent in large departments. It could, therefore, be assumed that communicators would use the two-way public relations models (and predominantly play the public relations manager role) in large public relations departments, as will be explained next.

The ANOVA results of Hypothesis 9 indicate that there is no difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the use of one-way public relations models in small public relations departments and the use of one-way models in large departments. (The null hypothesis for Hypothesis 9 could not be rejected.) The assumption can, therefore, be made that senior management expects top communicators in small and large departments to use one-way models in their communication activities.

However, the ANOVA results of Hypothesis 10 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the expectations of senior management with regard to the use of two-way public relations models in small public relations departments and the use of two-way models in large departments. The construct “two-way models” correlated highly with “large department” in the test data set and the assumption can, therefore, be made that two-way practices will be more prevalent in large departments.

It can, therefore, be assumed that top communicators will use the more sophisticated two-way public relations models and play the public relations manager role more often in large departments.

In summary, the assumption can, therefore, be made that it is the perception of top communicators in South African organisations that senior management, to a greater extent, expects them to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when they are part of a small organisation. It can also be assumed that senior management, to a greater extent, expects the top communicator to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making in a large public relations department. Senior management expects small and large departments to use one-way public relations models in their communication activities, but they also expect large departments to use two-way public relations models in communication activities and organisational decision-making.

7.2.6 Qualifications and experience when making a strategic contribution

Objective 11: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators with a graduate qualification and the strategic contribution made by top communicators with a postgraduate qualification.

Objective 12: To establish what the top communicator in the South African organisation perceives to be the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by top communicators with a few years' experience in the communications field and the strategic contribution made by top communicators with many years' experience in the communications field.

The ANOVA results of Hypothesis 11 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the perception of the top communicator about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution made by the top communicator with a graduate qualification, and the top communicator with a postgraduate qualification. The test data set for Hypothesis 11 indicates that the mean scores for the categories "other qualifications" (mean score, 69.35484), "graduate qualification" (mean score, 68.71951), "postgraduate qualification" (mean score, 71.65212) and "all groups" (mean score, 70.06994) differ very little. Most of the respondents had qualifications in the public relations, communications, languages, social sciences and commerce fields.

The assumption can, therefore, be made that qualification is a weak indicator of the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making. This could indicate that skills and knowledge (as indicated in Chapter 2), rather than qualifications, are valued by senior management when the top communicator makes a strategic contribution.

Dozier et al (1995:103) asked what comes first – an enlightened coalition demanding excellence, or a knowledgeable communication department delivering excellence? They concluded that expertise typically – but not always – comes first. Top management tends to value and support communicators who first demonstrate their worth. Public relations will be considered to be part of top management if they can prove that they can do the job.

Dozier et al (1995:114) also state that education does not influence playing either advanced or traditional roles. Activities such as attending professional meetings,

holding office in professional associations, or making presentations to such associations, do not seem to influence role enactment by the top communicator.

Pollack (1986) found that practitioners included in the inner circle tend to have more training in public relations as opposed to just a few courses or seminars or no formal education in public relations.

This finding is consistent with Lawler and Hage (1973) who, more than a decade earlier, established that professional training, along with professional activity, decreases feelings of powerlessness (White & Dozier, in Grunig J, 1992:493).

The result of a lack of relevant knowledge is that organisations unfortunately sometimes look outside the ranks of their own communication and public relations technicians to find managers for this important function. Encroachment is the inevitable by-product of a calling that fails to rise above technique. The career failure of top practitioners to assume the management role within the organisation is also a failure to truly emerge as a professional from the communication skill cluster that operationally defines what practitioners do – and what the practice is (Dozier, in Grunig, J, 1992:352).

The ANOVA results of Hypothesis 12 indicated a statistically significant difference between the perception of the top communicator about the expectations of senior management with regard to the strategic contribution to organisational decision-making made by the top communicator with a few years' experience (one to eight years) in the communications field and the top communicator with many years' experience (nine to 40 years) in the communications field. The construct "many years' experience" correlates highly with "strategic contribution", as indicated in the test data set.

It can, therefore, be assumed that senior management expects the top communicator with many years' experience in the communications field to make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator with a few years' experience.

Although membership of top management was not tested in this hypothesis, it is interesting to note that Grunig, J & Grunig, L posited two explanations for the inclusion of public relations in top management: either public relations departments represented in the power elite are empowered to practice the two-way model of communication or only those practitioners with expertise to practice such a model will be included in that inner circle.

Because of the significant correlations between inclusion in top management and both education and expertise in public relations, they favoured the latter explanation (Grunig, L, in Grunig, J, 1992:493).

It can, therefore, be assumed that top communicators with the relevant public relations/communication knowledge, skills and experience should have a better opportunity to become part of top management.

The limitations experienced with this study, as well as the recommendations for further research will now be discussed.

7.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The most notable limitation of this study was that the sources of information that were used were to a large extent limited to the writings of the members of the *Excellence* team, amongst others Dozier, Grunig, J & Grunig, L, since the most comprehensive research on this topic was done by this team. Where the work of other writers was consulted for this study, the research of the *Excellence* team was often quoted and discussed.

In the literature review it was indicated that top communicators should be managers with communication skills, rather than communicators with management skills. The focus should, therefore, be on the management and leadership skills of the top communicator. Although the knowledge level of top communicators was briefly

discussed in this study, more research needs to be done on the management skills of top communicators in their new role as facilitators, negotiators and strategists in the organisation.

Internal and external audiences furthermore need to be aligned with the strategic vision and objectives of the organisation in order for the latter to survive in a very competitive environment.

Because of the communication expertise and the holistic perspective of the top communicator, as well as her location as boundary-spanner in the organisation, she can act as the integrator of processes and strategies in the organisation in order to align the various stakeholders, shareholders, publics, staff and clients of the organisation. She is also in a favourable position to integrate organisational processes by means of communication practices in order to contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. However, further research needs to be done on the skills necessary to play this role and to truly become part of the decision-making process on top management level.

7.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has set out to contribute to communication theory building. In studying communication theory and identifying concepts, constructs and variables as well as the links between them, it was endeavoured to contribute to an understanding of the underlying principles of communication management in the modern organisation. Since the environment in which communicators operate is fast becoming more complex, with new communication sources, mediums, receivers and methods coming into existence every day, it is important for the communication manager to be knowledgeable about the theory of communication management. This study can help top communicators understand that it is now, more than ever, necessary to use more sophisticated two-way public relations models for communicating with constituencies and to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making by playing the public relations manager role.

Communicators in communication departments furthermore need to perform their technical work in a strategic manner in order to add value in the organisation. Top communicators in the South African organisation will have to position themselves as managers who can take part in management decision-making and who can be held accountable for their communication actions in the same manner as other senior managers are held accountable for their actions. In this way senior managers will come to value and support the top communicator and the communication department.

The findings of this study supported the assumption that it is the perception of top communicators in South African organisations that senior management expects them to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making by playing the public relations manager role, and using two-way public relations models in organisational decision-making and communication activities.

With the results for Hypotheses 1 and 2 as a point of departure, it can be assumed that the top communicator, predominantly playing the public relations manager role, and using two-way public relations models, can make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. This can lead to excellent communication and can contribute to the top communicator being valued and supported by top management.

Top communicators do not perceive reporting lines to the CEO (or any other manager) or senior management (or middle management) to be very good indicators of their strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. These findings support the communication theory that reporting relationships are necessary, but hardly sufficient for making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making, as indicated by Dozier et al (1995:84). Reporting relationships alone tell us little about the influence of individuals on senior management or on organisational decision-making. The critical factor is not whom one reports to, but rather whether one has access to any of the (corporate) officers at will.

The assumption can also be made that it is the perception of top communicators that senior management expects the top communicator in a small organisation to make a

slightly bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than they expect the top communicator in a large organisation to make. It can also be assumed that senior management expects the top communicator to make a bigger strategic contribution in large public relations departments, where technical tasks can be delegated to other staff. Senior management furthermore expects top communicators in small and large departments to use one-way public relations models in their communication departments, but they expect top communicators in large departments to also use two-way public relations models.

It can, therefore, be assumed that two-way public relations models will be practised more frequently in large departments where it will also be expected of the top communicator to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making (by playing the public relations manager role).

This study showed that the highest qualification of the top communicator is a weak indicator of the strategic contribution the top communicator makes to organisational decision-making. This could indicate that skills and knowledge, rather than qualifications, are valued by senior management when the top communicator makes a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.

Senior management furthermore expects the top communicator with many years' experience in the communications field to make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making than the top communicator with a few years' experience.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 this cross-sectional study not only provides communication managers with information on how to become involved in strategic management in order to practice excellent communication, but can also be used by anyone wishing to contribute to excellence in the organisation through communication. This study highlighted the importance of the power of the top communicator and the communication department in the organisation; the expectations of senior management of the top communicator and the communication department with regard to the use of one-way and two-way public relations practices; and the public relations manager

and/or public relations technician role the top communicator plays in the organisation in order to contribute to communication excellence.

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APPENDIX A

8 August 2000

Dear Colleague

EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT: A SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY

In our on-going efforts to make the communication profession more professional, we, as communicators, constantly strive towards excellence in communication. In this effort it is important to realise that one of the most important determining factors of communication excellence in an organisation is the relationship between top communicators and senior management.

A team from the University of Pretoria is currently undertaking research to establish the nature of this relationship in the South African organisation. As part of this research, top communicators from a selection of corporations, associations, government agencies and non-profit organisations are questioned as to how they contribute to the practise of communication excellence in their organisations.

As a top communicator in your organisation, you could make a valuable contribution to this project and we would thus sincerely like you to take part in our investigation. The attached fact sheet contains more information on the project.

I would like to request that you take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire and send it back to me by e-mail, fax or post before or on **Friday, 11 August 2000**. The survey consists of 40 questions and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

This survey is strictly confidential and neither you nor your organisation will in any way be connected to the findings of this study. However, if you are interested in the results of the project, you are welcome to give your particulars at the end of the questionnaire, so that the findings can be forwarded to you.

Thank you, in advance, for your co-operation.

Kind regards

Estelle de Beer
COMMUNICATION MANAGER
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

**A NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND
COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

Dear Communication Manager/ Practitioner

BACKGROUND ON THE INTERNATIONAL *EXCELLENCE STUDY*

Research in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom, generally known as the *EXCELLENCE STUDY*, has indicated that the public relations/corporate communication function will make a vital contribution to the organisation's bottom line if the person in charge of communication, functions at the managerial level and has the *knowledge* to practise strategic communication management.

The second prerequisite for 'excellent communication', as identified by the *EXCELLENCE STUDY*, is *shared expectations* between the communication manager and top management. In other words, if the chief executive (CEO) does not understand the corporate communication/ public relations/ public affairs manager's strategic role in decision-making and does not allow him/her a place at the boardroom table, the communication function cannot practise 'excellent communication', no matter how knowledgeable and experienced the communication manager is. This finding provides an explanation for the frustration experienced by many communication managers who feel that they are not being 'allowed' to contribute that which they are capable of.

A team at the University of Pretoria has been conducting research over the last two years in order to obtain empirical findings on 'excellent communication' in this country. The following findings were obtained from the first phase:



BACKGROUND ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY: PHASE ONE (1997-1998)

Maybe you were one of the respondents who participated during 1997 in the first phase of the South African research project on 'excellent communication', undertaken by a team at the University of Pretoria (project leader: Retba Groenewald). The findings on the *skills and knowledge* that South African communication *managers* considered imperative in order to contribute to organisational effectiveness, were widely publicised. The background of the study was explained in two editions of the PRISA COMMUNIKA, the preliminary findings at the IABC Conference in September 1997, and the statistical findings at the PRISA Conference in Port Elizabeth, in May 1998. (On the latter occasion, the findings of the literature review on '*shared expectations*' was also touched upon--this constituted the beginning of Phase 2 of the research).

The main findings of Phase 1 was the following:

- Only 37% of the respondents (which consisted of communication *managers*) can be seen as communication specialists (having undergone *communication training*);
- Only 10% of the respondents (communication *managers*) have undergone *management training*;
- 51% of the respondents have undergone training *other than communication or management*
- South African communication *managers* considered strategic communication skills and management skills as significantly more important than technical communication skills, and thought that they had not been sufficiently trained in this.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WITH PHASE TWO OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY: 'SHARED EXPECTATIONS'

We are now ready to start the empirical (quantitative) research, which consists of two surveys that will run concurrently—corporate communication managers will be asked to '*share their expectations*' of, and comment on, the nature of their relationship with top management, whereas their chief executive officers (CEOs)/ managing directors will be asked to comment on their '*expectations*' of an ideal role for, and their perceptions of the behaviour of, their most senior manager/practitioner responsible for the communication function. As in the 1997 survey, the sampling plan consists of the membership lists of professional communication associations (PRISA, IABC, SACOMM and UNITECH).

APPENDIX B

For this questionnaire the terms public relations management and communication management will be regarded as synonyms.

Part 1

Section A

In this first of three sections you will answer questions on the value the senior management in your organisation attaches to the communication department, and the strategic contribution that you as top communicator make in the organisation.

Please select a number between 0 and 10 to indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Totally disagree					Totally agree					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Senior management supports the communication function in your organisation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. Senior management recognises that communication can make a strategic contribution.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. You readily have access to senior management.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. Senior management value your input before they make decisions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. Senior management expects you to make communication decisions fairly autonomously.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Senior management expects you to contribute towards effectiveness by helping the organisation to meet its goals.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Senior management expects the communications department to manage its own programme in line with the principles of strategic management.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. Senior management expects you to work closely with them to solve organisational problems that involve relationships with target audiences.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. Senior management expects you to use (formal and informal) research techniques to monitor trends in the organisation's environment for use in business decision making.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. You are in a position to influence key strategic decisions of senior management.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

The next section deals with questions about the communication model which is being used in your department and the expertise in your department.

Please select a number between 0 and 10 to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Totally disagree					Totally agree					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is predominantly to get your organisation's name into the media.											
2. Senior management believes that the success of communication is measured by the number of people who use your products or services.											
3. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to prevent unfavourable publicity for your organisation in the media.											
4. Senior management believes that it is your task to prepare news stories that reporters will use.											
5. Senior management believes that it is only necessary to keep a clipping file to determine the success of public relations.											
6. Senior management believes that the top communicator is a neutral disseminator of information.											
7. Senior management believes that in communication, the broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave.											
8. Senior management believes that after completing a communication programme, research should be done to determine how effective this programme has been in changing people's attitudes.											
9. Senior management believes you should make sure that the organisation's policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept.											
10. Senior management believes that the purpose of communication is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes of publics.											
11. Senior management believes it is the role of communication to facilitate mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics the organisation affects.											
12. Senior management believes communication should provide mediation opportunities to help management and publics negotiate conflict.											

Section C

Next you will answer questions about your role in the communication department. (These questions specifically refer to your role and not that of your subordinates.)

Please select a number between 0 and 10 to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Totally disagree					Totally agree					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Senior management expects you to predominantly write communication material such as speeches, articles, advertisements, etc.											
2. Senior management expects you to produce brochures.											
3. Senior management expects you to edit the grammar and spelling of the material written by others in the organisation.											
4. Senior management expects you to use your journalistic skills to establish what the media will consider newsworthy about your organisation.											
5. Senior management expects you to issue news releases.											
6. Senior management expects you to keep others in the organisation informed of what the media report about important issues.											
7. Senior management expects you to take responsibility for the success or failure of your organisation's communication programmes just as other managers take responsibility for their terrain.											
8. Senior management expects you to develop strategies for solving communication problems because of your experience and training.											
9. Senior management expects you to make communication policy decisions.											
10. Senior management expects you to act as counsel to top decision makers when communication issues are involved.											
11. Senior management expects you to create opportunities for management to hear the views of various (internal and external) publics.											
12. Senior management expects you to represent the organisation at events or meetings.											

Part II

Finally, there are a few demographic questions about you and your organisation.

1. **To whom do you report to in your organisation? (State designation)**

Would you regard that person to be part of:

Junior management

Middle management

Senior management

2. **Approximately how many people are employed by the organisation you work for?**

3. **Approximately how many communication practitioners are in your department?**

4. **What is your highest qualification?**

5. **How many years experience do you have in the communications field?**

6. **What is your designation?**

Thank you. That completes the questionnaire

I am interested in the results of this study. Please forward it to me at:

Name: _____

Postal address: _____

Tel: _____

Fax: _____

Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

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