

## CHAPTER 6: DATA REPORTING

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the information collected during the in-depth interviews. True to the qualitative inquiry, a broad description of each theme is provided, which extends the accounts into various sub-themes that emerged from the data set. Understanding how corporate communication is perceived and measured in industry, is important towards the creation of KPIs for this discipline. In addition, noteworthy comments, about the way the IT industry responds to corporate communication, provides valuable insight into the exploratory nature of this study.

### 6.2 THEME 1: CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

The first and most prominent theme, evident from the dataset, pertained what respondents understood by corporate communication, and what it symbolised in their situations. Various facets were highlighted in the descriptions of corporate communication, which evolved into sub-themes. The first sub-theme related to the way respondents, and their organisations, perceived the role of corporate communication in their organisation. Descriptions are synthesised to form the various groups within the sub-theme.

#### 6.2.1 The role of corporate communication

This sub-theme is clustered in groups for comprehensibility, although the respondents did not necessarily categorise their views on the roles of corporate communication:

- A role that appeared strongly was the **advisory role**. Here the corporate communication department was described as the organisation's conscience, internally, externally, and amongst key interest groups (including government, environmentalists and other stakeholders). In one case, the label 'devil's advocate' was utilised to describe this role. In a personal experience recalled, conflict arose between the senior management and staff members. Forced to become the 'middle man', this respondent assisted in resolving the conflict by lobbying the different viewpoints. This example correlated with another depiction of the communication practitioners' role, describing it to, "Facilitate the communication between two parties, to make both parties aware of things that might

have been overlooked". Extending this view, another respondent claimed that communication practitioners needed to be, "Emotionally intelligent and in tune with the business and the various environments", to be able to perform the above advisory role. Related to the advisory role, was the function of translating the business strategy to employees, and the corporate messages to other stakeholders, consequently fulfilling a linking role. In so doing, practitioners described themselves as needing to, "Understand and support business objectives and needs" and, "Having the ability to think about the people we are communicating to and be sensitive to them, and then remember how and what we need to say to that group for them to understand". The effectiveness of this linking role calls for a corresponding change in the approach utilised to communicate to different stakeholders. Furthermore, communication practitioners were described as the instrument or telephone between two groups of people, requiring them absorb, understand and convey both points of view.

- Another chief role that appeared evident was the **service provision role**. One respondent explained:

"You see, I think people miss the purpose, because communication is not supposed to be an activity or a something that communications is supposed to do. They are supposed to assist everybody to be able to communicate. That is their job, and they need to be measured on whether they are actually doing that or not. So they are 100% a support function that provides the support needed to communicate, whether that is through training, or whether that is through tangibles, or managing the processes through which communications takes place".

A similar viewpoint illuminated that other functions should, "Make use of the communication department to assist them to do their job. And it should be written into their performance measurement". Similar descriptions reoccurred, agreeing that the role of internal communication practitioners should be the provision of communication services to the different divisions within the organisation.

- Linked to the above role is the **relationship building and maintenance role**. Deduced from theory, this role was questioned amongst the respondents. The answers varied widely, from acknowledging the relationship-building role with all stakeholders to disagreeing with it totally. Arguing the latter point, a respondent exclaimed:

"Oh please, let us not be that! That is a responsibility that is so big! We have a role to play, but we are not the owners of those relationships. We never can be. Those relationships are owned functionally, we can provide support for those relationships. Some of them we own, media and maybe even employees. Not even government or investors, no".

Another response was, "35 people cannot build and maintain all the relationships for an organisation the size of 6500 people". Expanding this argument also indicated that it is too difficult to build relationships with people that are barely in contact with the practitioners. These respondents declined the relationship-building role, explaining that communication practitioners only connect with stakeholders on a face-to-face level at events, but are not in the position to play golf and drink coffee with the stakeholders.

Referring to the definition of communication, a respondent explained that it is, "The creation of understanding" where corporate communication's role, to create understanding, opens the way to relationships that can be built. Corporate communication, therefore, creates the platform of understanding, and the rest of the organisation becomes responsible for building those relationships. Despite this, the building of internal relationships was repeatedly highlighted, as important for various reasons. A respondent explained that the relationship with finance was for budget purposes, with HR for general employee support, with top management for buy-in and approval, and the IT department for IT support.

Revisiting the support role, explanations were offered that internal relations should be treated like client relationships, where the communication department is the service provider to the rest of the organisation. This mindset was a common theme and practitioners often, interestingly, referred to other employees as clients. A respondent indicated how building relationships with internal employees creates trust. This trust then makes the communication to the employees credible and effective.

Media as a stakeholder group was another relationship identified as being owned by the communication division. An example was given of how a successful relationship with a media partner, resulted in the guaranteed publicity of an article once a month. This window of opportunity was a direct result, of understanding what the media required, in terms of the quality of the articles. Another viewpoint explained that the strength of the relationship with the media should be visible in areas such as journalists contacting the correct spokespeople for information, and their subsequent attendance at events. A

respondent, employed as a communication manager, emphasised the importance of building relationships with the communication practitioners in the department (or in some cases, those spread across the country). Naturally, this would encourage teamwork and co-operation.

The last relationship identified was that of outsourcing companies or suppliers. This relationship is vital, because this stakeholder group must understand the organisation and its positioning, to ensure that services are provided effectively.

- Related to the above perceptions of communication roles, the communication department was responsible for identifying five key leaders from the strategic stakeholders, within the company's business space. A campaign was then developed for each of the designated five people. The company termed this the **influencer role** and the job description included building strong relations with very prominent and high-powered people. A senior manager was assigned to take ownership of one of those relationships. The communication team then identified which communication preferences the targeted person favoured, and furthermore ensured that the communication took place. The respondent recalled a book created to communicate the way the company had helped several underdeveloped communities during the year. Written in story format and containing real life cases, it was sent to an identified key leader, being a minister in parliament. The communication department received a letter from the minister describing how reading the book inspired her. Ultimately, a relationship was fostered with this key leader.
- The last role induced from the data was the **custodian role**, where the communication department was responsible for the organisation's communication. In these cases, respondents explained how the organisation's policy insisted that communication to various stakeholders had to be approved by the communication department, before being disseminated. In some cases, only the communication department was allowed to distribute certain forms of communication, such as company-wide e-mails. Being custodians of communication, the responsibility of each practitioner is to enhance the communication from, to and within the organisation.

### **6.2.2 The intangible value of corporate communication**

The perceptions surrounding the intangible values that the communication department, and practitioners, bring to the organisation lie at the centre to understanding which

components should be measured, when measuring communication. An important premise surrounding this sub-theme is that intangible value / assets only develop over a long period and take a while before they become evident.

- A perception, that leaders do not notice the intangible value of communication until it is absent, was highlighted. Despite this opinion, several respondents identified numerous different forms of intangible value. The communication department's **support function** to the rest of the organisation is a contribution of this nature. According to this notion, the communication department should treat the organisation as a client. One respondent elucidated, "The crux of making sure that your intangible value is captured is by extracting exactly what your client wants, and delivering on that, otherwise your intangible value is misdirected and wasted and you will not see it in the end result". This respondent further explained that standardising the customer experience is what adds value; this is what the communication department should do when supporting the organisation. Painting this picture with an example, another respondent reflected on a communication standardisation project that enhanced the communication in a large division of a company. Intangible value became evident as the communication effort helped to increase employee morale and confidence, ensured that meetings no longer wasted time, disseminated the right messages at the right time, guaranteed that feedback was obtained and reacted upon timeously, which in turn resulted in fewer misunderstandings. Intangible value was summarised as, "Good communication companies are those that believe in it".
- The roles of communication also revealed that another intangible value identified, is the creation of relationships. In this case, the communication department assists the organisation in building and maintaining **relationships** with key stakeholders. As identified by the 'influencer role', strong relationships may have a huge impact on the end goals of a business. Significantly, the intangible value can be traced back to the efforts of the communication department.
- Respondents also indicated that communication's ability to provide **feedback** was another form of intangible value. "We did our homework and we found that people get tired of surveys, and they are sick of filling in forms and never getting feedback". Respondents explained that communication practitioners are the few individuals that understand the value of feedback and should therefore, encourage or provide feedback, whether good or bad, to various stakeholders. An incident was recalled where research

findings had to be reported to a management team. The results were extremely poor and embarrassing and had to be reported to the employees in the presence of management. Although not a pleasant experience, immense value was created through the credibility that management gained, by providing the feedback and acknowledging their failure. The immediate response was a willingness, displayed by employees, to assist management in working through the problems. In another case, feedback aided many issues, including racism. An employee 'Hotline', for anonymous phone calls, created an opportunity to communicate problems. Apparently, it was a very successful exercise; not only was the work climate determined, but fears that employees had about losing their jobs were also brought to the fore. Another respondent indicated the immense value lie behind **listening** to stakeholders, especially when it came to community groups. In this case, the communication department had listened to a particular stakeholder group and relayed that information back to senior management. Management made changes accordingly, that ultimately resulted in obtaining both the satisfaction of the community group as well as avoiding a chaotic situation.

- Although branding could typically be seen as a marketing function, communication practitioners provide intangible value by **building the company brand**. The value of building the company brand was described as, "Ensuring the company has a positive presence in the market", through constant communication in the external environment, (where competition is tough, especially in the IT industry), is where intangible value is contributed. A company must never be 'out-of-sight' and therefore 'out-of-mind'. Another view highlighted the importance of building the brand by consistent, holistic communication. "Good communication in an organisation tends to be far more integrated and focused, whereas if you have bad communication, it tends to fall apart", was also raised. This view also maintained that communication is effective when the message is co-ordinated and reinforced by everyone in the organisation, and no mixed-messages occur.
- The ability to analyse and condense vast amounts information, especially from mass media, is another area where communication provides intangible value. The benefits associated with this value is that it decreases the time that other employees would spend to work through publications that provide them with the information they need to be able to perform their jobs. An example of this **knowledge management** is when practitioners work through newspapers and websites, to filter through important information and assimilate it, into a central hub, where the entire organisation can access it. In some

cases, respondents indicated that they would have to take this a step further than simply disseminating the information; they would actually have to analyse and identify gaps, problems or issues. A communication strategy or plan would then have to be created to close those gaps, and the strategy would have to be implemented. Seeing that these gaps are mostly communication orientated, this area remains a risk to organisations that do not have a communication department to fulfil this task.

- A respondent, with over ten years consulting experience, indicated that a common problem, most organisations face, is caused by **poor communication**. This occurs in organisations ranging from small family-owned businesses to large corporate companies. An effectively operating communication department plays a major role in correcting this problem, and in so doing, offers one of the most important intangible values to the organisation. Poor communication can be resolved by determining communication processes and establishing tools to facilitate communication. A scientific quote (obtained from the International Association of Business Communicators' conference) was provided, stating that a 15% increase, in communication effectiveness, resulted in a 29% increase in the overall effectiveness of the organisation.
- Handling and preparing for **crises** was another major intangible contribution, because corporate communication provides credibility through proactive and reactive communication. Performing anticipatory (proactive) communication over many years makes it much easier for senior management to successfully confront crises on a reactive basis. Pick 'n Pay's food poisoning crisis was recalled as an example, "It was a lot easier for Sean to be good, because Raymond Ackerman had been the master at positioning Pick 'n Pay as 'I care' ... it's a much easier job than if you're trying to do communication for somebody who's said nothing for a long time".
- An interesting area identified as intangible value was highlighted by a respondent that worked in an IT firm. Apparently, one of the senior managers, based in the communication department, in the United Kingdom, was responsible for the **competitive strategy**. If a relative competitive issue arose, this employee would be aware of it and be designated to disseminate information regarding the issue; in some cases, the information would have been presented in person (via video conferencing or event presentations). The information would pertain to what is happening and how to handle it from a best practice point of view. This 'competitive information engine' was on-line 24 hours a day, constantly monitoring the market and the competitor activities. The



intangible value, resulting from this, supported the company vision, of being a leader in the industry. Therefore, by staying alert of competitor initiatives, it is easier to maintain the market leader position.

- Intangible value is also contributed when stakeholders **change behaviour** to such a degree that it is beneficial to the organisation. Understanding the current behaviour (by obtaining feedback), addressing it (through communication), and encouraging a behavioural change (through constant integrated communication) that benefits both parties, is the ultimate value. Emphasis was placed on the fact that behavioural change involves dealing with the complexities of people and therefore takes time to cultivate; no shortcuts, to achieve this value, exist.

Perceptions relating the size of the organisation, or the communication department in relation to corporate communication's effectiveness, also surrounded the intangible value topic. A view was that smaller organisations tended to be extremely reliant on the visions of one or two leaders, who might not be concerned with communication. In that case, communication is not effectively managed. For this reason, the views were that smaller organisations, in general, did not value communication and did not communicate effectively. On the other hand, another view argued that communication tended to be easier in smaller organisations, because there is less structure and red tape, however, it was agreed that standardising the communication became more difficult. An extremely different viewpoint highlighted that the effectiveness of communication is not dependent on company or departmental size, but rather on resources available; the reason being, the organisation could outsource and manage the majority of the communication activities, if the budget allowed. Supporting this statement, another viewpoint indicated that the ability to work electronically has made smaller communication departments a possibility. In spite of this comment, another respondent, representing a large organisation explained, that their department more than doubled in a year, because they were not coping with the workload, despite having outsourced and acquired tools to communicate. The recurring view claimed that larger (especially global) organisations, have the resources to perfect communication, and are often forced to realise the value behind communication due to global competition and legislation.



### **6.2.3 The strategic, managerial and technical representation**

This sub-theme exemplified whether communication functioned at a strategic, managerial or technical level. Necessary insight into determining the way in which communication should ultimately be measured was provided, as each level is responsible for different functions and activities. Respondents based internally in an organisation indicated that these levels were represented in their organisations. Consultants gave insight into the organisations to which they provided services. A forceful theme, emphasised by virtually all the respondents, was that the communication representation largely depended on the buy-in of the CEO, and that it could change when the leadership of the organisation changed. This subjectivity resulted in immense frustration for many of the respondents, and they stressed that MBA students (who often become leaders of these organisations) need to be taught, about the value of, communication in their curriculum.

#### ***6.2.3.1 Strategic representation***

"There is a very high regard for communications people", was a statement uttered, where respondents mentioned the strategic involvement of corporate communication. Further expostulations were, "The communication department does not reside in HR or Marketing, making it in its own right a whole division that reports directly to the chairman and has representation on the executive board, where it sits on all the board meetings". Where this did occur, following the adjournment of a board meeting (where for argument's sake a new business strategy was developed), the corresponding communication strategy would immediately be developed, based on the corporate strategy. This required the co-operation of the HR, Marketing and Communication directors. At these meetings, the allocation of responsibilities would be decided and each director would return to their department, to ensure that the strategy was implemented. This approach was extremely beneficial in environments that change quickly, as a rigid communication strategy becomes obsolete. For that reason, communication strategies are created, as the business strategies are developed, by the board of directors, in response to the changing macro environment.

Explications were made that the maturity of the organisation plays a major role in whether or not communication is represented on a strategic level. This is especially true when it comes to CSI, which requires the executive leadership team to meet once a month to

determine where money would be invested. This was enforced after many years of, "Throwing away money" had wasted CSI efforts. In these meetings, the communication would be identified and relayed to the communication managers who would then ensure implementation.

There are advantages to having representation on the senior management level. One advantage concerned the provision of feedback. When a communication representative featured on the executive board, it was much easier to provide feedback and to be heard. This was especially significant when the news was not positive. In addition, the internal processes of receiving information for the creation of communication materials were enforced by the communication executive. This had solved many communication difficulties experienced within the organisation. Although the ideal is to have communication representation at top level, the effectiveness of communication would be guaranteed if any senior manager bought into the concept of communication and enforced it. The following case in point was recalled; a HR senior manager had the power, especially through the performance measurement system, to prioritise communication throughout an entire business unit. Although the communication department played no role in this project, the insight of the HR director ensured the necessary buy-in. Whoever led the communication teams significantly influenced the focus of the communication. In other words, a marketing director compelled a 'sales focus' and a financial director drove a 'share focus'.

### **6.2.3.2 Managerial representation**

Where the communication department was represented on an executive level, the process of conducting tasks would typically flow from the communication strategy (devised by the communication executive) to the heads of each communication function (the communication managers). They would then develop and manage the implementation of their communication plans. These managers are in other words strategists (in their own right) and people managers, because their jobs entail it. These people were seen as project managers whose expertise, knowledge and experiential ground is founded in communication.

In cases where communication was not represented on a senior management level, the highest representation for communication occurred at a management level. In some views, there were 'blockages' between the two levels. An example was cited where the communication manager had to become, "Red headed and strong-willed" to ensure that communication was considered at a strategic level. A communication manager explained that she had reported to several different directors (including HR, marketing, finance and the CEO) over a period of eight years. This respondent described how the communication budget and resources were a constant predicament, and the value of communication efforts were only realised after it had been removed. Another respondent, also a communication manager, explained how she defended her position for years and fought to gain credibility with senior management. These respondents revealed that only through company crises were they provided the opportunity to illustrate the value of communication. They indicated that communication was something that these companies were forced to do, and instead of embracing it they, "Did it with a grudge". The discerning factor, to take note of here, is that in these situations, the internal communications suffered severely. This often resulted in communication managers either being, "Too scared to make decisions on their own", or never obtained approval, because it either took too long or they seldom received feedback. A consultant recalled how a project for an organisation was blocked by the communication manager's fear of the other managers, and it eventually prohibited them from implementing the communication plan. In these cases, many of the projects entered into by communication managers were not noticed by top management or they were not completed at all.

### **6.2.3.3 *Technical representation***

The technical level, known as the tactical level, was described as being 'operations'. This level (often incorporating the services of the communication managers as well) implements the communication plans. The tactical level was considered highly important, especially where the communication department maintained the service provision role to the rest of the organisation. As indicated, this level often incorporated specialists such as graphic designers and journalists; or formed the entry level for future communication managers and executives. Mention was also made to the fact that the tactical level included receptionists and call centres. Where some communication departments created materials in-house, others outsourced these activities and were responsible for briefing and managing the process with the supplier. Outsourced activities included media publicity,

research or environmental scanning (otherwise known as business intelligence), media production, and advertisements. The vital importance of finding a good outsource partner was stressed, but this often proved to be a lengthy time consuming process.

#### **6.2.4 The functions and activities of corporate communication**

This sub-theme presents a detailed description of the communication department functions, and the activities that communication practitioners conduct on a day-to-day basis. This information is crucial when daily communication measurement is to be successfully executed. This section is divided into the functions and activities of consultants, and the functions and activities of internal communication practitioners as these differ considerably. An additional reason is that internal communication practitioners, wishing to measure the performance of their partners, must understand what their partners' functions and activities are and how the measurements of these, can incorporate into practitioners' own performance measurements.

##### **6.2.4.1 *Communication consultants' functions and activities***

- **Communication Research** involves contracting consultants to conduct research on behalf of the communication department or organisation. Activities in this function include determining the research strategy, collecting the data, analysing the data and reporting the findings. Many respondents (including internal practitioners), indicated that recruiting an external consultant for research purposes is advantageous, because of the neutral status and credibility of the consultant. Research is conducted to measure networks, media effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction, communication climate, trust with supervisors and / or trust with senior management. This may take place over a predetermined period, and make use of 'interventions' and 'dipsticks' to address, monitor, test or adapt communication messages. Interventions are activities addressing problem areas, and could be anything from, "Creating a website, changing your website, throwing out your newsletters, starting a newsletter, optimising your notice board, looking at your meetings, looking at your meetings in this group only, and more". This research also becomes the basis to develop further offerings, such as communication strategies, plans and the implementations thereof.
- **Communication strategies and programmes** are ideas and plans regarding how and what to communicate to whom. Although this function would typically be conducted by an

internal communication practitioner, the indication was clear that clients, who employ these services, do not always have communication departments nor do they actively participate in communication activities. In many cases, the implementation for these plans was provided to organisations (and communication managers) who did not have the resources to implement the plan themselves. When these strategies and plans were to be evaluated, execution thereof hardly ever happened because clients either did not request or budget for it. The types of organisations contracting these services varied in size; however, it did include medium and large organisations.

- **Communication training** is provided to any employees, and the subject may vary from written to oral communication. The following case was cited; research had identified communication training as a necessary intervention in a company. The levels of education of the communication champions (people elected at different levels of the organisation to monitor communication effectiveness), were very low and said champions had to be schooled on how to conduct meetings and maintain effective notice boards.
- **Financial reporting** includes the creation of annual reports, shareholder letters and other forms of financial communication. Approaching this financial communication from a 'marketing' point of view, ensures that the documents look professional, integrated with the company's look and feel, use communication messages wisely, and incorporate graphics and illustrations. This approach utilises tangible communication as a means to sell the organisation to those reading the information. Once again, smaller companies were said to make use of this function.
- **Media production** is the development of the actual media used to communicate in communication programmes. This entailed producing anything from printed media (such as brochures, posters and banners), to electronic media (such as websites), to multi-media (such as corporate videos), and promotional items (such as corporate gifts).
- **Media management**, otherwise known as publicity or PR, involves establishing relations with mass media organisations. The goal is to obtain publicity in various media, including print, radio and electronic. Besides writing for and obtaining publicity, an additional service included media clippings, where various publications were monitored to see if the publicity was achieved. To manage unrealistic expectations, clients are taught to understand the media environment. As an apt example, referral was made to clients being enlightened about the difference between an editorial and an advertorial. The

provision of this service is not always guaranteed, as the relevant control lies with the journalists or media companies. However, an alternate perspective to this statement was proffered. A respondent claimed that virtually all publications could be guaranteed when planning and predicting a clients' media activity over a predetermined period (such as a year), with the help of a comprehensive strategy, process and planning tool. By doing this, two goals are achieved. Firstly, publicity is frequent and closely aligned to the business requirements, and secondly the degree, to which articles are changed, by the journalists, is minimised. The following process for establishing media presence was revealed. The initial stage is approaching the client for detailed business information; then the consultants brainstorm a media strategy based on the client's information; to be followed by the strategy being presented to the client, simultaneously posing seven questions to the client to clarify the purpose of each message:

- Why is the client doing PR? This question identifies the ultimate purpose of the PR. This could vary from increasing sales, educating stakeholders, attracting shareholders or potential employees, to positioning the company.
- Who do they want to reach? This defines the target audiences.
- What outcomes do they seek? This determines a number of media outcomes to be achieved. An example would be to obtain five publications with the Business Day.
- With what messages?
- Over what period of time?
- With what frequency?
- Through which vehicles? This is the method of reaching target audiences (newspapers, magazines or e-media).
- And at what cost? This is often the determining factor for the entire media strategy.

The process then involves mapping the outcomes to a plan and timeline; and finally updating the plan as the outcomes are achieved.

When addressing the target audience, a respondent categorised it into business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C). In attending to B2B audiences, the respondent described a model called, "Sphere of influence", used to identify important audiences that need to be reached in order to achieve outcomes. The logic behind the model is that Decision-Makers (typically CEOs and MDs) do not have time to read

articles, and therefore articles should appeal to different groupings of people, who influence the Decision-Makers. Illustrated as a diamond shape, the model has a horizontal line running through the middle of the diamond. The bottom tip of the diamond represents a small number of people including peers, competitors, and existing or prospective partners. The area above the tip, and below the horizontal line, represents government, "Who are also an influence sphere, especially in South Africa, because they are a little bit like analysts". These groups are known as the Influencers. According to this respondent, the people residing in the bottom half of the diamond have an enormous impact, because they reach the multitude of Decision Influencers, who are represented in the top half of the diamond, just above the horizontal line. These audiences could be managers, supervisors, personal assistants and more. In the top tip of the diamond, resides the Decision-Makers and there are very few of them. These people experience information overload and need reliable people to influence them. The reliable people are the Decision Influencers who are in turn, influenced by the Influencers (represented in the bottom half of the diamond). Accordingly, the filtering process implies that communication should be targeted at the Influencers and the Decision Influencers, to ultimately reach the Decision-Makers. Another opinion saw the role of media, as communication's largest function, because key stakeholders are reached and influenced by messages in the media. In one case, the media liaison role was so important to the client organisation, that the company employed an on-site service level agreement. In this scenario, the consultant would permanently be contracted to the client organisation and work on the business premises, to ensure that the consultant remains aware of happenings on a daily basis.

#### **6.2.4.2 Internal communication practitioners' functions and activities**

Having clarified what services consultants offer to organisations as well as internal communication practitioners, allows the focus of this discussion to investigate the daily duties of the internal practitioners. A considerable amount of attention is awarded this section, because understanding the practitioners' duties forms a crucial basis in determining how their performance as well as the role of communication, in general, should be measured, in an organisation.

The size of the represented communication departments ranged from three to 35 members respectively. These departments were allocated budgets that had to be



managed. There were various terms used as an alternative to corporate communication, although it referred to the same thing. The term 'Corporate Affairs' was used persistently, as an equal substitute to corporate communication, while in actual fact, describing an entire stakeholder communication approach. Another term referring to corporate communication was 'marketing'. This term was continuously used, despite the fact that the full spectrum of the marketing mix (product, price, promotion and distribution) was not represented as the responsibility of the communication department. A perspective on this was; written communication was seen as communication, and marketing was perceived as integrated communication. Another viewpoint argued that the term 'marketing', was applied, because the communication efforts attempt to sell the company and its products to various stakeholders for various reasons. Other organisations combined the two functions into one department and called it the Business Marketing Organisation. This department dealt with the four 'P's' as well as corporate communication functions. Practitioners in this group were called 'audience managers'. Another term proffered to describe a similar set-up, was 'Integrated communication services', where corporate communication and marketing were fused. Despite this collaboration, the department maintained a communication focus, which assisted the flow and integration of messages. This respondent claimed that it was the ideal set-up as marketing (entailing the promotion 'P') then fell under communication.

In cases of large organisations, consisting of many geographically dispersed business units, the communication department resided in head office, and additional practitioners were positioned in each business unit, to ensure that communication flowed through to the regional divisions. The sizes of the organisations varied from 250 to 45 000 employees, and represented the industry categories of IT, petroleum, mining, retail, government services, automobile manufacturing, broadcasting, and franchising. These organisations' communication departments were described as consisting of different sub-divisions or teams, which are responsible for different communication functions:

- **Internal communications** sometimes referred to as employee communications, implies the managing of communication that takes place internally within the organisation. The notion was, "Unless you are going to manage the interpersonal communication that takes place, it is going to be haywire". A respondent referred to this chaos as the "party system" or "broken telephone", when management's messages changed or were

misinterpreted. In one case, the internal communication function was sub-divided, according to the audience and message content.

*Group wide* communication entails messages sent to all business units comprised in the organisation. The content would mainly be employee related issues, such as benefits, changing product offerings, changing medical schemes or provident funds, and annual results. Communication practitioners are the custodians of this communication, and are required to verify that the messages meet standards concerning accuracy, tone, target audience jargon and adherence to company rules and regulations.

The next level is *interest*, focused where the content of the communication is relevant to a few business units. Communication would be sent directly to those business units or divisions employing the tools used by those audiences. Depending on the message, this information would also be accessible on the Intranet (available to the entire organisation).

The last level of communication is *functional* communication where only a small group of people are affected by the content of the message. Communication practitioners would assist the functional owner of that content with that communication, thus becoming the 'facilitator' and not the 'owner' of that communication. A responsibility of this function would be to enhance communication by collecting information from relevant sections of the business, improving it and then disseminating it to the broader organisation. Further responsibility would be to encourage employees to feel free to express their opinions. A respondent recalled how he had sat in on exit interviews, and was shocked at what people were saying. The respondent explained that employees are often too afraid to tell their bosses what they really think or believe. In addition, corporate environments tend to get bureaucratic and do not encourage *realistic* feedback. This type of feedback encourages the truth regardless of whether it is bad or good. The respondent further clarified that getting the wrong feedback was more destructive than not getting feedback at all.

Another view regarding the internal communication function was that it provides the 'link' to the business units and departments. In this situation, the internal communication activities revolved around the provision of services to the executive board (assisting them with their external and internal communication), and the HR function's communication. The activities also included providing communication for issues and change management, values role-out, company wide e-mails, and company notices. In some cases, the activities even included a language service.

A subject that surfaced during the interviews related to managing diversity (especially in South Africa where there are eleven official languages and numerous cultures and religions). Communication had fostered a culture in their organisation where everyone was respectful of the diversity and capitalised on it. Apparently, the ultimate result of internal communication could be seen in the organisational culture, where effective communication would be embraced. In such a case the use of cross-functional teams were very effective tools, in breaking down communication silos between functions. Two examples were provided:

“It has been quite a problem where people operate in silos quite a lot here, it is quite sad. More and more, what is happening is when there is a project going on, the project team is made up of cross-departmental individuals, so there is that sharing going on, there is that constant discussion going on. People from different departments have been having an input into the project. So it has been working over the past year. The silos have been coming down”.

“One of decoder projects that came out in the beginning of last year was probably the breakthrough for this organisation, where people had to pull together from all over the organisation to make that project work. And it worked like an absolute bomb. It was so successful. And it was successful because of the co-operation from all the departments or all the teams who were involved in that project team. So people saw the success from this project and started incorporating people from across the organisation. The silos are breaking down, but unfortunately they do exist and it takes a mind shift change to get people away from thinking that”.

Working with the HR department often appeared to be problematic, as the distinction between the two functions in practice is not clear. A perception maintained that internal communication was historically owned by HR, and has now shifted to focus on organisational development. “They are not communication experts and need communication's assistance”. An example was cited of a certain communication department that had worked exceptionally hard at building a relationship with the HR department, and succeeded, after a long time, to create synergy. A firm warning was furnished about planning and budgeting for internal communication, “Otherwise you end up doing a newsletter only”, because very few organisations pay attention to this aspect. A very difficult function to establish is a two-way stream of internal communication, which both pushes information to employees, but at the same time, also requires a factor

where the employees demonstrate a demand to receive information. To complicate this concept, internal communication has to compete with numerous other messages, bombarding employees on a daily basis, which calls for the communication tools to be creatively used, to cut through this clutter. Apart from being creative in disseminating the messages, they also have to ensure that messages are as inclusive as possible, but minimalist in terms of quantity. Furthermore, the concept of internal marketing was also highlighted, where the same messages going to the external stakeholders, were aligned to messages going to the internal stakeholders. This ensures that employees are not the last to receive knowledge about matters concerning their company, by learning of it in the newspapers.

A final matter related to internal communication was the need for organisations to empower their employees to be able to do their daily jobs. Internal communication is said to facilitate this process by 'employee engagement'. This movement maintains that by empowering employees, it encourages them to take responsibility for their own roles and relationships. This is done by equipping employees with skills and support material needed to build a relationship with a stakeholder.

"If employees are engaged, they will venture, they will talk about the company and support the company, otherwise they are just involved, where they get a salary and that is all".

This employee engagement is driven by understanding, commitment, trust and leverage. Communication's role is to facilitate, with tangible support (such as documentation) as well as intangible support (such as training), the provision of confidence. Another description indicated that, "It's a good term for actually talking to your staff, helping them to understand what's going on, and what their rules are, why they are important, and why, what they do is important". In this way, meaning is provided to the mission and vision statement, because it shows how employees are involved. A respondent described a model they created around employee engagement. It consisted of four quadrants regarding what people and employees want in an organisation. The first quadrant comprised the 'I' factor, the second, the 'us' factor, the third, the 'purpose' factor and the last, the 'growth' factor. By addressing these four areas, engagement occurs. The 'purpose' factor would require organisations to give employees direction, through vehicles such as the vision, and then excite them about the vision. The 'I' factor entails that employees wish to understand exactly what is expected of them, and what

the compensation would be. It also includes the employees' feelings and experiences. The 'growth' factor provides the opportunities and training within the company to grow as individuals. In addition, the "us" factor offers the culture, where employees feel part of a family in a safe working environment (this even includes the look-and-feel of the physical environment). Employee engagement can be measured with an engagement survey, which is often conducted by the HR department.

- **Investor relations** and the activities within this sphere were described as being dependant on the needs of the organisation. In some cases, the organisation was not a listed company and did not have shareholders. In other cases active communication had to be maintained with shareholders at all times. Where the communication department did own the relationship, the target audience included shareholders, institutions, government, as well as the regional, provincial and local municipalities. Messages that had to be delivered revolved around peer group analyses, consistent performance, and the motivation that the company is worth investing in. This communication is especially important in South Africa, where the market is perceived as a higher risk.

In other cases, communication practitioners did not take ownership of the relationship, but facilitated where necessary. In addition, the communication department managed the financial media, on behalf of the finance or treasury division. In such cases, the financial departments became the communication departments' clients, where the latter received briefs on what was expected of them. When these scenarios exist, the communication practitioners' expertise in this field need not be extensive; however, the basic principles and terminology have to be understood. Obviously, in these situations, the communication practitioners work very closely with the finance team.

- **Government relations** also varied depending on the organisation. In some cases, these relationships belonged to the communication departments, but the communication executives owned them, the reason being that South Africa's legislation regarding Affirmative Action and the Black Economic Empowerment initiatives are strategic issues that have to be communicated to both government and other stakeholders. Where the communication departments were not required to lobby with government, relationships with ports, for imports and exports purposes were established. This communication was labelled as important for suppliers and logistic houses. Another communication activity identified within this function was, once again, to stimulate the conversations between the government and the owners of the relationships. In these cases, the organisations

had regulatory departments that lobbied with the government and ensured that the laws and regulations were adhered to and kept up-to-date.

- **Integrated communications** did not feature as a sub-group or team, within the structure of the communication department, however, the opinion was voiced that this is one of the most critical functions of communication. The goal is to ensure that the whole communication system is integrated. This initiates with the oral network, which is reinforced by using various tools, such as road shows, golf games, print media, electronic media, and social events. All these means of communication should be used together to create impact. Communication practitioners are expected to advise other staff members how to integrate their communication to their stakeholders. Moreover, integrated communication from the whole organisation is just as important. This is done by centralising all the dissemination of all communication to the communication department. Furthermore, standardising certain communication media such as document templates, e-mail signatures, logo's and facsimile cover sheets, provide this integration. In organisations where this approach was not entrenched, messages from different sections of the business were known to be contradictory. Another case was mentioned where an organisation had suffered from a poor reputation and through, "Ensuring that there's one voice to communicate the message and this message is consistent throughout", the reputation improved significantly. A respondent, however, proffered caution that the communication department often operated in the silos. A suggestion was made that by integrating advertising, PR, investor relations, and branding messages, the end result could be a strongly positioned brand.
- **Image and reputation** was considered a strategic function. A respondent recalled how their company had just experienced an image crisis, where stakeholders were confusing the umbrella brand with the brands underneath it. The communication department had to manage this identity crisis strategically, with a series of strong messages (initiating from the internal stakeholders). An interesting concept highlighted in this function was that the communication department was responsible for the look and feel of the company's stores, point-of-sales and promotional displays. This was termed 'merchandising', where the merchandising team physically went to stores to collect and gather information. The information included competitive information (such as shelf space, pricing, packaging, promotions, shelf displays, and messages) to monitor competitor activities.
- **Managing partners and suppliers** as a function, was relevant to the communication departments, where organisations relied heavily on a partner network to survive. This



was especially significant in the IT organisations, where the IT products and solutions were sold through a partner network. This communication function is very important to these organisations, because the partners become the ‘face to the clients’. Accordingly, the communication to this group does not necessarily fall into the marketing category, and even though the ownership of the relationship does not lie with the communication department, the support provided to the departments (or channel managers), responsible for the relationship, is very important. One respondent described how an entire IT system was implemented to assist with partner communication. The most common communication tool utilised in this function, is called the Extranet, which is a combination of the internet (for external stakeholders) and the intranet (for internal stakeholders). Another area where the communication department became involved in is in corporate hospitality for these partners.

- **Administrational support** also termed ‘admin support group’, is a very interesting communication function, identified during the interviews. The practitioners residing in this function provide administrative support to the entire communication function. Activities include typing, posting notice boards, acquiring quotes, arranging purchases, making payments to suppliers, and in certain cases, doing very specific tasks that are related to the nature of the business. In one case, the organisation's receptionists and telephony (switchboard) were part of the communication department, and they fell under this communication function. In another case, the ‘admin support staff’ was responsible for the corporate site image. They would have to walk around the company premises and examine the physical look and standard of the building. Where there were problems, they were required to report it to the maintenance department, and ensure that the problem was rectified. In organisations where the responsibility of the call centre resided with the communication department, the support team would be responsible for scripting the message, the telephone operators needed to read. The call centre would be kept up to date with new products or services, any problem or issues, and frequently asked questions.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** depicts the organisation’s personality as a good social citizen and responsible leader. These messages can be sent by investing socially towards education, skills development and capacity building. The communication executive’s strategic decisions can be CSR projects. In this case, the communication team would ensure the management and publicity exposure of the projects. Part of these activities include speech writing, letters to government, organising executive visits and



making sure that briefing documents are prepared correctly. CSR projects were occasionally opened, to all employees, on a voluntary basis. In many cases, project teams (sometimes consisting of cross-functional teams), would be formulated to manage the project, and the project's communication would be handled by the communication department. In some cases, CSR and sponsorships had to be linked. A good example provided, is golf and cricket sponsorships, relating to golf and cricket development programmes in the rural areas. Another example also advised that sponsorships should only be undertaken, if it supported the brand or image of the company. In certain industries such as mining, the CSR component was especially important. The legal mining charter required the company to supply housing to the community, surrounding the mining site. An important factor to consider (especially from a communication's perspective), is the sustainable development of the community, to be able to function, after the mine had been moved.

- **Events** formed another sub-group or function of the communication department. The team is responsible for co-ordinating events, be they internal or large-scale events such as product launches, road shows and annual year-end staff functions. The cut of point to event ownership ensured that the smaller internal events were organised by the division responsible for the event. Importantly, regardless of the event, the event's team had to ensure that the publication team were informed of events taking place, for publicity purposes. At this point practitioners could assist on various levels of communication service support, including a *reporting level* (where publicity is ensured), or *support and advice level* (where assistance is provided to the owners of the event), or *service provision level* (where the event's team become the owner of the event).
- **Media relations** have two functions that are not mutually exclusive. The first is to build and maintain relations with the media as a stakeholder group. This is complex because the media, as a stakeholder group, are a conduit of the audience trying to be reached. They are the medium *and* they are an audience. What they understand and perceive is what they push out to the public. The second part of the function is to reach external audiences, through the media, by obtaining publicity. It involves getting the message out there. A respondent indicated how difficult this was, because of information overload that audiences experience on a daily basis. Activities in this part of the function included writing news releases, setting up interviews, attending interviews to ensure that things run smoothly, delivering material to the media, briefing the media, organising and managing media launches, handling media queries, ensuring that information publicised

externally, is also publicised internally, while concurrently acting as spokespeople. Regarding spokespeople, only the media relations team or assigned people, who had received media training, were allowed to speak to the media. These people would typically include the CEO, heads of departments, or people who were credible and could face the media, comfortably. A multi-national IT company receives a lot of media attention, and the respondent explained that it had to be managed on a daily basis. They have a matrix of 12 spokespeople who are all experts in their field of business. There are strict rules regarding media interaction, and interviews with these spokespeople can only be arranged via the communication department. Each of the 12 spokespeople is profiled to portray a persona of the company. The CEO, for instance, represents the company's public face. He is portrayed as a responsible citizen, leading a responsible company, who really understands the needs of the country (South Africa). Positioned as visionary, he would typically deal with the 'softer issues', such as skills development, capacity building, education, citizenship initiatives and product launches for the emerging markets. Additionally, the CEO also has a natural strength to talk about business, so he would be used to relay business messages as well. Where messages leaned towards technical aspects, the technical heads were utilised. In this way, different focus areas and personality types were incorporate for different messages. In another case, publications, that did not make use of the mainstream media, were also part of this function's responsibility. This would include customer publications such as magazines, books or coffee-table information booklets. These projects were managed by the media relation's team, but were outsourced to big publication houses, for design and printing. The responsibilities included co-ordinating, project managing, and affirming the correct news was forwarded to the publication houses.

- **E-media** was another unusual function identified in the interviews. This function is responsible for maintaining the internet, extranet and intranet; furthermore, chat rooms and discussion forums are created and maintained. In other cases, the website would also form part of this function, where the communication department re-designs pages that need updating and sent these off to the IT division for uploading. In another case, the look-and-feel as well as website design was also the responsibility of the communication department. This particular communication department's practitioners also had to update and manage the stakeholder databases.
- **Crisis communication** was sometimes referred to as 'external communications', and its concerns are issues. Depending on the industry, respondents indicated that they had

been involved in issues such as bribery and corruption, strikes, environmental damage, security problems, computer viruses or crashes, collapsing share prices, and major employee turnover. A large percentage of the communication, in this function, focuses on media communications and is normally reactive in nature. Where communication was not represented on a strategic level, communication managers became involved strategically. As previously mentioned, respondents indicated how their, "Big break through was the almost downfall of the company". These respondents explained the visibly valued prominence of communication during times of crises. They recalled how the natural reaction of their senior managers was to have 'no comment' or to threaten the media if they went public. The result was a plummeting share price, because, due to lack of communication, stakeholders did not know what was happening. Every speech was scripted for every spokesperson; at every presentation frequently asked questions were written to ensure the staff and senior managers could cope with everything that was thrown at them. Moreover, the team had to ensure that only relevant people were quoted in the media. The positive side to crises is that important people are often profiled in the company (the exact people whom the communication team had been trying to profile). This success was largely dependent on the degree to which communication with the media, prior to the crisis, was proactive.

- **Media production** is the provision of tangible forms of communication. This includes the creation of brochures, posters, white papers, leadership pieces, invitations, letters, speeches, e-mails, newsletters, briefing documents, magazines, newspapers, books, and in some cases, other marketing materials such as sales packs, corporate gifts and signage. Cases did occur where these tangibles were created in-house. In the quoted case, graphic designers were employed, and the equipment needed to print the material was acquired. A respondent from an IT organisation explained that it made sense to do this, because the pace at which the products were developed, increased the rate of producing communication tangibles. In this case, outsourcing the task did not make financial sense.

#### **6.2.4.3 Additional daily activities of corporate communication practitioners**

The above functions and activities mostly formed part of the communication department's structure. There were, however, additional activities, performed on a daily basis, that were identified during the interviews. Attention was continuously drawn to the fact that these activities consumed vast amounts of time and this justifies the inclusion of this section in

this chapter. In developing KPIs for corporate communication, that measure intangible contributions, it is important to realise, which activities consume practitioners' time. Insight into this issue, may lead to these activities being altered or minimised in order to achieve ultimate efficiency; otherwise, they need to be included in the performance matrixes, to show where intangible value has been created:

- **Meetings** consumed a colossal portion of the respondents' daily activities. Mention was often made of meetings that could easily take up to three whole days, leaving very little time to attend to performance tasks. The frequency and range of these meetings, which were identified as ways to process information, depended on the reasons as well as the people involved. These types of meetings included structured divisional meetings for all communication employees; formal weekly meetings for the entire communication department (a respondent mentioned that in their case a four hour, compulsory meeting, was at the order of every Monday morning); and informal daily meetings for project management purposes (decided if and when needed). These meetings would take place with, either, other members of the organisation (requesting the assistance of the communication department), or between communication team members to co-ordinate their efforts. In addition, meetings were also conducted with the media or consultants to whom activities were outsourced. A different view on meetings was presented by a communication manager. The communication department had three practitioners, and the entire organisation had been divided into three groups, where each practitioner was assigned responsibility for serving one of those divisions. The practitioners had to attend meetings that occurred in their sections of the business, to identify the type of communication they could offer as assistance to those divisions. These meetings were also assigned and attended to find out what was happening in the rest of the business. Furthermore, these duties were also written into their performance criteria.
- **Environmental scanning** was another day-to-day activity, identified as being of great importance. Called a 'media watch', this activity normally occurs first thing in the morning (in some cases before 09:00) and in this case, media information is summarised and disseminated via tools, such as the daily e-mail newsletter or the intranet. "The important thing is for the communication department to be keeping very closely in touch with what is happening in the organisation, what issues there are and communicating those to [whomever] they should be communicating them to". This activity is normally divided between all the members of the communication department, and one person is responsible for uploading and disseminating the information. Where news is critical, it is

sent via e-mail, SMS or phone to the relevant person. One respondent spoke of a “Hot Line” which was a SMS, sent directly to the senior managers, to notify them of emergencies.

- **Managing people** was another daily activity that emerged strongly. Respondents managed consultants to whom activities are outsourced, employees from the communication department, and employees from the organisation (such as the IT, marketing or HR team). In these cases, practitioners were project managers, and had to perform the daily activities of monitoring and managing the progress of the various projects. When managing consultants, the practitioner would be responsible for providing a detailed brief with objectives, guidelines and standards. Additionally, depending on the outsourced activity, the practitioner would also provide the consultant with information such as the copy for a brochure. Respondents indicated that this formed a major part of their daily activities on all three levels of strategy, management and operations.
- **Obtaining information** was related to the previous activity. The frustration of having to wait for other employees, to provide the information, was a major theme, and proved especially problematic when the other members did not consider their task a priority. In one case, this problem led to the practitioner creating the document, without any input from the other person, then physically going to the person (for whom the information was needed) and threatening to publish the information, as it was written, unless the necessary information was provided immediately. Although effective, this scenario was not conducive. Various similar frustrations were mentioned, in organisations that had not identified communication processes for information retrieval. Unfortunately, a respondent indicated that more than 80% of disseminated information was written, without receiving information from the source. The following quote serves as proof that this was a frequent problem in IT organisations:

"Yes it's very difficult. It is a challenge for a communicator to create. And the big thing is getting it across to management. The value of being open with you and providing you with information so that you can communicate is essential. It relies heavily on an internal structured approach for it to be successful."

Where obtaining information is supported by leadership, practitioners are fed with information. Although not always perfect, these organisations, at least, make information provision part of a process, where practitioners are given a lead (concise document). This is then transformed into a formal brief (with budget, expectations, deliverables and

post-project evaluation). The next step is the creation of a communication plan with deliverables, and verified by the 'client'.

- **Budget control** was an area important to communication managers and senior managers, because both the timeline and budget are crucial elements that these practitioners, as project managers, are evaluated on. This is extremely complex when dealing with different departmental budgets (which is the case when providing services to another function). Practitioners, also, often need to indicate the ROI. A case was mentioned where an entire week was dedicated to financial admin. Understanding, from a practical point of view what communication practitioners are responsible for, and what they do on a day-to-day basis, has moved the discussion towards identifying the means by which these efforts were measured in their respective environments.

### **6.3 THEME 2: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT MODELS AND SYSTEMS**

This theme directly relates to the performance measurement models or systems employed in organisation. Respondents, based internally, gave accounts of the methods they were measured by, while consultants offered insight into the performance measurement systems of the organisations that were provided with services. Discussions are provided, about consultants who employed a specific measurement model to measure their business. This theme is categorised into six sub-themes, focussing on the awareness of the best practice communication evaluation models. The sub-themes are:

- Identifying the organisation's approach to research;
- Identifying the performance measurement models, utilised in the organisations; Investigating how corporate communication is integrated into these models;
- Determining what measurement techniques are used to measure communication; and finally,
- Exploring the association with performance measurement models and reward systems.

#### **6.3.1 Awareness of best practice communication evaluation models**

Most respondents explained that they did not actively use any model to evaluate. There was one case, where a model was described for the use of developing communication campaigns. The model graphically resembled the Steyn and Puth (2000:53) communication strategy framework, explained in Chapter 3, but this was referred to as the "Butterfly model". The majority of the respondents were not familiar with the best practice



communication evaluation models. Only one respondent knew of the best practice communication evaluation models and described them to be, "Like Einstein's relativity theory, developed many moons ago, but useful in their contribution". The respondent commended the models for providing theory behind the logic, but explained that the use of the models would depend on circumstances, such as available resources, in terms of budget and people, as well as the literacy levels of the audience. The respondent also indicated that, "One size doesn't fit all" and that the benefits of each model have aided various situations. This respondent further mentioned that the key issue is what happens with the results.

### **6.3.2 Organisational approach towards research**

A common theme among respondents, representing smaller organisations and IT organisations, was that their approach to research could be categorised into either *no research* or *informal research*. Comments elicited that the organisations felt it, "A waste of time"; "That they know it all"; "That they can ask three times and that they'll know it all"; "They guessed it"; "They asked the people that they know and their friends"; and that "There are a lot of organisations that feel the need to measure, but they don't". A respondent indicated that the last notion was common amongst universities. In the consultants' case, where research was not requested by the client, it did not even recommend any research, simply because of a limited budget.

Where the approach to research was one of *evaluation only*, respondents explained that it was executed to prove accountability. A communication manager indicated that research was done simply to:

"Prove my existence, to prove that I needed to be there. Most of the time, I already knew what the outcome was going to be, because I started picking up on that. But I did it, because it was showed that we were adding value, and to show that, this is what the people are saying".

In other cases similar to this, research was always done at the end of a campaign to determine its success. The survey tool was a quick quantitative questionnaire, containing three questions, and sampled less than 10 participants.



There were also cases that resembled the *scientific management approach*, but they featured in the larger organisations, where research was an outsourced activity. This observation was motivated, in that larger global organisations are often forced to conduct research, because foreign legislation requires a communication audit once a year, to monitor the organisational climate and transparency in financial statements. A specific case indicated that their organisation had been conducting a communication audit successfully for more than four years, and the impact was significant. The importance of conducting research, on a continual basis, was signified. A few cases were also mentioned, where the organisations participate in research conducted by other organisations. One such example is an annual survey called 'Employer of choice', which measures internal climate. Another example was conducting a 'brand audit', which tracks brand awareness amongst the target group, brand preference, understanding of technology, understanding of product design, and whether key messages are being received. From these research results, areas in need of improvement were identified and addressed with strategies and plans. Success is determined the following year when the survey is conducted again. Once again, the results identify areas that need to be maintained or improved.

### **6.3.3 Types of performance measurement models employed at organisations**

In describing the performance measurement models used by the organisations, attributes were allocated to the definition of an effective performance measurement system. The model's sustainability was the most important attribute, as organisations did not wish to invest into something that would become obsolete after a short period. The second attribute was surrounding the ability to measure both quantitatively and qualitatively. Suggestions were put forward that the performance measurement system be quantitative, to highlight the organisation's performance on the profitability of the business, and that qualitative measures be used to determine the quality of the work produced. An example of the qualitative measure would include:

"Somebody will produce a document and they will give it to one of their peers or a senior person to review. That review process, I would say, is the measurement of the quality".

Furthermore, the performance measurement model should be accepted and used by *everyone* in the organisation. A respondent described their performance measurement

system as a, “Perfectly good system”, but it was never used or enforced by the senior managers.

The most cited performance measurement model or system was the Balanced Scorecard. Turning attention towards descriptions of the Balanced Scorecard, its popularity was noted, because of its ability to ensure implementation. Another description was, "It is not this airy fairy model that nobody can actually put into practice". Despite the positive outlook, a contradicting viewpoint described the model as, “A lot of work”, and mentioned that smaller organisations did not make use of it, because their measuring systems tended to be informal, and their goals were inclined to be financially based.

Regarding the operations of their Balanced Scorecards, respondents mentioned that their scorecards are tabulated on a continual basis and make use of a simplistic system of colours, to indicate the progress towards the achievement of goals.

"Red means 'big problem, big problem, big problem, this is not working'. Orange or amber is 'oh this is okay, we're not too phased', and green is 'this is going well we are chilled, so, so happy' ".

The scorecards provided an overview of the entire business and / or department, and were viewable by everyone in public areas, such as the intranet or in cafeterias. In spite of this, one respondent claimed that she had never seen the scorecard and was not sure how it worked.

Respondents continued that on their individual scorecards, the KPIs and PBRs (performance-based reward) are linked to operation plans, and focus on achieving the target areas in the division's Balanced Scorecard. The division's scorecard is designed to achieve the corporate scorecard. An illustration of this was provided, explaining that the company had a KPI, within the Learning and Growth perspective of the Balanced Scorecard, to be 'Employer of choice'. The department most effected by this was the HR department, who then also had 'Employer of choice' as a KPI. With the communication department fulfilling a support function, this KPI was also relevant to the communication department, especially in terms of communication. Many communication practitioners were therefore, linked to this KPI and this was reflected in their performance indicators and

PBR. Additionally, the KPI for the communication practitioner was specific to the role of that practitioner, for example, the internal communication's manager would have a higher weighting and more activities surrounding this KPI, than the publication's manager. Furthermore, the 'Employer of choice' surveys and awards (conducted on an annual basis) would provide the results, to evaluate the individuals and the departments involved.

In another case, the company had implemented the Balanced Scorecard two years ago, and were only achieving success after implementing an electronic system, to aid the process. The respondent explained that the system had made it a lot easier, because without it, "It is just like a poster on the wall, then people don't really take notice". Furthermore, the Balanced Scorecard methodology was embedded in their Performance Discussion management meetings, held on a quarterly basis. In those meetings the four quadrants of the Balanced Scorecard, became the agenda of the meeting, where each department discussed and realigned its activities to the corporate scorecard. In this case, the departmental scorecards kept the same perspectives as the corporate scorecard.

Variations of the Balanced Scorecard were incorporated. One example was the franchise audit (a Balanced Scorecard developed for existing franchisors), that retained the four perspectives, but altered them to suit the franchising focus:

- Financial: Franchisors are concerned with the financial performance of the franchisee, and vice versa.
- Customer: Franchisees are classified as 'customers' of the franchisor. They often make purchases from the franchisor and relationship marketing is important.
- Internal: Internal processes and the standardisation of these processes are critical to the operation of a franchise. The franchisees' business system consists of a formula for internal operations, devised by the franchisor. Adherence to internal performance standards is crucial to the performance of the franchise as an organisation.
- Innovation: This is mostly the responsibility of the franchisor, although franchisee input must be facilitated.

Another company that altered the Balanced Scorecard, managed to embed the concept of measurement into their culture. This was not achieved by changing the perspectives but by enforcing bi-monthly reviews, for every level of the organisation in every department. Before these reviews take place, detailed information is collected from each employee. In

some cases, employees are required to obtain this information from their partners (such as, sales figures for certain products). The collected information is reviewed by the management teams at a large management meeting. This review includes planning, budgeting, reviewing and rewarding. The success of the information collection process is a result of its entrenchment throughout the entire organisation, because it is written into every employee's performance measures and reward structures.

Where the Balanced Scorecard was not successful in sufficiently catering for an organisation's need, the organisation created tailored models. In one example the company had tried both the Excellence Models and the Balanced Scorecard, and explained that, "We've tried to customise it to something that we find applies, or is a lot easier to apply, especially in our industry". Their personalised performance measurement model contains a KPI scorecard initiating with the strategic objectives and ending with individual employee objectives. With an operational focus, the measures are output orientated and take into consideration longer and shorter term areas. Long-term issues include compliance, the legal environment, socio-economic factors and 'regionality' (graphical locations), where short-term areas revolve around everyday activities. The longer-term areas were described as being difficult, but possible to measure with progress benchmarks, public perception, and feedback. Another organisation, also making use of a customised performance measurement system, focused particularly on assessing people. With the notion, "You can't manage what you can't measure", this consultancy attempted to measure everything and everyone with various feedback mechanisms. The model is based on the Managing Director's Master's dissertation, and evaluates employees on a number of criteria. These include their ability to execute clerical and administration duties, ability to manage statistical reports, ability to provide feedback to the client, ability to engage with colleagues, ability to engage with the media, and the ability to understand their client's business. The measurement is done bi-annually by peers, managers and other employees, and is integrated with a reward process.

Another organisation made use of a completely different model that originated in North America, referred to as, "The Drotter model". It is a leadership development tool and contains four perspectives, namely operational, financial, technical, and business. Additional areas appear underneath those four perspectives, termed leadership and

growth, management results, relationship results, and finally innovation and improvement results. The model also has a dashboard (scorecard) and KPIs, which are visually displayed at monthly departmental gatherings.

#### **6.3.4 Representation of communication in the performance measurement models**

Communication was not always incorporated in the performance measurement model, but when it was, it was represented in one of three ways. The first was by featuring KPIs in various employees' performance indicators. The second was when communication had been identified as an area in need of improvement. This is where the performance measurement model became the tool used to enforce co-operation. The third was when the communication department was integrated into the performance measurement model, in the same way that other departments, within the organisation, were incorporated. The approach to communication measurement was largely dependent on the leadership style.

According to the first case, communication could become very successful when each person in the organisation is made aware of it. Although extremely difficult to achieve, it was indicated that each employee (including senior managers), should have a communication KPI, related to what they do. Enforcing managers to communicate to their employees (through a formalised system such as meetings), could be an example of a KPI. This status is beneficial, in cases where the manager does not have the natural ability to communicate with employees. Another example is ensuring that employees approach the communication team for assistance in certain communication areas. This is valuable in cases where an employee's writing skills is poor and the employee is required to communicate regularly, in written format, with influential stakeholders.

In the second case where research had indicated that communication was a problem area, communication was built into the performance measurement model, and given a weighting to increase its value. In one case, an organisation allocated an astounding weighting to the communication component in their performance measurement system. Where each component obtained a score, the communication component's mark was to be multiplied by 12 and the rest of the components by two. This meant that even if targets were achieved in the other areas of the business, the total score would be significantly lower,

because the weighting of the communication component was so extremely high. The score determined whether bonuses and increases would be paid out as well as the amount. This project significantly influenced the importance of communication in that organisation, where employee satisfaction improved from 40% to 70% in a year. For the following years, the communication component was not removed, but weighted equally to the rest of the components, to maintain the results. After two years, the satisfaction score still measured as high as 80%. Notable though, was the fact that the managers were also assessed by these weightings.

In the last case, the day-to-day measurement for support functions (such as the communication department) maintained a 'client perspective' where the support function treated the different business units and departments as clients. The performance measurement of these support functions revolved around the service provided to the clients, and the clients evaluated the performance of the communication practitioners. This method worked well from a process point of view as it became clear where practitioners were concentrating their efforts, especially if it was intangible in nature, such as offering advice. For every project or activity that was tangible in nature, there was a quantitative measure called a 'tick sheet'. The client was required to state their level of satisfaction by completing a detailed questionnaire, after each project. The questionnaire included a quantitative scale ranging from 'did not meet requirements', 'met requirements', 'was satisfactory', or 'exceeded requirements'. Aspects such as objective and goal achievement, timeline (deadlines), and budget were listed on this sheet for review. The qualitative measure was done quarterly in the client review meeting. Practitioners updated a client list on a regular basis by the practitioners, and thus, the clients and the communication department knew, which services were provided, at all times. At that meeting the head of communications, all the team leaders, the communication practitioners, and the clients (who service was provided to, in that quarter) came together. The aim of the meeting was to capture the qualitative aspects of the practitioner's service, where the 'tick sheet' was unable to do so. The clients reviewed the practitioners' service, while the practitioners were not allowed to respond to their comments. The divisional communication meeting occurred, just after the client review meeting, and awarded an opportunity to discuss the results, provide feedback and plan for the future. In this forum, questions such as "How do we improve?", "Where are we falling flat?", "Where are we losing focus?", and "Where have we done exceptionally well" were addressed.

Another well-entrenched form of day-to-day measurement concerns events. It normally focuses on determining whether the outcomes of communication events were achieved or not. This is accomplished, by requiring the attendants, to complete evaluation forms at the end of the event. This is ensured, by making the evaluation process the last activity of the event agenda, before the events are adjourned. Prizes are then drawn from the completed evaluation forms and the doors of the venue are not opened, until the prizes are handed out. The information obtained from these evaluation forms, is captured and reviewed during management meetings. This procedure is also directly linked to the performance measurement system, and made policy, to conduct evaluations after each event, regardless of the nature of the event.

Where communication departments were measured with the performance measurement model, respondents indicated that it worked well. They also explained that they were not required to do more or less, than what was written in their performance indicators. This prohibited them from focusing attention in the wrong direction, as well as being misused by other departments.

An interesting concept was presented by a respondent who measures the communication effectiveness between a franchisor and franchisees. In terms of providing supportive franchising, franchisors need to focus on various elements, such as operational support, training support, marketing support, administrative support, and communication support. In each of these elements, points are awarded, which is then used as a benchmark the following year. Communication is measured and monitored in terms of obtaining and maintaining the correct details of the franchisees. Then ensuring that communication takes place (by e-mail, facsimile, or telephone) is the next section where points are awarded. Certain media score higher points than others do. Further points are awarded, if there are additional elements of communication, such as a newsletter. The frequency of the communication is also allocated points. In this way, organisations that do not have communication departments are encouraged to communicate and can, therefore, still measure their communication functions, by following a similar, uncomplicated method of measurement.

Another unusual angle, regarding communication processes, was contributed to this theme. In order for the processes to be measured, a respondent had to map the



communication processes, relating to the company's ISO 9000 compliancy, in a workflow diagram. The respondent claimed that it made a significant difference to think of communication in that way, because each step of the communication process had to be identified and defined. This also assisted in determining measuring criteria for communication, at each step of the process. The suggestion was made that mapping out communication processes and then measuring them accordingly, is an important tool for performance measurement. This is especially significant, if the communication processes occur throughout the entire organisation.

### **6.3.5 Techniques employed for measuring corporate communication**

During conversations, a few examples, regarding the techniques used to measure communication efforts, were mentioned. Even if the organisation's approach to research was not scientific, some respondents still measured certain activities for their own management purposes. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques were employed and a recommendation made that research had to be done before an activity to determine where problems could occur, during the communication efforts to monitor, and afterwards to determine results.

Explanations proffered, revealed that communication managers would look at their package of communication tools, and through measurement decide where the best effects and impacts as opposed to costs were achieved. Costs included real material costs, resources such as people and time, and equipment such as software programmes, photocopier machines etcetera. A different measure was described by a respondent who represented a strategic role within the company. This respondent explained that the ultimate measure was the company's stock price, relative to the inherent value. This reflected the success of the market, the perception in the market, the perception in delivery, and the perception of value (both current and future value). Having reported (to the rest of the board), on marketing and communication for three years, it became evident that the most effective measure was the performance against their peer group analysis, in terms of stock, stock price relative to South African and international prices, to the rest of the industry, and then in some cases, to other industries.

Considering the above measurement scenarios, Table 6.1 provides a list of measurement techniques mentioned by respondents and used to measure the effectiveness of their communication. As these techniques have been discussed in the above conversations, the table is not elaborated on in detail. This list also does not include methods used to measure the media for publicity purposes, as this section is discussed subsequently.

**Table 6.1: Measurement techniques used by respondents to measure communication effectiveness**

Individual interviews / In-depth interviews	Focus group discussions	Communication audits
Communication champs (employees based at various sites who monitor and provide feedback regarding the communication effectiveness)	Dipsticks (this is a research technique used for specific problem areas to monitor results)	Structured questionnaires (handrolc or electronic)
Telephone interviews	Call centre feedback	Sales measures
Reputation management audits	Post-project evaluation	Internal audits
Webpage analytical data regarding website usage	Perception surveys or audits	Stock price analysis

Considering media measurement, there were various views on measuring publicity as well as determining the value thereof. Apparently, this is one of the easiest measures for communication, which explains why practitioners are keen to make use of it. In addition, its popularity is noteworthy, because of the quantitative representation, creating accountability for communication. However, the fact that the achievement of publicity seldom relied on the efforts of the practitioner, is important. Publicity is often achieved, because of the situation in the publication house, where an available slot, had to be filled, just before the publishing deadline. Apart from this, respondents indicated how they went about measuring their media publicity. The universal method of measuring was with column centimetres, multiplied by the applicable weighting (ranging from 1-5), for the publication type featured. In some cases, this was multiplied by an additional weighting of six, because the impact of publicity (known as PR), is considered higher than advertising. The clippings were done manually, either in-house or by the media consultancy, and were regarded as expensive and labour intensive. An impact analysis was usually conducted by a consultancy, to measure favourability, spread, reach and other variables. Another respondent explained that their monthly media report was a 'running scorecard model', also conducted by the media partners. This indicated the number of media placements

that were received, the tonality, the kind of topics that were covered, the angles, and the ratio of what was provided, by the practitioners, in relation to what was actually printed.

There were respondents who criticised the above methods of media analysis. One argued that they are misleading, because advertising prices can be significantly reduced when bought in bulk, or when negotiated down. The publicity is then calculated at the original price of the advertising, despite the fact that the organisation may receive discounts for their advertising. Another respondent felt very strongly about the true measurement of the value of publicity, and maintained that by effective planning, PR did not have to be given a value in terms of costs or centimetres (in Rand amounts). The intangible value would be visible in outcomes such as employee morale, share price, shortened sales cycles, confident salespeople, stimulated sales pipelines, market awareness, increased needs identification, better quality of partners and employees, as well as better turnover. These statements were based on debates facilitated by PRISA and BizCommunity. Another respondent intimated that their communication team had made the decision not to utilise any media measurement, and to only monitor results in outcomes such as share prices and peer group analysis. The former respondent believed that PR could not be measured in centimetres and presented an argument with the following key reasons:

- PR practitioners need to ask themselves whether they would have advertised in the publications where they obtained publicity, because only a few people actually target the correct publications.
- The concept of cognitive dissonance implies that no amount of PR can undo a negative perception; it can only reinforce feelings, not create new ones.
- That PR affects the business, especially when well managed. An example was provided where a start-up company was acquired for R14 million, within eight months of opening its doors. This was the goal of the company all along, and through correctly positioning it with PR, the goal was achieved.
- The last reason was against the remuneration system to PR consultants. The respondent explained that they determine their fees, based on the client's calculated ROI. This ROI (calculated by measuring column centimetres), was often an inflated figure and normally premeditated, by the consultants themselves. An example where publicity was valued up to R70 thousand, for containing the company logo in a sports

article, was presented. The logo was barely visible, but the calculations included weightings for the publication type, the size of the entire article (even though nothing was mentioned about the organisation), the fact that the logo featured in the picture, and the fact that the picture was in colour. This disproportionate equation did not give justice to a smaller well-written article, focused on building the corporate reputation. For this reason, ROI should be based on outcomes, which is far more effective than on column centimetres.

Finally, only one respondent mentioned that they made use of a media audit, to discover, what the media understood about their company. Information is acquired, regarding who the media perceive the market leaders to be, and what the positioning of each market leader is. This information is then used to create effective messages, that would filter through this media (as a stakeholder group), before it entered the public arena. This aspect was indicated as especially important for the IT industry. A practical example was provided by another respondent, who explained that he hosted a radio talk show, and he was tremendously disappointed with the performance of PR practitioners. According to this respondent, they did not cultivate a relationship with him, but were narrowly concerned about obtaining publicity on his radio show. Not once did they provide him with questions that he might ask during an interview with their clients, neither did they define the objectives of the interview. This left the interviewee vulnerable and unprepared for the interview. Additionally, he claimed that he had never met the practitioners, nor had they ever thanked him afterwards for the coverage.

#### **6.3.6 Rewards and performance measures**

Performance assessments occur at pre-determined periods and provide the opportunity to review and rate the employees' performance. Issues, areas of improvement, and areas of success are highlighted during these meetings. The manager and the employee revise what needs to be done, how it needs to be done (by placing a standard against it), whether it was achieved, and whether more was done than required of the employee. Depending on how the employees achieved their KPIs, their rewards are calculated accordingly.

Concerning rewards and motivation, mention was made several times that the assessment should be linked to the remuneration. Responsible for performance measurement, a

respondent explained, "I cannot emphasise it enough. It is the only way that you will have success with it". Another said, "You know people are driven by money. This whole organisation is driven on their bonuses". This strongly indicates performance measurement models are credible when linked to compensation. In another case, attention was drawn to the fact that despite having a performance measurement system, which was linked to payment, the company in question did not disburse the bonuses, which immediately discredited the entire system and made it worthless.

An alternative to providing monetary rewards was an informal psychological reward system. An example of this is where an employee worked long hours, to ensure that certain outcomes were achieved. The employee would then be rewarded with time off or some other incentive. Accordingly, time is one of the most convenient rewards to dispense, because there is no paper work involved and it is appreciated by the receiver. Caution was however issued, not to abuse this privilege, as it would lose its effect. Additionally, another form of recognition appeared in the form of accolades at departmental meetings, where this verbal acknowledgment, awarded to someone who had performed particularly well, was documented in the minutes.

## **6.4 THEME 3: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The last theme that emerged from the data pertained to KPIs. This theme focuses on the way KPIs are produced and employed. Furthermore, because most of the respondents were either aware of or knowledgeable about KPIs, they could supply the necessary examples.

### **6.4.1 The construction of Key Performance Indicators**

From the respondents' descriptions, it became clear that KPIs are used differently in every organisation, and depend largely on the performance measurement systems as well as the leadership style of the organisation. KPIs are mostly outcome based and can be quantitative and / or qualitative in nature. Advice was proffered, that KPIs remain quantitative, especially in the business environment, for measurability purposes. In addition, another respondent also recommended not using the formula of inputs over outputs, when determining KPIs, especially on a strategic level, because the complexity of inputs, needed to ensure an outcome, becomes too difficult to track. An example of this

respondent's strategic KPI, on an executive level, was to ensure that the company had all its mining licenses. This was constituted as a qualitative KPI, because it would require a series of inputs, to achieve the outcome. Attention was therefore awarded to outcomes and not the importance of the inputs. The respondent equated this concept to a sales person. The outcome is to achieve a sale, regardless of the inputs, required to obtain the sale. However, in certain cases, where the process of achieving the sale is ineffective, the KPI would be constructed around streamlining the sales process, or providing the sales person with additional tools, to enhance performance. Another case also made mention of tools, and indicated that the set of KPIs (for the position of internal communication manager), described what needed to be done and how. Failure to achieve those results, led to an investigation into, either the tools made available to perform the tasks, or the skills of the employee, able to perform the tasks. Depending on the result, new KPIs would be constructed to address the problem, such as going on training, or making use of alternative tools.

KPIs are based on an employee's job specification or job description. It describes what the employee should be doing, and how the employee is performing, within that particular role. An important difference between targets and KPIs are that targets indicate the ideal or what would liked to be achieved, while KPIs indicate what has to be achieved. Additionally, KPIs are the indicators that rewards are calculated on. It is a standard and describes what is expected from each employee, team, department or division. Several respondents indicated that they were not required to do anything more or less, than what was written in their KPIs. Furthermore, benchmarking is critical for the measurement of KPIs. It should allow for comparisons against the previous year's performance, against best practice as well as industry performance. An example of KPIs, where comparisons against best practice and industry performance are evident, is the 'Employer of Choice' annual survey, where many organisations are entered into and compared to each other.

From an executive perspective, the KPI has tended towards the qualitative plane, and represented the division or department's KPIs. These could be gradually broken down into quantitative KPIs and allocated to the employees in the department. This is because their KPIs have an operational focus. In other words, the KPIs from the organisation are broken down and represented in the division's or department's KPIs, where it becomes the

responsibility of the executive of that department. Next, these KPIs are further broken down and owned by each manager and employee in the department. This ensures that there is strategic alignment and no duplication of tasks. The senior managers develop KPIs for the organisation, and then converse with their management teams, to develop KPIs for the department and each manager. After this step, the managers meet with employees and determine their individual KPIs (based on the objectives of the department and their individual focus area). The KPIs are sometimes broken down into months, weeks or days, depending on the situation, and this entire reviewing process, occurs over a long period. By following this method, valued aspects of the organisation, could be entrenched throughout the whole organisation. As an example, the strategic issue was to become the employer of the year. This was a similar corporate KPI to the 'Employer of Choice', mentioned earlier in this chapter. The respondent described that this KPI was driven into every employee's KPIs, making everyone intensely aware of the issue, and motivating employees to contribute to this KPI. Although this concept seems flawless, another respondent cautioned that as soon as an indicator becomes foreign to employees, they become scared of it and then opt to rather lose that percentage of the reward (bonus / pay), and ensure that every other KPI is performed successfully. For this reason, employees need to understand what is required of them in their KPIs. If it entails unfamiliar aspects, thorough training, linked to sufficient compensation for their effort, should be provided. A case in point was mentioned, where Engineers were forced to have a communication related KPI. They chose to ignore it, because the contribution towards their bonus was only 2%, and they did not judge this reward, worth the extra effort. The notion was that they were Engineers and not Communicators, and therefore did not deem the exercise to be of any value.

Each KPI should be measurable and this measurement can take place on a quantitative or qualitative basis. More often than not, the quantitative measures are concerned with measuring outputs, while outcomes are measured qualitatively. Attention was drawn to the fact that performance review questionnaires contained both a quantitative section with KPIs, as well as a qualitative section. The qualitative section provided opportunity for comments, made during the performance review meeting, and focuses on behaviour, attitude and skills. Another example of measuring an outcome would be to perform an in-depth interview, to discover if a relationship has fostered with a specific stakeholder group.



The important thing is that the KPIs should assess, which factors contributed to the performance of the organisation as a whole.

A further characteristic of KPIs is that they are supposed to challenge individuals. Flexibility is built into the KPIs, to allow the employee to grow and avoid frustration from being rigidly constrained. A respondent explained that a:

"Bright guy got a performance appraisal of 65% for all the years that he worked at a company, because that was the standard; that was the mean. That was the same [reason why] I left my previous company".

By creating opportunity to grow and rewarding the growth, employee stagnation and boredom, can be avoided.

The scoring of each KPI is weighted according to its relevance and importance in the specific category. The weighting is normally kept between 1–10. For example, an internal communication manager's KPI for employee education (derived from the departmental KPI of employee engagement), will far outweigh a KPI for assisting marketing managers with client education. Operationally, the activities of sharing knowledge to employees through newsletters, intranet and other media, will weigh more than the activities conducted in creating a client brochure. Clarification was provided, explaining that the KPI of employee education, received a rating of four (out of 16), which was the highest weightings of the five KPIs.

#### **6.4.2 Examples of Key Performance Indicators**

During the interviews, respondents mentioned various KPIs, that were either applicable to their organisation, department, or themselves. In some cases, KPIs that should become applicable were also suggested. With the focus on communication, the following section presents a synopsis of the KPIs mentioned for organisations (senior managers), departments (managers), and individuals (employees). Where these KPIs were provided, they are displayed within quotation marks. Where the KPIs were not proffered but explained, these are also included and displayed below without quotation marks.

#### **6.4.2.1 Organisational Key Performance Indicators**

- “To be 'The employer of choice'.”
- "An initial KPI was to identify a suitable target market. The result was that we started with 19 institutions on our register, we now have 385 in North America alone."
- “A KPI was to identify the communication systems for the entire organisation. This would include: how would it report to head office, how would it facilitate communication and how would it facilitate the actual running of the business, including everything from ordering the stock to selling it?”
- The KPI should be creating business processes that allow for information to flow, that allow for communication to get the information that they need, so that they are able to communicate it to whoever they need to communicate it to.
- "If you are just communicating, because you have to communicate, you are not giving yourself a [value. You] have got no way of measuring it, you have no way of knowing whether you are being effective, and you've got no way of knowing where you are sitting at, because you do not have a KPI saying 'What are we doing around communication and what we are supposed to be doing?'."
- "They [employees] must make use of the communication department to assist them to do their job. And it should be written into their performance measurement."
- Conduct a communication audit once a year measuring trust, image, reputation, communication effectiveness.

#### **6.4.2.2 Departmental Key Performance Indicators**

- “Improve the quality of interpersonal communication.”
- In one case, a consultancy insisted that an organisation develop KPIs for their communication practitioners, because they were not building relations with the media. Their KPIs entailed spending time with the journalists, to compiling a minimum amount of articles and news releases in a pre-determined period, and attending a minimum amount of media interventions. The results of these KPIs were measured with ROI figures, derived from media calculations, and these figures improved from a 20% to a 150% ROI, on media.

- Provide feedback after research activities have been done, and specify a period that the research will be taking place. An example that a respondent quoted was, " 'For the next 6 months we are going to work on improving the trust levels in this organisation, and we are going to do this and that'. And after 6 months, you tell them, 'You know, 6 months ago, when we started, this is where we were and we measured it, and this is where we are now, and this is the end of the project' ".
- "Effective budget control has become more and more important on KPI measures."
- The manager is responsible for client and budget management. "Within that KPI, there are two or more specific things such as, the marketing budget will not overstep a certain range for the year, and then the manager is measured on whether this was achieved not."
- "If the manager is not communicating well to his staff, then he would get a KPI that he must meet with his staff and cover the following sections every week - to encourage information flow from his higher meetings. Then it is a formal process, which must take place because it affects his performance criteria, and then the employees should be allowed to have input into that process as well."
- Create an understanding of what the business is striving for, and what the strategic intent is.
- Plan and manage employees' career paths.
- Ensure that administration is up-to-date and can be executed effectively through information systems and control.
- Ensure employees attend communication skills training programmes and received manuals that are regularly updated.
- Ensure that all communication material created follows the predetermined corporate standards and includes intellectual property rights such as trademarks and copyright.

#### **6.4.2.3 Individual Key Performance Indicators**

- "Proactively find opportunities to create awareness and education across the entire organisation around the IT Solutions [products]. Use existing and new communications vehicles to execute."

- "Become familiar with the various knowledge management tools (communities, portals and other collaboration / communication activities) to ensure consistent communication happens with all stakeholders."
- "Publish community satisfaction surveys for each division in order to gather feedback on the effectiveness of each. Incorporate the results and feedback for improvement into the plans."
- "Create comprehensive [communication] plans for each community (keeping in mind that communities are not homogenous and have multiple stakeholder types) with the following objectives:
  - Tailoring and improving communication based on stakeholder requirements;
  - Improving community portal usage (more users and increased usage by existing users) by tracking usage statistics;
  - Creating platforms for regular community- based interaction;
  - Increasing participation in community-based activities;
  - Improving the quality of content on and structure of communities."
- "Create regular community-based newsletters targeted at driving and improving community usage. Work with global and regional Solution leads [managers] to gather relevant, timely content. Newsletters to be distributed electronically."
- "Assist Marketing Managers in gathering and publishing sanitised solution-based materials to the Solutions pages [product pages] on the intranet, assuming that many of these materials are generated by the community."
- "Implement cross-linkage between communities and portals [intranets] to ensure ease of access to information."
- "Work with IT to gather statistics on the use of intranet pages and measure on a monthly basis. Make recommendations to improve use based on results."
- "Create understanding in the organisation."
- Assist in developing the branding strategy.
- Assist with the development of the annual report.
- Direct publicity towards a lead generation purpose.

- Develop 10 new releases every month.
- Ensure strong media relations measurable by the journalists contacting the correct people for information, and the journalists attending the events they were invited to.
- "Every person in an organisation is a brand ambassador, and as such has to take all the responsibility for doing so. They need to be measured on the push information flow and what they are pushing at us. They have indicators that when you launch your product, or even before launching a product, then this is the information that you are supposed to communicate, so many days before and it needs to go there, there and there. A service centre agent has another form of responsibility of being a brand ambassador. A switchboard would be a different form. Financial people have a number of suppliers and clients that they deal with. And the impact that it has on your brand is massive."

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided insight into the way in which organisations currently measure themselves, along with their communication departments. Surprising to note, was the depth, at which communication is embraced, in these South African organisations. It is clear that some of them have come to realise the importance of incorporating communication measurement into the performance measurement system. A respondent indicated that the corporate communication industry is still very young (around 10 years old), which signifies the growth that has taken place in organisational maturity, regarding this issue.

In addition, for practical purposes, this study's exploration has identified several facets that organisations have incorporated into the measurement of communication. Each organisation has customised the communication role, to suit their circumstances and created KPIs to support these customisations. By incorporating new concepts into the definition of corporate communication, organisations have illustrated how adaptive and creative they have become, in ensuring that communication does make a difference. Concepts such as the use of technology, adopting a service provision role, acquiring an administrative support function to facilitate the communication team, incorporating communication on a strategic level, and making communication the custodian of the site image and telephony, are just a few of these examples. Additionally, senior level buy-in

has significantly changed the tune of corporate communication practitioners, failing to prove their worth. It is evident that performance measurement system is a tool used to accomplish buy-in for the softer issues.

Despite this growth, it is still evident that many organisations (especially smaller and IT organisations) have a long way to go. As indicated, the leaders and entrepreneurs of this country need to be schooled (in qualifications such as MBAs), that softer issues are not less important than the other issues. Furthermore, softer issues can be creatively measured and incorporated to conform to the quantitative dominance of the scientific inquiry.

As one respondent stated:

"It's proving its worth here, thank heavens, but it is never a done deal, and maybe somewhere somebody must say that! It is never a done deal. In other words, there is no room for complacency in championing the role of communications. You actually need people to do it constantly".

