# Obstacles to integrated communication (IC) implementation: critiques of existing models and recommendations for a new South African model

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A B S T R A C T

After almost 15 years of existence, integrated communication (IC) is still difficult to implement in order to integrate all the marketing and communication efforts of an enterprise. It is contended that the first reason for this is the confusion between the concepts of 'integrated marketing communication' (IMC) and 'integrated communication' (IC). Secondly, structural and/or functional obstacles in existing global models (developed predominantly in Europe and America) prohibit or deter successful communication integration with all stakeholders. The purpose of this article was to explore the differences between the concepts of IMC and IC and to critique the six existing models of IC implementation in order to work towards the development of a more encompassing IC implementation model (especially for South Africa) that truly resembles the essence of IC. An extensive literature study was conducted for the first objective, and comparative analysis was employed as the research methodology for pursuing the second objective. It is concluded that IC evolved from IMC, and it is argued that IC implementation models should address integration from an organisation-wide perspective, including more than merely communication *per se*. All the various dimensions of communication, both internal as well as external to the organisation, should be involved to ensure total brand communication. The value of the research lies in the fact that an attempt is made to resolve the confusion surrounding the concepts of IMC and IC. Based on this clarification, the existing models of IC are critiqued against the true essence of IC rather than IMC. Lastly, ten recommendations for a new IC implementation model are formulated, and the South African context is touched upon.

**Key words:** comparative analysis, integrated communication implementation, integrated communication, integrated marketing communication, Stakeholder Age, strategic communication, strategic intent, total brand communication

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## INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the new millennium, Kitchen (1999: v) observed that the most recognisable development in business and management is the globalisation of markets for products and services. In the same year, Keegan (1999: 21) argued that, to many managers, executives and leading-edge managerial and marketing thinkers, globalisation was already a reality. Kitchen & Schultz (2000: 6, 14) further elaborated that for many businesses and industries, business extends well beyond the national marketplace, and they reasoned that almost irrespective of the distribution and widening of world markets, multi-national organisations would be poised to take full advantage of market and marketing opportunities on a global scale. In such environments, Dunning (1993: 14) argued that organisations should not only focus on marketing and strategic alliances, but should also gain and retain a global competitive advantage by optimising organisational resources and taking control of technology.

The most defining characteristic of the 21st century's globalised marketplace is that stakeholders have significantly greater access to far more information than in any previous phase of economic development (such as the Industrial Age) and social development (such as the Information Age). Based on this greater access to information, stakeholders become active roleplayers in the market. Also, because of the interactive nature of stakeholders, organisations in this age are more visible as accountable corporate citizens, and they have to exercise social responsibility towards all their stakeholders to a greater extent than ever before.

This means, as Kitchen & Schultz (2000: 7) explain, that all organisations will have to build real relationships with real stakeholders. Referring to 'real' implies that relationships are not outbound, based on spin, rhetoric and one-way communication – as was the case in the Industrial Age – but based on a correct understanding of the dynamics of served markets and constituencies throughout the world in which the organisation is competing (Kitchen & Schultz 2000: 7). It could be argued that the approach that organisations need to follow in order to ensure interactivity with stakeholders is that of integrated communication. Only then can brand loyalty be created and maintained.

## INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION OR INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION?

The integration of all communication actions and efforts serves as the driver of interactivity during the process of stakeholder integration. Some confusion exists, however, with respect to the terms 'integrated marketing communication' (IMC) and 'integrated communication' (IC). Niemann (2005: 86–99) scrutinised the literature and the existing definitions of IMC and IC before the late 1990s and summarised the

preferred formulation of the definition of IC until that time as "the strategic coordination of all messages (internally and externally) to create dialogue between the customer and the organisation, which will attitudinally and behaviourally move the customer towards brand loyalty".

Further intensive review of the literature since 1990, including the current body of knowledge of IC and IMC, yielded five fundamental differences between the two concepts, as described in the following sections.

## IMC focuses on customers, while IC includes other stakeholders

IMC focuses predominantly on customers. (Caywood, Schultz & Wang 1991: 3; Keegan, Moriarty & Duncan 1992; Schultz 1991: 101; Tannenbaum 1991). As long ago as 1983, Levitt (1983: xxii) stated eloquently: "The purpose of business is to get and keep a customer. Without solvent customers in some reasonable proportion, there is no business. Customers are constantly presented with lots of options to help them solve their problems. They do not buy things; they buy solutions to problems. To create betterness requires knowledge of what customers think betterness to be. The imagination that figures out what that is, imaginatively figures out what should be done, and does it with imagination and high spirits will drive the enterprise forward."

IC, however, proposes a more holistic perspective to include all stakeholders. Steyn & Puth (2000: 198) explain that "groups of people are stakeholders when they are affected by decisions of an organisation or if their decisions affect the organisation". According to these authors (2000: 198), publics form when stakeholders recognise the consequences of an organisation's behaviour as a problem and organise to do something about it. It should be borne in mind that organisations are functioning in the Stakeholder Age. In this age, organisations have to begin with, and focus very strictly on, the needs and wants of all stakeholders, rather than just customers, in order to become stakeholder-centric organisations. According to Duncan (2001: 14), this is known as the outside-in approach. It is contended that an IC approach will lead the organisation to greater stakeholder-centricity.

## IMC focuses on messages, while IC focuses on communication

In the context of IMC, the focus is on messages sent out by the organisation. In the context of IC, the focus is on communication (implying a two-way process), thus emphasising that all communication, not merely messages, contributes to the brand of the organisation.

## External messages versus internal and external messages

IMC focuses heavily on external messages, whereas IC focuses on internal and external messages. With IMC, Shimp (2006: 5) proposes that the focus is on the integration of marketing communication. The implication is that the focus remains

on the development and the delivery of external messages, and predominantly the functions of the marketing communication mix, in order to reach customers (Keller 1998: 138). Conversely, IC includes the integration of all communication sent out by the organisation, thereby including internal and external messages (Kitchen & Schultz 2000). In IC, the internal messages in the organisation are equally important to what is communicated externally. Internal messages are pivotal in the organisation so as to ensure agreement on the rationale for the organisation, accordance with organisational procedures, agreement on an organisational purpose, and unity of achievement within the organisation.

## Marketing/communication strategy versus the organisation's intent as the driver of organisational messages

Arguably, one of the most fundamental differences between IMC and IC is that with IMC, the marketing or communication departmental strategy drives the messages of the organisation. With IC, however, the strategic intent of the organisation as a whole drives all the communication of the organisation. Niemann (2005: 247) concludes by arguing that the organisational mission (the long-term strategic plan or strategic intent) should drive all the communication and business objectives and operations of the organisation (Niemann 2005: 247), and not the departmental strategy of a marketing or communication department, as is the case with IMC (Duncan 2001: 30).

## Technical aspects versus the strategic nature of the organisation

IMC contributes to the technical aspects of the organisation, whereas IC is strategic in nature, contributing to the strategic thinking processes within the system of the organisation. IC enables the organisation, using its mission, to be prominent in the long-term strategic organisational plan (strategic intent) in building the brand relationship with stakeholders by emphasising the corporate integrity of the organisation (Niemann 2005: 248). IMC, however, focuses on creating a common look. This approach to planning for IMC can be described as follows: some centralised or corporate group gives guidelines, and the makers of all communication material are asked to develop their materials accordingly. Thorson & Moore (1996: 137) refer to this approach as the "one look" approach. It is argued that for IC, the long-term strategic plan or strategic intent of the organisation should drive all strategic IC actions internally and externally for the organisation (including the organisational mission and learning).

## IC AS THE NECESSARY CONTEXT FOR IMC

Based on these five differences, it could be argued that the concept of IMC evolved into IC. IC can thus be regarded as a broader view of IMC, and it might therefore be

considered that true IMC can only be implemented in the context of IC. It should be emphasised that IC follows on IMC, and that IC is the context that should be created in order to implement IMC successfully. IC is built on the premise that there must be interaction between the two forms of communication (internally and externally) in an ongoing, interactive, independent and synergistic manner (Gronstedt 2000: 7). There should be no obstacle, despite the often-different functions, between these types of communication, for both are ultimately strategically indispensable in driving business forward. As a whole, IC is therefore not a new concept. It has evolved from the need to prepare organisations to succeed in the global future business landscape of the Stakeholder Age. "It is as a result reasoned that IC is always integrated marketing communication, but that integrated marketing communication is not always integrated communication" (Niemann 2005: 29).

The focus in the development of any new implementation model is therefore on IC rather than on IMC. A shift in the body of knowledge consequently appeared in the concept of IMC, as well as the implementation thereof in a more broad-based strategic approach, so that IC is regarded as an umbrella term for all strategic organisational communication (Kitchen & Schultz 2000: 4). In this evolutionary period of the concept, it would appear that much literature exists on IMC and IC. It could be argued that many of these texts claim to focus on IMC and IC, but they are in truth merely traditional promotional approach texts, which cover promotional elements, rather than true integration. In addition, most of these texts exclude various other IC mix elements, and some of the literature, advocating the idea of IC, does not view IC as an organisational process but merely as the superficial integration of a message for a specific campaign. Alternatively, there are instances in the literature where reference is made to IMC, whereas the concepts and conclusions are actually more reflective of an IC context (Duncan & Moriarty 1997; Atkinson, Waterhouse & Wells 1997; Duncan & Caywood 1996; Gronstedt 1996; Kitchen & Schultz 2000). In these instances, the authors refer to their ideas as IMC, whereas the ideas actually incline more to the definition and principles of true IC.

IC is therefore defined, for the purposes of the current research, as "the strategic management process of organisationally controlling or influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful, data-driven dialogue to create and nourish long-term, profitable relationships with stakeholders" (Niemann 2005: 30).

## STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL OBSTACLES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IC

Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn (1992: 4) argue that since its inception, IC has received considerable attention. Pettegrew (2000: 1) reasons that despite its appeal, more than a decade has passed since the concept was first introduced, and most major organisations have yet to fully implement the foundational ideas contained in IC.

Percy (1997: 8) consequently states that the theory of IC, while theoretically pragmatic, ultimately fails because of significant structural-functional obstacles to its implementation. However, it can be argued that the value of IC lies less in which organisations have adopted it and more in the competitive advantage it can provide, as well as the fact that the complexity of human communication requires tenacious integration in order to be consistent and effective. If IC is truly to become what Argyris, Putnam & Smith (1985: 72) refer to as a theory-in-use, Pettegrew (2000: 2) postulates that a substantive analysis of organisational obstacles to the adoption of IC and strategic actions to overcome them must be advanced.

# EXISTING MODELS OF IC IMPLEMENTATION

Most research on IC spent almost no time in introducing existing models of IC implementation (except for Hunter 1999), although the arguments contained therein were used to develop new models. The following section discusses existing models with the purpose of focusing on the validity or the 'implementability' of the models weighed against the fundamental arguments of IC literature.

## The evolutionary IC model

The evolutionary IC model, introduced by Duncan & Caywood (1996), assumes that organisations can integrate communication activities over time. The model consists of concentric circles, as presented in Figure 1, illustrating that one stage of integration may build on the experience of the previous stage. The evolutionary model also assumes that communication professionals gain experience at each stage, allowing them to add to the level of performance. IC, according to the stages of IC, begins at an awareness level and may advance through several stages to a general integration of new ways of conducting business.

### Discussion and critique

It can be argued that the value of the evolutionary model of IC is that it presents several evolutionary stages on the way to an ideal IC function. This helps organisations that choose to integrate their communication activities to establish their priorities in re-designing their processes and possibly even restructuring their communication functions. Furthermore, it is reasoned that the value of this model is that other stakeholders, apart from customers, are assigned considerable importance. It is therefore evident that customers remain the most important group of stakeholders, but the value of other stakeholders to the organisation is explicitly mentioned and emphasised. The major criticism of this model would be that it advocates, in essence, a silo approach. By focusing initially on specific sections of
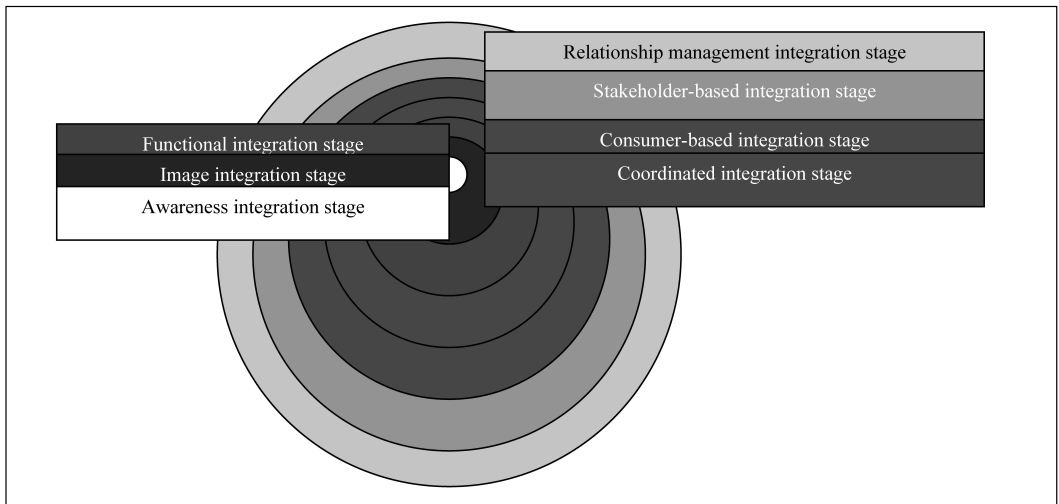
Source: Duncan & Caywood (1996: 22)

Figure 1: The evolutionary model of integrated communication

business, it does not include the strategic intent of the organisation as a point of departure. The implication is thus that IC implementation incorporates the organisation's strategic purpose only towards the end of the implementation process.

Gronstedt's (1996) proposed stakeholder relations model takes the notion of stakeholder orientation yet further.

## A stakeholder relations model for IC

Gronstedt (1996) labels the model in which he attempts to integrate marketing communication and public relations as a "stakeholder relations model". His thinking is based on the criticism that "the divisionalizing of the communications responsibilities into narrow disciplines has created communication technocrats" (Gronstedt 1996: 287). Furthermore, he presents two arguments as to why such a distinction does not make sense. Not only do publics and markets overlap (Kotler 1986: 117–124), but so do marketing and public relations tools. Hunter (1999) states that advertising is no longer limited to marketing, and public relations professionals are increasingly using "corporate advertising" to communicate their messages. Gronstedt (1996: 289–290) provides evidence that marketers, likewise, are increasingly making use of public relations tools.

Figure 2 represents the Gronstedt (1996: 287) model of IC. It explains and unites the main dimensions of public relations and marketing communication and subsequently offers a stakeholder-based approach to IC.
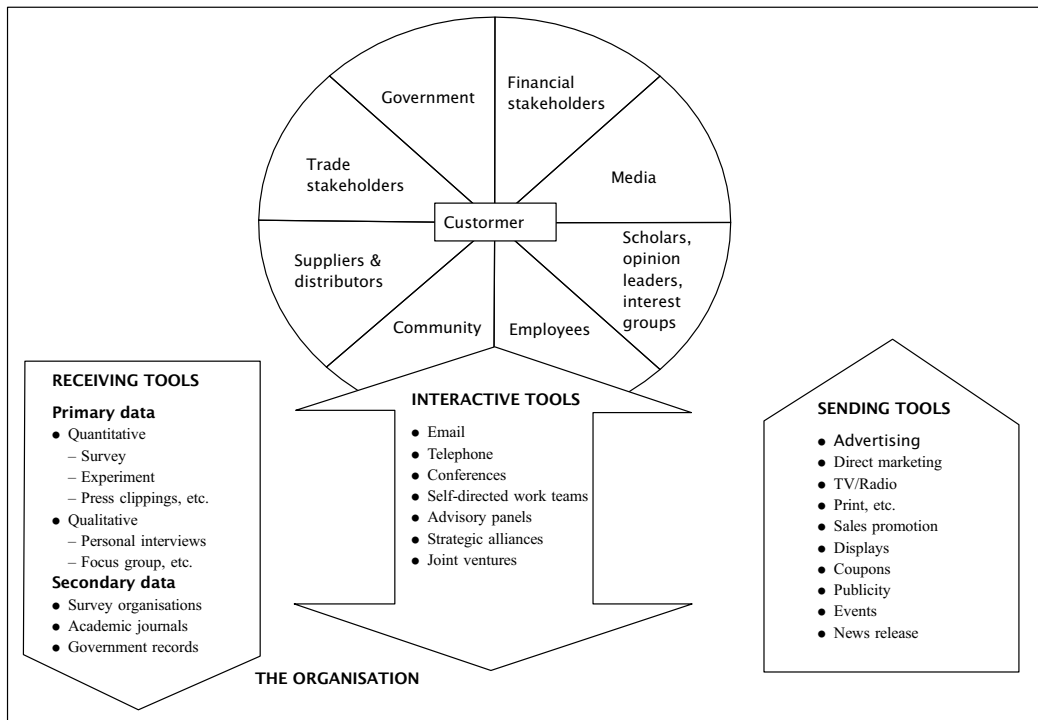
Source: Gronstedt (1996: 291)

Figure 2: Stakeholder relations model

## Discussion and critique

The most important criticism of the Gronstedt (1996) stakeholder relations model is that no reference is made to the organisation itself or to the stakeholders' relations with the organisation. All the emphasis is therefore placed on stakeholders and none on how the organisation should position and organise itself to build relationships with stakeholders. Another criticism is that the model focuses predominantly on external messages to stakeholders, without sufficiently emphasising internal messages to internal stakeholders such as employees (which are mentioned in the model).

However, the significance of the evolutionary IC model proposed by Duncan & Caywood (1996) and the Gronstedt (1996) model of stakeholder relations lies in the suggested merging the two models discussed thus far. In such a model, it can be argued that the organisation can first determine where it is in terms of integrating communication efforts by applying the Duncan & Caywood (1996) model and then applying the Gronstedt (1996) model of stakeholder relations to focus more specifically on the stakeholder aspects that need integration.

   The next model of IC implementation to be discussed is that presented by Hunter (1997).

## Hunter's IC implementation model

According to Wightman (1999: 3), Thomas Hunter's thesis for the University of Salzburg offered the most extensive examination at that time of the issues surrounding the corporate implementation of an IC structure. After an extensive analysis of the factors influencing corporate marketing communication structure, Hunter (1997) developed a five-stage model of integration, which is merely descriptive of the process and does not include a graphical model. Hunter's five-stage model (1997) consists of the following five steps:

- There is coordination and cooperation between public relations and marketing.
- Public relations and marketing are perceived as equally important by members of the organisation, especially top management, regardless of their organisational relationship.
- Marketing communication is moved from the marketing department to the public relations department, which will then be known as the communication department. The communication department will then consist of three subdivisions: marketing communication, corporate communication and internal communication.
- Communication and marketing are placed on a hierarchical level immediately below the CEO, and both functions have their senior officer in the dominant coalition.
- The communication function is integrated into the relationship management approach, as proposed by IC scholars Duncan & Caywood (1996). There is a consulting relationship between the marketing department and the subdivision for marketing communication.

   This model can be graphically represented as shown in Figure 3.

### Discussion and critique

Although Hunter (1997, 1999) contributes strongly to the structuring, standing and approach to communication (and the consequent relationship within the organisation to other functions), the model fails to include sufficient focus on the external emphasis of IC. Moreover, although the model proposes a relationship management approach in the fifth stage, the approach still focuses predominantly on building relationships with other organisational functions to create a fully integrated organisation. It is therefore argued that the model serves as a good grounding for the internal, departmental communication aspects in IC, but lacks the inclusion of stakeholders and their consequent environments.
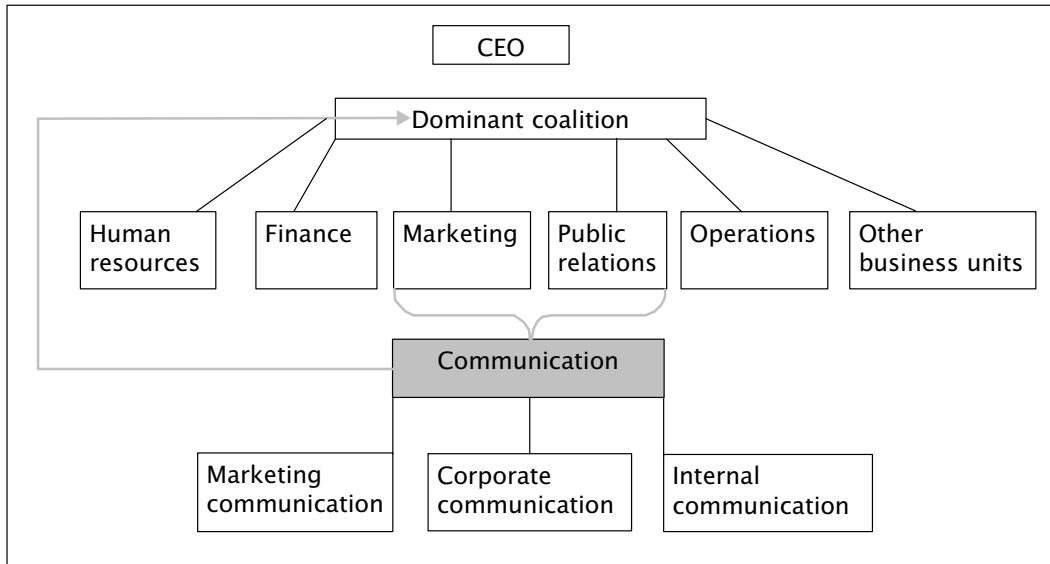
Source: Niemann (2005: 122)

Figure 3: Hunter's five-stage model for integrated communication

The next model, proposed by Grunig & Grunig (1998), criticises various authors' viewpoints of IC. They recommend a model that supports the view that marketing communication should be coordinated by the public relations department.

## Integration through the public relations function

Grunig & Grunig (1998: 146) reason that there is intrinsic worth in integrating all marketing communication functions. However, they criticise the narrow outlook of public relations held by supporters of IC. Grunig & Grunig (1998: 147) review the models of Duncan & Caywood (1996) and Gronstedt (1996) and conclude as follows:

- With regard to the Duncan & Caywood model (1996), they argue that the last two stages (stakeholder-based and relationship management integration) bear a strong resemblance to the integration of communication through the public relations function, as they propose.
- With reference to the Gronstedt model (1996), they disagree with the assignment of customers as central to the model, implying that they are the most important stakeholders. In this regard, they suggest instead that an equally sound argument can be made that employees or investors are the most important stakeholders and that different publics are more or less strategic for different kinds of organisations.

## Discussion and critique

It is contended that the major difference between the integration proposed by Grunig & Grunig (1998: 147) and the suggestions of the scholars previously discussed is that Grunig & Grunig (1998: 147) do not suggest moving integration upwards through the marketing communication function. It is suggested that integration begins at the highest level of integration, incorporating marketing communication and communication programmes for other stakeholders into the public relations function. Grunig & Grunig (1998: 147) agree with Drobis (1997–1998: 9), who declares that marketing is 'dead', and they argue further that integrated communication must "go beyond marketing to encompass employee and labour relations, investor relations, government affairs, customer service and just about any other facet of management where effective communications is a critical success factor" (Drobis 1997–1998: 7). In this regard, it is reasoned that all communication functions in the organisation should rather be integrated and function as an overall, centralised communication department, as opposed to separate communication functions in various departments, as the latter could promote turf battles between various communication functions.
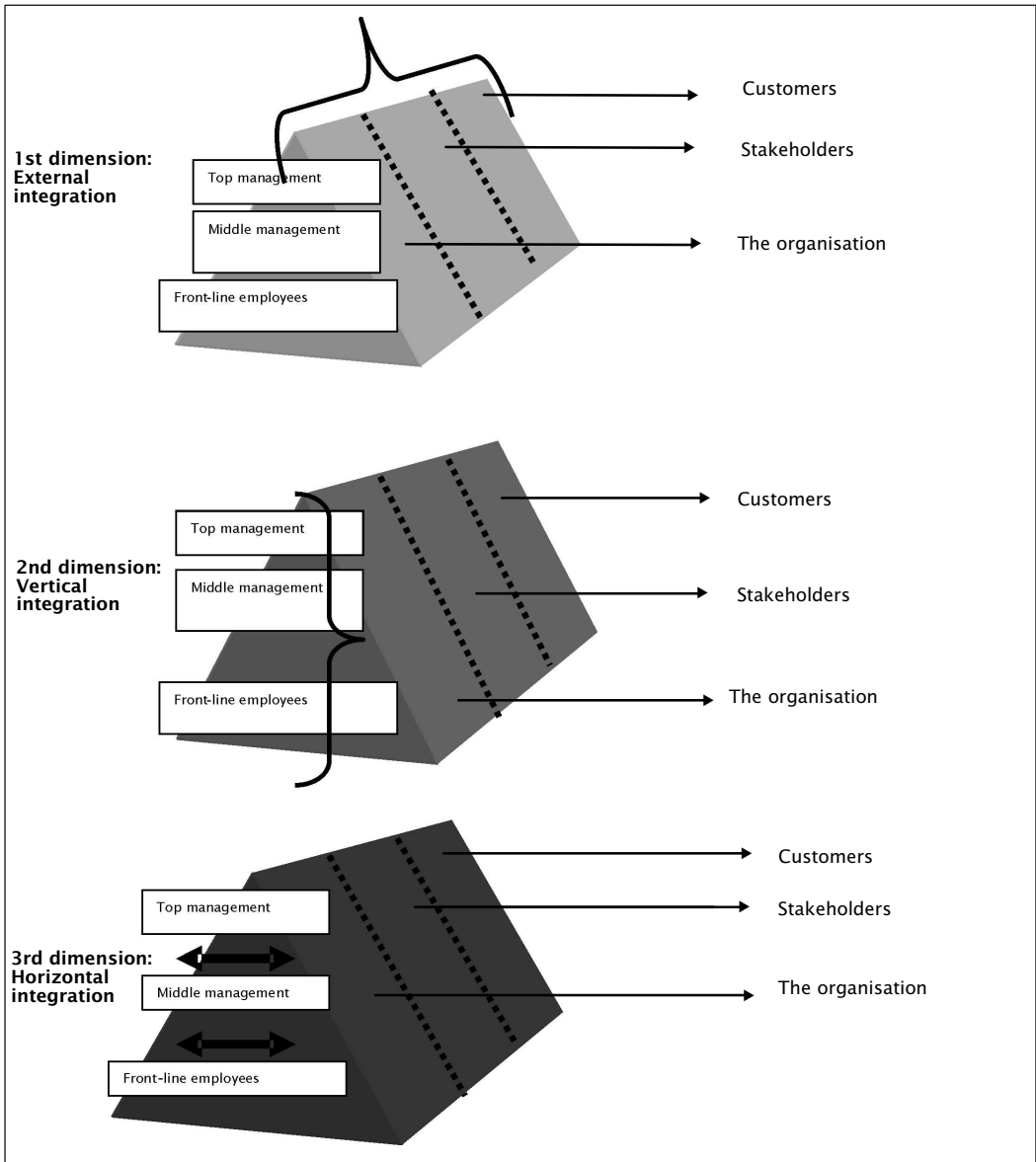
Although this model of IC makes valuable contributions to the field of IC, the major criticism is in line with one of the foundational ideas of IC, namely that this model can potentially emphasise and advance turf battles in the organisation and, equally, over-emphasise the separation of functions. According to IC theory, all communication functions have an equal opportunity of contributing to the IC approach (Niemann 2002: 146). Furthermore, separating functions such as marketing and public relations, as proposed by the Grunig & Grunig model (1998), is in direct contrast to the idea of cross-functional planning, which is a fundamental principle of IC. Similar to Hunter's model, Grunig & Grunig (1998: 146) do not propose a graphical representation of the model of integration through the public relations function.

Gronstedt (1996), who suggested the stakeholder relations model, has since advanced his philosophy on IC and proposed his most recent model in 2000, namely the three-dimensional IC model.

## The three-dimensional IC model

The three-dimensional IC model is based on a nine-year study by Gronstedt on the role of communication at 14 leading organisations in America and Europe in order to research the concept of effective IC. The model that Gronstedt (2000) proposes on the basis of this research moves the organisation from a "production century" organisation (characterised by inside-out thinking) to a "customer century" organisation (characterised by outside-in thinking).

Gronstedt's model (2000) suggests that the organisation should integrate communication externally with key customers and stakeholders, vertically between

**1st dimension:**
**External**
**integration**

Top management

Middle management

Front-line employees

Customers

Stakeholders

The organisation

**2nd dimension:**
**Vertical**
**integration**

Top management

Middle management

Front-line employees

Customers

Stakeholders

The organisation

**3rd dimension:**
**Horizontal**
**integration**

Top management

Middle management

Front-line employees

Customers

Stakeholders

The organisation

Source: Gronstedt (2000: 8)

Figure 4: The three-dimensional approach to integrated communication

senior management and frontline workers, and horizontally across departments, business units and geographical boundaries.

The first triangle depicted in Figure 4 represents the organisation with senior management at the top, middle management in the middle and front-line employees

(anyone below middle management that adds value directly or indirectly to the customer) at the bottom. The triangle behind represents stakeholders such as the local community, the media, investors and government regulators. The last triangle represents the customers. Gronstedt (2000: 17) illustrates the groups as overlapping triangles to show that "customer century organisations" (or "stakeholder century organisations") need to involve people from all ranks and from every department in ongoing dialogues with customers and other stakeholders.

### Discussion and critique

Gronstedt's new model (2000) is clearly based on his stakeholder relations model (1996), but offers several new elements that advance his views on integration. The major contribution of the new model is the analytical approach in the distinction of three separate levels of integration (namely externally, horizontally and vertically). In the new three-dimensional model of IC, Gronstedt (2000) emphasises (in similar vein, but more emphatically than in his first model) the importance of not supporting the traditional divisionalisation of the communication functions. The new model further includes the brand and a stakeholder orientation as the guiding principles of IC. Gronstedt's (2000) model could be criticised for placing insufficient emphasis on the communication function itself in integrating the three dimensions, and therefore not providing guidance on the source of communication in the three-dimensional integration.

   In the following section, the focus is on the eight-step IC process suggested by Kitchen & Schultz (2000).

## An eight-step IC model

Kitchen & Schultz (2000) advocate an eight-step IC model. This model proposes IC of a circular nature, progressing through all eight steps, and then taking the communication professional back to Step 1 (see Figure 5). Through this 'closed loop' planning system, the learning from each step in the model and from each completed communication effort is incorporated and combined with the data previously gathered and stored, and offers a basis for planning the next stage of communication or the next communication effort. The organisation is constantly learning from marketplace experience, and is continuously improving and enhancing its knowledge of customers and prospective customers. In this model, the organisation is also constantly testing assumptions and relating them to the reality of the marketplace.

### Discussion and critique

It is argued that it is the 'closed-loop', circular system that differentiates this IC model from other generally ad hoc approaches. Only by using actual marketplace results as
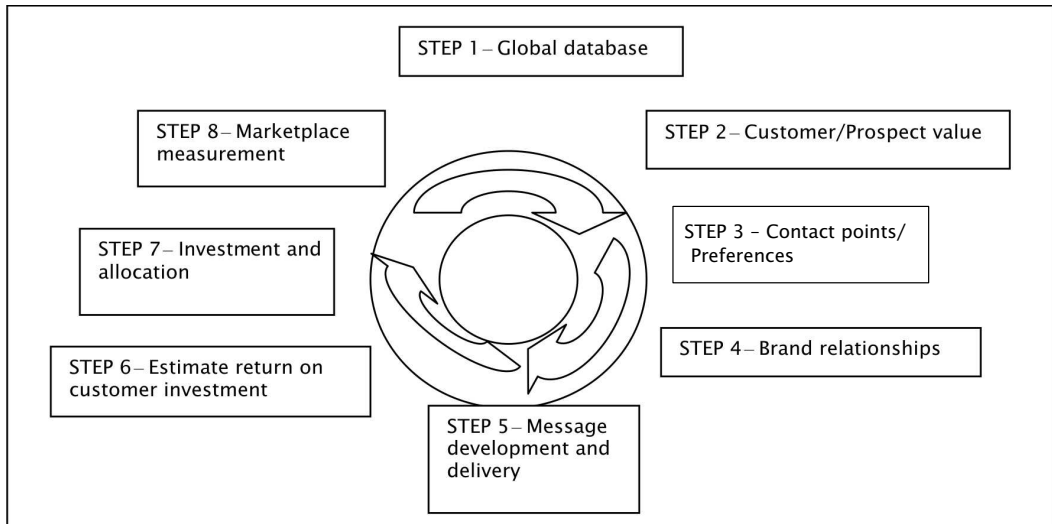
Source: Kitchen & Schultz (2000: 9)

Figure 5: An eight-step integrated communication model

the basis for the next communication effort can the organisation essentially become a learning organisation. Knowing what was successful and what was not, knowing what performed up to expectations and what did not, enables better, more effective communication professionals. The most significant contribution of this model is that it proposes a clear understanding of the value of customers, enabling the expenditure of communication resources and effort according to the return on customer investment. However, this model can be criticised for focusing predominantly on customers, thereby excluding a broader stakeholder approach and not placing sufficient emphasis on internal and external messages.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS ON CURRENT IC IMPLEMENTATION MODELS

In this article, various IC implementation models have been scrutinised and criticised to elucidate the issue of effective IC implementation. The evolutionary IC model proposed by Duncan & Caywood (1996) focuses on several stages of IC. The model is depicted in a circular form to dispel the notion that any stage is more important than another. As an alternative, each stage may utilise the experience of the previous stage, and each organisation determines the stage that most closely matches its existing situation.

The stakeholder relations model (Gronstedt 1996) proposes an integrated approach to communication by merging the main dimensions of public relations

and marketing communication. The central tenet of the model is that a communication professional will utilise the marketing or public relations tool with the greatest potential for success in a given situation. Hunter's model (1997) is derived from the modification of a previous model (Hunter 1999). The model identified five stages essential for integration.

Grunig & Grunig (1998) propose integration through the public relations function. This model criticises the other models discussed earlier and emphasises the importance of integrating all the communication efforts through the public relations department. The Excellence Study (Grunig 1992) was used as a motivation for separating marketing and public relations, suggesting that communication should be coordinated through the public relations department. The purpose of the Excellence Study was to identify the characteristics that constitute 'excellence' in the management of public relations and communications. The study aimed to answer two related questions: firstly, how public relations contributes to achieving organisational objectives, and thus to organisational effectiveness; and secondly, how public relations should be practised and organised to contribute most to organisational effectiveness. In seeking to answer these questions, Grunig (1992) recognised that it was necessary to determine how public relations should be practised at the programme, departmental and organisational levels.

The three-dimensional model of IC suggested by Gronstedt (2000) demonstrates that IC is a strategic management process that must involve the entire organisation (the "unity of effort" of the organisation). The model symbolises three dimensions that are considered necessary for an organisation to survive in the customer and stakeholder centuries.

Lastly, Kitchen & Schultz's (2000) eight-step IC model comprehensively describes the implementation of IC. This model has a very distinct business management approach, with explicit recognition of the financial implications of IC for the organisation.

The argument that marketing and communication management should be integrated and considered to form part of business management is reiterated in the models discussed, especially those of Hunter (1997) and Grunig & Grunig (1998). It can therefore be reasoned that the implementation of strategic IC should be regarded as part of business management, and not merely as a function thereof. It is also further argued, on the basis of existing models, that organisations cannot build external relationships before building internal relationships.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW MODEL FOR IC IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the discussion of the existing IC models, it is argued that the following aspects should to be borne in mind in developing a new model for IC implementation in the Stakeholder Age:

- The model should be based on a holistic perspective to ensure that IC is an organisation-wide endeavour.
- The strategic intent of the organisation should be the point of departure for any organisation considering the implementation of IC.
- Strong emphasis should be placed on all stakeholders of the organisation, to include key players beyond merely customers.
- If the organisation wishes to ensure interactivity with all stakeholders and the consequent environments in which they function, it should consistently monitor and adapt to the greater environment in which it functions.
- IC should undoubtedly be practised and implemented at a strategic level within the organisation.
- Communication objectives should be aligned with the organisational goal and, more importantly, the strategic intent of the organisation. "Then, and only then, can communication and marketing management be regarded as being a strategic contribution to the business management of the organization" (Niemann 2005: 30).
- The organisation must learn from its environment and stakeholders in order to build and nourish profitable relationships with the organisational brand.
- The organisation should constantly reposition itself and its strategic goal according to what is learnt from the environment in order to survive in dynamic, challenging circumstances.
- The focus should be on the relationships, structure and interdependence of the parts of the model, rather than on the parts themselves.
- Communication should be regarded as a business approach rather than merely another function of the organisation.

## THE NEED FOR A SOUTH AFRICAN MODEL FOR INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION IMPLEMENTATION

Limited research and literature exist on the topic of integrated communication in the South African marketplace. A study by Ehlers (2002) considered the development of a framework for structuring integrated communication in South African organisations. The study focused on just two functions of IC, namely marketing and public relations (by analysing web sites), and could therefore be criticised for taking too limited a perspective. The models considered in the present study were developed in the contexts of European and American marketplaces and then implemented globally. Although the IC implementation models discussed in this study should, in theory, be practised and applied on an international scale, it could be argued that the South African context calls for unique communication approaches based on global communication trends and theories, but adapted to the African continent.

## NOTE

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