

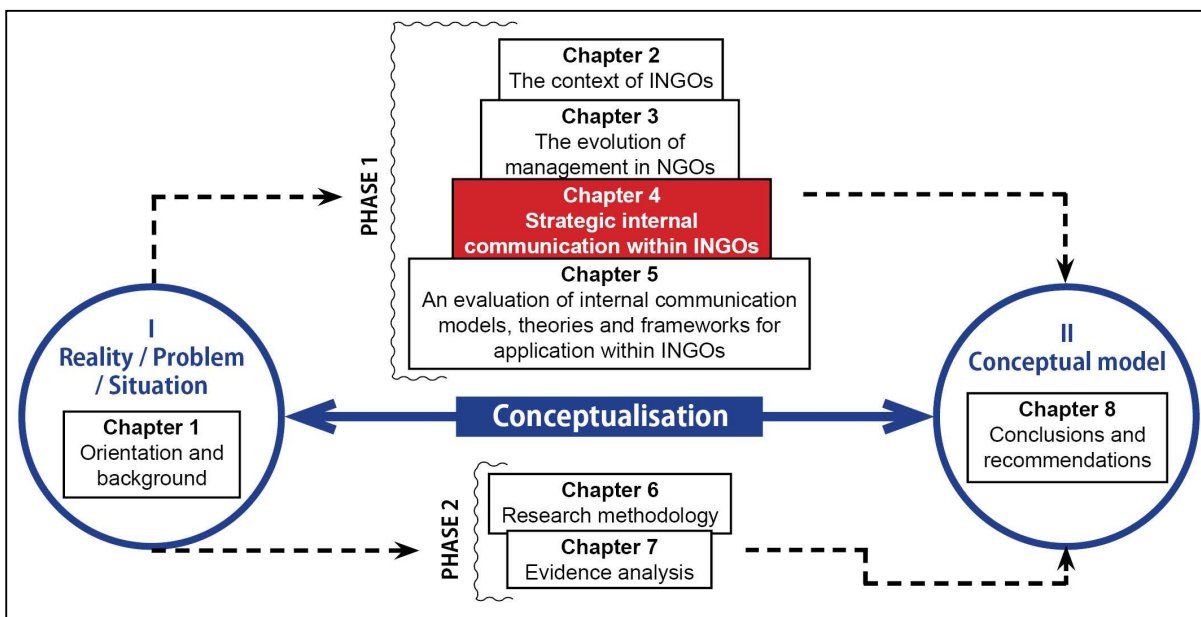
Chapter 4

Strategic internal communication in international non-governmental organisations

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 2 and 3 provided the contextual background for the management of strategic internal communication in INGOs. Chapter 2 explored the INGOs' position within civil society and relationship with other sectors of society, while Chapter 3 considered the management of INGOs, including the characteristics and challenges that the INGO form poses to traditional management thinking. Against the backdrop provided by these discussions, Chapter 4 defines strategic internal communication and focuses on its application within INGOs. Figure 4.1 illustrates the position of Chapter 4 in relation to all the other chapters of this study.

Figure 4.1: Chapter 4 in relation to the other chapters



The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section considers the communication management approach to internal communication which this study adopts, as well as several alternative approaches. The second section defines strategic internal communication identifying what makes it strategic and how the process should unfold. The final section considers strategic internal communication within INGOs, paying particular

attention to the challenges faced by INGOs, the opportunities offered by strategic internal communication, and the barriers to implementing effective strategic internal communication in this context.

4.2 APPROACHES TO INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The literature contains three separate approaches to communication in organisations and the relationships among an organisation's internal stakeholders: organisational communication, employee relations and communication management. Organisational communication considers all communication that occurs within an organisation and goes so far as to consider organising as communication (Conrad & Poole, 2005:9). It focuses on the importance of communication to every individual within the organisation and how each employee and manager uses communication to achieve their individual and organisational goals. It offers an understanding of how communication works in an organisation. From a human resources perspective, employee relations is concerned with the relationship between the organisation and its employees. Both of these approaches and how they relate to strategic internal communication are discussed below.

First, however, the communication management perspective, as the approach adopted in this study is discussed. The communication management approach views communication within the organisation as a management tool (Welch & Jackson, 2007:181). It focuses on how management can use communication to improve the performance of the organisation. Within this framework, this study adopts a stakeholder perspective and focuses on strategic communication theory. This approach is discussed next.

4.2.1 Communication management approach

Communication management is synonymous with corporate communication and public relations (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). Within this perspective, internal communication is just one of several communication management specialisations, including media relations, investment relations and crisis communication among others (Yeomans, 2006:333). From the communication management perspective, each of these functions is distinct, but needs to be integrated in order to be effective (Quirke, 2002:25). What unites them is a view of communication as a tool for use by management to achieve

organisational goals. PRISA (2009), the Public Relations Institute of South Africa, defines communication management as “the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders.” This definition highlights two key theories that have influenced the communication management discipline, particularly as it applies to this study: stakeholder theory and strategic communication theory. These are discussed in more detail next.

4.2.1.1 Stakeholder theory

The central concept of stakeholder theory is the stakeholder, which is classically defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984 in Friedman & Miles, 2006:1). The application of stakeholder theory results in the organisation no longer being viewed as an isolated unit, guided and managed solely by its directors, and under the influence of its shareholders (Friedman & Miles, 2006:25). Instead, the organisation is seen as interdependent with multiple stakeholder groups whom it both affects and is affected by.

The literature identifies two principal reasons for an organisation to adopt a stakeholder perspective in its strategic management: utilitarian reasons and moral or ethical reasons (Bendell, 2002:55; Crane & Livesey, 2002:39; Friedman & Miles, 2006:29). Adopting a stakeholder approach for utilitarian reasons involves engaging with stakeholders with the sole purpose of protecting and furthering the organisation’s strategic and economic goals. Approaching stakeholder relations from a normative perspective, based on morals and ethics, requires broader consideration of all stakeholder interests with the aim of developing win-win situations and ultimately a more ‘just’ society. This normative stakeholder perspective complements the neo-institutionalist view of organisations adopted by this study and introduced in Chapter 1.

From both these perspectives, an organisation, such as an INGO, cannot simply be guided by its own rational decision-making, but must also adhere to social pressures, as put forth by its stakeholders, in order to maintain its legitimacy and thus its long-term survival. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders among both businesses and NGOs (Crane & Livesey, 2002:39). By adopting a stakeholder perspective, an organisation is forced to become

more responsive to its external environment and the changes within it (Welch & Jackson, 2007:183).

From a postmodern worldview, normative stakeholder theory calls for the recognition and consideration of interests and relationships that may not be part of traditional management practices (Friedman & Miles, 2006:68). It argues for the adoption of multiple stakeholder dialogue to replace traditional manager-centred forms of decision making (Friedman & Miles, 2006:69). Thus normative stakeholder theory serves as a basis for postmodern strategic management as discussed in Chapter 3. By strengthening relationships, stakeholder dialogue builds the bridges necessary for both successful organisations and an improved society.

A key component of stakeholder theory for communication management is stakeholder management. Scholes (1997:xviii) defines stakeholder management as “the professional management of interactions between all those with an interest - or 'a stake' - in a particular organisation.” By comparing this definition to PRISA’s definition of communication management, it is clear that communication management involves the management of stakeholder relationships through the use of communication. With a foundation in stakeholder theory, communication management is able to both advocate for the benefit of improved relations with an organisation’s stakeholders and build and strengthen those relationships.

Stakeholder theory as applied within a communication management approach has several implications for internal communication. First, it fundamentally validates the importance of this management function, because it identifies the intrinsic value of all stakeholders, employees and other internal stakeholders included, not just as instruments to furthering the organisation’s goals, but as important groups who need to be considered in their own right (Friedman & Miles, 2006:29). It therefore provides the theory behind justifying internal communication as a necessary and beneficial management function. Second, as an analysis by Welch and Jackson (2000) argues, a stakeholder perspective of internal communication means that internal stakeholders must not be considered as a homogenous group, but rather as consisting of various inter-related subgroups. Finally, the postmodern worldview of strategic management and internal communication adopted in

this study and identified as appropriate for INGOs, draws upon the stakeholder dialogue theory in order to identify the appropriate means of implementing strategic internal communication effectively. As a result, stakeholder theory underlies the conception of strategic internal communication in this study.

4.2.1.2 Strategic communication theory

Strategic communication is a concept that unites all the communication functions in organisations (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic & Sriramesh, 2007:3), including strategic internal communication. Hallahan *et al.* (2007:3) define strategic communication as “the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission.” They (2007:7) argue that the word ‘purposeful’ is central to the concept of strategic communication because it focuses on the intentional use of communication by an organisation’s leaders and employees. Steyn (2007:139) contends that strategic communication is part of the strategic management of the organisation. Strategic communication must be clearly linked to the organisation’s strategic intent, both in terms of its actions and its goal.

Strategic communication is not only about achieving the organisation’s strategic intent through communication with its stakeholders, but is also about ensuring that the strategic intent is in line with the organisation’s stakeholders. Therefore, the communication function has a role to play before and during the strategic management process and not just during strategy implementation. This view is based on the postmodern view of strategic management as put forward by Knight (quoted in Steyn, 2007:139) that strategic management is “a subjective process in which the participants from different management disciplines ... assert their disciplinary identities.”

At the strategy development stage, strategic communication brings the society or ‘outsider’ perspective to the process (Steyn, 2007:139). It does this through the analysis of the internal and external environment (Steyn & Puth, 2000:63; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007:10). As identified in the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, strategic communication/public relation’s key role, with regards to the organisation’s strategy, is through the reconciliation of the strategy with the expectations of its strategic constituents (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:34). Strategic communication’s role is to analyse the organisation’s environment and

its stakeholders and ensure that the organisation's strategy reflects this context. From a postmodern perspective, this process involves ongoing negotiations between the communication function, stakeholders and the organisation's management, where the communication function is not just the mouthpiece of management, but rather is an activist on behalf of stakeholder interests and is in pursuit of equitable participation by all (Ströh, 2007:209-210).

In order to play its role during both the strategy development and implementation stages, the lead communicator requires a voice at the executive level of the organisation - where it develops its strategy (Steyn & Puth, 2000). Without this representation at the senior level, it is impossible for the communication function to fulfil its strategic role with regards to achieving the organisation's strategic intent. A second requirement is that the lead communicator has the knowledge and understanding of communication's strategic role in order to be able to fulfil it. Without these two conditions, an organisation's communication function cannot operate at the strategic level.

As conceptualised in this study, strategic internal communication is a specific component of strategic communication. Thus the theory of strategic communication is the backdrop for understanding strategic internal communication. This relationship is discussed further in section 4.3.

4.2.2 Alternative approaches

While this study approaches internal communication through communication management heavily influenced by stakeholder theory and strategic communication theory, there are alternative approaches to this concept. Organisational communication approaches communication in organisations, not from a management perspective, but from the view that it is something undertaken by everyone within the organisation. Human resources does not focus on internal communication but rather on the concept of employee relations to understand the relationships between an organisational and its employees. The following section discusses these two approaches, how they relate to communication management and how they impact on this study's conception of strategic internal communication.

4.2.2.1 Organisational communication approach

Organisational communication is distinguished from communication management in its focus on theory and research, as opposed to the practical function of communication in organisations and in its adoption of “an integrative communication orientation” (Mumby & Stohl, 1996:53). Organisational communication scholars have come to see communication not just as a phenomenon within organisations, but as a means of describing and explaining organisations (Deetz, 2001:5). In other words, an organisation is communication (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:7) and thus communication is the basis for the organisation itself.

While organisational communication may focus on research and theory, it does still have practical implications for communication within organisations. However, unlike communication management, it does not focus on the functions of a communication department, but rather on the overall communication processes at play within the organisation. Therefore, the practical implications for organisational communication apply not to a specific department, but rather speak to how all employees in an organisation can analyse a situation and choose the appropriate communication strategies to achieve their goals (Conrad & Poole, 2005:4). When considered through a postmodern lens, the field demonstrates a concern for diversity, process and a holistic view of the organisation (Mumby and Stohl, 1996:66). Thus organisational communication provides insight into many of the issues that need to be considered within a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication.

Some of these insights relate to two concepts often studied by organisational communication scholars and which relate to strategic internal communication: control and identification. The literature identifies four types of control in organisations (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:262; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:254):

- i. simple: the use of direct power
- ii. technical: through the availability, or lack thereof, of tools and resources
- iii. bureaucratic: the use of organisational rules and procedures
- iv. concertive: The use of interpersonal relationships and teamwork

It is this last type of control that is most relevant to considerations of internal communication in organisations. Concertive control relies on relationships and shared values in order to normalise behaviour (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:255). Organisations who use concertive control most clearly are usually fairly flat and require significant teamwork and a high degree of coordination, as well as organisations where adhering to core values is a requirement for achieving the organisation's goals (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:265). Establishing concertive control is necessary in INGOs who espouse core values that often are contrary to other types of concentrated power.

Concertive control is made possible through identification (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:255). As was introduced in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.2.2), identification is the process by which people link themselves to others through the discovery of common ground. Within organisations, it occurs when employees define themselves (at least in part) in terms of the organisation for which they work and internalise its mission, values and customary ways of doing things (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:114). A primary impact of identification is that it ensures that employees make decisions that are beneficial to the organisation because they see the organisation's interests as their own (Maneerat, Hale & Singhal, 2005:189). In addition, when employees identify with the organisation, their morale, commitment, job satisfaction and quality of performance generally increase (Maneerat *et al.*, 2005:189). However, feelings of identification rarely develop on their own (Cheney *et al.*, 2004:114). Thus a role for strategic internal communication, particularly in an INGO whose values encourage it to rely more on concertive control than other forms, is to encourage employee identification on the basis of the organisation's mission, values and strategic intent through dialogue and communication. Thus, while this study does not occur within the domain of organisational communication, this field of study does make a contribution to its conception and understanding of strategic internal communication.

4.2.2.2 Employee relations approach

Employee relations is the component of human resources management focused on the relationship between employees and the organisation. It has grown in importance with increased recognition that people are one of an organisation's most valuable assets and that the success of the organisation can be linked to the effectiveness of its human resource management (Buford, 2006:517). Unlike communication management and

organisational communication, employee relations does not take a communication-centric view of the management of internal stakeholders. Instead, it adopts a holistic view to the management of human resources which includes recruiting, training, retaining and separation; although in its most basic sense it is about employer and employees working together to achieve success (Hartley, 2007:1).

One of the key insights of the employee relations approach is its characterisation of the nature of the relationship between an employee and the organisation. In the mid twentieth century, there was an implied employee contract whereby employees would remain loyal to the company for life while the employer would 'take care' of them until retirement (Anonymous, 2003:1). However, in the late twentieth century, the implied contract gave way amid economic tensions that resulted in downsizing and an increase in contract work. Now, employee relations calls for the employee-employer relationship to no longer be viewed as paternalistic, but rather as a partnership (Anonymous, 2003:11). This view is aligned with the stakeholder perspective wherein all stakeholders, in this case, employees, have an intrinsic value to the organisation and thus need to be managed for win-win situations.

Employee relations may not be communication-centric but it does still recognise that communication is a key part of employee relation activities, in particular when motivating and engaging employees (Hartley, 2007:2). Employee engagement is an area where internal communication and employee relations overlap. Both areas of research address the need to engage employees in the organisation's decision-making process, as well as linking their particular areas of work to the organisation's overall strategy in order to achieve identification and thus more effective productivity. Employee relations also recognise the need to integrate employee relations consideration into the overall organisational strategy in order to improve organisational performance (Gunigle, Turner & Morley, 1998:115). Thus, the employee relations approach provides support for the importance of internal stakeholders in the strategic management process. Overall, employee relations, while it considers other aspects of human resources management than just communication, provides fundamental support for the strategic internal communication concept that is the focus of this study.

4.3 DEFINING STRATEGIC INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Strategic internal communication is not a common term in the literature, but is used here to emphasise the strategic nature of how internal communication is conceived in this study and differentiate it from many of the varied definitions of internal communication in the literature. However, as many elements of internal communication relate to strategic internal communication, this section discusses the definition, purpose and divisions of internal communication before providing further refinement to the concept of strategic internal communication. The final component of this section then highlights several key components of the strategic internal communication process.

4.3.1 Overview of internal communication

As the Excellence Study for Public Relations established, internal communication is both a component of and a prerequisite for excellent public relations (Grunig, 1992:532). Unfortunately, internal communication is a function that is under-researched in comparison to other aspects of communication management (Argenti, 1996:94). Adding further confusion is the fact that the divisions between external and internal communication are becoming increasingly blurred, as employees are often also customers, beneficiaries or other classes of stakeholders. However, a number of authors have delved into this concept in detail focusing on the particular aspects of communication unique to internal stakeholders. The following section discusses the variety of definitions of internal communication, the different dimensions of the function and the identification of its purposes and benefits that these authors have illustrated.

4.3.1.1 Definitions of internal communication

To further add to the problem of limited research in this area, a variety of terms including employee communication, internal public relations, internal corporate communication and internal marketing have all been used somewhat interchangeably to refer to the management of communication within an organisation. Even when the same term is used, it is rarely defined in precisely the same manner. Table 4.1 highlights just some of the definitions of internal communication in the literature.

Table 4.1: Definitions of internal communication

Author(s)	Definitions
Bovee and Thill (in Kalla, 2005:304)	<i>"The exchange of information and ideas within an organization."</i>
Kalla (2005:304)	<i>(integrated internal communications) "All formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of an organisation."</i>
Maubane (2006:11)	<i>"Communication that occurs in the internal environment of an organization"</i>
Stauss & Hoffmann (quoted in Yeomans, 2006)	<i>"The planned use of communication actions to systematically influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees."</i>
Cutlip, Center & Broom (quoted in Meyer & De Wet, 2007)	<i>(Internal corporate communication) "The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the internal stakeholders on whom its success or failure depends."</i>
Doorley & Garcia (2007:129)	<i>(Employee communication) "The function charged with aligning the 'hearts, minds, and hands' of the employee constituency through dialogue and engagement."</i>
Welch & Jackson (2007:184 & 186)	<i>"The strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations across a number of interrelated dimensions including, internal line manager communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication."</i>
	<i>(Internal corporate communication) "Communication between an organisation's strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims."</i>
Chen (2008:167)	<i>"A management tool [that] helps identify, establish, and maintain relationships between an organization's management and its employees"</i>

* Where the author uses a different term to refer to a similar concept, this has been indicated in brackets.

The definitions in Table 4.1 approach internal communication from a variety of perspectives. For example, some definitions include only managed communication (Scholes, 1997:xviii; Stauss & Hoffmann in Yeomans, 2006; Welch & Jackson, 2007:184; and Chen, 2008:167) or both managed and unmanaged communication (Kalla, 2005:304 and Maubane, 2006:11). As well, the definitions highlight a variety of different purposes for internal communication. These two distinctions are discussed in the following sections; what is important to note here is that, as highlighted by Welch and Jackson (2007), there is no single definition of internal communication that is predominant in the literature.

4.3.1.2 Dimensions of internal communication

The definitions in Table 4.1 can be distinguished by the inclusion of manager or unmanaged, task-related or non-task related and formal versus informal communication. In their definition, Welch and Jackson (2007:184) identified what they see as the main divisions of internal communication:

- internal line management communication,
- internal team peer communication,
- internal project peer communication and
- Internal corporate communication.

Line management communication is the day-to-day discussions between an employee and his/her manager. Team peer communication is the communication amongst all team members. Project peer communication is the communication between all employees working on specific projects. These three dimensions incorporate all the task-related communication an employee engages in on a daily basis. Meanwhile, internal corporate communication is the communication from the top management of the organisation to all employees about the organisational issues, goals and objectives and, as a result, is non-task related.

These different dimensions serve to highlight the different levels and groups that engage in internal communication. However, it is not always simple to distinguish between the different types of communication. For example, line managers have been identified as a key source of communication about organisational issues and objectives and not just specific task-related issues. Similarly, informal communication plays a key role in an employee's commitment to the organisation's goals. Since this study is approaching internal communication from a communication management perspective, internal communication is viewed as the managed use of communication (although this does not preclude the managed use of informal channels of communication). The other distinctions are not so easily made and will be discussed further in section 4.3.2.

4.3.1.3 Purpose of internal communication

The definitions in Table 4.1 also highlight a variety of goals or purposes for internal communication. These include:

- "systematically influence[ing] the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees" (Stauss & Hoffmann in Yeomans, 2006);
- "establish[ing] and maintain[ing] mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the internal stakeholders" (Cutlip, Center & Broom in Meyer &

De Wet, 2007), or in other words helping to “identify, establish, and maintain relationships between an organization’s management and its employees” (Chen 2008:167);

- “aligning the ‘hearts, minds, and hands’ of the employee constituency through dialogue and engagement” (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:129); and
- “promot[ing] commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims” (Welch & Jackson, 2007:186).

Similar to Cutlip, Center and Broom, as well as Chen, within the communication management perspective, internal communication focuses on the relationship between management and employees; each is the other’s most important public and a productive relationship is necessary for them to achieve their goals (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006:311-312). The other goals can be seen as the desired products of the effective management of that relationship. Argenti (2003:129) cites a Conference Board study of over 200 companies from a variety of industries which identifies even more goals for internal communication including:

- i. “To improve morale and foster goodwill between employees and management.
- ii. To inform employees about internal changes such as a reorganization or staff promotion.
- iii. To explain compensation and benefit plans, such as a new health care plan or an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- iv. To increase employee understanding of the company and its products, organisation, ethics, culture, and external environment.
- v. To change employee behaviour toward becoming more productive, quality oriented, and entrepreneurial.
- vi. To increase employee understanding of major health and social issues or trends affecting them, such as child care or AIDS.
- vii. To encourage employee participation in community activities.”

This list of objectives reflects a common bias in internal communication of focusing on a one-way relationship between management and employees (Yeomans, 2006:334). However, a symmetrical relationship between employees and management has been

identified as key to effective internal communication (Grunig, 1992:531). Al-Ghamdi, Roy and Ahmed (2007:274) provide a list of the purposes of internal communication more in line with this principle:

- i. establish and disseminate organisational goals
- ii. develop plans to achieve goals
- iii. organise human and other resources to be both effective and efficient
- iv. select, develop and appraise employees
- v. lead, direct, motivate and create a climate where people want to contribute
- vi. control performance

While internal communication can be used to achieve all these goals, these are all derived from the development and maintenance of the relationship between employees and management. As Yeoman (2006:334) identifies the general goal of internal communication to be “building two-way, evolving relationships with internal publics, with the goal of improving organisational effectiveness.” By fulfilling this purpose, internal communication helps to drive organisational performance (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:133).

As a result of fulfilling its overall purpose, effective internal communication has been associated with a wide array of benefits including but not limited to: increased employee engagement and commitment (Dolphin, 2005:171; Meyer & De Wet, 2007:31), increased employee satisfaction and decreased resistance to change (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299), decreased employee turnover and reduced absenteeism (Yates, 2006:71), improved productivity and higher quality of services and products, increased levels of innovation (Clampitt & Downs, 2003 in Tourish & Hargie, 2004) and improvement to a company’s financial performance and a sustainable competitive advantage (Asif & Sargeant, 2000:299; Yates, 2006:72). These benefits all contribute to the role internal communication plays in driving organisational performance.

The reason why the effective management of an organisation’s relationship with its employees can lead to these many benefits is because employees are an organisation’s most powerful constituency, one who can influence the reputation of the organisation with all of its other constituencies (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:134). Therefore, while the line may be blurring between internal and external communication, internal stakeholders still require

specific attention. As Simões, Dibb and Fisk (2005:153) argue, an employee's stance towards an organisation is vital to the quality of his performance and the quality of internal communication influences that stance. Similarly, effective internal communication encourages employee identification with the organisation, which leads to a more supportive attitude towards the organisation that in turn leads to improved quality of performance and retention (Dolphin, 2005:173). Internal communication is a means of aligning an organisation's employees with its mission and objectives (Dolphin 2005:173; Steyn & Puth, 2000; Verwey, 2003:3; Yates, 2006:74) thus leading to a more effective workforce that contributes to (and not detracts from) an organisation's reputation.

4.3.2 Definition of strategic internal communication

Strategic internal communication is not synonymous with internal communication. While it remains concerned with the relationship between the organisation and its employees, its focus is on the *strategic* functioning of internal communication. Of all the definitions of internal communication in Table 4.1, only Welch and Jackson's (2007:184) makes mention of the need for internal communication to be strategic, noting that it is "the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations." Similarly, Verwey & du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) reflect the strategic focus in their definition of strategic organisational communication as "the strategic planning of communication in order to ensure effective internal communication, thereby enabling the organisations to achieve productivity and effectiveness in the short term and adaptation and survival in the long term." Internal communication needs to be managed strategically in order for it to be as effective as possible in pursuit of the organisation's mission. Since the strategic component of strategic internal communication is so important, the key step in defining this concept is to understand what is meant by strategic.

As discussed in section 4.2, strategic communication forms the backdrop to strategic internal communication. As noted in that section, strategic communication is strategic both in terms of its goals and its functioning and the same applies to strategic internal communication. In order for internal communication to function strategically, it must possess several characteristics which are discussed next.

4.3.2.1 Purpose of strategic internal communication

In Table 4.1, Welch and Jackson's (2007:186) definition of internal corporate communication identifies the goals of internal corporate communication as promoting "commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims." While these goals would all be included in the objectives of strategic internal communication, they are simply steps or components in achieving its overall goal. Doorley and Garcia's (2007:129) definition, by noting the alignment role of employee communication, is similar to this study's understanding of strategic, which, as was discussed in Chapter 3, refers to aligning the entire organisation around its strategic intent. In section 4.2.1.2, strategic communication was identified as having the goal of advancing the organisation's mission. Thus, strategic internal communication, as part of both the strategic management and strategic communication perspectives, has the goal of aligning internal stakeholders with the organisation's strategic intent and thus advancing its mission.

As was noted in the discussion on postmodern strategic management in Chapter 3, strategic alignment requires strategic discourse across the organisation and at all levels to raise individual and collective strategic consciousness (Puth, 2002:203). Strategic consciousness allows individuals and work groups to interpret and implement the organisation's strategic intent within their own area of work. Puth (2002:209) also notes, in order to experience the benefits of strategic alignment employees must not only be able to turn their commitment into action, they must be empowered to do so. This means that employees must be allowed to make autonomous decisions in their own sphere of work and be enabled to put those decisions into action (Puth, 2002:209). Thus, rather than simply using top-down communication and control, strategic internal communication can achieve strategic alignment in the organisation organically through the promotion of strategic dialogue on the organisation's strategic intent and related strategic issues.

4.3.2.2 Position and role of strategic internal communication

In order to achieve its purpose, strategic internal communication needs to be positioned as part of the strategic management of the organisation. This is because strategic internal

communication plays a role in the strategy development process (Verwey, 2003:2) as well as in the strategy implementation process.

Strategic internal communication plays a role in strategy development, by bringing the views and issues of internal stakeholders into the process (Steyn, 2007:139). Thus, it helps the organisation's strategic intent develop in a way that is aligned with the views and values of the organisation's internal stakeholders. In order to ensure that this occurs, the lead of the internal communication function requires relatively unfettered access to the senior management of the organisation (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:145). From a postmodern perspective, this also entails developing the culture and channels of communication among all internal organisational stakeholders where they can engage in the ongoing process of strategic development.

Second, strategic internal communication plays a role in strategy implementation by communicating the organisation's strategic intent to all internal stakeholders and ensures that they understand their role in achieving the organisation's mission and vision as embodied in its strategic intent. As Moynihan and Pandey (2006:131) note, "strategy process does not communicate itself, and to be fully exploited depends on effective channels of internal communication." In order to do this properly, the internal communicator again requires access to the senior management of the organisation.

From a postmodern worldview, these two roles are not easily separated. The reason is because, from this worldview, strategic management is not seen as a linear process whereby the organisation's strategy and strategic intent is first developed and then communicated to the organisation's stakeholder. Rather, as discussed in Chapter 3, postmodern strategic management is an ongoing process of strategy formulation and implementation which is constantly adapting to the complex and changing organisational environment. Thus, strategic internal communication is best seen as an ongoing process as well (Foreman, 1997:19). In this regard, strategic internal communication is concerned with developing a culture of ongoing communication (Foreman, 1997:18). As Ridder (2004:20) argues, a successful organisation requires a "community spirit within [the] organisation [that] falls in line with its strategic direction," and strategic internal communication's role is to foster this spirit. As a result, strategic internal communication

must emphasise dialogue between people instead of simple tools and techniques of communication (Foreman, 1997:18). Through this emphasis on dialogue, a higher level of strategic consciousness is developed within the organisation leading to increased strategic alignment (Puth, 2002:182). However, for this process to be successful, the internal communicator needs to be part of the strategic management of the organisation.

4.3.2.3 Knowledge of the internal communicator

The first necessary element for an effective strategic internal communication process is that the senior internal communicator within the organisation needs to have the knowledge of how to operate strategically. Grimshaw and Mike (2008:28) argue that one of the main reasons why organisations do not have effective strategic internal communication functions is because (i) leaders do not know what such a function would look like and (ii) existing internal communication staff are not strategic enough to establish one. This position is echoed by Steyn and Puth (2000:10) who identify a failure to see the big picture and think strategically about communication and its relation to the organisation's strategic intent as major shortcomings common among communication practitioners. Therefore, for internal communication to fulfil its strategic role, the senior internal communicator must have the knowledge of how to do so.

4.3.2.4 Content focus of strategic internal communication

In order to be strategic, internal communication needs to be focused on the organisation's strategic intent. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.1), strategic intent is the heart of an organisation's strategy. It encompasses both the goal of the strategy, the direction that needs to be taken to get there and the purpose behind both (Puth 2002:188). It is the content of strategic internal communication. Puth (2002:196) identifies four key components of strategy that need to be communicated with all internal stakeholders in order to achieve alignment: the context within which the strategy develops, where the strategy is taking them, where they currently are and how they are going to get between the two. Therefore, if an organisation wants to align itself and ensure that all its resources and energies are focused in the same direction, it must have clear strategic intent.

When considering this question, the postmodern approach to strategic management makes it clear that the development of strategic intent is not a static activity but an ongoing process of dialogue and negotiation between an organisation and its stakeholders on strategic issue. As noted by Steyn and Puth (2000:63), part of the role of strategic communication is to monitor both the internal and external environments and identify key strategic issues for internal and external stakeholders from them. For strategic internal communication, this process means identifying key issues in the internal and external environment and engaging in dialogue on them on an ongoing basis (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:150). The nature of these issues, the speed at which they change and the potential effect they can have on the organisation make monitoring stakeholders and issues and inserting them into the strategic dialogue an important part of managing strategic internal communication. Thus, postmodern strategic internal communication is as much about aligning the strategic intent with the internal context of the organisation through strategic development as it is about aligning the organisation with the strategic intent through strategy implementation.

4.3.2.5 Definition

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that the concept of strategic internal communication is not adequately reflected in the definitions in Table 4.1. None of these definitions emphasise the strategic functioning of internal communication. Therefore, this study develops its own definition of strategic internal communication as follows:

“the strategic management of communication to align the organisation’s internal stakeholders with its strategic intent.”

This definition incorporates the strategic intent as the content of the communication, and strategic alignment as its purpose. The position of the internal communication is implied in the term strategic management. This definition is equally valid from both a traditional and postmodern strategic management perspective. The difference between these two perspectives becomes evident in the process of strategic internal communication with the former being guided by linear top-down strategic management and the latter centred on promotion of dialogue and negotiation. This process, through which communication is managed in order to achieve strategic alignment, is discussed next.

4.3.3 Process of strategic internal communication

The literature, concerned with internal communication broadly and strategic internal communication specifically, identified a number of normative ideals for how this concept should be implemented in organisations based on communication and strategic management theories. The following discusses the main elements of these in more detail. In addition, given the postmodern worldview adopted for this study and the argument regarding the appropriateness of postmodern strategic management in INGOs, the implications of this on the various processes are also discussed.

4.3.3.1 Strategic orientation

To be effective, the process of strategic internal communication requires a strategic orientation. This strategic orientation is more than its strategic content, purpose, position and role and includes several components. First, as part of strategic communication, strategic internal communication must be integrated with the organisation's overall communication strategy. Second, as noted by Watson Wyatt (2004), strategic internal communication must be a formal process with its own strategy to ensure that it receives the attention and commitment necessary to be effective. Finally, the goals of the internal communication strategy must be informed by the overall strategic intent of the organisation (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008). From a postmodern perspective, incorporating these three elements into the strategic internal communication process may not mean developing a static strategy, but rather involves regular and ongoing dialogue around the goals of internal communication and its relationship to the broader communication function and the strategic intent. It is by adopting this strategic orientation in the management of internal communication, that strategic internal communication is able to achieve its ultimate goal of aligning the organisation's employees with the organisation's strategic intent.

4.3.3.2 Leadership

Strategic internal communication requires leadership in order to be managed and implemented successfully. Oliver (2000:179) puts forth that any internal communication platform requires support from the top to be successful. Argenti and Forman (2002:154) identify the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as the most valuable asset in employee relations, while Meyer and De Wet (2007:30) identify him/her as the most important factor

in fostering employee commitment. Similarly, Yeomans (2006:345) notes that the communication approach of the organisation's leader is important for both the credibility and effectiveness of internal communication.

If the organisation desires employee participation and symmetrical communication, top management must show leadership in adopting this approach. For example, if the organisation wants to move from control management to enabling management, as discussed in Chapter 3, senior management needs to be committed to this process in both words and deeds. Puth (2002:210) argues that in order to be successful, an organisation's leader must live out certain values and principles including: integrity, adaptability, motivational capacity, visionary thinking, diversity learning, people developing and empowerment. Puth (2002:210) argues that a leader must be guided by these principles in order to provide the organisation with the integrity and consistency to make employees secure and develop the commitment necessary for full strategic alignment. The organisation's leadership must embrace value-based action, as discussed in Chapter 3, where the values of the organisation are not only stated, but are imbued in the actions of leaders. This means not only reflecting these values, and the values of the organisation, in their words, but also in their actions.

However, while managers and executives recognise the importance of effective internal communication, they often do little to bring it about (Tourish & Hargie, 2004:2). A study by Robson and Tourish (2005:220) found that the reason for many internal communication problems was "reluctance on the part of managers to, in practice, devote the time clearly required to build effective communication systems." In addition, the study found that the workload of senior managers decreased their ability to communicate effectively with employees, which in turn led to inefficiencies and more work. The conclusion is that effective internal communication requires the commitment of senior management in principle and in practice. In addition, internal communicators must consider the messages sent by leadership's actions and ensure that they reflect what is in their communication (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:152).

While the commitment of top management is important, it is not the only source of internal communication leadership. Line management and supervisors are an important source of

communication for employees. Thus, internal communication leadership at this level is important to establish two-way dialogues with employees, particularly in larger organisations. If line management does not reflect the values and goals of senior management, for example enabling management and value-based action, these messages will be lost. As Puth (2002:185) points out, strategic internal communication requires committed and inspiring leadership at all levels of the organisation. As a result, encouraging and facilitating communication leadership among senior and line management is an important component of managing strategic internal communication. It helps establish employee identification and concertive control.

4.3.3.3 Symmetrical communication and dialogue

The Excellence theory of Public Relations argues that public relations generally, and internal communication in particular, should be symmetrical (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006:35). Symmetrical communication involves the organisation engaging in dialogue with its publics with the goal not only of persuading those publics to its point of view but also being open to persuasion as well (Grunig & White, 1992:39). The reason symmetrical communication is important internally is because it helps build a participative organisational culture that increases employee satisfaction which in turn improves organisational performance (Grunig, 1992:532).

Despite the benefits of symmetrical communication, internal communication in organisations around the world has, for the most part, been one-way (Chen, 2008:172). As critics note (see McKie & Munshi, 2007), there are many practical issues in implementing symmetrical PR, including accusations that it is misleading in its promise of equality amid uneven power distribution. Therefore, symmetrical communication is seen as the normative ideal, if not the practical reality.

Despite the difficulties, there are means of developing channels that encourage communication across horizontal and vertical boundaries of the organisation. For example, Yeomans (2006:341) notes that internal communication practitioners can create and facilitate informal communication networks. It is these informal channels through which employees are most likely to obtain and communicate the most useful information (Jo & Shim, 2005:278). Similarly, line managers are employees' most trusted source of

information (Yeomans, 2006:341), thus, developing communication competence among managers (Verwey, 2003:2) is a key tool to developing open two-way flows of dialogue. Thus by working to develop open formal and informal communication at all levels of the organisation, strategic internal communication can foster the necessary culture and consciousness for the strategic process and strategic alignment to occur.

The postmodern worldview of strategic internal communication defines its role as encouraging ongoing dialogue on the organisation's strategic intent. As Puth (2002:209) notes, there is a need for "ongoing strategic discussion" to ensure all employees understand the organisation's strategic intent within their own context. Dialogue is also important for the development and adaptation of the strategic intent to changing contexts. Therefore it can be concluded that dialogue is an important component of strategic internal communication. As noted above, this dialogue needs to be symmetrical in order to engage with employees, increase their commitment to the organisation and ensure their identification with the organisation and alignment to its strategic intent.

4.3.3.4 Internal communication infrastructure

Internal communication infrastructure encompasses the channels and media of communication that are used internally within the organisation. These media need to be chosen, based on the goals and needs of the organisation, and not based simply on what tools are available (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:149). As noted by Asif and Sargeant (2000:306), this infrastructure includes both formal and informal channels of communication. Thus, strategic internal communication requires a holistic infrastructure, encompassing all the avenues of communication available in an organisation that serve the purpose of aligning an organisation's employees with its strategic intent. The channels of communication used impact on the ability of internal communication to achieve its goals (Quirke, 2002:169). Developing both formal and informal, local and international internal communication infrastructure is necessary to ensure effective communication with all internal stakeholders, no matter their position or location.

Each of the above elements of strategic internal communication requires consideration when determining how to manage this function within an INGO.

4.4 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FOR STRATEGIC INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN INGOs

No field of research has directly considered the application of strategic internal communication within INGOs. As Lewis (2007) identified, there is a lack of academic research on NGO management generally and internal management in particular. In addition, the nonprofit management literature generally ignores communication management (Kelly, 2000:88). Similarly, both organisational communication and public relations research rarely consider CSOs (Kelly, 2000:88; Lewis, 2005:340; for exceptions see Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006; Jenkinson *et al.*, 2005; Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009; Janse van Rensburg, 2003; Steyn & Nunes, 2001; Hewitt, 2006; Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007).

Meanwhile, development communication, defined as “all forms of communication that are used for the improvement of an individual, community or country’s material, cultural, social and other conditions” (Malan in Steyn & Nunes, 2001:30), is not concerned specifically with NGOs, but rather with the broader process of development in which multiple stakeholders are engaged - including local communities, local and national governments, international organisations as well as NGOs. As a result, no field of research has considered the role of communication within NGOs or INGOs.

While no field provides a complete theoretical background for strategic internal communication in INGOs, studies by Steyn and Nunes (2001) and Janse van Rensburg (2003) both determined that strategic communication was applicable and beneficial in the CSO context. It can thus be extrapolated that strategic internal communication can play an important role in addressing challenges and improving performance of INGOs. This is in line with the composite approach to NGO management, suggested by Lewis (2007:219), where principles from business management, like strategic internal communication, can be incorporated into NGO management given proper consideration to their unique context and needs.

In this respect, the unique characteristics of INGOs do pose certain considerations, barriers and challenges for strategic internal communication. This section discusses these, particularly as they relate to the context, form, structure, culture and workforce of INGOs.

In addition, several communication challenges for INGOs are also considered. Attention is also given to how strategic internal communication can help overcome some of these barriers. Finally, as noted by Peruzzo (2009:665), for civil society organisation, strategic communication is not just about meeting the organisation's need but about engaging with citizens and encouraging their participation in meeting their own needs and thus the goals of the organisation. Therefore, the use of a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication with its incorporation of dialogue and negotiation is appropriate and is given particular consideration in this section.

4.4.1 Context-related barriers and challenges

As was discussed in Chapter 2, INGOs operate within the development field, often in the South, and also in the international arena. The result is that, as Anheier (2005:349) notes, INGOs do not have just one environment, but multiple, complex environments over which they have very little direct control. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, an INGO's context can pose various challenges to its management. For example, the INGO context is filled with multiple stakeholders who have conflicting expectations of the organisation (Chesters, 2004:326). Similarly, a changing global context, such as a financial crisis, as well as increased competition with global civil society, can have an effect on the amount, stability and diversity of funding available to INGOs.

Strategic communication is tasked with identifying stakeholders in the external environment and ensuring that their issues are taken into consideration during the strategy development and implementation process. As a result, an effective strategic communication function assists an organisation to both understand and adapt to its external context. From an internal perspective, Puth (2002:196) highlights the necessity of communicating with all internal stakeholders not only the strategic intent, but also the context within which the strategy develops in order to achieve alignment. By ensuring that internal stakeholders are aware of the external environment and how it impacts on the organisation, strategic internal communication ensures that the workforce is able to adapt to changing contexts, understands the reasons behind decisions and remains aligned behind the organisation's strategic intent.

While strategic internal communication can help address some of the challenges posed by the INGO's external context, its application is also affected by that context. For example, the INGO's funding environment can be a barrier for strategic internal communication in INGOs because it limits the available means for implementing the internal communication process. In addition, shifts in the external environment may require shifts in the organisation's strategic intent. As the strategic intent adapts to the changing environment, strategic internal communication is needed to keep the organisation strategically aligned. Being aware of and negotiating the complex context is necessary when developing an INGO's strategic intent. Similarly, aligning an organisation with its strategic intent requires awareness of the external environment in order to adapt and understand the reasoning behind strategic decisions. As a result, organisational context is an important challenge and consideration for the management of strategic internal communication.

4.4.2 Form-related barriers and challenges

Organisational form, as well as organisational context, is part of Lewis' (2007:219) conceptual framework for NGO management discussed in Chapter 3. Organisational form refers to the type of organisation, such as a business, a government agency or a CSO. As the composite model suggests, different organisational forms can require different management principles.

Chapter 2 identified several characteristics that distinguish CSOs from other organisational forms including: non-profit distributing, voluntary in nature, limited sources of revenue and operating on the basis of shared norms and values. These characteristics can lead to particular challenges. For example, one characteristic of INGOs is the scarcity of resources available to them. This leads to fragmentation within the sector and thus the challenges of increased competition. Another characteristic leads to difficulties establishing legitimacy because of the subjectivity of the values on which INGO missions are based and thus difficulty in ensuring that one is always perceived to be acting in accordance with them. As discussed in Chapter 3, INGOs often have ambiguous missions open to multiple interpretations which can lead to ambiguity, goal displacement, a lack of cohesion and even contradiction in their strategic intent as well as frustration among employees who cannot integrate the organisation's strategic intent into their work. This is a challenge that is at the centre of strategic internal communication's purpose.

Considering the theory of strategic internal communication discussed in section 4.3, it is clear that while this function is not the solution to all these challenges, it does have a role to play, particularly in addressing the last challenge with regard to ambiguous missions. Creating strategic alignment around a cohesive strategic intent is the main purpose of strategic internal communication. However, very few authors provide much guidance on the creation of the strategic intent. The reason is because internal communication is more commonly seen as playing a role in strategy implementation and not strategy development. However, as argued by Steyn and Puth (2000), as well as illustrated in Grimshaw and Mike's strategic communication maturity model (2008:30), strategic communication and strategic internal communication have a role to play at the strategy development level.

This role is to ensure that the views, values, issues and knowledge of external and internal stakeholders are taken into consideration during the development of the strategic intent. From the postmodern perspective, this means the use of stakeholder dialogue to ensure that internal and external views are taken into account. In this manner, the organisation will more likely end up with a strategic intent that has a common understanding and acceptance across a broader group of stakeholders. By viewing internal communication as a process, INGOs can negotiate the different interpretations of their mission and their values within the organisation. This helps to improve internal legitimacy and contributes to the establishment of external legitimacy.

By helping to build a more cohesive strategic intent around the INGOs mission and strategic alignment within the organisation, strategic internal communication can lead to improved organisational performance, thus creating a more competitive organisation in the hunt for resources. Similarly, an organisation that is internally coherent will be better placed to form partnerships and alliances without losing sight of its strategic intent. Thus while strategic internal communication is not the solution to the challenges posed by organisational form, it is a component thereof.

While strategic internal communication can help address the challenges posed by the INGO's form, INGO characteristics can also impact on how strategic internal communication is managed. For example, common INGO values, such as participatory

decision-making, equality and reciprocity, influence what management styles and practices are acceptable in these organisations and thus serve not so much as a barrier but as an influencer of strategic internal communication. Therefore, it is necessary not only for the organisation's strategic intent to reflect its values, but the management of strategic internal communication must reflect them as well.

4.4.3 Structural barriers and challenges

Organisational structure was introduced in Chapter 3 where it was defined as “the formal, systematic arrangements of the operations and activities that constitute an organisation, and the interrelationships of those operations to one another” (Organ and Bateman in Rollinson, 1993:272). As was illustrated in Table 2.5, Van Tulder & Van der Zwart (2006:65-67) identified three different organisational structures common to INGOs: global organisation - federation and network. Organisations adhering to these different structures also have different management structures with control either centralised, diffused or decentralised.

As discussed in Chapter 3, INGOs face the challenge of balancing the need to be flexible and adaptable with the need to remain focused on pursuing a cohesive strategic intent. In addition, strategic internal communication requires both horizontal and vertical communication. INGO structures can make this challenge difficult. Often, structures are organised along vertical lines making cross-functional communication difficult (Niemann, 2005:166). Programme silos and isolated work units can pose barriers to establishing strategic alignment (Puth, 2002:203). This problem is further compounded by INGO funding structures which, as discussed in Chapter 3, often are tied to specific programmes. This encourages the silo mentality where each programme looks out for itself at the expense of the organisation as a whole. This type of structure can lead to bureaucracy and silos that prevent the development of a cohesive strategic intent; however, care must be taken because an overly flexible structure can lead to mission displacement.

In addition to providing a challenge for strategic internal communication to overcome, already established management structures can also dictate how strategic internal communication is managed in the first place and thus pose a barrier to its effective

implementation. For example, in Figure 4.3, Quirke (2002:211) identifies nine different options for managing strategic internal communication given structural characteristics.

Figure 4.2: Different options for managing internal communication

	Centralisation	Central coordination	Decentralisation
Monolithic	1. Dictate	2. Integrate	3. Cooperate
High-profile portfolio owner	5. Lead	5. Network	6. Negotiate
Low-profile portfolio owner	7. Frame	8. Coordinate	9. Influence

Source: Quirke (2002:211)

Quirke (2002:211) identifies how each of the nine options for managing internal communication is appropriate for organisations with a particular structure and profile. Some of these options, particularly ‘dictate’, would not be appropriate in a postmodern approach to strategic management and thus poses a barrier in INGOs with those structural features for the implementation of strategic internal communication.

Structure both guides and is guided by strategic internal communication. While strategic internal communication cannot solve problems of structure on its own, it can, as part of a broader strategic communication function, help mould an organisation so that it is focused on its strategic intent with increased awareness of its environment. As discussed in Chapter 3, structure in INGOs can be seen as flexible and arising from the interplay of various tensions inherent to this organisational form. Negotiating these tensions is thus necessary in order to align the organisational structure with the organisation’s strategic intent. For example, Mounter (2003:268) suggests the establishment of ‘non-negotiables’ within the internal communication strategy that must be adopted by all components of an organisation. Outside of these non-negotiables, local branches of the organisation can be flexible in adapting to their particular circumstances and environment. By encouraging a central focus on strategic intent, strategic internal communication provides a centre point around which an organisation can achieve flexibility without loss of focus.

A second consideration for the application of strategic internal communication is the structure of the communication function. Within an INGO, whether the function is centralised at headquarters or diffused among local offices, it can impact on the abilities of

this function to engage in effective strategic internal communications. For example, if the communication function is only established at international headquarters, aligning country offices may be difficult if they do not feel they have a vested interest in the function.

Appelbaum and Belmuth (2007:244-245) identify two models for implementing public relations (and within that internal communication) in international organisations: the global model and the multinational model. In the global model, an overall communication strategy is superimposed on all national markets with allowances for local adaptations, while in the multinational model distinctive strategies are implemented in each market. The global model is more in line with strategic internal communication because, as Anderson (quoted in Appelbaum & Belmuth, 2007:245) argues, it ensures that all the communication functions in all the different markets are interrelated.

Mounter (2003:268) provides a suggestion for creating a structure for the internal communication function in international organisations that overcomes the top down approach of the global model. The key point that he proposes is the creation of communication networks to support local management in taking ownership of the internal communication function. This helps to ensure commitment at the local level and prevents the appearance that it is simply being imposed from headquarters. In this manner, it ensures that all communication in the organisation, no matter where it is located in the world, is still centred on the organisation's strategic intent and core values, thus maintaining the organisation's reputation, while at the same time ensuring adaptation to local contexts. Consideration of these structural barriers is required in order to manage strategic internal communication in INGOs

4.4.4 Cultural barriers and challenges

Chapter 3 introduced the concept of organisational culture which comprises "the set of key norms, values, beliefs, and understandings shared by members of an organisation" (Beck & Lengnick-Hall, 2008:155). A shared culture that reflects the organisation's values encourages employee identification and boosts commitment to the organisation resulting in improved organisational performance. However, as Lewis (2007:113) notes, NGOs generally do not have a single culture but rather multiple cultures centred on different job tasks and nationalities. Managing these different cultures is a challenge for strategic internal communication.

As noted in Chapter 3, an organisation's culture can be a liability when it stands in contradiction to those actions that would improve an organisation's performance (Robbins, 2002:234), such as the consideration of strategic internal communication. A bureaucratic culture, with leaders and managers who tend to value themselves and their particular domains over the well-being of the organisation as a whole, is not conducive to strategic alignment (Puth, 2002:90). Cultural attitudes that reflect the 'this is the way we do it and we see no reason to change' sentiment lead to resistance to change (Niemann, 2005:172-174) and the implementation of new ways of looking at processes such as strategic internal communication.

In addition to the possibility of these static cultural attitudes, as discussed in Chapter 3, INGOs also often have cultures focused on action, where it is more important to be doing something than necessarily taking the time to make sure it is either effective or efficient (Lewis, 2007:113). This can be detrimental to the development of an organisation-wide learning, strategic consciousness and thus strategic alignment as well as to strategic internal communication itself. Strategic internal communication, like many other communication and marketing functions, is focused on long-term results (Burnett, 2007:16). This means that investment in strategic internal communication may not see a return, in terms of organisational performance, for a significant period of time. This lag between investment and results makes strategic internal communication less appealing in a culture focused on action. As a result, an INGO's culture can be a barrier to the establishment of effective strategic internal communication.

In order to succeed, an organisation must align its culture with its strategic intent. However, culture is difficult to change and very little insight is provided into how it can be modified through strategic internal communication. One common element among authors (Mounter, 2003:268; Watson Wyatt, 2004; Grimshaw & Mike, 2008) is the need to ensure managers act in accordance with the organisation's strategic intent. It can be hypothesised that this tactic, along with adopting internal stakeholders within the strategy development process and aligning stakeholders behind a single strategic intent, would contribute to creating an adaptive culture that reflects the organisation's strategic intent. Hewitt (2006:81) identifies a communication climate based on openness, mutual respect and trust and in which employees have a voice as well as effective line manager communication as

key to effective internal communication. By shaping these elements, strategic internal communication can play a role in building an open and adaptive culture. Culture is complex and changing and it requires involvement from all sides of an organisation, and strategic internal communication is an important component of the process.

Unfortunately, as already discussed, changing culture can be a difficult process. Therefore, the management of strategic internal communication must not only consider its role in shaping an adaptive culture through which strategic alignment can occur, but the fact that strategic intent and strategic internal communication also need to fit the existing culture. Melcrum (Mellor & Dewhurst, 2008) identifies culture as playing a key role in the success of internal communication. Similarly, Mounter (2003:268) recognises the need to adjust internal communication to nuances of different national and organisational cultures. As a result, organisational culture is a necessary consideration when determining how to manage strategic internal communication.

4.4.5 Workforce-related barriers and challenges

In Chapter 2, several characteristics of the CSO workforce and INGO workforce were identified. These characteristics include a strong commitment to the INGO mission, lower than market-level remuneration, a mixture of paid and voluntary employees and diversity in terms of nationality, culture and work tasks. The composition and characteristics of this workforce can cause a variety of management challenges. For example, there is the need to manage communication across geographical distances between headquarters and field offices, as well as across cultural differences. There are also the challenges of having both an expatriate and local staff, often with different commitment levels, salaries and lengths of service. Finally, there is the challenge of developing a workforce that has continuity as well as the necessary international outlook to carry out the organisation's strategic intent. Overall, the diversity of the INGO workforce can have negative effects on workforce productivity and overall performance of the organisation, but it can also have positive effects in terms of creativity and innovation.

The internal communication literature from the communication management perspective has largely considered employees as a single, homogenous public both within and across organisations (Welch & Jackson, 2007:181). However, as advocated by a stakeholder

perspective and Steyn and Puth's (2000:63) model for developing a communication strategy, there is a need to conduct research to understand the internal audience when managing and planning internal communication. In addition, the postmodern worldview makes clear that the diversity between and within organisations is an important consideration. For example, a study by Chen (2008) illustrated how the organisational culture within Chinese firms makes it difficult for them to implement symmetrical internal communication systems advocated by scholars in the United States. Therefore cultural considerations need to be taken into account when implementing internal communication in offices in different countries.

Mounter (2003:268) similarly advocates for research of both local and global issues to understand cultural nuances within international organisations. Internal communication is particularly important in international organisations where organisations need to take advantage of the diverse backgrounds of their employees in order to be able to effectively coordinate locally and globally (Appelbaum & Belmuth, 2007:244). Through strategic alignment and dialogue, strategic internal communication can help improve understanding and cohesion among different staff as well as continuity of vision when staff come and go. In this manner, strategic internal communication has the ability to help address the challenges posed by the characteristics of the INGO workforce. The postmodern approach to strategic internal communication further assists in addressing these challenges because it calls for ongoing dialogue among all stakeholders. This dialogue helps to ensure that the diverse voices within the organisation are heard, while at the same time helping to develop a common understanding, no matter the cultural or work related differences, of the organisation's strategic intent. Through this process, the organisation is able to benefit from increased innovation while still maintaining a cohesive workforce.

A final workforce related barrier is the lack of strategic knowledge among internal communicators in CSOs and INGOs. This shortcoming among personnel is compounded by two factors. First, the limited financial resources of an INGO can make it a challenge for them to hire and retain sufficiently trained and experienced senior communication staff to guide strategic internal communication. Second, and also related to limited resources, INGO communication personnel often have to fulfil several roles (Burnett, 2007:17), often both internal and external communication or other less-related roles. The result is that

communication personnel, through a lack of training, predetermined mindsets or simply over-taxation, can themselves pose a barrier to the implementation of strategic internal communication. Overcoming personnel barriers requires real commitment from management as well as internal communication staff in order to develop the necessary resources to pursue strategic alignment through strategic internal communication.

4.4.6 Communication challenges

Strategic internal communication has the ability to assist an INGO deal with many of the organisational and internal management challenges associated with the INGO context, form, structure, culture and workforce, but it cannot solve them alone. When it comes to communication challenges, however, strategic internal communication can take the lead in finding solutions and changing those challenges into opportunities. This is particularly the case when integrated with external communication as part of a strategic communication programme. The following section discusses how strategic internal communication helps to address a variety of communication challenges.

4.4.6.1 Organisational reputation

In one survey, 80% of nonprofit organisations placed enhancing visibility and reputation as a major challenge (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2007:255). CSOs, including INGOs, face a broad range of demands from different stakeholders particularly the government, donors, beneficiaries and the general public (Anheier, 2005:370). The result is that it is difficult for CSOs to communicate a single consistent image or brand that satisfies the diverse groups of stakeholders who have varying degrees of contact with the organisation (Lewis, 2005:253). As Laidler-Kylander and Simonin (2007:253) put it, “the multiple roles and stakeholders that global nonprofit brands must address make nonprofit brand building complex and challenging.” This challenge is further compounded by a lack of literature that considers the unique characteristics of international CSOs in relation to branding (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009:59) or reputation management.

A lack of a consistent brand or image can have negative consequences for INGOs and their reputation. Jenkinson, Sain and Bishop (2005:81) highlight the fact that a lack of a consistent brand can result in contradictory or fragmented stakeholder experiences with

the organisation. A consistent image is equally important within an organisation. As Hankinson (quoted in Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009:59) notes, a brand “unifies the workforce around a common purpose; acts as a catalyst for change; and contributes to the professionalism of the sector.” When employees are familiar with and share the values of the organisation, as evident in its brand, they enact these in their work which is critical in upholding the CSO’s reputation and in achieving its mission (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003:6).

Strategic internal communication creates a cohesive internal brand based on the organisation’s strategic intent, ensuring that when stakeholders interact with the organisation they receive a consistent experience. As Brown and Yoshioka (2003:6) note, when employees are familiar with and share the values of the organisation, as evident in its brand, they will enact these in their work which is critical in upholding the CSO’s reputation and in achieving its mission. It is the role of strategic internal communication to ensure that employees gain that familiarity. Both Quirke (2002:169-170) and Watson Wyatt (2004) note that, in order to embody the organisation’s values, and its strategic intent in their actions, employees need to go beyond awareness of those values and strategic intent to actual commitment.

It is in making that progression that one-way and two-way asymmetrical forms of communication come up short. As noted by Quirke (2002:170), to achieve commitment requires widespread participation in the process and a sense of ownership, something that can only be achieved through significant dialogue. Therefore, building commitment to an organisation’s strategic intent that leads to the desired action requires a postmodern strategic internal communication based on dialogue and negotiation.

It should be noted, however, that to create a consistent internal and external image for the organisation and maintain its reputation the internal communication function must be closely integrated with external communication functions within a programme of strategic communication. This principle is reflected by Mellor and Dewhurst (2008) who note the importance of effective partnerships with other communication-related departments in order to achieve the desired results of this function.

4.4.6.2 Realistic expectations

INGOs are in the ironic situation of being the sort of organisation from whom great results are expected while, at the same time, undertaking the sort of work where results are very difficult to identify and quantify. Thus, INGOs face the dual challenge of finding ways of communicating successes while creating realistic expectations among their stakeholders.

INGOs face high expectations in a variety of areas. As organisations, the public generally expects them to rely largely on volunteers or hard-working professionals who require only minimum compensation because of their unwavering commitment to a particular cause (Carson, 2002:430). Their resources are expected to go primarily to beneficiaries and programmes with very little for overhead and administration costs (Carson, 2002:431). As Lewis (2005:253) notes, “the public seems to expect that such organizations will and should accomplish their missions without spending much on themselves.” At the same time, INGOs are held to a higher ethical standard than government or business (Mustaghis-ur-Rahman, 2007:226) and a scandal in one INGO, generally tarnishes the reputations of all (Carson, 2002:431). Meanwhile, the previous idealised view of INGOs as the key to development is now giving way to a view of INGOs as failures (Lewis 2007:228). Thus, there is a greater need to manage public expectations to ensure ongoing support and the long-term survival of INGOs. Thus this process poses an ongoing communication challenge for these organisations.

The difficulty INGOs often have in both creating realistic expectations and communicating success with their stakeholders can lead to frustration for their internal stakeholders if their expectations for the organisation are not met, or if they feel they are not meeting the expectations of the organisation or of the broader public. Strategic internal communication can address this challenge by managing the expectations internal stakeholders have of the organisation. As Puth (2002:196) highlights, this function must communicate the context within which the strategy develops, where the strategy is taking them, where they are currently and how they are going to get between the two. By communicating these four elements of the organisation’s strategic intent, strategic internal communication ensures that employees understand the reasoning behind the strategy, the current position of the organisation, its long term goals and the plan for reaching them. Also, by actually contributing to the development of that strategy through dialogue, employees’ identification

with the strategy increases. In this manner, employees develop realistic expectations for the organisation and are better able to evaluate its success and understand any setbacks.

In addition, strategic internal communication helps address this challenge by communicating the organisation's expectations of its internal stakeholders. As highlighted by Watson Wyatt (2004), a key component of strategic internal communication is to link employees' particular areas of work with the organisation's strategic intent. This is supported by Puth (2002:196) who notes that it is important to "translate the issues to make sense in your [employees'] own context". As a result of this process, internal stakeholders understand how they fit into larger strategic picture and are thus better able to prioritise their work in line with the expectations the organisation has of them.

4.4.6.3 Information and knowledge management

Lewis and Madon (2004:117) identify three types of information that NGOs require to operate effectively: information about their work on the ground, information about their context and information about inputs and outputs to ensure the efficient use of resources. However, the information in NGOs is often fragmented and rarely formalised, (Hume & Hume, 2008:130) and the nature of information makes it difficult in the current climate of change and complexity for NGOs to determine what information is actually useful and how it should be used (Lewis, 2007:213). The problem is compounded in many INGOs by the high turnover of volunteers and employees (Hume & Hume, 2008:130), an organisational culture that restricts information flow, a geographically scattered and compartmentalised workforce and the role of power between an INGO and its stakeholders that results in a rejection of information that does not 'fit' their worldview (Lewis, 2007:214). Therefore, managing information and knowledge in INGOs is challenging.

Fundamentally, managing information and knowledge requires "a system of formal and informal communication within an organization" (Lewis & Madon, 2004:118). Strategic management is concerned with the development of processes needed to support organisational goals (Hume & Hume, 2008:129). While strategic internal communication is not focused on the day-to-day management of information, it plays a role in ensuring that the organisation, its culture and its structure can address the challenges of this process.

Verwey *et al.*'s communication triad at work (Figure 5.6) notes the importance of horizontal and vertical communication. In particular, they note the contribution of horizontal communication to both innovation and the development of employees' abilities to achieve their organisational goals. Therefore, horizontal communication is important for achieving an organisation's strategic intent. Strategic internal communication helps build structures for horizontal communication by promoting dialogue and understanding throughout the INGO. As each programme gains a better understanding of the strategic intent, it is better placed to see how the information it holds may be useful to other parts of the organisation. In this manner, strategic internal communication helps to build the underlying processes needed for managing and sharing knowledge and information.

The various challenges discussed have the potential to be mitigated through strategic internal communication. By encouraging strategic dialogue throughout the organisation, strategic internal communication has the potential to build a consistent vision and understanding of the organisation that helps to develop realistic expectations and increase the sharing of information throughout the organisation. In this manner, strategic internal communication can help improve the performance of an organisation.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Strategic internal communication is conceptualised in this study from the communication management approach as well as the stakeholder perspective because it is concerned with the managed use of communication and views the organisation as both affected by and affecting multiple stakeholder groups. More specifically, strategic internal communication is a subset of strategic communication which means that it has a role to play at the highest levels of an organisation and is focused on strategic alignment.

Strategic internal communication is as important for the performance of an INGO as for any other organisation. INGOs face several communication challenges which an effective strategic internal communication function can help address. At the same time, there are several barriers to the establishment of such a function that can impede progress in this regard. Overall, strategic internal communication offers the opportunity to INGOs to address many of the challenges they face.