Author(s): Mykkänen, Markus

Title: Communication Professionals and Organisational Decision-Making : A Finnish Study of Practitioner Roles

Year: 2016

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Communication Professionals and Organisational Decision-Making

A Finnish Study of Practitioner Roles

Markus MYKKÄNEN

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Traditionally, the debate on communication value and the contribution of communication professionals to organisational decision-making has been linked to diverging roles (managers, technicians). This chapter introduces an alternative view, based on an exploratory, qualitative study of communication professionals in Finland. It focuses on the diverse ways in which these professionals contribute to organisational decision-making. The results show a rich, constantly developing picture of communication practices, which challenges the traditional dichotomy of manager and technician roles.

Introduction

The strategic importance of communication professionals and their participation in the dominant coalition of organisations has been a much discussed theme since the early 1990s.

Decision-making, organising and carrying out activities within and between organisations are becoming increasingly dependent on larger and larger amounts of information (Van Lier, 2013). Communication is used as the basis of decision-making (March, 1988), but has also challenged those processes (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001). Organisations, as Weick (1979) states, do not just interact with their environments, but they enact them as well. An organisation can be seen as a system that adapts and sustains itself by reducing the uncertainty that it faces on a daily basis.

Communication professionals enact the organisational environment through interaction and meaning creation. Their daily work can be seen as organising, which helps reduce the uncertainty that organisational

members face when they are making decisions that enable the organisation to survive and succeed.

Decision-making in organisations

In modern organisations, decision-making is greatly influenced by the information environment (Luhmann, 2005), the flow of information (Cheney *et al.,* 2004), as well as employees and stakeholders (Michel, 2007). This contrasts with traditional top-down organisational hierarchies, where senior management made decisions and employees were expected to carry them out. Nowadays, employees and stakeholders, such as business partners, possess a broad range of skills and bring new knowledge and ideas to the decision-making table (White & Mazur, 1995). This input potentially improves the quality of the information available (Van Knippenberg *et al.,* 2004).

An essential part of organisational decision-making concerns forming the strategy and future directions of the organisation. Thus, strategic decision-making can be defined as part of the organisational communication process (Brunson, 1982), as a core managerial process (Cooren *et al.*, 2006), as part of organisational discourse and communication (Hendry, 2000) or as actions and social representations (Larouche, 1995). Since the 1980s, scholars like Dozier (1986; 1992), Baskin & Aronoff (1988) and Grunig *et al.* (2002) argue that communication professionals should participate in a more strategic manner in organisational decision-making, instead of merely implementing the decisions made. Thus, communication experts are expected to add communicative value to decision-making processes. Cornelissen (2008) argues that inviting communication professionals at the decision-making table enables inclusion of stakeholder views into the definition of organisational strategies and actions.

Roles of communication professionals

Broom and Smith (1979) were the first to conceptualize the generic roles for public relations practitioners: expert prescribers, communication facilitators, problem solving process facilitators, and communication technicians. Broom and Dozier (1986) identify two major roles, manager and technician. Grunig (2006) argues that the manager role is more influential than the role of the technician. DeSanto and Moss (2005) model the manager role as a policy advisor, a strategic counsellor, a monitor, an evaluator and an issues management expert. Verčič *et al.* (2001) define four roles: managerial, operational, reflective and educational. Nothhaft (2010) suggests three roles: the missionary, the agent of common sense and the buck's stop. These three roles are largely advisory.

In the European context, Tench *et al.* (2009) suggest the role of communication professionals to be more one of "boundary spanning", binding together the interests of the organisation and its stakeholders. Recently, Swerling *et al.* (2014) argue that during the last decade scholars have advocated a role of communication professionals acting as strategic counsellors, and, following James E. Grunig (2006), emphasise their position as bridges between the top management of the organisation and its stakeholders. Indeed, James E. Grunig (2006) argues that the communication function in organisations has been over-institutionalised as a protective function, whereas a bridging function would be more productive. Bridging creates relations between the organisation and its stakeholders and also helps in managing the behaviour of organisations. Grunig (2006) argues that bridging includes communication activities related to strategic decision-making, by bringing focused and coordinated processes to the decision-making table that help understand the interests of key audiences. Larissa A. Grunig (1992) considers the participation of communication professionals in strategic decision-making processes important; however, the effectiveness depends on the reporting line of professionals in the organisational hierarchy.

This study focuses the discussion on the roles of communication professionals and their contribution to organisational decision-making. In the next section, literature in the field is analysed to clarify existing views on the topic. Next, the methodology of this interview study is described. Finally, the findings are reported and conclusions drawn.

Contribution of communication professionals to decision-making

The European Communication Monitor survey (Zerfass *et al.,* 2014) has frequently shown that the influence of communication professionals on decision-making is greater than their actual participation in those processes. Moreover, there are various ways to contribute to decision-making. More understanding is needed about how the roles of communication professionals affect organisational decision-making and what they contribute to top-level strategies (Steyn & Niemann, 2010).

Zerfass and Franke (2013) argue that communication professionals should not only facilitate operational processes and inform internal and external stakeholders about strategic decisions, but they also need to ensure that communicative implications are integrated as input into the decision-making process. This presents new challenges and requires that the focus moves "from leading communication processes to developing the organisation's communication skills on all levels" (Hamrefors, 2009: 19), which includes decision-making processes.

Swerling *et al.* (2014) point out that organisational communication is undergoing a major transformation in which transparency and dialogue with stakeholders play key roles. In addition, as Steyn (2007) argues, communication professionals also facilitate the successful implementation of strategic decisions. Organisations need to have a voice, and communication professionals do address that need (Taylor *et al.* 1996). Those individuals who act as speakers, in effect interpret decisions (Kieser, 1998) before they are ready to be transformed into action. The crucial point is whether the organisation's members accept the speaker's voice as legitimately representing the organisation.

Communication professionals primarily contribute to decision-making by enabling dialogues between the organisation and its employees (Saini & Plowman, 2008) and other stakeholders (Schwarzkopf, 2006). Through such dialogues, as Murray and White (2004) note, added value is brought to organisational decision-making and hence to organisational strategies. The main role of communication professionals is to enable the top management to make better quality decisions and improve its communication capabilities. Nevertheless, as Kanihan *et al.* (2013) argue, many communication professionals are not positioned in the organisation in a way that would allow them to serve this purpose effectively. When they are enabled to function at this level, the conditions are created for ethical and high-level communication practices both inside and outside the organisation.

Practitioner roles and decision-making processes

In the last decade, the discussion on communication and decision-making focused on the role of communication professionals (J. E. Grunig, 2006; Swerling *et al.*, 2014; Brønn, 2014). More recently, the discussion has been built around quantitative research (e.g. Swerling *et al.,* 2014; Brønn, 2014; Kanihan *et al.*, 2013), along with some qualitative research (e.g. Smith & Place, 2013; Nothhaft, 2010; Huebner *et al.,* 2008). The strategic contribution of communication professionals to organisations continues to be a much discussed theme in the field, as they are not yet universally acknowledged to be significant partners for organisational success (Brønn, 2014), and practical communication activities, or as Smith and Place (2013: 168) explain, the "inferior role of technician" still overshadows the field.

Brønn (2014) finds, in a Norwegian study, that even where communication professionals are considered to influence the economic success of the organisation, they still may not be structurally invited to the decision-making table. Her survey results showed that communication professionals are generally invited to make suggestions regarding alternative ways of making decisions, but they are not actually involved

in selecting the final decision (Brønn, 2014). Indeed, the author argues that their contribution to decision-making is limited in many organisations. Where they are involved in the decision-making processes from the early stages, communication professionals also have more influence in discussions about communicative actions than strategic planning. Brønn (2014) concludes that even where the professionals feel their role to be at the strategic level, others in the organisation still see them as "message deliverers".

Edwards (2009) identifies communication professionals as trusted senior advisors, who create social capital through their formal and informal networks. Kanihan *et al.* (2013) state that where communication experts are included in the dominant coalition, they have a possibility go beyond a strategic role and incorporate more ethical and symmetrical communication practices into their work, using their informal dimension of power. Smith and Place (2013: 180) report that communication professionals use their expertise or possible leadership position by giving advice or voicing concerns, as well as serve as "key information disseminators" for the organisation.

Nevertheless, as Diga and Kelleher (2009) state, communication professionals often just carry out the mechanics of generating information products and implement decisions made by others. According to Neill and Drumwright (2012), scholars have long suggested communication professionals to serve organisations as their conscience and enact the role of an ethical counsellor. Dozier and Broom (2006: 146) note the role of managers and technicians "may need constant reinvention through intensive observation of what communicators do in their day-to-day work".

Method

This exploratory study aims to contribute to understanding how communication professionals in Finland perceive their role in organisational decision-making processes and how they contribute communicative value to these processes. The qualitative method, of conducting expert semi-structured interviews, was chosen because a rich description of the phenomena was sought.

Research question

The research question (RQ) is: *How do communication professionals contribute to organisational decision-making in Finland?* The aim is to find out how practitioners perceive their role in decision-making and contribute to organisational decision-making processes.

Sampling and demographics

The data for this study was collected by interviewing communication professionals (N=12) working in a variety of organisations in Finland. The interviews were conducted from December 2013 to May 2014.

Purposive sampling was applied; participation was based on availability and willingness. Invitations to participate in the research study were emailed to 19 communication professionals whose organisations each had a distinctive communication function and employed at least two communication professionals. The invitees comprised 13 communication directors or managers (of whom 9 agreed to participate) and 6 press officers (of whom 3 agreed to participate). At the beginning of the interviews, all participants were asked to fill in a background information form and to describe their position as a communication professional.

The gender ratio (Female:Male) of the interviewees was 8:4. Their average work experience in the field of organisational communication was 13.8 years, and ranged from 2.5 years to 33 years. The communication departments in which the interviewees worked ranged in size from two to 14 employees, while their organisations varied widely in employees, from just 40 to 27,000. The organisations were mainly located in the central and southern parts of the country, and their type of operations varied widely from industrial companies to municipalities. Only one interviewee per organisation was selected for an interview.

In accordance with the ethical guidelines of Finnish Research Council, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to all interviewees. An unaffiliated communication professional and an experienced scholar reviewed the interview guidelines.

Interviews and analysis

The author conducted and recorded the semi-structured interviews, which lasted from 30 to 70 minutes. The author transcribed the interviews for further analysis. The level of transcription was basic, i.e. the tone of voice, pauses and fillers were omitted. After the transcription the interview texts were treated to qualitative content analysis using *Atlas.ti*. The content was analysed based on the order of the questions in the interviews, and quotations were coded according to the questions. The codes were divided into three main categories: professional roles, tasks and themes. Each quotation inside a category was also given a more descriptive title based on the content. All the codes within each category were then printed separately and the quotations analysed. This chapter

focuses only on the data pertaining to the roles of the interviewees in organisational decision-making.

Every role referenced by the interviewees was translated, as close as possible to the interviewees' own phrasing. The data were analysed in a data-extraction table with one row for each fragment and columns for the quantities of codes, their descriptions and, finally, the original quotations. The descriptions were then compared with those given in dictionaries and scientific works of reference, and the roles grouped into clusters. Finally, all the roles were critically analysed and merged into larger groups. This process yielded six overall roles.

Findings

In this section, the main results derived from the interviews are presented. First, information on the interviewees' positions in decision-making processes is presented.

Involvement in decision-making processes

All 12 interviewees reported that a communication professional is invited to board meetings; in three organisations this concerned communication together with marketing. Six interviewees stated that their organisation has multiple boards and that communication professionals are invited to all of them. One interviewee, however, reported that communication professionals were invited to the boards at all levels except the top management board.

Four interviewees reported that the communication professional had advisory power on the board, including the right to speak and attend, while eight participants also reported having voting power, which indicates full membership of the board. The inquiry about invitations to board meetings also revealed that when an organisation has different organisational sub boards communication professionals may have varying power and diverging privileges on each of them. Organisations may invite any one of their communication professionals to different sub-boards, or each individual may have a distinctly separate role in the sub-boards. This indicates that in practice communication professionals may have multiple roles in organisational decision-making.

Roles in contributing to organisational decision-making

One question in the semi-structured interview was aimed at eliciting professionals' perceptions of their role in organisational decision-making processes. The interviewees were asked to talk freely and describe their role in as much detail as possible. In fact, they did not mention just one role but gave a more complex picture of how they took this responsibility in practice.

Table 1. Roles of Communication Professionals in Organisational Decision-making

	Role	References (n)	Definition
1	Strategic partner	4	Attending board meetings to strategically help decision makers by providing stakeholder-related information, influencing the board in a favourable direction, and participating in decision-making with voting power.
2	Strategic liaison	4	Influencing decision-makers by emphasising the strategic role of communication, and managing interaction between the organisation and stakeholders about ongoing or future decision-making processes.
3	Facilitator	7	Scanning the organisational environment for issues as input for decision-making, planning and preparing ongoing and impending future decision-making processes and communication processes between decision-makers and stakeholders.
4	Expert	8	Supporting decision-makers by endorsing their communication, challenging their communicative views during the decision-making process, and participating on the board with advisory power.
5	Implementer	8	Managing the communication function, preparing and implementing communication plans concerning decision-making, supporting the execution of decisions within and outside the organisation, but without participation in the decision-making process itself.
6	Disseminator	7	Disseminating and explaining decisions made and the effects aimed at, both internally and externally.
	Overall	38	

In total, roles in decision-making were referenced 38 times, identified and coded in the interview transcripts. Initially, this resulted in 18 roles, which were critically analysed for overlaps. The roles that most resembled each other were grouped together, resulting in six final roles, each with its own definition. To ensure that the summarised definitions were clear and well translated, the keywords used were checked in dictionaries and scientific works of reference. Finally, the six roles were

labelled as categories, emphasising keywords often used by the interviewees. Although this was done with care, the names given to the roles should be read together with their definitions (see Table 1).

In the following sections, these roles are presented along with definitions provided by the interviewees. Generally, the interviewees revealed that the idea of discussing the contribution to organisational decision-making in detail was a novel experience. They acknowledged that they were expected to contribute to organisational decision-making, but when asked about their precise roles or position in the decision-making process, not all the interviewees were prepared to point this out and explain how they contributed to decision-making in practice.

Strategic partner

The role of Strategic partner refers to attending board meetings to help decision-makers by providing strategic information that may influence the board in a favourable direction regarding a particular decision, and to participate in the decision-making process by exercising the power to vote. Before grouping and merging the data, this role consisted of the following dimensions: partnering the board (1 mention), lobbying (1) and actively making decisions (2). Being a Strategic partner was described as being included in the core group (the board) where the most important decisions in organisation are made. The board perceived partnering as a strategic task that gives the communication professional access to important information. Lobbying was described as efforts to influence current decisions and move decision-makers in a favourable direction. Active decision-making was described as being part of the core group on the board with equal privileges regarding influence, access to information and decision-making together with the other board members.

Strategic liaison

A Strategic liaison is responsible to decision-makers for the strategic role of communication, organising planned communicative actions, and enabling interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders about ongoing or future decision-making processes. This role combined the dimensions of organising (2), exerting a strategic influence (1) and enabling decision-making (1). Interviewees described 'organising' as related to arranging possibilities for stakeholders to influence the organisational decision-making, by those who are to be affected by the organisation's actions. Communication departments were also described as organising and ensuring that certain communicative activities are planned for the future and are executed on schedule or cancelled if not needed. Strategic influence was related to responsibility for emphasising the strategic aspects and roles of communication, as well as reminding the

board and decision-makers about the importance of communicating decisions. Enabling referred to enabling interaction between the decision-makers and affected stakeholders. Enabling was described as making sure that stakeholders' interests are heard during the process and stakeholders are informed about the outcomes of the decision-making process.

Facilitator

Acting as a Facilitator refers to the responsibility for scanning the organisational environment for issues influencing decision-making processes, and the planning and preparing of ongoing and impending future decision-making processes and communication processes between the decision-makers and stakeholders. The role of the Facilitator comprised three dimensions: preparing (5), planning (1) and monitoring (1). Preparing referred to ongoing decisions and decision-making processes. Communication practitioners participate in planning by ensuring that the communication process is included in the decision-making process, either from the onset or later on. Professionals also prepare reports on the views of stakeholders and employee feedback, and note ideas in the process. Planning pertains to different aspects of organisational communication that are linked to decision-making, but lack a pre-formulated communication plan. Monitoring was described as scanning the organisational environment to identify critical discussion of the organisation, issues that have the potential to become crises, and other issues that need attention in decision-making.

Expert

An Expert was seen as responsible for supporting the organisation's decision-makers by endorsing their communication, challenging their views on communication during the decision-making process, and participating in the board with advisory power. The role of Expert consisted of four dimensions: participating (3), adding expertise (2), commentating (2) and being a sparring partner (1).

Participating included the invitation to attend board meetings with the right to discuss and give one's opinion on different matters, although without the right to vote. The communication professional was expected to attend to learn about the matters being prepared, and answer to questions if board members have something to ask. Adding expertise, which was linked to participation, refers to the communication professional as an expert who can support the board's communication. Commentating was referenced in relation to being active during the decision-making process and commenting on the decisions under discussion during board meetings. The last dimension, acting as a sparring partner, was referenced in the context of challenging the views

concerning communication of the decision makers, sparring with the board and taking a stand.

Implementer

The role of Implementer refers to having responsibility for managing the communication function, preparing and implementing communication-related plans about the organisation's decision-making, but not having a voice in it.

This role comprised three dimensions: implementing decisions (4), having no role in decision-making (3) and acting as a manager of communications (1). The interviewees saw this role as including responsibility for the implementation of decisions made, while not being included in the decision-making process. The implementer was described as being responsible for implementing and executing decisions made, through the use of communicative actions. The dimension of having no role was described as being excluded from the decision-making process while nevertheless being responsible for implementing decisions. The dimension of acting as a manager was described as being responsible for managing the group of communication professionals in executing an agreed communication plan concerning decisions and the decision-making process.

Disseminator

The role of Disseminator refers to being responsible for more technical matters of decision-related communication such as messaging and disseminating information on decisions made and their intended effects internally and externally. This role includes the dimensions of informing (5), communicating (1) and messaging (1). All these dimensions were seen as including the dissemination of information about decision(s) both in the internal and external environment of the organisation.

Comparing the roles of interviewees

Comparing the six roles against the data collected from the interviewees reveals that communication professionals usually enact several roles in organisational decision-making processes. The communication professionals in the sample were found to support the organisation's decision-making processes by acting in up to four different roles (see Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency and Dominance of Organisational Decision-making Roles by interviewees in the case study

Dominant role(s) per respondent	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6
Strategic liaison		2	1		1	1
Expert/Disseminator				2		2
Implementer				1	2	
Facilitator/ Implementer			1		1	
Strategic liaison/ Facilitator		1	1			
Strategic partner/ Implementer	1				1	
Strategic partner/ Disseminator	1					1
Strategic partner	2		1			
Facilitator			2		1	1
Implementer					1	
Expert				3		2
Expert/Implementer		1	1	2	2	
Total (38)	4	4	7	8	8	7

Notes: Roles: R1=Strategic partner, R2=Strategic liaison, R3=Facilitator, R4=Expert, R5=Implementer, R6=Disseminator.

In Table 2 the most frequently referenced roles by any single interviewee are highlighted in grey. This illustrates that a communication professional contributes to decision-making in different ways within his or her organisation. According to the interviews, communication professionals are expected to contribute to decision-making in different phases of the process, e.g. providing input for as well as disseminating information on the decisions made. No prevailing combination of roles contributing to decision-making could be identified, as each interviewee's role or combination of roles in relation to decision-making was unique.

Discussion and conclusion

The initial results of this research show the diversity of the roles occupied by communication professionals in decision-making in Finnish organisations. Each interviewee described a different combination of roles by which they contributes to the Organisation's decision-making process. The descriptions provided by the practitioners were condensed into six roles: Strategic partner, Strategic liaison, Facilitator, Expert, Implementer and Disseminator.

The *Strategic partner* holds very much the same position and has the same privileges as other board members. In this role, practitioners contribute to the decision-making process by providing important information, influencing the direction of decisions, and finally helping to make the decision by using their voting power. The *Strategic liaison* role, performed together with the board, involves organising plans for communication and interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders, while at the same time emphasising the strategic role of communication.

The role of *Facilitator* is more neutral, and is motivated by the communication process. This role includes the technical aspects involved in arranging the different communication processes needed throughout the decision-making process. The Expert is seen as having advisory power in the decision-making process and the privilege of challenging the communicative views of top decision makers. The *Expert* often represents the communication function in meetings while the Expert's participation in board meetings is a marker of the status of communication.

The *Implementer* is responsible for the implementation of decisions, by using, and possibly managing, communicative actions. Exclusion from the decision-making process, however, means that the Implementer concentrates on the outcomes of decisions and the later stages of their implementation.

The role of *Disseminator* mostly resembles the role of the technician, which has been established in earlier literature. This role involves the traditional dissemination of information to internal and external stakeholders, and is more concerned with the technical aspects of communication.

The participants in this study did not see themselves in their daily work as part of a decision-making system. However, their contribution to organisational decision-making included multiple roles performed simultaneously. Moreover, the interviewees considered communication to have some power in organisational decision-making. Although not all of the interviewees were personally invited to join the board, many interviewees reported that the communication department or group had advisory or voting power during board meetings. This supports Van Ruler and de Lange (2003), who found that PR departments have some power to influence organisational decision-making.

An analysis of these roles reveals that the way in which communication professionals contribute to decision-making varies according to the different phases of decision-making. The interviewees reported playing different roles throughout the decision-making process and in relation to different situations. This was regardless of their position in the organisation and whether or not they were invited to board

meetings. The results also reveal that in the context of organisational decision-making the Finnish communication professionals interviewed do not follow previous role typologies, such as the dichotomy between technician and manager identified by Broom and Dozier (1986). The interviewees were found to combine different roles, thereby yielding a more complex picture than presented in the literature.

Two of the roles, Strategic partner and Strategic liaison, were focused on own voting power or influencing board decisions. Two roles, Strategic liaison and Facilitator, underline the bridging of interests and views. Two roles, Facilitator and Expert, contribute to the quality of the decision but leave the responsibility of choosing to others. Two roles do not address the decision-making process but instead the execution, Implementer, or dissemination, Disseminator, of the decisions made.

This range of roles shows a rich texture of practice, and perhaps combining roles is natural as the applicability of a role may also relate to the immediate situation or issue at hand. In an ambiguous situation, for example, the bridging of contrasting views may be needed, whereas in a clear situation bringing influence to bear might be a more likely choice of role. Practitioners may have a preference for certain roles, but are also able to develop the competence required to occupy new roles as the need arises. In this sense, the outcomes of this study show communication as a developing, rather than as a static practice.

This exploratory study shows that not all the roles of communication professionals identified relate to decision-making power in the sense of influencing the choice of alternatives. Some roles focus on bridging organisational and stakeholder views, while other roles focus on the choice and execution of communicative actions. The latter supports the findings of Brønn (2014) that the contribution of communication continues to be centred more on the communicative aspects of decisions than on the appraisal of alternative choices for the decision. However, the findings also indicate that Finnish professionals feel that they contribute strongly to the decision-making process through their performance of multiple roles, including taking care of the operational side of decision-making both during the process and after the decision has been made. The latter supports the line of thinking expounded by Zerfass and Franke (2013) who state that involvement of professionals ensures the inclusion of communicative implications in decision-making. This also supports the findings of Verčič *et al.* (2001) about reflective and educational dimensions of the roles of communication professionals. Either way, the roles this study found add to the status of communication professionals, as their contribution to decision-making is distinctly more than being lowly message deliverers.

This study is not by any means an in-depth examination of organisational decision-making and the roles of public relations professionals in the Finnish context. While the study does contribute some interesting findings on the daily work of communication professionals in organisational decision-making, the smallness of the sample suggests further larger sample research to verify the results. A further limitation of the study is that the interviews were translated from Finnish to English.

Following the recommendation of Steyn and Niemann (2010) to explore the relation between communication and decision-making, this study increases understanding of the diverse ways in which communication professionals contribute to organisational decision-making. This paper also supports the notion of Dozier and Broom (2006) that roles are constantly reinvented through observation of one's day-to-day work. Future research could further clarify the implications for practice and the education of public relations and organisational communication.

To complement the contribution of communication professionals to organisational decision-making, it would be important to study their roles further on a quantitative basis and to focus more on examining the tasks of professionals during the actual decision-making process. This study indicates that the contribution of communication professionals, the communicative value they add to organisational decision-making, can take a variety of forms, and that communication professionals are actively in the process of further developing their contribution to organisational decision-making processes.

References

Baskin, O. & Aronoff, C., *Public relations: the profession and the practice* (2nd ed.), Dubuque, IA, W. C. Brown, 1988.

Brønn, P. S., "How others see us: leaders' perceptions of communication and communication managers", in *Journal of Communication Management,* 18 (1), 2014, pp. 58-79.

Broom, G. M. & Smith, G. D. "Testing the practitioner's impact on clients", in *Public Relations Review*, 5(3), 1979, pp. 47-59.

Broom, G. M. & Dozier, D. M. "Advancement for public relations role models", in *Public Relations Review*, 12(1), 1986, pp. 37-56.

Brunsson, N., "The irrationality of action and action rationality: decisions, ideologies and organizational actions", in *Journal of Management Studies,* 19 (1), 1982, pp. 29-44.

Cheney, G., Christensen, L., Zorn, T. & Ganesh, S., *Organizational communication in an age of globalization: Issues, reflections, practices,* Prospect Heights, IL, Waveland Press, 2004.

Cooren, F., Taylor, J. R. & Van Every, E. J., *Communicating as Organizing: Empirical and Theoretical Explorations in the Dynamic of Text and Conversation,* Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.

Cornelissen, J., *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice,* Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, 2008.

Desanto, B. & Moss, D., "Rediscovering What PR Managers Do: Rethinking the Measurement of Managerial Behaviour in the Public Relations Context", in *Journal of Communication Management,* 9 (2), 2005, pp. 179-196.

Diga, M. & Kelleher, T., "Social Media Use, Perceptions of Decision-Making Power, and Public Relations Roles", in *Public Relations Review,* 35 (4), 2009, pp. 440-442.

Dozier, D. M., *The Environmental Scanning Function of Public Relations Practitioners and Participation in Management Decision Making,* Paper presented at the meeting of the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Norman, OK, 1986.

Dozier, D. M., "The Organizational Roles of Communications and Public Relations Practitioners", in J. E. Grunig (ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management,* Hillsdale, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992, pp. 327-355.

Dozier, D. M., & Broom, G.M., "The centrality of practitioner roles to public relations theory", in C. H. Botan & V. Hazleton (eds.), *Public Relations Theory II,* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2006, pp. 137-170.

Edwards, L., "Symbolic Power and Public Relations Practice: Locating Individual Practitioners in Their Social Context", in *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21 (3), 2009, pp. 251-272.

Eisenberg, E. & Goodall, H., *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint* (3rd ed.), Boston, MA, St. Martin's Press, 2001.

Grunig, L. A., "Power in the Public Relations Department", in J. E. Grunig (ed.), Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management, Hillsdale, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992, pp. 483-500.

Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M., *Excellent public relations and effective organizations: A study of communication management in three countries,* Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.

Grunig, J. E., "Furnishing the Edifice: Ongoing Research on Public Relations as a Strategic Management Function", in *Journal of Public Relations Research,* 18 (2), 2006, pp. 151-176.

Hendry, J., "Strategic decision making, discourse, and strategy as social practice", *Journal of Management Studies,* 37 (7), 2000, pp. 955-977.

Hamrefors, S., *The Information Officer's Role in Leadership,* Final Report in the Research Project "Business Effective Communication", Stockholm, The Swedish PR Association, 2009.

Huebner, H., Varey, R. & Wood, L., "The Significance of Communicating in Enacting Decisions", in *Journal of Communication Management,* 12 (3), 2008, pp. 204-223.

Kanihan, S., Hansen, K., Blair, S., Shore, M. & Myers, J., "Communication Managers in the Dominant Coalition: Power Attributes and Communication Practices", in *Journal of Communication Management,* 17 (2), 2013, pp. 140-156.

Kieser, A., "Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Organisation beim Reden. Organisieren als Kommunizieren", in *Industrielle Beziehungen,* 5 (1), 1998, pp. 45-74.

Laroche, H., "From decision to action in organizations: Decision-making as a social representation", in *Organization Science,* 6 (1), 1995, pp. 62-75.

Luhmann, N., "The Paradox of Decision Making", in D. Seidl & K. Becker (eds.), Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies, Malmö, Copenhagen Business School Press, 2005.

March, J., *Decisions and Organizations,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.

Michel, L., "Understanding Decision Making in Organizations to Focus Its Practices Where It Matters", in *Measuring Business Excellence,* 11 (1), 2007, pp. 33-45.

Murray, K. & White, J., *CEO Views on Reputation Management. A Report on the Value of Public Relations, as Perceived by Organizational Leaders,* London, Chime Communications, 2004.

Neill, M. & Drumwright, M., "PR Professionals as Organizational Conscience". In *Journal of Mass Media Ethics,* 27 (4), 2012, pp. 220-234.

Nothhaft, H., "Communication Management as a Second-Order Management Function: Roles and Functions of the Communication Executive – Results from a Shadowing Study", in *Journal of Communication Management,* 14 (2), 2010, pp. 127-140.

Saini, S. & Plowman, K., "Effective Communications in Growing Pre-IPO Start-Ups", in *Journal of Promotion Management,* 13 (3), 2008, pp. 203-232.

Schwarzkopf, D.L., "Stakeholder Perspectives and Business Risk Perception", in *Journal of Business Ethics,* 64 (4), 2006, pp. 327-342.

Smith, B. G. & Place, K. R., "Integrating Power? Evaluating Public Relations Influence in an Integrated Communication Structure", in *Journal of Public Relations Research,* 25 (2), 2013, pp. 168-187.

Steyn, B., "Contribution of Public Relations to Organizational Strategy Formulation", in E. L. Toth (ed.), *The Future of Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management: Challenges for the Next Generation,* Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007, pp. 158-166.

Steyn, B., & Niemann, L., "Enterprise Strategy: A Concept That Explicates Corporate Communication's Strategic Contribution at the Macro-organizational Level", in *Journal of Communication Management,* 14 (2), 2010, pp. 106-126.

Swerling, J., Thorson, K. & Zerfass, A., "The Role and Status of Communication Practice in the USA and Europe", *Journal of Communication Management,* 18 (1), 2014, pp. 2-15.

Taylor, J. R., Cooren, F., Giroux, N. & Robichaud, D., "The Communication Basis of Organization: Between the Conversation and the Text", in *Communication Theory,* 6 (1), 1996, pp. 1-39.

Tench, R., Verhoeven, P., & Zerfass, A. "Institutionalizing Strategic Communication in Europe – An Ideal Home or a Mad House? Evidence from a Survey in 37 Countries". *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 3, 2009, pp. 147-167.

Van Knippenberg, D., De Dreu, C. & Homan, A., "Work Group Diversity and Group Performance: An Integrative Model and Research Agenda", in *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 89 (6), 2004, pp. 1008-1022.

Van Lier, B., "Luhmann Meets Weick: Information Interoperability and Situational Awareness", in *Emergence: Complexity & Organization,* 15 (1), 2013, pp. 71-95.

Van Ruler, B. & de Lange, R., "Barriers to Communication Management in the Executive Suite", in *Public Relations Review,* 29 (2), 2003, pp. 145-158.

Verčič, D., Van Ruler, B., Bütschi, G. & Flodin, B., "On the definition of public relations: a European view", in *Public Relations Review,* 27 (4), 2001, pp. 373-387.

Weick, K., *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (2nd ed.), Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley, 1979.

White, J. & Mazur, L., *Strategic Communications Management: Making Public Relations Work,* Wokingham, Addison-Wesley, 1995.

Zerfass, A. & Franke, N., "Enabling, Advising, Supporting, Executing: A Theoretical Framework for Internal Communication Consulting Within Organizations", in *International Journal of Strategic Communication,* 7 (2), 2013, pp. 118-135

Zerfass, A., Moreno, A., Tench, R., Verčič, D. & Verhoeven, P., *European Communication Monitor 2014. Excellence in Strategic Communication – Key Issues, Leadership, Gender and Mobile Media. Results of a Survey in 42 Countries,* Brussels, EACD/EUPRERA, Helios Media, 2014.

Markus Mykkänen, M.A., is a doctoral researcher in the Department of Communication at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. His research interests include communication processes related to organisational decision-making, and media relations. He has also published about the roles of communication professionals.