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Model for developing corporate communication strategy

ABSTRACT

The body of knowledge in the field of corporate communication indicates a strategic role for the corporate communication manager. However, there are but a few references to corporate communication 'strategy' in a strategic organisational context. Few practitioners seem to understand the meaning of strategy, although it is a known, uncomplicated concept to those familiar with management theory. The key problem seems to lie in the application of strategy for corporate communication (public relations) issues.

It is therefore the aim of this article to explain the meaning of *strategy* in a corporate communication context. Based on the strategic management literature, corporate communication strategy is conceptualised as a *functional* strategy, providing focus and direction to the corporate communication function. It is differentiated from *implementation* strategy as it is known in the communication plan - the latter being the approach to communication activities. Corporate communication strategy is proposed as providing the missing link between the corporate strategy and the corporate communication function.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Although the corporate communication industry acknowledges that strategy should be an integral part of its communication programmes, in practice this amounts to little more than lip service (Tibble, 1997:356):

> Strategy and the communications world, and particularly the PR part of that world, just do not seem to go together. It is certainly unusual to come across a memorable, cogent, sustained, and effective communications strategy. Not a brand strategy. Not a marketing strategy. Not an advertising strategy — a communication strategy.

The fact that the concept of 'corporate communication strategy' has received little attention in academic (or practitioner) literature might be a contributory factor towards this situation. However, academic knowledge in the area of the strategic management of an organisation's communication is relatively limited (Van Riel, 1995:142). It therefore seems necessary to gain insight into strategic decision-making procedures and related management concepts, in order to conceptualise *corporate communication strategy* and suggest a model for its development.

This article will firstly clarify relevant concepts and provide a theoretical framework for corporate communication strategy. Secondly, it will explore the meaning of the concept of 'strategy' by investigating the body of knowledge on corporate strategy and strategic management. Thirdly, it will provide a conceptualisation of corporate communication strategy. Fourthly, it will suggest a model to guide practitioners and students in developing a corporate communication strategy for an organisation.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.1 Model

McQuail and Windahl (1993:2-3) consider a model as a consciously simplified description of a piece of reality in graphic form. The model developed in this article is a *functional* model, which describes systems in terms of energy, forces and their direction; the relationship between the parts; and the influence of one part on another. The aim of the model presented is thus to organise the components of the corporate communication strategy process and to explicate their development.

2.2 Corporate communication

Corporate communication can be defined as *"the integrated approach to all communication produced by an organisation, directed at relevant target groups"* (Van Riel, 1995:24), both internal and external.

The term *corporate communication* is increasingly being used in practice to describe the management function that is still referred to as *public relations* in academic literature (Groenewald, 1998:58). A survey among Fortune 500 companies in the US indicated that, as early as 1992, *corporate communication* was used in 164 cases compared to 76 companies that persisted with *public relations* (Budd, 1995).

Corporate communication is thus preferred when referring to an overall corporate communication strategy for an organisation, further justification being that public relations suffers from negative associations with the way in which it has been practised in the past (Ehling, *in* Grunig, 1992). Public relations is also seen by some chief executives in South Africa as referring only to an organisation's external communication (Steyn, 1999). Corporate communication is regarded in this article as the broader term, encompassing both internal and external communication.

2.3 Public relations

The concept of *corporate communication strategy* is based on the following definitions of public relations (corporate communication):

- The First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations, held in Mexico City in 1978, defined public relations as *"the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisational leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation and the public interest"* (Jefkins & Ugboajah, 1986).
- Public relations is *"a communication function of management through which organisations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organisational goals"* (Long & Hazelton, 1987:6).
- Public relations is *"the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends"* (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994:1).

The emphasis in these definitions is on identifying and managing issues and stakeholders/ publics in order to assist the organisation in adapting to its environment and building mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders, on whom it depends to meet its goals.

2.4 Strategy

Strategy could be seen as the *thinking*, i.e. the logic behind the actions (Robert, 1997:22). Drucker (*in* Kotler, 1988:61) sees it as an indication of an organisation's positioning for the future, deciding *what* should be done rather than *how* it should be done. Strategy requires choices—deciding what particular kind of value an organisation wants to deliver and to whom (Porter, *in* Gibson, 1997).

2.5 Stakeholders and publics

These two terms are often used synonymously — however, in the context of the strategic management of an organisation's communication, there are subtle differences. Individuals or groups are *stakeholders* when they are affected by the decisions of an organisation or if their decisions affect an organisation (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholders are normally seen as being *passive*, e.g. employees or members of the community. When they become aware of potential problems in the relationship with an organisation and actively communicate about it, they can be described as *aware* or *active* publics (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig, 1992:125).

3. GENERAL THEORY OF EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The dominant world view of corporate communication is the asymmetrical view that corporate communication is a way of getting what an organisation wants without changing its behaviour or reaching a compromise with its stakeholders or publics. This mindset guides organisations in directions that are ineffective and not in their long-term interests. Asymmetrical world views steer corporate communication practitioners towards actions that are unethical, socially irresponsible and ineffective. Such practitioners presuppose that the organisation knows best and that stakeholders/ publics benefit from 'co-operating' with it (Grunig, 1989).

Excellent organisations adopt the view that corporate communication is a symmetrical process of compromise and negotiation and not 'a war for power'. Organisations with a symmetrical world view do not isolate themselves from their environment, but are open to interpenetrating systems and freely exchange information with their stakeholders. In such organisations, people are given equal opportunity, new ideas flourish, conflict is resolved through negotiation and managers coordinate rather than dictate (Grunig, *in* Grunig, 1992:39, 43-44).

By developing a corporate communication strategy, organisations will manage their stakeholders and issues proactively - striving towards cooperation and mutually beneficial relationships. Corporate communication strategy will also serve as the link in aligning corporate communication goals with organisational goals, thereby facilitating the function's contribution to organisational effectiveness.

Bearing the above theoretical framework in mind, the concept of *strategy* (in the context of the organisation's strategic management process) will now be explicated.

4. LITERATURE ON STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

4.1 Strategy

Virtually everyone writing on strategy agrees that there is no consensus on its definition (Chaffee, 1985:89). In the following paragraphs, an attempt will be made to bring some order to the chaos that the term 'strategy' has created.

Strategy, from the Greek word 'strategia' (office of the general), is *"the science or art of military command as applied to the overall planning and conduct of large scale combat operations"*. Strategy could therefore be seen as the thinking, i.e. the logic behind the actions (Robert, 1997:22). Most authors affirm that the heart of strategy-making is in the conceptual work done by leaders of the organisation.

Drucker (*in* Kotler, 1988:61) sees strategy as an indication of the organisation's positioning for the future; the *what* rather than the *how*. It means doing the right thing, rather than doing things right. A strategy can also be seen as an approach, design, scheme or system that directs the course of action in a specific situation (Grunig & Repper, *in* Grunig, 1992:123). Where there is no clear concept of strategy, decisions are based on either subjective or intuitive assessment and are made without regard for other decisions (Jain, 1997:9).

Various authors see strategy as a pattern, namely:
- a pattern in the organisation's important decisions and actions, consisting of a few key areas or things by which the firm seeks to distinguish itself (Kami, 1984);
- a pattern in a stream of actions—this pattern being the result of strategic decisions made by the firm (Mintzberg, 1987);
- a pattern of *"major objectives, purposes, or goals and essential policies and plans for achieving those goals, stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or is to be"* (Jain, 1997:9).

Chaffee (1985:90) clusters strategy definitions in literature into three groups:
- **Linear** strategy, which *"focuses on planning, and consists of integrated decisions, actions, or plans that will set and achieve viable organisational goals"*.
- **Adaptive** strategy, which is concerned with the *"development of a viable match between the opportunities and risks present in the external environment and the organisation's capabilities and resources for exploiting these opportunities"*. The environment is seen to consist of trends, events, competitors and stakeholders, to

which the organisation must adapt.

- **Interpretive** strategy, which views the organisation as *a "collection of co-operative agreements entered into by individuals with free will. The organisation's existence relies on its ability to attract enough individuals to co-operate in mutually beneficial exchange"*. The focus is on desired relationships, symbolic actions and communication. Interpretive strategy emphasises attitudinal and cognitive complexity among diverse stakeholders in the organisation.

The fundamental truth in strategy is that an organisation cannot be all things to all people. Strategy requires choices—deciding what particular kind of value an organisation wants to deliver and to whom (Porter, *in* Gibson, 1997). The strategy is the primary determinant of success or failure in fulfilling the mission and achieving the organisation's goals and objectives (Digman, 1990:13).

4.2 Strategic management

Greene, Adam & Ebert (1985:536) see strategic management as *"a continuous process of thinking through the current mission of the organisation, thinking through the current environmental conditions, and then combining these elements by setting forth a guide for tomorrow's decisions and results"*.

Strategic management focuses on strategic decisions—those decisions that deal with the determination of strategy and provide the definition of the business as well as the general relationship between the organisation and its environment. It also deals with the strategic planning required to put these decisions into practice with strategic control, which ensures that the chosen strategy is being implemented properly and produces the desired results. The key concept in these definitions is *strategy*, the organisation's preselected means or approach to achieving its goals and objectives while coping with current and future external conditions (Digman, 1990).

4.2.1 Strategic thinking and strategy formulation

Mintzberg (1994) and Robert (1997) maintain that strategic thinking is not the same as strategic planning. Where strategic thinking is the process that the organisation's management uses to set direction and articulate their vision, strategic planning often looks back at five years of numbers and extrapolates for the next five years. This does nothing to change the 'look' or the composition of an organisation.

Strategic thinking is a process that enables the management team to sit together and think through the qualitative aspects of its business (opinions, judgements, even feelings of stakeholders) and the environment it faces (Robert, 1997:54). It produces a framework for the strategic and operational plans ,and attempts to determine *what* the organisation should look like, i.e. the strategy.

Strategic thinking reviews and questions the direction of the business. It produces a profile that can be used to determine which areas of the business will receive more or less emphasis and is both introspective and externally focused (Robert, 1997:56-57). It is problem solving in unstructured situations, being able to recognise changing situations. Most importantly it involves selecting the right problems to be solved (Digman, 1990:53).

4.2.2 Strategic and operational (tactical) planning

Where strategic thinking determines the strategy *(what* should be done*)*, strategic and operational planning helps to choose *how* to get there, i.e. to put the strategy into practice (Robert, 1997:26). The chosen strategy is created for each division or business — the result is the strategic, long-range master plan.

In the implementation phase, the strategic master plan turns strategy into reality, by means of more detailed and shorter-term plans and schedules at progressively lower operating levels of the firm (Digman, 1990:54). Operational planning allocates tasks to specific existing facilities to achieve particular objectives in each planning period. Operational or action plans incorporate four elements (Pearce & Robinson, 1997:304):

- specific functional tactics*/actions/activities to be undertaken in the next week, month or quarter (*each business function, e.g. marketing/ corporate communication/human resources needs to identify and undertake key and routine, but unique activities — functional tactics — that help to build a sustainable competitive advantage);
- each tactic/action/activity has one or more specific, immediate (short-term) objectives or targets that are identified as outcomes;
- a clear time frame for completion;
- accountability, by identifying persons responsible for each action in the plan.

In applying the above to the corporate communication function, it would seem that practitioners expend most of their effort on communication plans at operational or tactical level.

4.3 Levels of strategic management

Strategy development takes place at different organisational levels (Digman, 1990). Top management and the board of directors develop the **enterprise** strategy (Ansoff, 1977) in which questions, such as why the organisation exists, what it attempts to provide to society and what types of relationships it will seek with stakeholders in its environment are addressed. Two important aspects of creating an enterprise strategy are an analysis of the stakeholders, and their values and their expectations (Dill, 1979:49). Enterprise strategy also has to do with the achievement of *non-financial* goals, such as enhancing the organisation's image and fulfilling its social responsibilities. In part, enterprise strategy represents the social and moral/ethical component of strategic management (Freeman, 1984).

At **corporate** level, strategy is mainly concerned with defining the set of businesses that should form the organisation's overall profile (decisions concerning mergers and acquisitions, strategic alliances, etc). At this level, strategies tend to be *financially* oriented (Digman, 1990:38). A **business** strategy usually covers a single product or a group of related products (Pearce & Robinson, 1997:6; Jain, 1997:9,19) and focuses on how to compete in the product/market/industry segment. At this level, strategies are often *marketing* oriented (Digman, 1990:38).

At **functional** level, the principal responsibility is to execute the strategies of the organisation Œenterprise, corporate and business unit• by developing annual objectives and short-term strategies (Pearce & Robinson, 1997:6). Corporate communication and human resources strategies are examples of strategy at the functional level. At **operational** level, strategies are implemented by establishing short-term objectives and operating (implementation) strategies (Digman, 1990:38).

In pointing out the differences between enterprise, corporate, business, functional and operational strategies, it is clear that the term strategy, as applied in the communication plan, refers to the *operational* level. It differs from the corporate communication strategy proposed in this article, which refers to the development of a strategy at *functional* level — providing focus and direction to the corporate communication function, and producing a profile that can be used to determine which stakeholders should receive more or less emphasis.

4.4 The stakeholder approach to strategic management

The stakeholder approach provides a new way of thinking about strategic management — that is, how an organisation can and should set and implement direction — and what the affairs of the organisation actually constitute (Freeman, 1984:vi). This approach is concerned with the identification and managerial response to groups and individuals who can affect, and are affected by, the organisation's decisions.

Higgins (1979:1) defines strategic management as *"the process of managing the pursuit of the accomplishment of the organisational mission coincident with managing the relationship* *of the organisation to its environment"*. The organisation's environment can be seen as the product of the strategic decisions of others: the government, competitors, customers, society and a host of other outside influences.

The concepts of *stakeholder management* as a method for systematically taking into account stakeholder interests (Freeman & Lifdtka, 1997) and *stakeholder analysis* (assessing the stake and power of each group) emerged in the 1980s (Freeman & Reed, 1983).

A strategy should be in place for each stakeholder group — not only for stockholders, but also for groups such as consumer advocates, environmentalists, the media or any other group affected by the organisation's decisions. Their key issues and willingness to expend resources helping or hurting the organisation on these issues must be understood (Wheeler & Sillanpää, 1998). It would be more advantageous to implement communication processes with multiple stakeholders, to negotiate on critical issues and to seek voluntary agreements with them, rather than having a solution imposed from the outside (e.g. through the intervention of the government, activist groups or the media).

What is therefore required are concepts and processes that provide integrated, strategic direction for dealing with multiple stakeholders on multiple issues. For each major strategic issue, the organisation must consider the effects on a number of stakeholders. For each major stakeholder, managers responsible for that stakeholder relationship must identify the strategic issues that affect the stakeholder and must understand how to formulate, implement and monitor strategies for dealing with that group. Many organisations do this well with one stakeholder group (e.g. customers), but few have the processes required to integrate a number of stakeholder concerns (Freeman, 1984:27).

This can be done by integrating boundary spanners into the strategy formulation processes to anticipate stakeholder concerns and try to influence the stakeholder environment. Freeman (1984) calls for 'external affairs' managers to take the responsibility for strategically managing stakeholder groups—people who are boundary spanners; people with the so-called 'soft skills' who excel in the management of values, perceptions, expectations and feelings; people who possess excellent communication skills; people who know how to *listen; and* people such as corporate communication and public affairs managers who have a good working knowledge of stakeholder concerns.

5. THE LITERATURE ON CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Although the public relations body of knowledge indicates a strategic role for the corporate communication manager (White & Mazur, 1995; Bartha, 1994; Grunig &

Repper, *in* Grunig, 1992:120), there are but a few references to corporate communication 'strategy' in a strategic organisational context. The few publications that refer to the topic deal mainly with communication campaigns and plans, as illustrated by the many planning models, operational plans and checklists that are frequently seen in corporate communication textbooks and articles.

The word strategy, according to Tibble (1997), is *"used very sloppy"*, is *"bandied around like a mantra,"* but contains little substance. The main thrust of his thinking is that few practitioners understand the meaning of strategy, although it is a known, uncomplicated concept to those familiar with management theory. The key problem seems to lie in the application of strategy for corporate communication/public relations issues, i.e. what strategy means in a communication context. The word strategy is often used by corporate communication practitioners to describe something 'important' (as in *strategic* messages, *strategic* direction) or to describe 'activities' (as in communication *strategy*). It is also used mistakenly when, in reality, it should describe a corporate communication/public relations aim, objective or tactic.

An effective strategy should rather provide the following (Tibble, 1997:357):
- *leadership of thought* and activity processes for the communication programme;
- the *context*, and a guiding principle, for all communication activity;
- the *link* between the 'why' and the 'how'; the logic that binds objectives and tactics together.

Eiselen (1992) seems to agree with Tibble on the real meaning of the term 'strategy', by advocating corporate communication strategy as the vital link between organisational strategies and the corporate communication function — enabling the practitioner to implement corporate communication programmes that advance the accomplishment of the corporate vision and mission. To elevate corporate communication to the same level of importance as any of the main functional areas, it is necessary to impact the organisation and its management where it really counts — the enterprise/ corporate strategy. Furthermore, strategy formulation and strategic planning are prerequisites for developing a sound corporate communication strategy, for they provide focus and direction to the communication, as well as synergy between the enterprise/corporate strategy and communication.

To make communication relevant in the strategy formulation process, Eiselen (1992) suggests the following approach: study the vision and mission, corporate goals and objectives, the major issues facing the organisation or areas of critical importance for achieving the vision/mission and corporate strategies. One now arrives at the starting point for the corporate communication strategy — it is here that the strategic link between enterprise/corporate strategy and the corporate communication function is made.

The implications of the organisation's key strategic issues and strategies, as well as the risk of communicating the issue are determined, and the corporate communication strategy is developed. The latter should essentially reflect or mirror the enterprise/ corporate strategy (Eiselen, 1992). A draft should be presented to top management for approval and suggestions. Only at this stage should communication plans/programmes be developed by means of the steps in the well-known public relations (corporate communication) process — situation analysis, developing objectives, publics, messages, media, budget and evaluation.

The above are a few references to developing a corporate communication strategy as a *functional* strategy, as the term is used in the strategic management context. Most corporate communication/ public relations authors (such as Windahl, Signitzer & Olson, 1993; Seitel, 1995:146-147; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994:316-327; Hainsworth & Wilson, 1992) seem to refer to communication planning at the *operational* level when using the term strategy. What they are in fact referring to is *implementation* strategy — the broad approach to communication activities

6. CONCEPTUALISING A CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In conceptualising a corporate communication strategy based on the concept of 'strategy', an attempt will be made to explicate the meaning of strategy in a corporate communication context (Steyn, 2000b; Steyn, 2000c).

The author regards *corporate communication strategy* as a functional strategy, providing the focus and direction for an organisation's communication with its stakeholders — determining *what* should be communicated to assist in achieving organisational goals. It is an approach that directs the course of action of the corporate communication function and provides an indication of its positioning for the future. It is the thinking, i.e. the logic behind the corporate communication function's activities, the *what* rather than the *how* — the mechanism that leads the function towards effectiveness (doing the right things), rather than towards efficiency (doing things right).

Corporate communication strategy is a pattern in the corporate communication function's important communication decisions and actions regarding relationships with strategic stakeholders, stated in such a way that the attitude of the organisation towards its stakeholders is clear. It is developed within the context of the organisation's vision, mission, corporate culture, policies and strategies (the internal environment), but focuses on an assessment of the external (macro and task) environment, and on the stakeholder environment.

Corporate communication strategy focuses on strategic communication decisions and is the outcome of a strategic thinking process by senior communication practitioners and top management with regard to the identification and management of, and communication with, strategic stakeholders. It produces a profile that can be used to determine which stakeholders will receive more or less emphasis. Corporate communication strategy can be seen as a proactive capability to adapt the organisation to changes in stakeholder expectations and opinions (through environmental scanning and boundary spanning activities). It can create a competitive advantage for an organisation through the early detection and management of issues, involving strategic stakeholders in decision making — giving the organisation the autonomy to concentrate on achieving its mission.

Corporate communication *strategy* is not the same as communication *plans*, but provides the framework for the strategic and operational communication plans necessary to carry out the strategy. It is problem solving in unstructured situations, selecting the right problems to solve. It provides a new paradigm for corporate communication — a new pattern of thinking about and studying organisational and corporate communication problems, defining them in a new way.

Corporate communication strategy does not follow the traditional 'linear' approach where the emphasis is on planning, but is moulded on the more modern approaches to strategy, e.g. adapting the organisation to trends, events and stakeholders in the environment ('adaptive' strategy). It also focuses on relationships, symbolic actions and communication, emphasising attitudinal and cognitive complexity among diverse stakeholders, which is the essence of 'interpretive' strategy. Taking this approach to strategy is easily explained when considering that the task of corporate communication is, by definition, 'building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders/publics'.

The corporate communication strategy makes corporate communication relevant in the strategic management process through its focus on communication with strategic stakeholders, aligning communication goals to organisational goals. It provides the vital link between the enterprise/ corporate/business strategies and the corporate communication function. Although the corporate communication strategy is influenced mostly by the organisation's enterprise strategy and provides strategic inputs in the enterprise strategy, it also supports the corporate and business strategies.

To conclude, it can be stated that the process of developing a corporate communication strategy provides the strategic approach required by organisations to identify issues and stakeholders proactively, and to manage communication with their strategic stakeholders.

7. THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The model for developing a corporate communication strategy for an organisation, as explicated step by step in the following section, is the outcome of a longitudinal action research project conducted and still being pursued, by the Department of Marketing and Communication Management at the University of Pretoria.

A model for developing a corporate communication strategy (Model 1) was hypothesised from literature and implemented in 48 non-profit organisations in 1998, by using a confirmatory design. The findings were analysed and the model was adapted. in 1999, the revised model (Model 2) was implemented in 46 other non-profit organisations, and again analysed and adapted (Steyn, 2000c). The twice revised model (Model 3) is presented at the end of this article as the preliminary findings of the action research project.

Steps that can be followed by a corporate communication manager/practitioner responsible for developing a corporate communication strategy and policy will now be suggested. As a point of departure, it is necessary to be thoroughly familiar with the organisation's (internal and external) environment.

7.1 Analyse the internal environment

➔ *Corporate profile*

It is essential for a corporate communication manager to be knowledgeable about the organisation's financial status and reputation in the field, its products or services and its overall competitive environment. Knowledge about the marketing, legal and other functions is also important in order to coordinate the efforts of these functions with those of the corporate communication function. Regular contact with key management personnel and the review of documents such as the annual and quarterly reports can provide some of this information.

Furthermore, the location of the organisation, whether in a single city or having multiple branches, the delivery system for its products or services, its major suppliers, and the identity and demographics of its customers are all necessary to develop an understanding of the organisation's operations. Other information required is a good working knowledge of the organisation's staff component - its total work force, both managerial and non-managerial. Special attention should be paid to key management people - for instance, how top management views the corporate communication function and its contribution to organisational effectiveness (Hendrix, 1992:9).

The corporate communication manager should also understand the formal structure of the organisation, i.e. the way in which it is plotted in the organisational chart and how the functions are related to one another. An even more important indication of how decisions are made might be the informal power structure. Effective communication is often the key to the effective functioning of the organisational structure (Kendall, 1992).

The corporate profile serves as a background for the development of a corporate communication strategy. The actual starting point is a thorough knowledge and understanding of the vision, mission, culture, corporate policies and strategies of the organisation:

> *To be strategic, public relations should pass one basic test: At a minimum, everything done must be aligned with the corporate vision or mission ...and must substantially contribute to achieving the organisation's goals and objectives. Ideally, public relations should be part of the team helping to create the corporate mission and set the objectives.* (Webster, 1990:18.)

➔ *Vision*

A vision represents a realistic, credible and attractive future state of affairs — a condition which, in some important way, is better than that which now exists — the '*big organisational picture*'. The vision indicates where the organisation is going and what it wants to achieve (Eiselen, 1992).

➔ *Mission*

The starting point in formulating an organisation's strategy is its mission or purpose, the definition of the organisation's role in society and the economy. The mission flows from the values of stakeholders (Digman, 1990:49) — it is an explanation of the organisation's identity and ambition. Whereas the vision is more associated with goals, the mission is associated with a way of behaving (Eiselen, 1992).

➔ *Corporate culture*

Deal and Kennedy (1982:31) define corporate culture as "*the way we do things around here*" and Peters and Waterman (1982:106) as "*a set of shared values conveyed by symbolic means such as stories, myths, legends and anecdotes*". A good example of corporate culture would be "*the customer is always right*" (Moorhead & Griffin, 1989:493). The values that make up corporate culture are seldom written down — they are basic assumptions made by employees about what is acceptable and what is not, and they become ingrained in their beliefs (Pearce & Robinson, 1997:356).

➔ *Corporate policy*

Corporate policy is a series of guidelines or standing plans that constitute practical day-to-day guidelines for conducting business, in contrast to the longer scope of the vision, mission, goals and objectives continuum (Bittel, 1989:78). It is a written definition of general intent or company position designed to guide and regulate certain actions and decisions, especially those of major significance or of a recurring nature (Jain, 1997:177). Policies guide the thinking, decisions and actions of managers and subordinates in implementing an organisation's strategy (Pearce & Robinson, 1997:322).

Policies are different from procedures and rules in the following ways:
- *Procedures* are specific series of tasks to be followed in performing work or accomplishing an activity, e.g. how a budget is to be completed, when it is to be submitted and how it will be reviewed. Procedures are therefore detailed steps to carry out policies.
- *Rules* are specific requirements that often relate to employee conduct, e.g. 'no smoking in office building'. Rules are the most specific and detailed, and deviations are not allowed.

➔ *Organisational strategies*

The organisation's strategies at the different levels (enterprise, corporate and business unit), as explained earlier, should also be studied in order to be thoroughly familiar with top management decisions.

In summary, it can be said that all of the above concepts—corporate profile, vision, mission, corporate culture, corporate policies and strategies provide the context within which corporate communication strategy is developed. To make communication relevant in the organisation's strategy formulation process, the corporate communication manager should conduct an analysis of the organisation's internal environment, as a first step in the process of developing the corporate communication strategy:

Analyse the internal environment
Corporate Profile/Vision/Mission/Corporate Culture/Values/Policies/ Enterprise/Corporate/Business Unit Strategies

7.2 Identify strategic stakeholders and publics in the organisation's environment

When organisations make decisions, they do so based on a set of shared perceptions of the organisation and its environment. Various authors conceptualise the environment in different ways. Some depict it as a set of *general components* — i.e. political, technological, economic or social components—called the remote/macro/societal environment (Pearce & Robinson, 1997:15). Others see it as a set of *cognitive maps* (Duncan, 1972; Weick, 1969). Lenz & Engledow (1986) view the environment as represented by a *patterning of strategic issues*. Van Wyk (*in* Spies 1994) calls the macro, task and micro environment the organisation's *decision making* environment.

Mitroff (*in* Spies 1994) includes the *stakeholder* environment, thus adding behaviouralist methodology to the procedure. Pearce & Robinson (1997:46) also mention the *stakeholder approach* to the environment. Executives are often compelled to subordinate the demands of the organisation's internal activities and external environment to the multiple and often inconsistent requirements of its various stakeholders. The environment can be seen as the product of the strategic decisions of external and internal stakeholders (the government, media, investors, customers, community, pressure groups, employees, labour unions and a host of other outside influences).

For the purposes of the strategic management of an organisation's communication, the author conceptualises the organisational environment as both a *collection of stakeholders* (Digman, 1990) and a *patterning of strategic issues* (Lenz & Engledow, 1986).

➔ *Using research to identify strategic stakeholders and publics*

The key component around which the corporate communication function should be anchored is the organisation's stakeholders and publics. The organisation's environment is a highly complex system, consisting of different groupings of stakeholders. Each stakeholder group has its own set of values, needs, desires, wants, goals and objectives—which may be and often are significantly different from those of the organisation (Blewett, 1993:13-17).

The overall strategic management of organisations is inseparable from the strategic management of relationships (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995). The management of relationships is the function of the corporate communication department/division. Before these relationships can be managed, however, the different stakeholders of the organisation must be identified.

Research provides a way for top management to become attuned to strategic stakeholders/publics — it can be considered as the other part of two-way