

CHAPTER 3: CORPORATE COMMUNICATION MEASUREMENT TOOLS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Process of Inquiry describes a systematic study of experience (direct / indirect) that leads to understanding and knowledge (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:4-5). In an organisational context, as mentioned in Chapter 1, knowledge and understanding is acquired through an objectivity quantitative process, otherwise known as the Scientific Scholarship. Corporate communication, however, makes use of the Humanistic Scholarship, which seeks to understand individual subjective responses (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:7-8), as a means to build relationships and appreciate stakeholder expectations.

Chapter 2 illustrated the complexity surrounding the communication between an organisation and its stakeholders, and provided insight into the vast scope of corporate communication functions. For corporate communication to be effective and accountable in all these functions, while truly understanding their stakeholders and their relationships, as well as being able to function alongside executives in an objective scientific context; a measurement tool, that captures this intangible value, has to be employed (cf Cornelissen, 2000:123; Lindenmann, 1993:7; Macnamara, 2002:8-9; Ritter, 2003:59). No doubt, both academia and industry has created and engaged various measurement and evaluation models in attempt to do so.

Gorpe and Saran (2005:1) as well as Phillips (2001:227) both highlight the variety of measurement and evaluation models that exist for corporate communication today. These authors claim that the variety has resulted from a need to justify practitioner and agency existence, and to provide that 'differentiating factor' for competitive reasons between agencies. Unfortunately, because of this, Phillips (2001:227) expands the debate insisting that a lot of the models are " ... voodoo, make-believe, and inventive nonsense", which has not only confused practitioners, but also worsened the situation. Macnamara (2002:2) states that communication evaluation has had a patchy track record throughout its history, because practitioners have been slow in accepting and using measurement tools; because their focus was primarily on measuring media clippings or relying on their 'gut feel' when making decisions (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:11-17; Phillips, 2001:227).

Macnamara (2002:2-5) refers to several surveys where practitioners across the world agree on the importance of evaluation and measurement, but highlights that the practitioners do very little about actually conducting measurement and evaluation, let alone budget for it. Authors agree that executives hold low levels of satisfaction with the communication evaluation provided by practitioners, because in the past, Public Relations Institutes have provided very little training in this subject (Gorpe & Saran 2005:4; Macnamara, 2002:5,14; Phillips, 2001:227; Steyn & Puth, 2000:6).

3.1 OUTPUT VERSUS OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

It would seem that communication departments are still stuck in the Press Agency tradition, where very little research is conducted (Macnamara, 2002:6). If evaluation and measurement does occur, Macnamara (2002:7) categorises it as part of the Public Information tradition, where the number of media articles, columns centimetres, and publications are counted. In other words, evaluation and measurement is completely *output* orientated as opposed to *outcome* orientated. The Institute of Public Relations Commission for Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation differentiates between communication outputs and outcomes (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:5).

Outputs are concerned with short term deliverables and can be extensively analysed by means of media content analyses; cyberspace / new media analyses; trade shows and event measurements; as well as public opinion polls (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:9). Macnamara (2002:8-9) explains that outputs are concerned with *micro-measuring* and determines the results of a specific activity such as an event, product launch, media publicity, analyst briefing, and other communication activities. Questions asked at this level include the number of media impressions gained; the activity's attendance rate; the ratio of acceptances to total invitations; the acceptance rate by the type of invitee; and the cost per attendee (PR Influences, 2003a; PR Influences, 2003c). Micro-measuring must therefore take place, to track the success of communication activities and this will ultimately contribute to the overall outcome (Macnamara, 2002:8-9).

Outcomes, on the other hand, determine whether the target audience received, paid attention to, understood, and retained the messages sent to them (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:5). Additionally, outcomes measure whether the efforts of the communication campaign resulted in opinion, attitude or behavioural change. Macnamara (2002:8-9)

refers to the overall determination of outcomes for the organisation as *macro-measuring*; it is also considered more difficult and more expensive than measuring outputs. This is due to the use of sophisticated measurement techniques such as awareness and comprehension, recall and retention, attitude and preference, as well as behavioural measurements (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:9). In the ideal model of Two-way Symmetrical communication, the feedback component of this model would require outcome measures to determine whether or not effective communication took place. Additionally, qualitative measurement techniques would be used to gain in-depth insight into stakeholder perceptions.

Preferably, communication research should find a balance between measuring both output and outcome communication of both quantitative and qualitative nature (Macnamara, 2002:8-9). This would capture the intangible value added by corporate communication, and allow the results to be generalised across an entire stakeholder group.

Cornelissen (2000:122-123) identifies and categorises four paradigms of organisational communication research. Each perspective differs with regards to the central location where communication may take place. In other words, different elements of the Information Processing Model (i.e., message, channel, sender / receiver, transmission, encoding / decoding, noise, feedback) are considered individually for measuring purposes.

- The Mechanistic Perspective sees communication as a transmission process in which a message travels across a space from one point to another (Cornelissen, 2000:122). This author explains that the *channel* is the locus of communication, where research measures the actual channel and transmission effectiveness. An example of this would be conducting a media analysis. Most practitioners would view this perspective as a means to measure the outputs generated (or news releases obtained). However, the outcome of the communication should also be measured in this perspective, to ensure that awareness, attitude or behavioural change did take place while communicating through the chosen channel. A financial magazine (as a channel) would, for example, not effectively reach or communicate with a teenager, let alone produce the desired change. Merely measuring the number of news releases (outputs) obtained, does not accurately reflect the channel's effectiveness.

- The System-Interaction Perspective concentrates on external behaviours as fundamental units of analysis. The point of communication is *patterned sequential behaviour*, determined by the overall communication system as opposed to an individual's conceptual filters or interpretations of events and activities (Cornelissen, 2000:122-123). This perspective coincides with the Situational Theory, stating that external forces (sometimes referred to as *noise*) have an effect on the meaning of the communication received (Olkkonen *et al.*, 2000:405). This perspective is critical to measuring outcomes, as outputs do not accurately provide information regarding situational factors that could greatly limit or hamper communication sent to the receiver. Preliminary research (research conducted before a campaign, otherwise known as formative or exploratory research), would fall into this category and serve the purpose of providing macro information that affects stakeholders' perceptions. Simply measuring outputs does not provide insight into external behaviours or situational factors and often results in unnecessary or incorrect communication campaigns.
- The Psychological Perspective focuses on the influence that individuals have on communication. This perspective seeks to explain the informational environments in which individuals are located, and the range of stimuli to which they respond, using a variety of conceptual filters (Cornelissen, 2000:122-123). Studying the *receiver or intra-individual orientation* places emphasis on the encoding and decoding processes of the Information Processes Model. Once again, outcome communication evaluation will reflect the internal thinking of a receiver. More often than not, stakeholders do not verbally communicate their perceptions regarding an organisation or its offerings. These perceptions manifest either in the way stakeholders behave, or through their word-of-mouth communication to other stakeholders. Qualitative research would be required to uncover these emotions, feelings and perceptions.
- The Interpretive-Symbolic Perspective views an individual as being capable of creating and shaping his or her own social reality. The position of communication is role taking and shared meaning; where the emphasis is placed on *meaning* rather than *accuracy* in message transmission (Cornelissen, 2000:122-123). Cultural backgrounds, symbols and other intrinsic meaning, play an important role here. In this perspective the actual message along with non-verbal cues, provide meaning to the stakeholder. Both outputs

and outcomes are an important measure to determine whether the message was constructed in a way that the receiver could receive, understand and retain.

Understanding that communication measurement can focus on various elements of the Information Processing Model, while simultaneously measuring the effects of communication on an output and outcome level, allows this discussion to examine some of the research methodologies or techniques that corporate communication practitioners have at their disposal, to collect data. When deciding on the research technique, practitioners need to consider the purpose of the research (Grunig & Grunig, 2001:14) as well as the role it will play in decision-making for the future.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Cooper and Schindler (2003:12-13) explain that research in business is typically conducted to respond to a problem that has been identified by management; this is known as applied research and pure or basic research. Even though both are problem solving based; applied research is directed at making immediate managerial decisions, whereas pure or basic research builds knowledge. Both categories can employ quantitative or qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis; however, for reporting purposes the first is preferred in business. Naturally, there are numerous data collection methodologies, to this end, Cooper and Schindler (2003:15) provide a set of research categorisations based on the approach used to gather data:

Exploratory research expands the understanding of a dilemma, and provides background information to the problem and situation (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:281). This research normally occurs in the 'planning phase', and incorporates the use of primary, secondary and tertiary data, from internal and external sources of information. Primary, secondary and tertiary data are discussed later in this chapter.

Communication approach is a second research category referred to by Cooper and Schindler (2003:317,319). This approach involves communicating with people to obtain their responses (as data) for analysis purposes. Personal, telephonic and self-administered interviewing are the most common techniques used in this approach (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:320-348).

From a Communication Theory perspective, Cornelissen (2000:123) recommends ethnomethodological and phenomenological methodologies to obtain a *receiver* perspective, within this approach. The Ethnography of communication is concerned with the application of ethnographic methods to understand the behaviour, inter-relation and communicative patterns of a group (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:212; Macnamara, 2002:32). Lindlof and Taylor (2002:16) express the term ethnography by its root, *ethno-* (means people) and *-graphy* (means describing). Littlejohn and Foss (2005:4-5) define ethnomethodology to be the detailed study of the way people organise their everyday lives. It involves a set of methods that carefully investigate the way people work together to create a social organisation (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:88). They explain that an example of such a method is a *conversation analysis*, which attempts to discover in detail, what is viewed as a social achievement. It is concerned with *sequential organisation*, or the way that speakers organise their conversational turn taking. Phenomenology is the study of knowledge that comes from consciousness, or the understanding of an object or event through consciously experiencing it. Phenomenology does not force, but examines actual lived experiences and follows three basic principles: knowledge is conscious; the meanings of things come as a result of a direct experience; and language is the vehicle of meaning (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:199-200).

Commonly found in the Humanistic Scholarship, these methodologies are as a means to enquire information, and are concerned with the individual (or in communication's case, the receiver) (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:7-8). The conventional surveys are a popular means of data collection (Cornelissen, 2000:123); however, Littlejohn and Foss (2005:24) mention that there are other techniques used to derive meaning from direct experiences. These include content analyses (through *hermeneutic phenomenology*), focus groups, and quasi-experiments. The purpose of these is to uncover perceptions of and reactions to the various facets of communication activities, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of the totality of the communication process between organisations and their stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2000:123). These methods are able to uncover the intangible value derived from certain organisational communication activities.

Observation approach is a third research category of data collection according to Cooper and Schindler (2003:399-401). Observation qualifies as scientific inquiry, when conducted

specifically to answer a research question. According to these authors, it should be planned with proper control and consideration to the reliability and validity of the methods used. This approach is further divided into *behavioural and non-behavioural observation*. The first focuses on non-verbal behaviour (body movements); linguistic behaviour; extra-linguistic behaviour (vocal, temporal, interaction, verbal stylistic); and spatial analysis (proxemics). Non-behavioural observation comprises record analysis (historic and current records); physical condition analysis (physical relationships); and physical process analysis (analysis of activities / processes) (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:403-405). Grunig and Grunig (2001:15) suggest that practitioners can apply this research in a practical way, by attending meetings that incorporate community groups. At these meetings, practitioners can both observe and capture the verbal and non-verbal communication and perceptions of attendees and community members.

Experimentation approach is a fourth research category and is worth mentioning here (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:423). This approach involves a researcher intervening, beyond that which is required for measurement, by manipulating a variable as well as observing the effects on another variable. This method is also referred to as *causal research methods* (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:425), but is not common in the communication discipline, and will therefore not be elaborated on in this study.

By categorising research, its approach and purpose becomes clear. It can then assist practitioners in identifying when and how to implement a specific research method – based on the information required. Cooper and Schindler (2003:278-455); Cutlip, Center, Broom and Du Plessis (2002:110-124); Grunig and Grunig (2001:15-16) as well as Macnamara (2002:25-33) supply descriptions for some of the various research techniques available to corporate communication practitioners who wish to collect data and use it for measurement purposes.

3.3.1 Primary, secondary and tertiary data

Primary data refers to works of research or raw data that has not been interpreted (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:282). These authors explain that primary data can be acquired through internal and external sources of information, which include inventory records, personnel records, purchasing requisition forms, statistical data, memos, letters, complete interviews

or speech (in audio, video or written transcript formats), laws, regulations, court decisions or standards, government data, economic and labour data.

Secondary data refers to information gained from sources other than primary research and are an interpretation of primary data. Almost all reference material falls into this category and prove very valuable to practitioners especially when trying to save costs. Some examples include market research and customer satisfaction research; online research services; research undertaken by professional organisations, advertising or marketing bodies; publicly released polls; subscription services; investor annual reports and various forms of literature (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:282; Grunig & Grunig, 2001:5; Macnamara, 2002:26). Macnamara (2002:26) explains that this form of research has been revolutionised by the internet, and claims that various organisations such as; the Institute of Public Relations in the UK (IPR), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA), the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) and the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) advise their members to make use of these research studies.

Tertiary data is an interpretation of a secondary source and normally represented by references, bibliographies and indexes (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:282). According to these authors, different interpretations result in secondary data having more value than tertiary data, and primary data more value than secondary data. Cooper and Schindler (2003:282) further advise that primary data should be collected and analysed rather than utilising and relying on a third party interpretation, should practitioners have an essential problem to solve.

3.3.2 Pre-testing

Macnamara (2002:26-27) includes pre-testing as a research technique to prevent practitioners from relying on their intuition or 'gut feel' when planning communication activities, ideas and even designs. Pre-testing is a technique that can also be used in formative or exploratory research (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:390-391). Macnamara (2002:26-27) explains that it can be conducted through e-mailing, faxing or personally meeting a sample of the target audience to test ideas, programmes, or concepts in general. This author elaborates stating that pre-testing is widely used in advertising, and can play a crucial role in the planning campaigns.

3.3.3 Case studies

Sometimes referred to as secondary or tertiary data, case studies are excellent practical sources of information to refer to when experiencing problems. Macnamara (2002:26) explains that collecting and studying case studies, assists with identifying best practice approaches to certain problems. Additionally, this research can form part of exploratory or formative research. This author provides an example of an organisation that underwent a name change and lacked the budget to commission research to identify the target audience's attitudes and needs. As a result, case studies about organisations that had undergone name changes were collected, and strategies were then emulated on strength of the lessons learnt from those events. The author highlights that case studies are readily and usually freely available on public relations institutions' websites, commercial public relations' websites, as well as in books, award compendia, and university libraries.

3.3.4 Focus groups

Focus groups consist of 6-12 participants, who discuss a topic in depth, guided by a trained facilitator (Grunig & Grunig, 2001:16). Sessions are video taped and the recordings are carefully analysed for comments, non-verbal as well as other forms of communication (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:113). Macnamara (2002:32) explains that the facilitator is the most important consideration in this technique and must be trained in psychology and focus group discussion techniques. Focus groups / community forums are successful qualitative research methods to discover attitudes, perceptions and pre-test ideas or strategies (Macnamara, 2002:32).

3.3.5 Personal interviews

A personal interview is a two-way conversation initiated by an interviewer to obtain information from a participant on a face-to-face basis (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:323). The authors also state that the interviewer generally controls the topics and patterns of discussion and probes the participant for information. The questions asked may be *structured* (consisting of predetermined choices called close-ended questions) or *unstructured* (where responses are not limited to choices, called open-ended questions) (Macnamara, 2002:17). Questions are created to appeal to various levels of the respondent's consciousness to tap into information that is willingly, reluctantly, knowingly or subconsciously shared. The latter may use *projective techniques* (such as sentence completion tests, cartoon or balloon tests, and word associate tests) to disguise the

study's objective (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:363-364). Typically, opinion leaders or key informants would be interviewed, because they are believed to hold leadership roles in their groups (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:112). Cooper and Schindler (2003:324) provide a list of advantages and limitations to this method, but the most important advantage is the depth of the information received. Unfortunately, personal interviews are a lot more costly and time consuming than other methods in the communication approach.

3.3.6 Telephone interviews

Cooper and Schindler (2003:335) explain that the telephone, as a medium, can be highly effective for arranging interviews and screening large populations. These authors mention that it is also a medium to obtain receiver perspectives or feedback. Call centres have taken advantage of telephonic interviewing due to cost and time saving. The authors stress that this is especially the case with the widespread Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and other computer-administered telephone survey methods. In South Africa, certain organisations such as Outsurance and DialDirect only make use of this medium to handle all client related communications. Once again, the advantages are evident, but the richness of information does not equate to the personal interview methodology (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:338).

3.3.7 Surveys / questionnaires

Surveys are one of the most commonly used research instruments, employed for market research, customer satisfaction studies and social research (Macnamara, 2002:31). This is because of the coverage, sample accessibility and costs advantages (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:341). Surveys can be used in corporate communication to gain feedback, and can appear in the following forms, publications (reader surveys); events (event surveys); presentations (audience surveys); employee communication (employee surveys); shareholder communication (shareholder surveys); member communication in organisations (member surveys); media communication (media surveys); community relations programs (local community surveys); and intranet, extranet or websites (online surveys). Online / E-surveys are affordable as printing and postage costs are eliminated, and data entry is automatically done (Macnamara, 2002:31-32). A recent alternative to conducting an online survey is to encourage surveying by means of new media, such as *blogs* (PR Influences, 2005c). Blog (an acronym for 'web log') describes a website that contains an online personal journal with comments about anything the writer wishes to

include (PR Influences, 2004d). Despite the obvious advantage of cost saving, Cooper and Schindler (2003:342) highlight the high non-response rate that this methodology experiences.

3.3.8 Response mechanisms

Macnamara (2002:27) includes response mechanisms such as toll-free numbers, coupons and competitions as a research technique. Furthermore the author explains that these methods can be used to track audience receipt, acceptance and, to some extent, understanding as well as consideration of messages. Additionally, this author also mentions that an analysis of website visits and downloads can be used to track and demonstrate *out-takes* and sometimes *outcomes*.

3.3.9 Readability and listenability tests

Readability tests estimate the number of years of education that a reader requires to understand the text read (Macnamara, 2002:26). The PII Model by Cutlip *et al.* (2002:209-212) makes use of the three readability measures:

The Flesch Readability test calculates a readability score with the following formula:

$$\text{Readability Score} = 206.835 - [(\text{average sentence length} \times 1.015) + (\text{average word length} \times 84.6)]$$

The closer the score is to a 100, the easier the readability and the lower the level of education needed to understand the writing. A score of 100 would only require a Grade 5 (primary) education level; while a score of 60 / 70 needs a Grade 8 / 9 (secondary) education level. The closer the score is to zero, the more difficult the readability becomes and ultimately this requires the receiver's education to be at tertiary level.

The Gunning Fox Index considers the sentence length and words, with three or more syllables, by using the following formula:

$$\text{Fog Index} = 0.04 \times (\text{ave number of words per sentence} + \text{number of long words per 100 words})$$

In this formula, the higher the score, the more difficult the comprehensibility, and the higher the level of education required. A score of six indicates easy reading and a Grade 6 (primary) level of education. The maximum score achievable score for this index is 17.

The Fry Readability Formula produces results similar to the Flesch Formula, but considers the sentence length and number of syllables, and represented schematically on a graph. Two additional readability methods included by Macnamara (2002:26) are the Dale-Chall method, and the Cloze Procedure or Signalled Stopping Techniques (SST). These are very simple and can be self-administered by practitioners with no training and at no cost. The Easy Listening Formula (ELF), by Irving Fang (in Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:212) works on the same principle as the readability tests, but provides a means to measure the listenability of aired broadcasts and speeches. These methods follow an Interpretive-Symbolic Perspective (Cornelissen, 2000:122), measuring percentage message intake and extent of meaning derived, determined by level of education.

3.3.10 Naturally occurring information

Grunig and Grunig (2001:16) highlight another research technique that is cost effective and accurate. Stakeholders often provide voluntary information to the organisation, without any effort from the corporate communication department in obtaining this data. This type of information may take the form of telephone calls, letters, e-mail messages, and conversations with employees (Grunig & Grunig, 2001:16). Cutlip *et al.* (2002:116) include call-in telephone lines (or toll-free numbers) to this list as it provides instant feedback and has the ability to monitor concerns and interests. Grunig and Grunig (2001:16) indicate that by exploring naturally occurring data, practitioners are able to identify stakeholders, their issues, the consequences of these problems, and be in a position to respond to these issues timeously.

3.3.11 Personal contacts

Cutlip *et al.* (2002:111-112) describe personal contacts to be informal in nature, as there is no form of scientific analysis is conducted. This form of research occurs by moving freely among people and gaining insight into their opinions, attitudes and circumstances. Examples include attending trade shows, community and professional meetings as well as any other occasions that attract stakeholders and provide practitioners with opportunities to observe and understand. Grunig and Grunig (2001:15) elicit that personal contacts require practitioners to be involved by showing an interest and by listening. They also point out that this method could take the form of observation or communication approach to research. Cutlip *et al.* (2002:112) explain that by generating community events such as the annual shareholders' meetings, creates a structured approach to this form of research.

3.3.12 New media or cyber analysis

Cornelissen (2000:119) states that *new media* has revolutionised communication to stakeholders, because it has enabled interaction with stakeholders, previously not possible. Phillips (2001:234) adds that it has allowed stakeholders the opportunity to easily create and communicate their opinions of an organisation, through media such as chat rooms or blogs. Instead of feeling threatened by new media, Phillips (2001:234) explains that this form of communication can sensitise practitioners to the type of media (online and offline) that their stakeholders are attuned to. It can also assist in identifying ideas and themes that are important to stakeholders, and empower practitioners with current jargon. The IQPC (2006) index of new media includes intranets, extranets, blogs, wikis, podcasting, and online forums. Grunig and Grunig (2001:16) explain that this research methodology (otherwise known as cyber analysis) can be done quantitatively or qualitatively and provide valuable input. The use of thematic analysis is a qualitative technique that focuses on the 'nitty gritty' linguistic levels, namely phonetics, phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, semantics, discourse, deixis and pragmatics (Phillips, 2001:230-233). By doing this, it becomes possible to understand how stakeholders use their language, because words are loaded with connotations and therefore influence opinions, attitudes and behaviours (Phillips, 2001:233).

PR Influences (2003c) includes another dimension in this category, explaining that a simple website analysis can provide valuable primary data. Outsourcing this analysis is unnecessary, because Webmasters of the organisation's websites can simply build this functionality into the website, or practitioners can utilise the numerous computer aided programmes that can make this information available. Google Analytics (2006) is one of many computer aided programmes that provide website analysis. This free service not only determines the amount of hits on one page, but also provides strategic information such as:

- The geographical location from which the user accessed the site (illustrating global awareness and effectiveness);
- How long the user spent on each page (demonstrating whether the user actually read information or skimmed over it);
- What time of day the user accessed the site (to understand when to launch promotions like competitions);
- What pages the user went to (illustrating what page headings interested the user); and,

- The search engine that the user got the website from (indicating if online advertising and publicity is effective or not).

Figures, provided in percentages, assist practitioners in making informed website decisions and design improvements. It also provides the quantitative statistics that measure website communication effectiveness. The information is electronically collected, analysed and the report is sent to the site, generally on a monthly basis. In addition, the information is available online, accessible when needed. Ritter (2003:54-55) lists additional service providers that provide a similar service and are readily available on the internet; Webtrends, Hitbox from Websidestory, and Nedstat.

3.3.13 Media analysis for editorial coverage

Macnamara (2002:27) claims that most communication measurement focuses around its media generation role. Ritter (2003:50) explains this phenomenon by the direct impact that media has on the image of organisations. Measuring what the news says about a product or organisation is crucial for the evaluation and strategic planning of the organisation's institutional communication. Additionally, editorial coverage correlates with public opinion and impact perceptions and ultimately builds the brand. The problems associated with this Mechanistic Perspective are the incoherent practices of media analysis, the concern for outputs rather than outcomes and disproportionate emphasis on achieving publicity rather than using integrated media in communication campaigns (cf Cornelissen, 2000:122; Gorpe & Saran, 2005:11; PR Influences, 2004d; Sandin & Simolin, 2006:3; VMS, 2006c).

Media are categorised according to their degree of control. These are divided into controlled, semi-controlled and uncontrolled forms. Sandin and Simolin (2006:3) explain that all categories need to be allocated, created, budgeted for, implemented and measured.

- Controlled media allows practitioners the ability to control how and when a message is delivered. Some examples include speeches, corporate advertising, in-house publications, visual presentations, newsletters and notice boards.
- Semi-controlled media include media where some sections of the message delivery are controlled by the organisation, while other sections are influenced by third parties. Examples include sponsorships, electronic media such as blogs, other websites, forums and chat rooms, and finally word of mouth.

- Uncontrolled media happen when and where the time and place of messages rely on third party decisions. This category mostly includes news releases, press conferences as well as media tours. This category (known as publicity) often forms the bulk of communication's media function.

Understanding the degree of control over the media used greatly influences decisions regarding the target audience and message creation. As mentioned earlier, most practitioners have devised numerous methods to measuring uncontrolled media.

Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (in Sandin & Simolin, 2006:15), Macnamara (2002:30) as well as PR Influences (2003c) provide guidelines about what practitioners should consider when measuring uncontrolled media. These include the output production, distribution, coverage, impressions, advertising value and systematic content analysis.

- Output production is the number of products or outputs created, such as news releases. VMS (2006c) reveals that output production is fast and relatively easy to measure, but provides no information about an article's size (i.e., a one-inch appearance counts the same as a feature story), slant (e.g., the positive or negative tones), and audience messages (e.g., whether the output conveyed what it was supposed). This measure is the least effective and Macnamara (2002:30) advises that, as a measurement technique, it should be avoided.
- Distribution is the number of media outlets receiving the products / outputs, and measures how and where the coverage occurred within specific media (PR Influences, 2003c). Distribution questions whether the correct media is being utilised (PR Influences, 2001b). Both Macnamara (2002:30) and PR Influences (2003c) explain that the credibility, circulation figures as well as target audience reach and relevance, should be evaluated annually, to determine whether the best media is being utilised for delivering core messages.
- Coverage is the number and size of clips, as is measured in column inches, seconds, and minutes of time or space, sometimes referred to as Share of Ink (PR Influences, 2003c). A column inch is the number of columns in an article multiplied by the number of inches or centimetres of text, including the headings (VMS, 2006c). PR Influences (2005b) explain that television and radio broadcasts incorporate minutes / seconds, and internet coverage bandwidth. In the internet coverage, one bandwidth equates to 50

words. PR Influences (2003c) draws attention to a coverage measure, currently used and called the Share of Voice. This refers to the percentage of free editorial coverage devoted to an organisation or product compared to that of their competitors. This method is significant in the ability to make competitor comparisons, but does not indicate the tone or content of the article (PR Influences, 2001b). Share of Voice is akin to measuring perceptions and should not be substituted for tone measurements (PR Influences, 2005e).

- Impression is the media placements, multiplied by circulation or broadcast reach. It assesses the potential reach of a story placement or activity (VMS, 2006c). In this category, terms such as circulation or readership (for print); gross impressions (for broadcasts); and daily average visitors (for internet / new age media) indicate how many people read, hear or see the publication (PR Influences, 2003c). VMS (2006c) mentions that frequency, which indicates the number of times exposure was obtained for a specific message, is included in this measure.
- Advertising value, otherwise known as the advertising value equivalents (AVE), assesses the market or advertising value of the particular space or time occupied by a story placement (VMS, 2006c). Harrison (2006b) explains that AVE are calculated by measuring the coverage in a publication and multiplying the publication's advertising rate per column centimetre (or column inch) to reach a monetary figure. VMS (2006c) explains that some AVE do calculate the tone of the article as well. Harrison (2006b) elucidates that measurements are similar for television, radio broadcasts as well as new media publications, and that a total media coverage figure is calculated by adding the AVE for the entire media coverage in a campaign. This figure is compared to the cost of the actual communication campaign, to show its apparent effectiveness. PR Influences (2005a) explains that AVE have acquired a negative association, and have been heavily criticised for comparing and equating the impact, that editorial and advertising communication has on audiences. Table 3.1 depicts the differences between advertising and editorial content (Harrison, 2006b; Macnamara, 2002:28; PR Influences, 2001b). The advantages of this method, is the fact that it captures the story's size, impression and the perceived image or credibility of the media outlet (VMS, 2006c), but the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages. The comparison between editorial and advertising impact has led the rejection of AVE, as a means to measure publicity success, by institutions such as the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) and other advertising boards across the world (PR Influences, 2001a).

Table 3.1: A comparison between editorial and advertising coverage

Editorial	Advertising
Is not paid for. Only appears if the media considers it to be 'newsworthy' or relevant to its audience.	Is paid for and carefully placed in selectively targeted media.
The original message may be changed or added to as part of the editorial process.	Says exactly what the organisation wants to say.
Is viewed by the readers as the opinion of the media or journalist.	Is recognised by the reader as paid-for.
Appears as new and seen as factual.	Recognised separately as advertising and some people may pay less attention to advertising.
May feature in unimportant media that may not be relevant to the target audience.	Is placed in selected media strategically important to the organisation.
May be well or poorly positioned.	Positioning is controlled and repetition ensures maximum impact.
There is no control over the layout of photos or headlines, and logos are rarely used.	Layout and design is organisation determined for maximum impact, and includes headings and logos.
May be used in a wide variety of media beyond the initial media the material is sent to.	Is restricted to the media paid for.

Harrison (2006b) condemns AVE as an invalid measure of communication effectiveness and argues that it is a fatally flawed logic. VMS (2006a) concludes that practitioners have falsely claimed success by using AVE incorrectly. Many authors such as Grunig and Macnamara underwrite this point of view (in Macnamara, 2002:30).

- Systematic content analysis examines the gist of the articles (Ritter, 2003:51) in terms of tone, key messages, sources, and prominence. According to VMS (2006c) this is essential in developing communication strategies, messages and market response, because it establishes the overall meaning of the placement, and whether or not it has reached the intended objectives (PR Influences, 2001b). Grunig and Grunig (2001:16) explain that a content analysis of media can be done quantitatively, by developing categories and placing stories into those categories; and qualitatively, by looking for patterns and impressions within the clippings. The qualitative approach requires a significant amount of time and is not often practised (VMS, 2006c). The quality of the coverage can also be assessed in a number of ways by examining the tone, prominence, publication type, branding, key messages, information sources and spokespeople (PR influences, 2005c):

- *Tone* is categorised and scored according to positive, negative or neutral slants (PR Influences, 2001b). To give an accurate indication of how an organisation is perceived within the industry, an investigation into the tone of the industry itself sheds light on the organisation's tone (PR Influences, 2003b). Ritter (2003:55-56) expands, stating that the rating should also consider how the industry's image influences the organisation's image. Ritter (2003:56) uses the effective example of a garbage industry versus a fashion industry, eliciting that a successful garbage company may not get the same ratings as a successful fashion company. This is due to the glamour of the fashion industry as opposed to the necessity of the garbage industry. Tone is an extremely important media measurement, however, Macnamara (2002:27) warns against awarding arbitrary weightings, which make this approach subjective.
- *Prominence* is the extent of coverage that the organisation receives in an article (VMS, 2006a). Prominence also represents the importance and placing of the article in a publication (VMS, 2006c). PR Influences (2005c) includes the brand visibility as a factor for analysing and focuses on whether the positioning of the brand name (i.e., foregrounding / backgrounding) catches the readers' eyes (i.e., in headlines or graphics).
- *Type of publication* is another important content analysis measure for the organisation's publicity feature. This includes the publication's level of status (PR Influences, 2005c). This is an important measure because placing messages in publications that do not reach target audiences, or have little credibility, will not reflect a positive image on the organisation.
- *Spokespeople and sources quoted* often affect credibility. Practitioners increase the score allocated to the article, if the correct people were approached for information, and if quotes remained in the original format (Ritter, 2003:51).
- *Key messages* (direct or indirect) that take a clear position for or against a topic or product should also be evaluated (Ritter, 2003:51). PR Influences (2003c) explains that this is because messages are often changed when the control does not lie with the practitioner, and that this should be monitored and measured.

The advantages of conducting content analyses include the ability to gauge quantitative and qualitative measures and still be able to combine it into a single quantitative metric (VMS, 2006c). Additionally, it is a more accurate way to measure coverage, since soft and hard measures are taken into consideration (VMS, 2006c). The disadvantage of this

method, however, is the ability to let subjectivity creep in. Practitioners are warned not to assign weightings on 'gut feel' but to arrive at the correct conclusions through systematic measures (VMS, 2006c).

- Share of Discussion (SOD) is an additional uncontrolled media analysis measure identified by industry. This metric measures the quantity and quality of an organisation's unpaid media coverage, in comparison to that of its competitors. It goes one step further than Share of Voice, as it calculates the amount of coverage and favourability compared to competitors. It takes into account the story length, position and the reputation of the media outlet as well as the industry and the media environment. It can also be correlated with outcomes such as sales, store traffic, physician visits, customer preferences, and / or other business metrics. In this way, it relates to key business metrics and is said to close the loop between outputs and outcomes, by linking the discussion in the media to actual sales. Advantages of this method include the ability to capture the organisation and its competitors' media coverage; it obtains impressions for each source and applies it; it measures the tonality of each article for both the organisation and its competitors; and it indicates monthly, quarterly or annual intervals on a spreadsheet. An added benefit is that it keeps the organisation closely focused on competitor activity as well as the organisation's performance in the broader market (cf PR Influences, 2003c; PR Influences, 2005e; VMS, 2006a; VMS, 2006b; VMS, 2006c).

Ritter (2003:51) indicates that various computer aided research tools and software programmes exist that communication practitioners can use for media monitoring and evaluation. Ritter (2003:51) cites programmes such as CARMA MEDIAudit and the MASS MEDIAudit (part of the MASS COMaudit) that can assist with vast amounts of media content analyses, and measures from quantitative to qualitative, strategic to tactical. Additionally, it allows for statistical comparisons and summaries, making the whole process less time consuming and more resource intensive (Macnamara, 2002:30).

Gone are the days where media relations reside around the number of releases dispatched, without measuring the impact results (PR Influences, 2005d). Coverage itself is not the end result (Harrison, 2006a). It is vital to identify that all media coverage is not equal in importance and relevance (PR Influences, 2001c), and that the actual medium plays a significant role in getting the message out there. The goal of media analysis should

be to measure the quantitative and qualitative impact of the organisation's presence in the printed and electronic media (Ritter, 2003:51), with the ultimate end result being that of changed behaviour brought about by the analysis of media coverage (Harrison, 2006a).

3.3.14 Summary of research methodologies

It is clear from the above that numerous techniques are available to communication practitioners, who wish to gather information as a means of feedback. These methods range from being output orientated to outcome orientated and used at various stages of the decision-making processes.

Although it seems obvious that communication practitioners would naturally employ various research techniques for their decision-making purposes, Grunig and Grunig (2001:6) as well as Gorpe and Saran (2005:3) argue otherwise. These authors categorise communication managements' approach to measurement and evaluation into:

- **No research approach:** In this approach, practitioners plan, monitor and evaluate their programmes without research (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:3). As highlighted by Macnamara (2002:5) and Phillips (2001:227), the predominant goal in this approach is to generate communication outputs from the organisation to its stakeholders. Gorpe and Saran (2005:3) reveal that various studies unfortunately categorise the majority of communication departments into this category.
- **Informal approach:** Sometimes referred to as *exploratory* methods of research, it is an unstructured approach where explorations or pre-tests, providing tentative information, are useful but not used for managing a programme. This research is not systematically planned, and includes methods such as informally talking to the public or media, reading reports, or listening to unsolicited feedback. The *grapevine* (gossip) and the use of 'gut feel' are also extensively used sources in this category. *Environmental monitoring* or *scanning* is a possible type of informal research, where practitioners obtain information about 'what is going on' in the external environment (cf Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:110; Gorpe & Saran, 2005:3; Grunig & Grunig, 2001:6; Phillips, 2001:227; Steyn & Puth, 2000:165)
- **Media event approach:** In this approach, research is conducted to generate newsworthy information that creates interest in the minds of the stakeholders (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:3). Although commonly practised by practitioners, this research has been criticised for being 'self-serving' (Grunig & Grunig, 2001:6).

- Evaluation only approach: This approach resulted from the need to be accountable, and often occurs amongst practitioners acting in the technician and manager role (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:3). Macnamara (2002:14) expresses the ineffectiveness of this approach, explaining that if evaluation is left until the end of a programme, it is often omitted due to lack of time or budget.
- Scientific management approach: Steyn and Puth (2000:16) refer to this approach as *evaluation / evaluative research*, which investigates performance control and programme adjustment. It serves both as a pre-test and post-test function of evaluation. Research is firstly conducted before a campaign (referred to as *formative research*), to define the problem for developing a communication programme as well as to accurately determine the targeted audience and establish SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely) objectives for the campaign. Secondly, research is done for systematic monitoring purposes, to track programme implementation, provide accountability for the programme, and identify early strategic adjustments. Thirdly, research is done to measure programme impact with respect to goals and objectives set. This research is strategic in nature and essential for planning, as it alerts the organisations about environmental changes for survival purposes (cf Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:203; Grunig & Grunig, 2001:6&9; Macnamara, 2002:2,8; Steyn & Puth, 2000:167).

It is clear from the above that the ideal procedure to communication research is the scientific management approach, which incorporates continued research, monitoring and evaluation. It is important for practitioners to understand the purpose of their research, while simultaneously balancing output and outcome research with the correct use of research methodologies or techniques. Even more fundamental is the ability to understand how the collected data can feed into an appropriate measurement model that all decision-makers understand. An investigation into communication evaluation models that embrace the scientific management approach follows.

3.3 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION EVALUATION MODELS

The beginning of this chapter highlighted Phillips (2001:227) statement that a colossal amount of measurement and evaluation models exist for corporate communication today. Due to the scope of this dissertation, only models that contribute toward the purpose of this study are investigated. These include the scientific management approach and the incorporation of the output and outcome measurement, while considering the elements of

the Information Processing Model. Some identified models include the *best practice approaches to measuring corporate communication*, and *measurement systems with strategic intent*.

3.4.1 Best practice models for evaluating corporate communication

The corporate communication evaluation models, described in this section, have been developed over the last two decades, and have gained tremendous popularity over the years. As a result, they have been labelled as best practice approaches to measuring corporate communication (Gorpe & Saran 2005:6; Macnamara, 2002:1-35; Sandin & Simolin, 2006:17). The best practice approaches include the PII Model; the PR 'Effectiveness Yardstick' Model; the Continuing Model of Evaluation; the Unified Evaluation Model; The Pyramid Model of PR Research; and the IPR PRE Toolkit.

3.4.1.1 PII Model

Developed in 1985 by Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994:414), the PII Model derives its name from three levels or steps of research termed: *Preparation (planning)*, *Implementation* and *Impact* (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:6; Macnamara, 2002:15). As seen in Cutlip *et al.* (2002:97-228), the PII Model finds its place in the last step of the **Four-Step Public Relations Process**, as a means to evaluate communication campaigns or programmes. The Four-Step Public Relations Process Attention is briefly examined.

The first step of the Four-Step Public Relations Process involves research and fact-finding to determine and establish the current issues or problems facing the organisation, thus questioning, "What is happening now?" (Rensburg & Cant, 2003:82). This step is called ***Defining Public Relations Problems*** and regarded as strategic in nature. It incorporates a situation analysis involving internal and external factors, as well as a SWOT analysis (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:97,109). Cutlip *et al.* (2002:111-125) advise on, and briefly discuss the various formal and informal methods of research, which can be used during the internal and external analysis.

The second step of the Four-Step Public Relations Process, ***Planning and Programming***, is conducted to answer the question, "What should be done and why?" (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:97-98). At this phase, strategies are created to assess the policies and programmes of the organisation (Rensburg & Cant, 2003:82). Once again, this step has a strategic

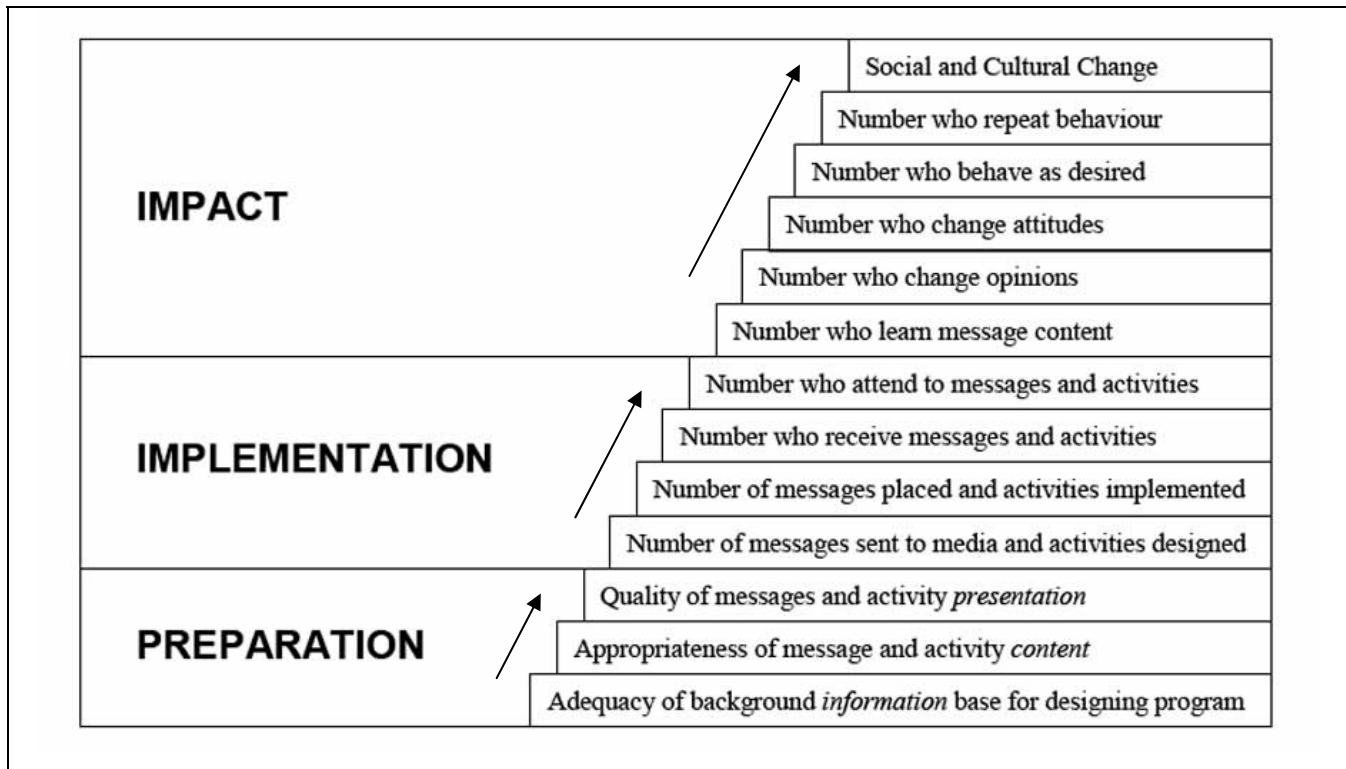
perspective, and approaches the planning phase with a Management by Objectives (MBO) methodology (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:141,144). The MBO approach involves setting goals and objectives, which are implemented by programmes or campaigns. Cutlip *et al.* (2002:149-164) explain how to define target audiences; create programme objectives; plan for and handle crises; create and stick to a budget; pre-test programme elements; and sell the plan to top managers or clients.

The third step of the process is where programmes are implemented and the question, "How do we do it and say it?" is answered (Rensburg & Cant, 2003:82). Cutlip *et al.* (2002:99) refer to this phase as ***Taking Action and Communicating***. Aspects such as message creation and framing, semantics, symbols, barriers and stereotypes as well as message dissemination are examined (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:174-188).

The fourth and final step of the Four-Step Public Relations Process (and the most relevant to this study) answers, "How did we do?" (Rensburg & Cant, 2003:82). Termed ***Evaluating the Programme*** (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:99), this step can be classified as a *scientific management approach* to research. Cutlip *et al.* (2002:204-209) explain that the purpose of this step is to evaluate the implementation, progress and outcome of communication programmes, and is measured by means of the PII Model.

The PII Model, illustrated in Figure 3.1, reads from the bottom to the top and represents the necessary elements that lead to problem resolution and social change (Cutlip *et al.*, 1994:414). The model raises specific questions at each step of the communication process, which provides information for assessing, campaign / programme effectiveness and contributes to an increased overall understanding of the communication process (Macnamara, 2002:15). In campaign / programme evaluation, Cutlip *et al.* (1994:414) explain that the most common errors, made by practitioners, are the use of measurement techniques that should take place on one level, and incorrectly substituting it into a different level. An example includes counting news releases and distributed brochures as the programme's impact effectiveness. The authors explain that this merely measures the programme's implementation and not the preparation or impact.

Figure 3.1: The PII Model of Evaluation



Source: Cutlip *et al.* (2002:207)

Preparation level assesses the information and strategic planning, needed to arrange the campaign (Macnamara, 2002:15). Cutlip *et al.* (1994:415) explain how practitioners often experience that the original situation analysis did not contain enough vital information for the entire communication campaign. This level, therefore, evaluates the adequacy of the background information used to plan the programme (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:207).

Additionally, it also measures the organisation and appropriateness of programme and message strategies and tactics (Cutlip *et al.*, 1994:415). At this phase, it is imperative, that a review of how successful the programme matched the demands of the situation is evaluated (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:210). These authors of this model suggest that practitioners perform a content analysis of the materials produced during the campaign, to determine whether the messages created actually addressed the original issues (Cutlip *et al.*, 1994:415).

The final stage of this level, measures the quality of the programme elements' presentation. Here the comprehensibility of messages is calculated (Cutlip *et al.*, 1994:416). Three *readability* and a *listenability* quantitative measures are proposed by

Cutlip *et al.* (2002:209-212), to determine how easily messages are received by audiences and what level of education the audiences have to be to receive the messages. Already discussed, the measures include the Flesch Formula, the Gunning Formula, the Fry Formula and the Easy Listening Formula (ELF).

Implementation level, deals with the programme's implementation and communication effectiveness and dissemination, by measuring tactics and efforts (Macnamara, 2002:15). This phase is mostly quantitative and mainly concerned with counting the number of communication products / outputs produced. It is here where media clippings play a role, however, Cutlip *et al.* (1994:420) warn against using this level of evaluation to determine the impact of the campaign. This level must also identify whether audiences received the messages. There are various ways to monitor what audiences are listening to on the radio or television. Audience research employs four primary methods (Cutlip *et al.*, 1994:424-426; Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:217-218):

- The *Diary method* where members of a household manually keep record of what is being watched or listened to.
- The *Meter method* electronically records radio tuning frequencies or television channels chosen by the receiver, as well as the time of day that these were watched or listened to.
- The *People meter* method monitors what each family member watches by requiring them to push a button unique to them, when watching television.
- The *Telephone interview* method involves calls either during or following a programme to determine audience size.

Impact level provides feedback on the outcome of the programme (Macnamara, 2002:15) and assesses the effectiveness of the campaign preparation and implementation. Here, the extent to which the outcome identified in the objectives for each target public, and the overall programme goal is measured (Cutlip *et al.*, 1994:426). The Benchmark Evaluation Model is a technique used to compare the results from the two preceding levels with measures achieved in the previous years. The *Intermediate* impact technique monitors progress toward the objectives and goals during the programme implementation. The *summative* impact assessments provide evidence of success or failure in reaching the planned end point (Cutlip *et al.*, 2002:219). Cutlip *et al.* (1994:426) elaborate that summative evaluations serve as formative evaluations for the next programme cycle. This phase answers the questions presented in the impact block in Figure 3.1.

Macnamara (2002:15) highlights an important theoretical contribution provided by this model. It correctly separates *outputs* from *impacts* (or *outcomes*). It also counsels against confusing measurements at different levels (Watson & Noble, 2005:79), and acts as a checklist when planning evaluation. Macnamara (2002:15) does, however, bring attention to criticism surrounding the PII model's complexity and lack of ability to incorporate the feedback element. Additionally, Macnamara (2002:15) criticises the model for not prescribing research methodologies at each of the level, despite the presentation of the *readability* and *listenability* formulas.

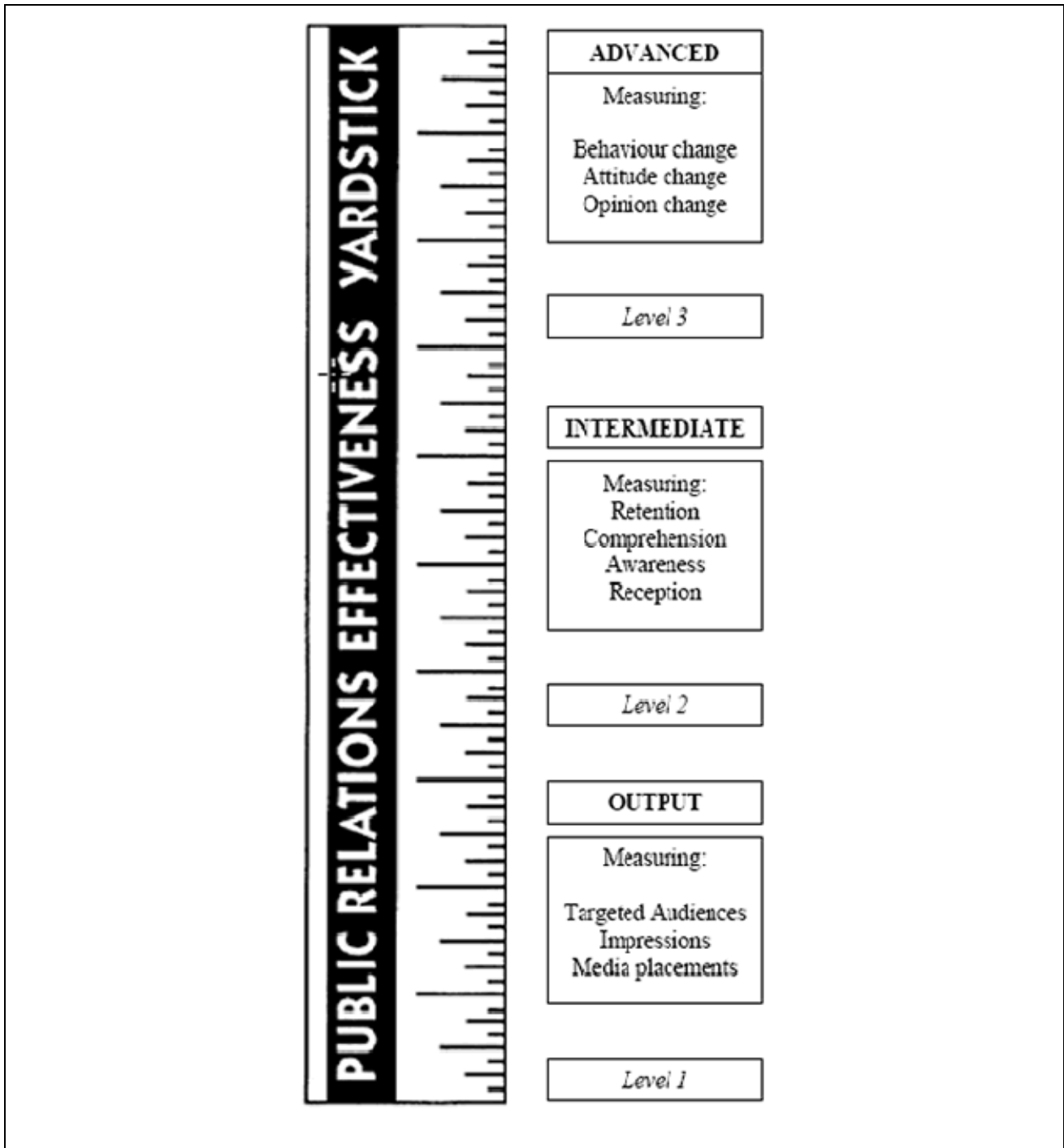
3.4.1.2 PR 'Effectiveness Yardstick' Model

The PR 'Effectiveness Yardstick' Model, developed by Lindenmann in 1993, presents a set of guidelines or standards that practitioners can follow when measuring communication effectiveness (Macnamara, 2002:19). Lindenmann (1993:7) describes the model as involving a two-step process of setting objectives, and then determining what level the practitioner should use to measure the communication effectiveness. In his model, Lindenmann (1993:7) explains that ultimately practitioners want to send their *messages*, *themes* or *ideas* to specified *target audiences* through predetermined *channels* and have *short- or long-term effects*. Setting objectives around these four areas is the first step of the process (Sandin & Simolin, 2006:16).

The second step of the model determines the levels that communication practitioners wish to measure (within their set of objectives). Macnamara (2002:19) explains that this approach to researching and evaluating is based on three levels of sophistication and depth, rather than the previous models suggested chronological process of communication. Macnamara (2002:19) also elaborates that these levels of effect include *outputs*, *outgrowths* and *outcomes*. Figure 3.2 illustrates the 'Effectiveness Yardstick' model measuring the three levels of communication effect.

Level one is the basic level and evaluates *outputs* (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:5). It focuses on what the practitioner or organisation actually did and how practitioners present and handle themselves. Evaluation and research at this level is low in cost and uncomplicated. Examples of measurement include media placements and impressions (total audience reached); the amount of exposure generated; content analyses and public opinion polls (cf Lindenmann, 1993:8; Macnamara, 2002:19; Sandin & Simolin, 2006:16).

Figure 3.2: The 'Effectiveness Yardstick' Model



Source: Lindenmann (1993:8)

Level two is the intermediate level and measures message reception, attention, comprehension and retention (Lindenmann, 1993:8). According to Macnamara (2002:19), this level of measurement introduces a fourth stage of communication called *outgrowths*, also known as *out-takes*, and refers to what audiences receive or 'take out' of communication activities. Several academics and researchers regard *outgrowths* as an additional stage in the chronological communication process (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:5;

Macnamara, 2002:19). The reasoning is that audiences have to receive, retain and understand messages (out-takes), before they can change their opinion, attitudes or behaviour (outcomes) (Macnamara, 2002:19; Sandin & Simolin, 2006:16). At this level, practitioners usually rely on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques such as, focus groups, in-depth interviews with opinion leaders, extensive polling of target audiences through mail, telephone or face-to-face communication (Sandin & Simolin, 2006:16).

Level three is described as the advanced level and focuses on measuring opinion change, attitude change or, at the highest level, behavioural change (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:35). This level is the most difficult to measure and is concerned with *outcomes* (Lindenmann, 1993:9). At this level, Lindenmann (1993:9) suggests utilising pre- and post-tests, experimental and quasi-experimental research designs, unobtrusive data collection methods, advanced data analysis or comprehensive and multi-faceted communication audits.

This model is not strictly comparable to the other models, as it offers a vertical progression of techniques rather than a horizontal movement from Inputs to Results (Watson & Noble, 2005:84). Macnamara (2002:19) commends it for its ability to identify that the communication process might not always appear chronologically. Watson and Noble (2005:84) mention that the model emphasises the setting of objectives, and Noble (1999:18) points out that it even separates cognitive and behavioural impact objectives, which will require different evaluative techniques. On the other hand, however, Macnamara (2002:19) criticises the model for omitting *inputs* as a stage in communication, and explains that the measurement should take into account, the amount of resources needed to achieve communication goals. Watson and Noble (2005:84) classify this model as largely educational and not necessarily practical, labelling it as an encouragement to practitioners rather than an effective evaluation technique.

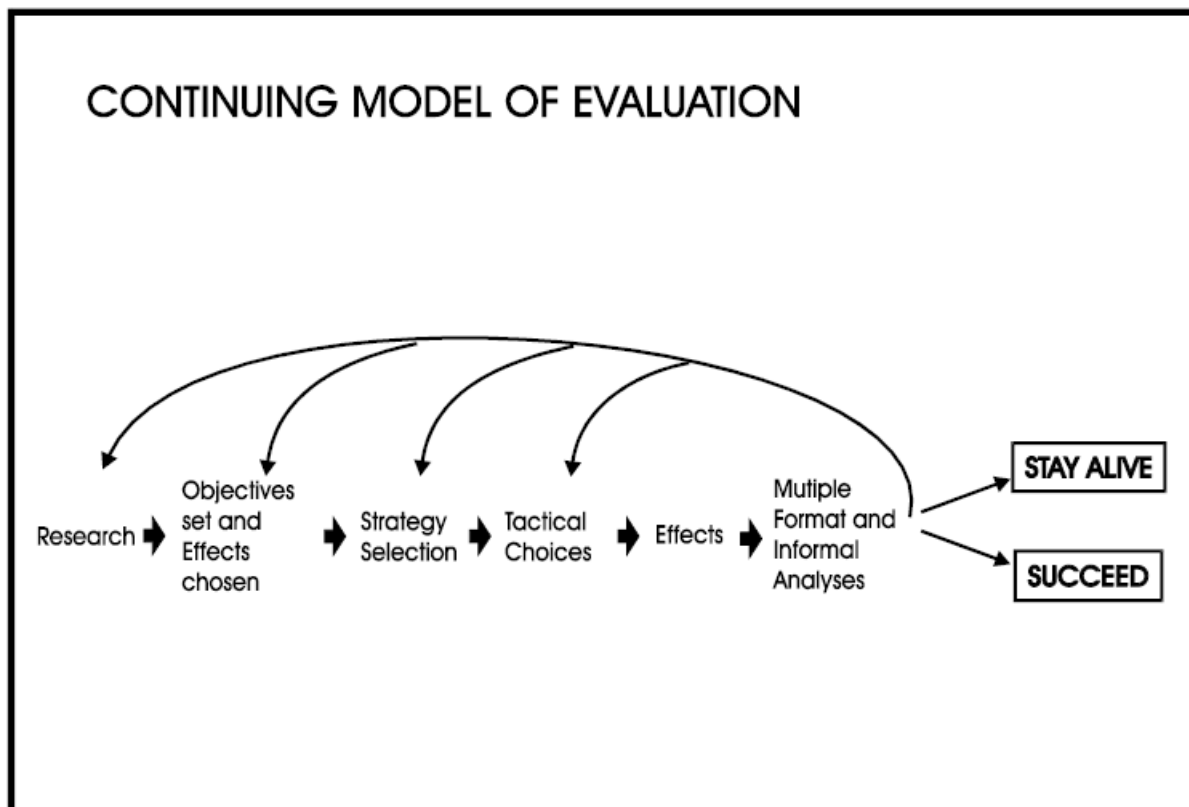
3.4.1.3 The Continuing Model of Evaluation

Watson and Noble (2005:90) relay studies conducted in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia, from 1990 to 1996. These studies proved practitioners reluctance to use the above-mentioned models. Based on this research, Watson (in Noble, 1999:18) criticises the previous models (including the Macro Model of PR Evaluation,

developed by Macnamara in 1992), for complexity and the lack of identified integral relationships with the creation of effects. By this, Watson and Noble (2005:90) imply that at every stage of the communication process, certain activities result in new *effects* that could change the desired end result. Where the previous models lacked active feedback, Watson (in Watson & Noble, 2005:92) attempted to build this element into the model and illustrate how dynamic in nature feedback is. To create this dynamic model, that considers the effects being created around communication activities, Watson (in Watson & Noble, 2005:94-95) created two models in 1997; the first being the **Short-term Model**; and the second **The Continuing Model of Evaluation** (Noble, 1999:18).

Nobel (1999:18) explains that the Short-term Model, is concerned with simple awareness objectives, and considered a linear process with no feedback mechanism. The Continuing Model of Evaluation is concerned with long-term activities and includes a feedback loop. The central element (the series of loops) reflects Van Leuven's effects-based planning approach, and emphasises that research and evaluation are continuous, and should be considered in every stage of planning a communication programme (Macnamara, 2002:21). Figure 3.3 schematically represents the model.

Figure 3.3: The Continuing Model of Evaluation



Source: Watson and Noble (2005:95)

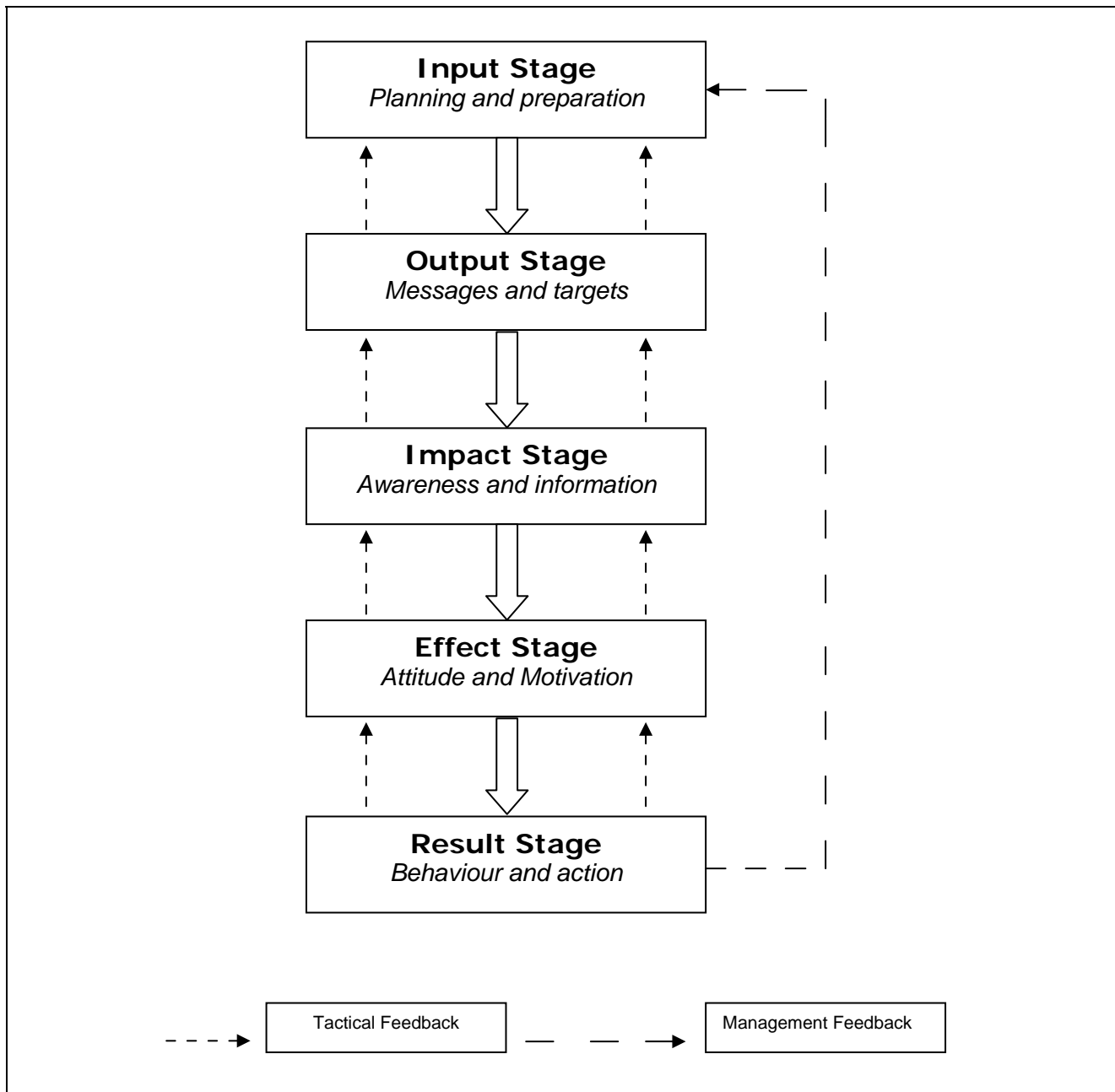
The model features the stages of programme planning as well as the way research should be incorporated. Research is illustrated as the feedback loops and judges the progress in terms of either success or survival (Macnamara, 2002:21). This feedback assists practitioners with validating initial research and adds new data for the streamlining and adjusting of objectives, strategies and tactics (Watson & Noble, 2005:95). *Effects* refer to the desired changes that the communication activities should result in, ideally measured with both multiple levels of formal and informal analysis (Macnamara, 2002:21). Noble (1999:18) explains that this model compliments rather than replaces the previous models, and commends this model for helping practitioners think of evaluation by means of complexity and time. Additionally, this author mentions that this model reinforces both summative as well as formative evaluation and is closer to achieving the Two-way symmetrical model of communication. Macnamara (2002:21), however, criticises the model for not expanding on the research methodologies needed, especially in the formal and informal analysis.

3.4.1.4 The Unified Evaluation Model

Developed in 1999 by Noble and Watson the Unified Evaluation Model attempted to combine the best of each of the previous models (Macnamara, 2002:22). Watson and Noble (2005:87) saw that the PII Model, the 'Effectiveness Yardstick' Model, the PR Pyramid Model and the IPR PRE Toolkit all described evaluation for communication in four steps, however, each of the models did contain something of value. For this reason, the Unified Evaluation Model, illustrated in Figure 3.4, combines the stages of the 'Effectiveness Yardstick' Model with the stages from the other models and terms them as *Input, Output, Impact, Effect* and *Results* Levels.

In this way, research is encouraged during the planning phase with inputs; and depth is added to the model by separating outcomes into cognitive (impact), emotional (effect) and behavioural (result) changes. This model therefore indicates the level of change that receivers will need to go through, before results in behavioural change will become evident. Furthermore, the model also makes provision for feedback, and differentiates the types of feedback as either management or tactical feedback.

Figure 3.4: The Unified Evaluation Model



Adapted from: Watson and Noble (2005:89)

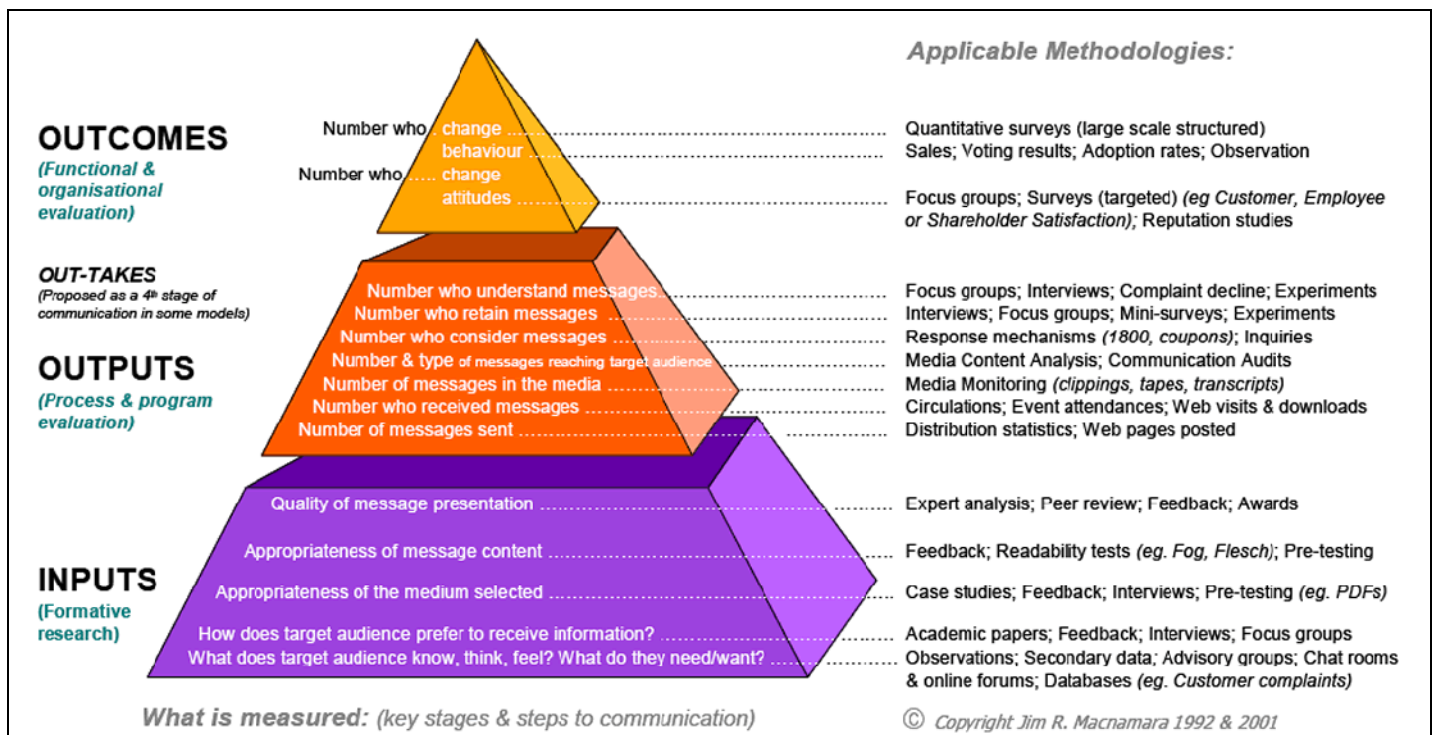
Despite the attempt to synergise all the previous models, criticism is ascribed to the concept of substituting out-takes and outcomes with impacts and effects. Critics claim that this substitution could confuse practitioners, rather than clarify the effects of their communication, resulting in further complications (Macnamara, 2002:22). These unnecessary complications may advance practitioners reluctance to conduct research, measurement and evaluation. Lastly, Macnamara (2002:22) as well as Watson and Noble (2005:90) themselves, underline the lack of suggested research methodologies or techniques at each stage of the model for data collection purposes.

3.4.1.5 The Pyramid Model of PR Research

Macnamara developed the Pyramid Model of PR Research in 1999 (Macnamara, 2002:16). This model is a revised version of his previous Macro Model of PR Evaluation, developed in 1992. It incorporates the input, output and outcome communication effects.

The model graphically illustrates the communication process in the form of a pyramid, to illustrate the large amount of information, accessible to practitioners, in the starting phase of a campaign (Watson & Noble, 2005:80). The base of the pyramid indicates the wide range of media and activities that practitioners have to consider, before decisions can be taken to narrow down the media options, based on target audiences and messages (Macnamara, 2002:16). Additionally, the model schematically signifies the amount of work that has to be done in the input phase, before sufficient outputs are created and outcomes achieved. The model makes use of the scientific management approach to research, by incorporating both formative and evaluative research throughout each phase. The middle section depicts the physical material and activities that would provide a series of outputs. Ultimately the top section indicates the achievement of a desired outcome (attitudinal or behavioural), known as the impact or outcomes (Macnamara, 2002:16-19). Figure 3.5 illustrates the Pyramid Model of PR Research.

Figure 3.5: Pyramid Model of PR Research



Source: Macnamara (2002:17)

The model is useful in conveying applicable methodologies that can be used at each level of the model (Watson & Noble, 2005:81). It encourages both pre-testing and post-testing campaign messages for effectiveness purposes with both quantitative (closed system evaluation) and qualitative (open system evaluation) techniques (Macnamara, 2002:16-19). It also focuses on the actual processes that practitioners need to undergo, to deliver outputs (e.g., designing a brochure or writing a media release). It can be said that the intangible value communication contributes, is captured at every step in the communication process, and translates this value into numbers and figures that portray accountability to executives.

Noble (1999:18) commends Macnamara's argument for conducting process evaluation from the early stages of a campaign, to reduce chances of failure. Additionally, Noble (1999:18) praises the model for suggesting different methodologies or research techniques at each stage of the model. This model draws on the recommendations of a number of researchers and academics listing 35 research methodologies, ranging from simple informal methods of gaining feedback to sophisticated structured surveys (Macnamara, 2002:18).

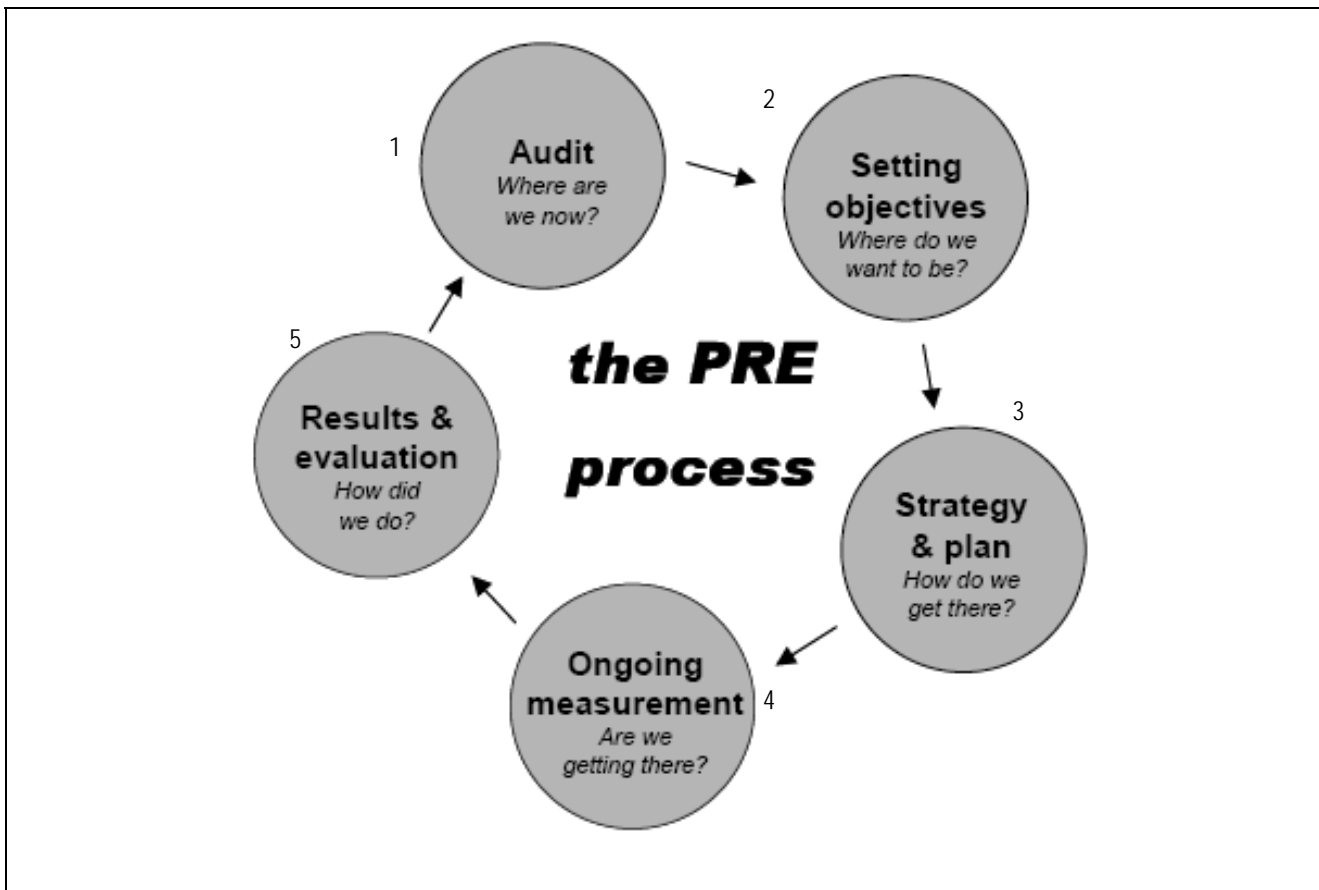
This model is comprehensive and makes a significant contribution to the concept of measuring communication activities by considering the actual business processes that occur between each phase (Macnamara, 2002:18). The model deliberately combines formative and evaluative research, in the belief that the two types of research must be integrated and work as a 'continuum' of information gathering and feedback in the communication process, rather than separate discrete functions. Watson and Noble (2005:81) do, however, criticise the model for its lack of concern with mid-campaign adjustment, and highlight its focus on media relations, which is a strategic and important part of communications, but not its only focus.

3.4.1.6 IPR PRE Toolkit

In 2001 the United Kingdom Institute of Public Relations, issued the second edition of its Public Relations Research and Evaluation Toolkit, based on the previous version, developed in collaboration with the Public Relations Consultants Association and *PR Week* (Phillips, 2001:227). The former toolkit did not offer advice as to how methodologies could be evaluated or applied, so the second edition improved on that.

The toolkit consists of a five-step approach to planning, research and evaluation. These steps give practitioners practical tools to undertake evaluation and overcome the problems that hinder them from conducting evaluation (Watson & Noble, 2005:85). Illustrated in Figure 3.6, the toolkit includes conducting an audit; setting objectives; devising the strategy and plan; conducting ongoing measurement; and finding results and evaluation (Macnamara, 2002:22-24; Phillips, 2001:227).

Figure 3.6: IPR PRE Toolkit



Adapted from: Macnamara (2002:24)

1. Conducting a communication audit about the organisation, products and services, as well as communications with audiences is the first step (Watson & Noble, 2005:86). This research assists in identifying the purpose of the communication. The list of research methodologies in this section include analysing existing data; auditing existing communication; attitudes and loyalty research; media audit and analysis; desk research; gathering inputs; and establishing benchmarks (Macnamara, 2002:24; Phillips, 2001:227). It is also suggested that senior management be involved at this stage, to encourage communication's strategic role (Sandin & Simolin, 2006:14).

2. The setting of objectives follows the audit, and should reflect the strategic and business goals of an organisation, answer the question, "Where do we want to be?" (Phillips, 2001:227). The model advises the department of corporate communication to align with other functions' strategic objectives; and requires detailed information on the identification of target audiences, messages, the medium, the desired response, and the timing (Macnamara, 2002:24). Pre-testing is also strongly advised (Sandin & Simolin, 2006:14).
3. Devising strategies and plans follow. Here the decision about the strategy, tactics, type and level of measurement to be utilised, is made (Sandin & Simolin, 2006:14). In this model, *outputs* measure which messages were sent out, how they were sent out, and whom they reached (e.g., media analysis and literature uptake). *Out-takes* measure the extent to which the messages were remembered and understood (e.g., focus groups and surveys). *Outcomes* measure to what degree the communication activity changed opinions, behaviour or attitudes (e.g., share price, sales, audience attitude research, and behavioural change) (Macnamara, 2002:24; Phillips, 2001:227).
4. Ongoing measurement is the first, of several periods of measurement or continuous measurement, asking, "Are we getting there?" and if so, "Did we stay on course?"; if not, "Should we adjust tactics, strategy or objectives?" (Phillips, 2001:227). The research methodologies recommended at this stage include media content analysis, audience research polls, focus groups, interviews, surveys, inquiries, and sales reports (Macnamara, 2002:24; Watson & Noble, 2005:86).
5. The last step evaluates the results and asks, "How did we do?" (Phillips, 2001:227). Here results are reviewed against the original objectives, and experiences / lessons are captured, focusing on what worked and did not work and what could be re-used in the next process (Sandin & Simolin, 2006:14; Watson & Noble, 2005:856). This is then fed back into the first step of the process again, completing the cycle and re-starting the ongoing circular process (Macnamara, 2002:25).

This model once again reinforces the ever-important theme of planning, executing and evaluating an organisation's corporate communication (Sandin & Simolin, 2006:14). It emphasises in a graphical way, how the evaluation process should remain an ongoing circular process (Macnamara, 2002:25; Watson & Noble, 2005:85).

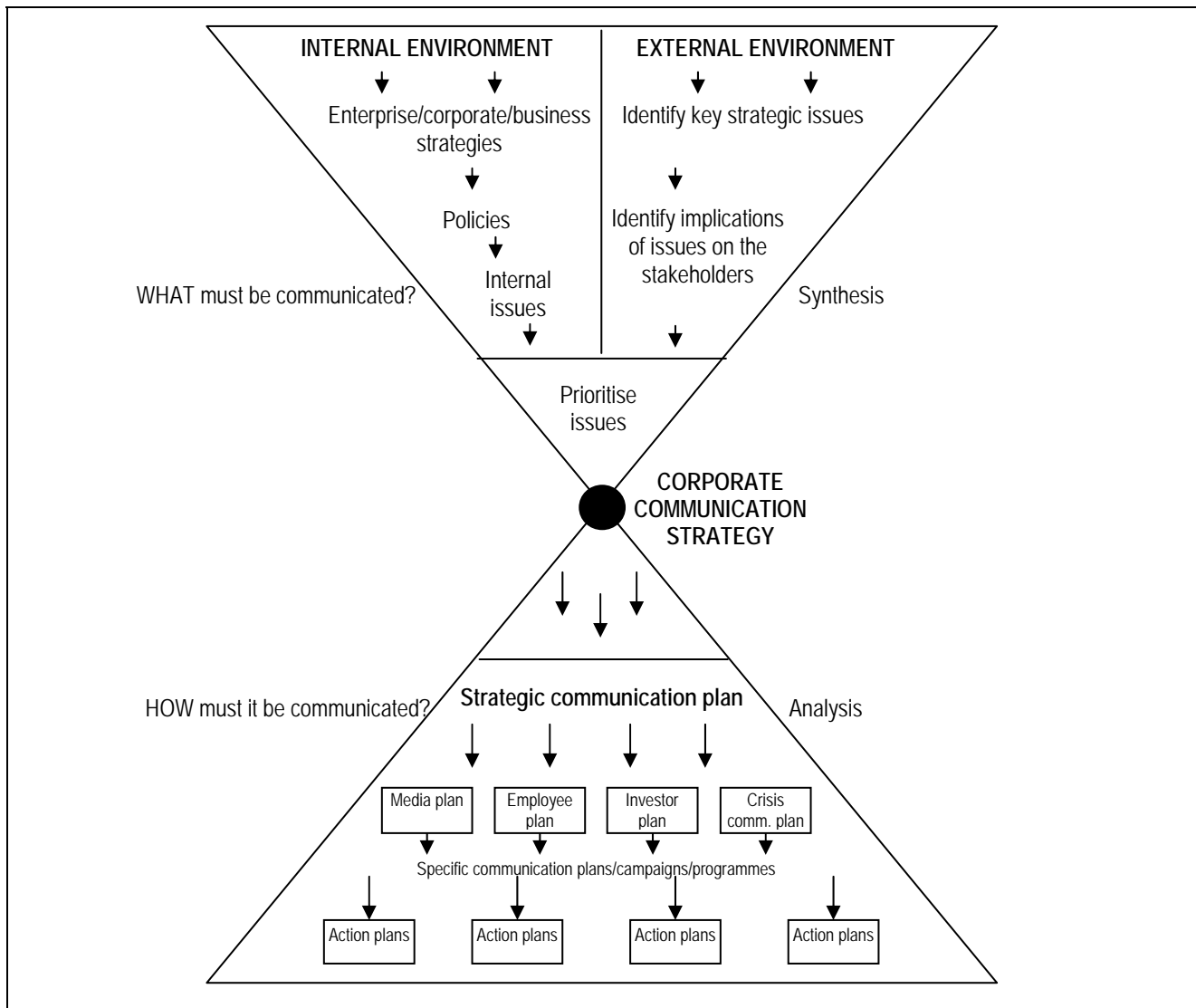
3.4.1.7 Summary of the best practice models

Noble (1999:18) commends the above models for their contribution to understanding that corporate communication occurs as a multi-step activity and requires different evaluation methodologies at different stages. The identification of resources (inputs), the tangibles product (outputs), along with the recipient change (outcomes), is an important contribution that all these models make. However, a very alarming fact, identified by Watson and Noble (2005:84) is, that practitioners do not adopt or make use of these models.

Watson and Noble (2005:84) attribute the reason for non-acceptance to be practitioners' lack of knowledge about these models; the narrowness and academic focus of the models; and the lack of practical universal appeal. Complimenting the last point, Steyn and Bütschi (2004:4) suggest an additional reason. These authors explain that corporate communication is perceived as a set of activities that the communication department has to do for the sake of communicating on behalf of the organisation. This discipline is therefore not identified as a strategic function. Where communication research traditionally helps devise, monitor and evaluate communication activities, Steyn and Puth (2000:63) argue there should be a stronger focus on the strategic element that corporate communication has in aligning the communication strategy to the organisational strategy.

The research that takes place in the communication department should fulfil a strategic role and provide input for the organisational direction. For this reason, Steyn and Puth (2000:63) provide a framework to demonstrate how the corporate communication strategy aligns with the organisation and precedes the development of plans. The framework provides a comprehensive view of how enterprise / corporate strategies are created and how the corporate communication strategy feeds from that. After devising the communication strategies, based on prioritised stakeholders and issues, Steyn and Puth (2000:64) comprehensively discuss how communication plans and programmes are developed. There are similarities between this framework and the Four-Step Public Relations Process by Cutlip *et al.* (1994:414); however, the emphasis is placed on the strategic role of corporate communication and can be seen in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Framework for the corporate communication strategy



Adapted from: Steyn and Puth (2000:53)

Although the concept of integrating the communication strategy into the 'bigger picture' is relevant to this study, this framework does not incorporate a measurement model to evaluate communication activities (at any levels of the organisation). It is therefore not discussed in this study. It has been mentioned to emphasise the importance of integrating *all* communication activities with the rest of the organisation.

The Commission of PR Measurement and Evaluation Report, identify four components in communication evaluation research. The first and second have already been discussed in the beginning of the chapter and include *outputs* and *outcomes*. There are however, two more components which include *setting specific measurable communication goals and*

objectives that feed from the organisational goals and objectives (as illustrated in the corporate communication strategy framework above); and finally, *measuring business and organisational outcomes* (Gorpe & Saran, 2005:5). The Commission suggests that whatever the communication practitioners are doing in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of their efforts; they should take care to link the corporate communication accomplishments to the ultimate goals and objectives of the organisation as a whole, in order to relay its business impact (Gorpe and Saran, 2005:6).

Although the above-mentioned models make mention of communication objectives and strategies flowing from the corporate vision, goals, objectives and strategies, none of these models are able to link the measurement and evaluation component to the bigger corporate measuring and evaluation tool. If communication and its results are to be taken seriously, the results need to be reflected in the tool that measures the entire organisation's performance, for strategic decision-making purposes. Grunig and Grunig (2001:7) expand this argument, stating that most measurement efforts by academics and practitioners are concerned with the evaluation of individual communication programmes and this is too narrow. Additionally, Vos and Schoemaker (2004:1) argue that communication quality measures should not only be campaign, project or programme based, but must include all communication activities that take place. Grunig and Grunig (2001:7) reveal that the effectiveness of an organisation as a whole should be determined before the communication department can understand how to make it more effective.

Grunig and Grunig (2001:8) name four levels where corporate communication plays a role in the organisation's over-all effectiveness:

- **Programme level**, which includes individual communication functions such as media relations, internal communication, investor relations, and so on. Here the goals and objectives for each function should be achieved on a cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural level of relationship with the organisation's stakeholders.
- **Functional level**, which implies the integration of communication among the overall management processes of an organisation. Communication processes need to be investigated and measured at this level. This is an extremely important contribution, as it identifies communication as part of the business process (sometimes referred to as workflow). For communication to be effective, the actual business process through which communication takes place should be streamlined.

- **Organisational level**, which considers how the organisation's goals and expectations are aligned to the organisation's stakeholders' goals and expectations, thus focusing largely on long-term relationships.
- **Societal level**, which is concerned with the ethical behaviour and social responsibility of organisations. Once again, an organisation's communication effectiveness should be measured at this level as well.

The above suggests that the value of corporate communication can be recognised, if it is measured with the same measurement tool used to measure the entire organisation. A few authors have started investigating a means for evaluating corporate communication strategically. These strategic evaluation models are reviewed in the subsequent section.

3.4.2 Strategic evaluations measurement systems

The Balanced Scorecard was developed to create and track metrics and parameters that accounted for the performance of a process, a department, a business unit, or the entire organisation, against established targets, in an integrated image (Ritter, 2003:46). It is a successful and widely adopted measurement and improvement system (Vos & Schoemaker, 2004:1). The following two models make use of the Balanced Scorecard as a means to measure communication as well as to attribute value to it.

3.4.2.1 Using the Balanced Scorecard for communication accountability

Vos and Schoemaker (2004:1) contend the Balanced Scorecard to be a measure of quality control. These authors note that literature does not record the application of the Balanced Scorecard within the communication department. Literature does however, mention how functions such HR and IT have employed the Balanced Scorecard. Commended for its *action-orientated approach*, the Balanced Scorecard is more likely to be implemented and used by organisations (Vos & Schoemaker, 2004:2).

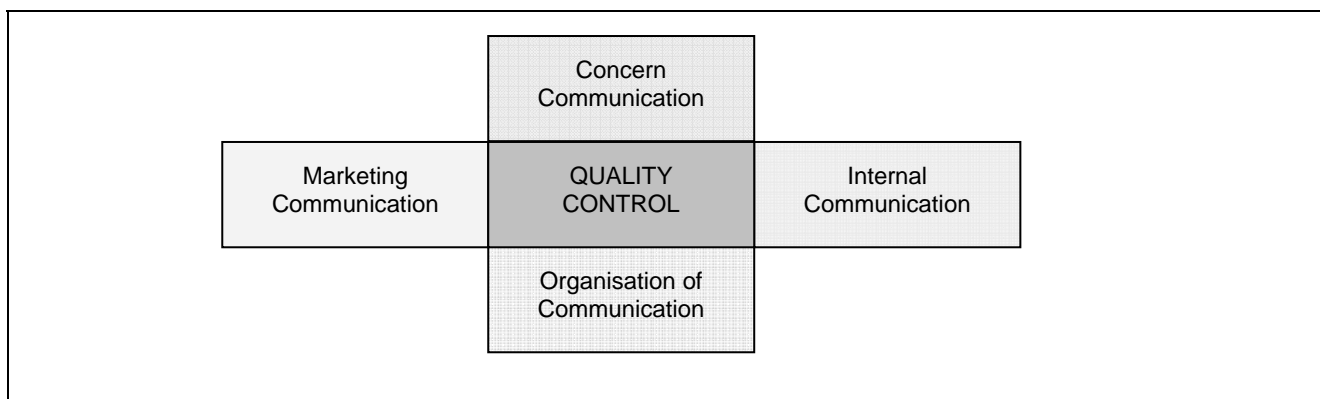
Another advantage that the Balanced Scorecard offers is the ability to measure the organisation's performance as a whole despite the numerous different departments that comprise it (Vos & Schoemaker, 2004:2-3). Vos and Schoemaker (2004:3) explain that corporate communication has developed many specialisations over the years, which has made the overall measurement of communication very difficult. The Balanced Scorecard is, therefore, a wonderful tool to measure the numerous specialisations within

communication, while maintaining an overall communication perspective. An added benefit that the Balanced Scorecard offers is the ability to measure how the organisation (as a whole) communicates, as opposed to simply measuring the departmental efforts. Lastly, the Balanced Scorecard can be employed (and is effective) in both small and large organisations at divisional or organisational level. Chapter 4 investigates the Balanced Scorecard in more detail.

Vos and Schoemaker (2004:5) explore the possibility of replicating the structure of the Balanced Scorecard, by adapting the four perspectives (finance, customers, internal processes as well as learning and growth) to four perspectives relevant to the communication environment. Illustrated in Figure 3.8, the communication perspectives are designed to address the same factors as the Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

- *Concern communication*: supporting the input structure of the financial perspective with corporate reputation and the promotion of the corporate image;
- *Internal communication*: supporting the output structure of the customer perspective, where the internal co-operation and change management are emphasised;
- *Marketing communication*: supporting the throughput structure of the internal processes perspective, where sales and distribution along with the awareness of offerings are highlighted; and finally,
- *The organisation of the communication function*: supporting the structure of the communication processes, focusing on the communication vision, the incorporation of communication as a function within the organisation, the coherence of communication activities and the innovation in communication.

Figure 3.8: The Balanced Scorecard for communication quality areas



Adapted from: Vos and Schoemaker (2004:5)

Vos and Schoemaker (2004:5) then adapted Kaplan and Norton's 'performance drivers' known as key success factors (KSF) or critical success factors (CSF) to be communication 'quality indicators'. *Communication quality* is defined as the degree in which communication contributes to the effectiveness of organisational policy and strengthens relations with parties, upon which the organisation depends, in order to be able to function well.

These authors use the following dimensions: clarity (of message); environment orientated (both internal and external, networking, and media contracts); consistency (coherent over time within the organisation's policy); responsiveness (detected changes through monitoring as well as use of feedback for improvement); and lastly, effectiveness and efficiency (result and goal orientated communication using planning, research and cost-efficient operations) (Vos & Schoemaker, 2004:6). Within each communication perspective, an indicator is created for every CSF, this is illustrated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Key success factors for corporate communication

	Concern communication	Marketing communication	Internal communication	Organisation of communication
Clarity	Clear positioning of the organisation	Clear position of brands	Information to staff is clear	Communication vision is clearly defined
Environment oriented	Maintain networks for the organisation's reputation	Maintain networks for distribution and sales	Communication reinforces commitment and supports change management	Communication function is well embedded in the organisation
Consistency	Coherence with other functions and with other communication domains	Coherence marketing mix, with research and development (R&D), and with other communication domains	Coherence with HR and with other communication domains	Common starting points for communication besides room for organisational units and/or communication domains
Responsiveness	Monitoring and action based on issues management	Monitoring and action based on market research, consumer trends and customer complaints	Communication contributes to internal views on external changes and communication skills encourage internal responsiveness	Feedback is used for innovation of communication
Effectiveness and efficiency	Assess corporate image, cost efficient methods	Assess brand images, cost, efficient methods	Internal communication audits, cost efficient methods	Assess communication quality, time management

Adapted from: Vos and Schoemaker (2004:6)

Indicators, when divided into distinct aspects and measured on a five-point scale, can be quantitatively measured. Although Vos and Schoemaker (2004:6) do mention that results

can be calculated and benchmarked, they do not illustrate examples on how it is supposed to be done. Additionally, they also do not prescribe the research techniques that should be employed to accumulate this information.

This tool has, however, been tested in government organisations and has proved valuable in facilitating team discussions as well as increasing communication attention in certain areas (Vos & Schoemaker, 2004:3-4). Nevertheless, Vos and Schoemaker (2004:4) do clearly state that the tool still requires additional testing, to identify long-term effects. Additionally, they also stress that the tool is not static in nature, but should be customised to suit specific organisations within specific industries.

Although this model makes significant contributions in measuring communication, in a similar structure, to the rest of the organisation, it is limited to measuring within the communication department only. An investigation into another Balanced Scorecard model follows.

3.4.2.2 A Balanced Scorecard approach to strategic corporate communication

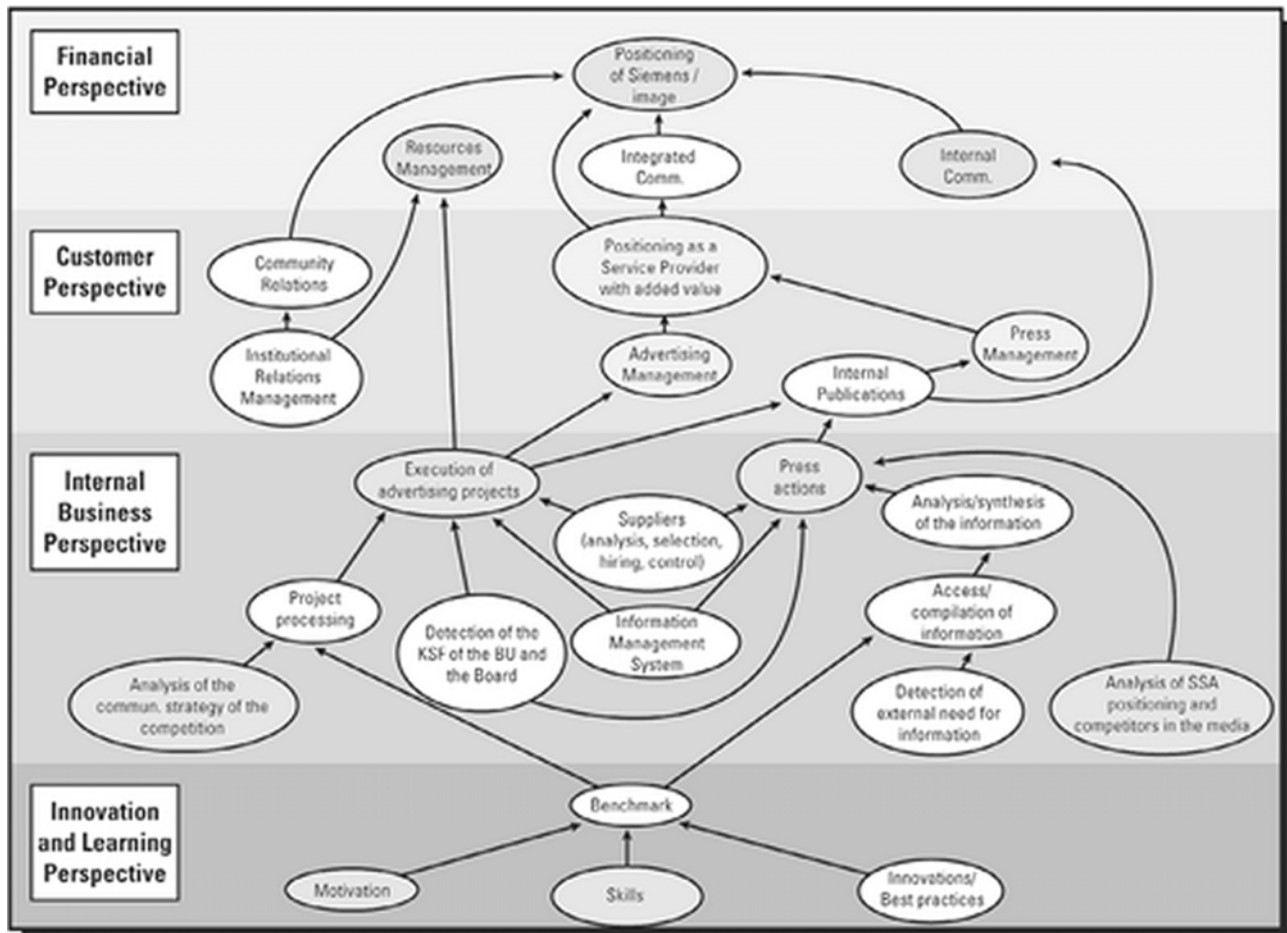
Ritter (2003:48) proposes utilising the Balanced Scorecard system to monitor communications within and from the organisation. This author conducted a case study with the Corporate Relations and Communication Division in Argentina's Siemens Corporation to investigate the possibility of employing the Balanced Scorecard to monitor communications. A significant approach that the author takes, in this model, frees the communication department from being solely responsible for monitoring all organisational communication. Furthermore, unlike Vos and Shoemaker (2004:1-7), Ritter (2003:48) does not develop communication perspectives, but maintains that the perspective will be subject to the conditions and environment that the communication department is faced with. This author proposes 11 steps to develop a corporate communication scorecard that flows from the original organisational scorecard:

1. Starting with the organisation's vision and the global strategy, the following questions should be asked, "What do you attempt to achieve?" and "Which objectives are set by the management in order to meet the vision?"
2. A review of the communication programme should then be conducted asking, "How does it fit within the strategic objectives, set by the company?"

3. An evaluation and definition of the communication department's vision and mission should be visited, questioning, "How are processes developed?"; "Does it provide information?" and "Does it help overcome obstacles?"
4. The CSFs, necessary for the communication process to meet the strategic objectives of the organisation, should then be identified.
5. The CSFs should then be organised according to the four Balanced Scorecard perspectives (financial, customer, internal process as well as innovation and learning); a cause-and-effect relations should be set among these factors, to show how they impact on one another. In this way, a business model will be defined as illustrated in Figure 3.9.
6. Indicators that permit the measurement of each critical success factor should then be allocated. Ritter (2003:51-54) provides these indicators, with the measurement technique and frequency. These will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.
7. Each critical success factor should then be matched to a parameter that efficiently defines it. This entails defining a measurement that specifies frequency, method employed as well as the measurement standard to be used.
8. The calculation of costs against the benefits of the defined measurements should then be conducted and matched with the available resources. This step provides a valuable opportunity to be creative in measurement related activities.
9. A clearly understood and agreed upon process should be developed in order to gather information, which would include involved parties' roles, responsibilities and deadlines.
10. Targets are then set in the Balanced Scorecard, and indicated as red, yellow and green lights to map progress.
11. With the Balanced Scorecard available, it is advised to carry out tests, asking, "Do measurements tell you what you need to know?" and, even more important, "Do they help you gear your organisation to meeting your strategic objectives?"

From the above 11 steps, Ritter (2003:48-59) devised a corporate communication Balanced Scorecard with indicators, for Siemens in Argentina, as a case study. These indicators will be presented in Chapter 4, where specific focus is awarded to KPIs. The Strategy map created for the company is presented in Figure 3.9.

Figure 3.9: The corporate communication business model for Siemens - Argentina



Source: Ritter (2003:51)

This model contributes significantly towards the understanding of how to integrate communication management and evaluation in an organisation. Firstly, the model identifies the need to manage *all business processes* related to organisational communication. Emphasis is drawn to the fact that these processes could occur throughout the organisation and not just within the communication department. Secondly, provision is made for the process of information gathering needed to create communication. Thirdly, the model makes provision for identifying what measurement (or research) techniques should be used for each indicator of a critical success factor; how frequently the measurement should take place; and to what standard the measurement should comply. Fourthly, provision is made for the calculation of costs and the allocation of resources, tied into to the greater communication department budget. Additionally, it is accentuated that the need to agree on the roles, responsibilities and deadlines must take place before actions are implemented. The most noteworthy contribution is, however, the ability to link communication activities and measurement, to the tool used by the

organisation. This is practical and more likely to be implemented, because top managers as well as managers from all organisational functions, can understand how communication is being measured.

Ritter (2003:48) as well as Vos and Schoemaker (2004:2) refer to the Excellence Models as being an organisational method of quality control. According to the authors, these Excellence Models are very useful in determining how to ensure the effectiveness of an organisation through quality. Additionally, many organisations have successfully implemented these models to enforce quality in every area of the business. Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:1-22) award attention to the South African excellence model and explore the possibility of including communication as a quality area.

3.4.2.3 *Aligning corporate communication and the Excellence Models*

Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:1) start by highlighting the competitive environment in which organisations operate today, and explain that this has driven the need for *excellence* and *quality*. Throughout their article, these authors emphasise the need for organisations to show continuous improvement, and for leaders to show commitment to all stakeholders. Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:11) also explain how quality / Excellence Models have helped organisations in the past, ensuring better employee relations; higher productivity; greater customer satisfaction; increased market share; improved relationship management; and improved profitability. Ironically, these are many of the end goals that the corporate communication function is tasked with.

Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:12), therefore, suggest that there should be strategic alignment between the model and corporate communication. Furthermore, the corporate communication department should assist the organisation in being more excellent, and should be able to quantify this contribution. Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:3) propose that portraying this contribution could solve the current measurement problems faced by communication practitioners, while simultaneously assisting the organisation's need for differentiation. The authors are also of the opinion that this will only be possible if corporate communication is aligned to tried and tested business models and approaches, of which the Excellence Models are one. The Excellence Models are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Typically Excellence Models employ a *self-assessment* component, defined by Porter and Tanner (in Rensburg & Ferreira, 2004:12) as 'health-checks', where an organisation reviews its direction and evaluates the current status of the its processes. Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:12) name five such self-assessment approaches, which include award simulations, pro forma's, workshops, questionnaires, and the matrix chart. Having gone through the self-assessment process, the organisation would then have determined what its strengths and weaknesses are, and integrate them in the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis (Rensburg & Ferreira, 2004:15). They also explain that this stage determines the organisation's current state, where improvement should take place, and ways to ensure improvement in the future.

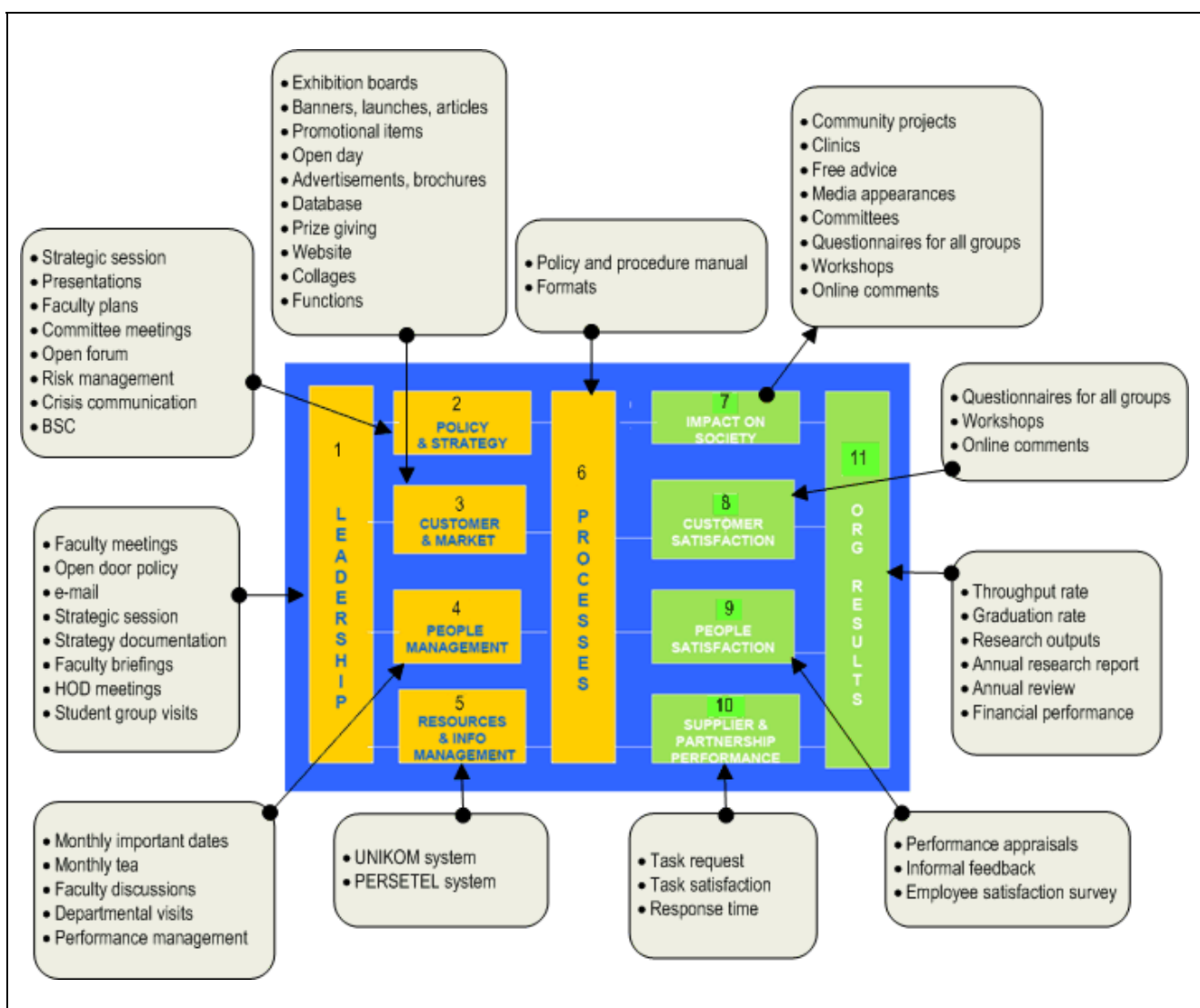
The key to Rensburg and Ferreira's (2004:1-21) proposal is the involvement of the corporate communication department in the execution and co-ordination of the self-assessment process. This suggestion is different to other communication models, in that it incorporates a strategic communication involvement; as early as the self-assessment and SWOT analysis phase, which assesses the organisation as a whole and not solely the communication department.

In the University of Pretoria (South Africa) case study, conducted by Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:15-19), areas of organisational improvement were identified by the corporate communication department using self-assessment tools in the form of questionnaires and workshops. Improvement areas were then prioritised and plotted in the South African Excellence Model (SAEM). During the strategic planning process, the corporate vision, mission, values, offerings, competition, target groups, technology, geographical area, competitive advantage, image, organisational structure, SWOT analysis, and priorities were considered, and the action plans linked to the Balanced Scorecard (to ensure that action plans could be monitored). All of the above were then re-plotted in the SAEM as depicted in Figure 3.10. This provides an overall picture of the strategic, tactical and operational communication involvement.

Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:19) claim that the benefit associated with this approach is the ability to clearly identify stakeholders, their needs and requirements as well as improve engagement with these stakeholders. The involvement with the self-assessment process ensures corporate communication a seat in the strategic planning and decision-making of

the organisation, and provides clear, more resourceful and strategically focused corporate communication plans. Communication activities are planned, undertaken and reviewed (through systematic gathering of data to inform internal and external quality assessments), to ensure the improvement of both internal and external corporate communication. Ultimately, the above approach leads to greater organisational efficiency and effectiveness, where good corporate communication practices are shared across and within organisations (creating benchmarks). A permanent change in corporate culture can grow to be one of openness, sharing and continuous learning, innovation and improvement (Rensburg & Ferreira, 2004:20).

Figure 3.10: Linking communication activities to the SAEM



Adapted from: Rensburg and Ferreira (2004:19)

Involving corporate communication on an organisational level, and not just as a solitary department inside the organisation, is an important breakthrough in understanding the value that corporate communication brings to an organisation. Unfortunately, this model does not define indicators, despite using the Balanced Scorecard. However, this model is commended for its ability to implement strategic effectiveness, through a performance measurement model, that is intrinsically involved with corporate communication and is accepted by senior managers.

3.4.2.4 Summary of the strategic evaluation models

As previously mentioned, Grunig and Grunig (2001:22-23) classify measurement and evaluation to take place on a programme level, functional level, organisational level, and societal level. The best practice models typically deal with communication programme / campaign measurement and evaluation, while the strategic evaluation measurement systems include communication measurement and evaluation on a functional, and in some cases, organisational level. The strategic evaluation measurement systems, therefore, provide a renewed thinking of how practitioners and senior managers can go about measuring communication performances. These approaches are commended for their proposition of using tools that the rest of the organisation incorporate, which make sense to other decision-makers, thus speaking the language of the CEO. Additionally, working from the Excellence Models (or models that the entire organisation uses to develop its strategies), automatically aligns the communication department to the rest of the organisation. The added bonus is that the measurement criteria are taken care of, when following this approach, as they automatically flow from the strategies identified by the organisation. As mentioned earlier, Grunig and Grunig (2001:7) claim that simply measuring communication programmes or campaigns is too narrow. These strategic models realise that communication programmes or campaigns take place throughout the organisation, and that intangible value is created by the communication department in areas that fall out of planning, organisation, implementing and evaluating campaigns.

Where the best practice models focus on the actual communication process (i.e., Information Processing Model) the strategic evaluation measurement systems start to realise that the practical day-to-day activities need to be measured to illustrate the numerous 'unseen' activities that occur in the communication function. These measurement systems also identify that communication managers need to plan their

resources (e.g., researchers for audits, designers for brochures and other materials, and journalists for news releases), manage a budget and obtain accurate information. It is evident that no practitioner would have all the skills necessary to perform all input, output, outcome, and research activities. This would mean that the practitioner would have to search, select, brief and manage the people needed for these activities. In larger organisations, outsourcing and managing these activities is what keeps communication practitioners busy most of the time, leaving little time for evaluation. None of the best practice models make provision for management measurement.

Additionally, these strategic evaluation measurement systems incorporate the use of technology into the communication processes. Numerous authors agree that the use of technology to assist communication is pivotal (Macnamara, 2002:31; Phillips, 2001:234; Steyn & Bütschi, 2004:4). Fortunately, not all technological resources are costly and add tremendous value by assisting practitioners with tedious but vital activities and information. Google Analytics (2006) is an example of such technology, where detailed statistical information regarding an organisation's website, can be obtained at no cost. This tool was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Although the best practice models are commended for their contributions, it is clear that a different approach is needed to integrate the communication efforts into the organisation. Used in conjunction with the strategic evaluation measurement systems, the best practice models could provide detailed information about specific campaigns that the communication department enters into.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Lindenmann (1993:9) deduces that there is not a single simplistic method for measuring communication effectiveness. This process of inquiry is extremely complex due to the multi-faceted levels against which communication practitioners need to measure effectiveness.

Firstly, the communication department is responsible for assisting the organisation with its stakeholder relations. Often the Humanistic Scholarship approach to inquiry is followed to understand exactly how the organisation performs in these relationships. The information obtained from this approach is expected to help the organisation identify the areas where

attention is needed, and in some cases define what strategic direction the organisation should move to next. There is, however, discord in this area between the Humanistic Scholarship (needed to delve into the deep characteristics of relationships) and the Scientific Scholarship (needed to prove generalisations, make comparisons, and make accurate predictions). Attempting to bring parity to this discord, are the strategic evaluation measurement systems. By including communication research in the strategic areas of the organisation, a humanistic focus is incorporated in the issues and problems that the organisation faces within their stakeholder relationships. Softer issues such as goodwill, CSR, corporate governance and more, will benefit from this and help the organisation achieve excellence. Additionally, these systems facilitate the understanding that communication takes place throughout, and on behalf of, the entire organisation; therefore this measurement should capture the combined effort of the organisation's communication. This should be reflected in the organisation's ability to communicate and not only in its communication activities.

Secondly, the communication department is expected to conduct communication activities to disseminate organisational messages that will either improve the organisations stakeholder relationships or simply position the organisation. In a world where time is money, and money is spent cautiously, the system dominated by the Scientific Scholarship approach, is happy to receive general feedback, or in some cases, receive nothing at all. The conflict between getting in-depth feedback, essential for two-way symmetrical communication, and simply disseminating information; is addressed by the best practice models. The models justify the need for research and evaluation during various stages of the communication activities, to ensure that the messages are being sent to the correct audience, at the right time and through the best channels. Additionally, using output and outcome measurement, the models provide a platform from which the Humanistic Scholarship approach, can feed information into the Scientific Scholarship environment.

Lastly, the communication department and the individuals, that comprise the department, must hold themselves accountable and responsible for the effectiveness of the activities that they perform on a day-to-day basis, which may not be directly linked to a campaign. This entails the utilisation of performance measurement and appraisal models, typically owned by the Human Resource department. The performance measurement systems (involving job descriptions) mostly function within the Scientific Scholarship approach. For

practitioners to capture their intangible contributions; synergy, between quantitative and qualitative measures, need to be aligned at all levels.

In this chapter, the difference between output and outcome measurement was clarified in an attempt to help practitioners identify the necessity of conducting research, measurement or evaluation. To this end, different research methodologies or techniques, available to practitioners, for data collection, were identified and briefly discussed. The best practice models and strategic evaluation measurement systems were subsequently investigated as a means to structuralise communication measurement.

It is clear that measurement is extensive and requires different methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative) to capture the true value of communication. Most importantly though, is the need to make research, measurement and evaluation a culture for the practitioner, department and organisation. Furthermore, the results should be produced in a way that everyone can understand and obtain value from it. This is only possible by enforcing measurement on all levels, with a performance measurement model, that everyone is evaluated by.

The following chapter provides a closer look at the measurement models available to organisations. Appreciating how these models work, will provide insight into understanding how to create communication KPIs. If corporate communication fails to be part of the measuring system, it will continue to be seen as unimportant and not worth paying attention to. This is aptly summed up in the familiar statement, “What is not measured does not get managed” (Rensburg & Ferreira, 2004:21).

