

**A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR INTEGRATING COMMUNICATION
AND CORPORATE CULTURE**

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has a somewhat unique environment within which businesses have to function. The fact that South Africa has eleven official languages and a mosaic of cultures are only some of the factors that contribute towards the complexity of the South African organisational environment. Cultural awareness is vital for effective communication, because different cultures communicate in different ways. While the universal objectives of marketing communication are to inform and more specifically to persuade, the way in which ethnic groups come in contact with information and are persuaded to act on information, varies widely. This article addresses the above-mentioned issues, but its overall aim is to provide a conceptual model for integrating communication and corporate culture in order to enhance an organisation's efficacy in multicultural societies. The Mitroff model for problem solving in systems thinking is used as a guideline.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary societies in many parts of the world are increasingly characterised by a multicultural population composition. This could potentially affect the quality of communication (and organisational communication) as communication is, in many respects, linked to culture. In order to address integrated communication (IC) (and subsequently organisational communication) quality and effectiveness, one needs to analyse and give prominence to the important role that culture plays in these processes.

The South African landscape is regarded as a heterogeneous and complex composition of individuals. Communicating effectively in such an environment could be a daunting challenge. However, Werner (2007) is of the opinion that it is essential for organisations to move away from perceiving diversity as a process of managing numbers, to a process where diversity is recognised and utilised as a competitive advantage. The aim of this article is to formulate a model to establish an internal organisational culture conducive and complementary to implementing IC.

RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The grand theory of this study is that of *systems theory* driven by *systems thinking*. Systems theory represents the organisation as a complex set of interdependent parts that interact to a constantly changing environment in order to achieve its goals, suggests Kreps (1990: 94). A logical application of systems thinking, according to Kreps (1990), is in describing the development, structure, and maintenance of human organisations. This argument highlights this theory's relevance to this study. Systems thinking enables a dynamic, holistic examination of an organisation and is regarded as the application of the systems theory within the organisational context.

To address the goal of this study, the Mitroff model for problem solving in systems thinking (Mitroff, Betz, Pondi & Sagasti 1974) was used. This model guides the researcher through the process of studying a phenomenon in science from a holistic or systems point of view. The Mitroff model is relevant in studies where problem solving and the formulation of a model applies. It defines the scope of the research, provides guidance in structuring the research and identifies the processes and stages to follow. As the grand theory of this study is the systems theory, this further informed the choice of the Mitroff model, as this model is based on the systems perspective. Mitroff *et al.* (1974: 46) argue that certain aspects of science can only be studied from a whole systems perspective and that anything less than a holistic view of science will fail to pick up certain of science's most essential characteristics.

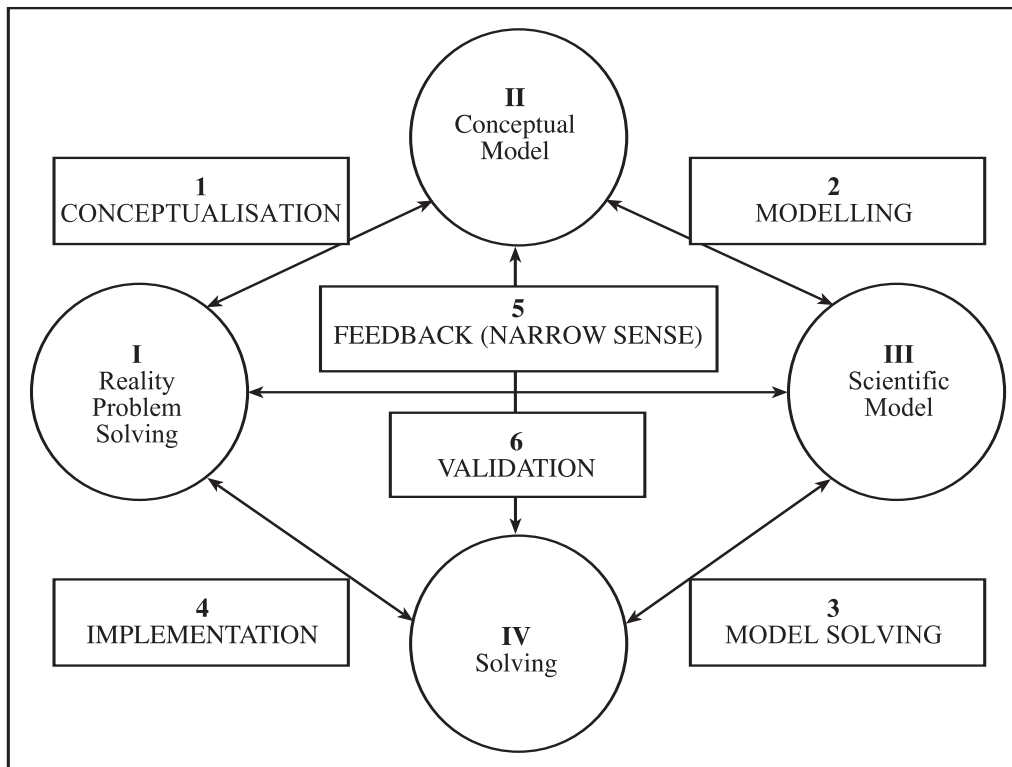
The graphic illustration in figure 1 represents Mitroff's whole systems view of the activity of problem solving. The model consists of four elements and six paths. In the figure the four circles represent the four elements (I, II, III, IV) and essence of the model. These elements are "Reality Problem Solving", "Conceptual Model", "Scientific Model", and "Solving". Closely related to these elements are the six paths. The paths or activities are conceptualisation, modelling, model solving, implementation, feedback and validation. Viewed from a systems perspective, there is

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no simple “starting” or “ending” points in this model. The process can begin at any point in the diagram. Mitroff *et al.* (1974: 47) state that the arrow or path from the circle labelled “Conceptual Model” is meant to indicate that the “first phase” of problem solving consists of formulating a conceptual model of the problem situation. The conceptual model set up the definition of the problem that has to be solved. The field variables that are used to define the nature of the problem are specified, as well as the level at which the variables are treated.

According to the Mitroff model the second phase entails the formulation of a scientific model (circle III). The third phase concerns the performance of activity 3 to derive a solution from the scientific model. Niemann (2005: 15) argues that the aim of social science is to provide a solution to a specified problem. The implementation or utilisation of the solution to the problem area in practice (activity 4) gives feedback of the solution to the original problem stated and entails activity 5 in the model. Validation is the last phase. Here the degree of correspondence between reality and the developed scientific model is evaluated. The comparison between the scientific model and reality may take place repeatedly until the scientific model is refined to reflect the necessary aspects of reality (Mitroff *et al.* 1974: 51; Niemann 2005: 16).

FIGURE 1: MITROFF’S SYSTEMS VIEW OF PROBLEM SOLVING



(Mitroff *et al.* 1974:47, adapted by Niemann 2005:14)

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As the Mitroff model implies that legitimate research need not address all the activities and elements in the model (Niemann 2005: 16), the scope of this study will only cover the first two circles of the model (Reality Problem Solving & Conceptual Model) and the path (Conceptualisation) that connects it. Circle I include phases 1 (literature review of corporate culture) and phase 2 (a review of the conceptual analysis of definitions of IC) of the research methodology of this study. Phase 3, namely the integration of key components of an excellent or strong corporate culture with the basic IC principles, materialises in Circle II. From this, an integrated communication model, submerged with elements of an excellent corporate culture, which is conducive to multi-cultural interactions, emerges. Within the scope of this article, the developed model will be conceptual in nature and will not have been validated in order to resume to circle III (scientific model). The highlights from phase 1, the review on the literature on corporate culture, follow in the next section.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AWARENESS

Culture gives an individual identity and is the code of conduct that a person lives by. It influences the very existence of an individual. Jandt (2004) describes intercultural communication as fundamentally about individuals communicating with other individuals with whom past experiences have not been shared. Moulder (1992: 19) supports this notion and adds to this description by highlighting five claims about culture. These claims are firstly that everyone's culture has been created for them, and largely by people who are older than they are and who began to shape their behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and values from the moment that they were born. Secondly, everyone's culture is always changing, because they are always adapting to new groups of people and to new social, political and economic situations. Thirdly, none of the members of a cultural group is totally homogeneous; that is why new groups are always coming into existence and going out of existence. Fourthly, no cultural group is totally unique; this is why some individuals from extremely different backgrounds and with extremely different life experiences manage to form alliances and to co-operate with each other. Finally, it is difficult to change the culture that one inherits because it has taught one how to behave, as well as what to believe, to feel and to value. To this Sae (2005) adds the fact that culture is ethnocentric, an obstacle to intercultural communication as it reflects a tendency for one group of people to regard their culture as superior to others. For all these reasons, it is obvious why it is not easy to communicate effectively in a multi-cultural environment.

Marketers have to take cognisance of the impact culture can have on their success. The study of culture as it relates to business has emerged as a distinct field of study (Frey-Ridgway 1997). Marketing, communication and marketing communication endeavours that were successful ten years ago will not necessarily have the same successful impact today. Cultural sensitivity has to be central to organisational operations (Gudykunst 1983). A management study of successful Australian national and multinational organisations revealed the centrality of intercultural communication (Sae 1998). To

manage a culturally diverse organisation effectively, each individual has to be encouraged to reach his/her full potential in pursuit of the organisation's objectives (Jenner 1994, in Sae 2005). According to this author, that means developing a corporate culture that fundamentally fosters and values cultural diversity. When considering De Wet's (2005: 54) view of culture as the values, activities and products of a relatively large human group through which it responds to its conditions of existence, the corporate culture of an organisation could be an effective vehicle to address multi-culturalism in an organisation. Van der Wal and Ramotsehoa (2001) are in favour of this argument and state that diversity in organisations can only be managed effectively when the organisational culture is appreciative of diversity.

CORPORATE / ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE DEFINED

Corporate or organisational cultures are unique and provide a stimulus for employees behaving in ways unique to the organisation. Werner (2007: 2) states that most definitions of organisational culture agree that it refers to a system of shared assumptions held by members, which distinguishes one organisation from others. According to De Chernatony (2001) organisational culture acts as the "glue" uniting staff in different locations to act in a similar manner. Informally it is referred to as "the way we do things around here" (Jandt 2004: 419). Jandt (2004) also describes it as the set of values, goals, and priorities that is encouraged through the policies and procedures of the organisation. Sae (2005: 274) supports this notion and adds that managers should take responsibility for institutionalising cultural diversity as the main ethos and guiding principles within their organisation so that organisational processes, policies and practices reflect cultural diversity in every conceivable way. Two theories that address these three factors are Peters and Waterman's "excellent culture" theory (1982), and Deal and Kennedy's "strong theory". Peters and Waterman's (1982) "excellent culture" theory highlights several themes (reflecting organisational processes) related to excellent organisations. These themes are:

Excellent organisations gear decisions and actions to the needs of customers. The importance of people, e.g. "a close relationship with the customer" and "productivity through people" are important themes;

- Excellent organisations react quickly and do not spend excess time planning and analysing;
- Excellent organisations encourage employees to take risks in the development of new ideas;
- Excellent organisations encourage positive and respectful relationships among management and employees;
- Excellent organisations have employees and managers who share the same core value of productivity and performance;
- Excellent organisations stay focused on what they do best and avoid radical diversification;

- Excellent organisations avoid complex structures and divisions of labour; and
- Excellent organisations exhibit both unity of purpose and the diversity necessary for innovation.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) focus more on the policies and practices of organisational culture. They argue that a “strong” culture enhances organisational success. These authors are of the opinion that if an organisation has the components of a strong culture, it will be a better place for individuals to work and will improve both individual and organisational performance. Deal and Kennedy (1982) identify four key components of a strong culture, namely values, heroes, rites and rituals and cultural network, which refers to the communication system through which cultural values are instituted and reinforced. The more deeply entrenched an organisational culture, the more difficult it is to change it. Deeply entrenched cultures are referred to as strong culture (Werner 2007: 27). In such an organisational culture the group members share the same values, beliefs and attitudes. They can easily communicate with each other and can depend on one another in meeting individual needs. According to the strong theory of culture formulated by Deal and Kennedy (1982), an organisation with a strong culture is being described as having:

- A strong, unifying corporate philosophy and mission;
- Trusted and trusting leaders;
- Open communication channels and access to top management;
- An emphasis on the importance of people and productivity relationship;
- A general sense of accomplishment and belonging by all;
- Commonly shared rites, rituals, and ceremonies;
- An uplifting general feeling about employees’ work, the place, and the future; and
- Satisfaction with rewards, performance and efforts (Sae 2005: 142).

Sae (2005:140) is in communion with the above points of view. He suggests that corporate culture reflects shared values, beliefs, norms, expectations, and assumptions that bind people and systems together. This author suggests that, like an iceberg, corporate culture has both visible and invisible elements. The observable aspects include the physical setting, language, stories, legends, myths, heroes and heroines, ceremonies, behaviours and dress. The visible aspects are indicative of the underlying dimensions, that is, the values, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of members as well as unwritten rules about the environment, time space, relationships, and activities (Weiss in Sae 2005: 140; Werner 2007: 4).

There are some common characteristics in the various ways organisational culture is seen. Organisational culture defines a boundary in creating distinctions between one organisation and another. In other words, each organisation projects its uniqueness in terms of who it is and what it stands for (Sae 2005: 141). Organisational culture

conveys a sense of identity for organisational members. Organisational culture facilitates the generation of commitment to something larger than interest in one's self (Mead, in Saeed 2005: 141). Organisational culture provides the necessary standard that an employee recognises and is willing to honour. It is the organisational ethos. Management relies on its organisational culture (or ethos) as the driving force behind the successful operation of an organisation rather than the formal, traditional structures of control (Peters & Waterman 1982; Ivancevich, Olekanski & Matteson 1997).

Against this background, it is clear that an organisation's culture creates a corporate identity that distinguishes one organisation from another. As a result, it also gives members of the organisation an identity. Subsequently, identifying with the organisation creates greater commitment to organisational goals and objectives (Werner 2007: 1).

BACKGROUND ON ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES

One of the most renowned researchers in the field of culture and cultural differences is Hofstede (1980; 1997; 2001). Hofstede identified five "value" dimensions that explain differences in culture. *Collectivism vs. individualism* is the first dimension. People in collective societies learn to place a high value on solidarity, cooperation, and concern for others. They prefer to work in groups (Werner 2007). In these cultures a person's identity is closely tied to her/his membership in important referent groups. Their communication tends to be guided and constrained by concerns about hurting the other person's feelings, minimising impositions placed on the other person, and avoiding negative evaluations of the other person. In contrast, individualistic people learn to value competition and independence from other people or groups. According to Werner (2007) individualistic people prefer to make their own decisions and stay emotionally independent of others. Conrad and Poole (2005) suggest that these people like communication that is clear, efficient, and effective, and they adapt their own communication to correspond to those guidelines.

Power distance, the second dimension, indicates how power is distributed in an organisation. It refers to the amount of power supervisors can acceptably exercise over their subordinates (Conrad & Poole 2005). Werner (2007) suggests that a high power distance is reflected in more levels of hierarchy, a narrow span of control and centralised decision making. Employees are expected to submit to authority and demonstrate respect. Low power distance is reflected in organisations that emphasise networking and collaboration. In this cultural type employees would probably call managers by their first names and freely communicate with them.

Male/female orientation refers to the extent to which the culture values the stereotypically masculine traits of assertiveness, competitiveness and materialism (Werner 2007), or the stereotypically feminine attributes of cooperativeness, nurturing, quality of relationships, supportiveness and interdependence (Conrad & Poole 2005; Werner 2007). The degree to which people are uncomfortable with ambiguity and risk, and prefer to work with long-term acquaintances or friends rather than with strangers,

is seen as *uncertainty avoidance* (Conrad & Poole 2005). Organisations with high uncertainty avoidance rely on formal rules and procedures to control events and create security. Such organisations avoid taking risks (Werner 2007). Those cultures high on uncertainty avoidance tend to show their emotions more freely than members of cultures on the opposite avoidance extreme (Van Staden, Marx & Erasmus-Kritzinger 2007). *Confucian dynamism* differentiates cultures in which people learn to take a short-term orientation (low Confucian) from cultures where a long-term one is preferred (Conrad & Poole 2005).

Hall (in Conrad & Poole 2005: 388) added the *low/high culture dimension* to the already developed culture types identified by Hofstede. In low-context cultures, people focus their attention on the explicit content of a message. In high-context cultures, much of the meaning is extracted from the context in which the message is uttered, and the message itself is much more ambiguous (Van Staden, Marx & Erasmus-Kritzinger 2007). According to Conrad and Poole (2005:388) the result is that the messages constructed by people from low-context cultures seem to be blunt and excessively detailed to people from high-context cultures; messages from high-context cultures seem to be excessively vague, confusing, or noncommittal to people from low-context cultures.

However, most authors on organisational culture agree that it is impossible to characterise an organisation as having a single culture. Organisations are seen by these scholars as a multitude of subcultures that “co-exist in harmony, conflict or indifference to each other” (Miller 2005: 102). These sub-cultures exist at different sites in the organisation. Louis (in Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg & Martin 1985) identified “vertical slice”, “horizontal slice”, or a specific work group as different sites. Each sub-group could have its own culture. Other aspects of organisational culture worth mentioning are that it is not unitary and often ambiguous. Martin (in Miller 2005) state that there is not always a clear picture of the organisation’s culture. There may be various manifestations of culture, which make it difficult to interpret. This phenomenon is known as the fragmentation perspective of culture.

The preceding discussion demonstrates the complexity of organisational culture. Apart from being a highly complex phenomenon (Miller 2006), organisational culture is also emergent. Interaction between organisational members creates culture. This idea is central to a communication perspective on culture in which culture is not merely transmitted through communication, but in which communication is “constitutive of culture” (Eisenberg & Riley, in Miller 2005: 101). Putman (in Miller 2005: 101) argues that, “social reality is a symbolic process created through ongoing actions and inter-subjective meanings attributed to those actions”. The communication process, which creates culture, is seen as very important in the emergence thereof.

THE CORE COMPONENTS OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION (IC)

Niemann (2005:99) defines integrated communication (IC) as “the strategic management process of organisationally controlling or influencing all messages and

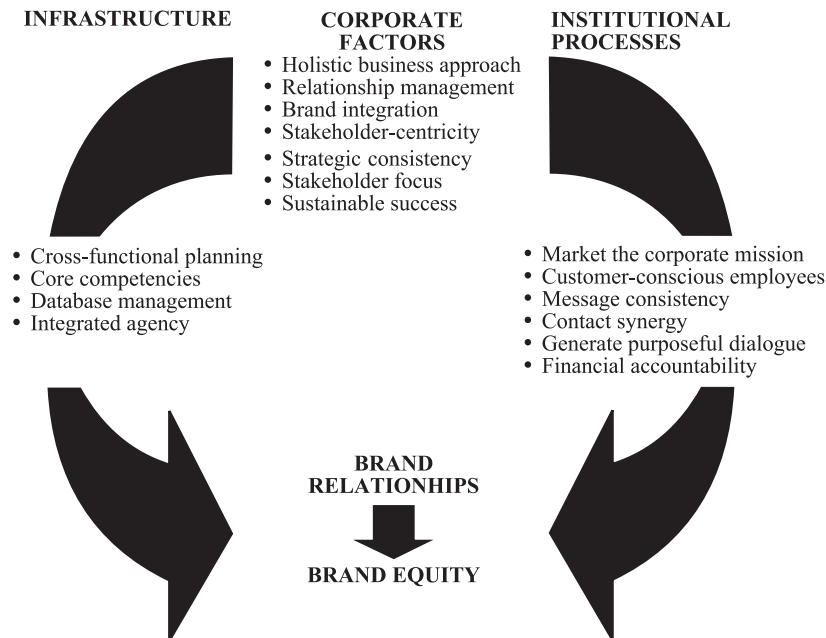
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encouraging purposeful, data-driven dialogue to create and nourish long-term, profitable relationships with stakeholders”. According to Mulder (2007) the scrutinising of a theoretical sample of IMC and IC definitions found between 1989 and 2006 through conceptual analysis resulted in the emerging of the primary values and philosophy of the IC phenomenon. It is important to note that the position taken in this article is that IC emerged from IMC (Niemann 2005; Mulder 2007). The values or basic principles of IC identified by Mulder (2007) are:

- Holistic business approach;
- Brand integration;
- Stakeholder-centric;
- Stakeholder-conscious employees;
- Contact synergy;
- Message consistency;
- Use of technology;
- Financial accountability;
- Stakeholder segmentation; and
- Sustainable success

In 1997 Duncan and Moriarty identified criteria that successful companies use to integrate their marketing communication activities. The criteria proposed by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) offered a valuable theoretical framework consisting of ten drivers. Mulder (2007) elaborated on this model and included the above-mentioned principles to offer a more inclusive approach to the integration of communication into an organisation’s activities. In this model each one of the drivers (as Duncan and Moriarty called them) or principles falls into one of three integration categories. The first category, corporate focus, includes seven drivers: (1) *holistic business approach*, (2) *relationship management*, (3) *brand integration*, (4) *stakeholder centricity*, (5) *the maintenance of strategic consistency*, (6) *stakeholder focus*, and (7) *sustainable success*. The second category, institutional processes, includes six drivers: (1) *marketing the corporate mission*, (2) *customer-conscious employees*, (3) *message consistency*, (4) *contact synergy*, (5) *generation of purposeful dialogue*, and (6) *financial accountability*. The third category, infrastructure, includes four drivers: (1) *cross-functional planning*; (2) *the development of core competencies*; (3) *database management*; and (4) *the use of an integrated agency*. (Each one of the categories will be discussed in detail later in the article.) Figure 2 illustrates this model.

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FIGURE 2: ELABORATED IC DRIVER MODEL

(Mulder 2007, adapted from Duncan & Moriarty 1997)

This elaborated IC driver model (Mulder 2007) underwrites the strategic approach that should be followed, the operational process that must be employed and the infrastructure that should be available to facilitate effective IC practices in an organisation. According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997) the integration that results from the implementation of these drivers includes customer retention; interactional, ongoing communication; the expansion of marketing beyond the marketing department to the whole organisation; and improved brand equity.

The elaborated IC model highlights several aspects and principles that can contribute towards the implementation of more effective integrated communication strategies. Still, this model only addresses the basic integrated communication applications. As almost all marketing and communication in the South African environment, and across the world, takes place within a multi-cultural setting, it is essential to take notice of this dimension. Not doing so is courting failure. The next section incorporates corporate culture components (that reflect excellence) with the identified principles of integrated communication (Mulder 2007) in an attempt to address this shortcoming.

MERGING CORPORATE CULTURE AND IC PRINCIPLES

Table 1 presents a comparison between the basic principles of IC and the organisational culture components discussed earlier. It is of note that the majority of corporate culture components and IC principles show significant resemblance. The additional principles (no. 7, 9, 10, 12 & 13) and components (no. 17) are also listed and will be conversed on in the discussion following the table.

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TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN IC PRINCIPLES AND CORPORATE CULTURE COMPONENTS (CCC)

	Basic principles of IC	Corporate culture components
1	Holistic business approach (Strategic driven)	Employees and managers share the same core value of productivity and performance
		Organisation culture provides the necessary standard that an employee recognises and is willing to honour (ethos)
		Organisational culture (ethos) as the driving force behind the successful operations of the organisation
		Organisational culture facilitates the generation of commitment to something larger than interest in oneself
2	Relationship management	Encourage positive and respectful relationships among management and employees, and between employees and other stakeholder groups
3	Brand integration	A strong corporate culture creates a distinction between one organisation and another; projects the organisation's uniqueness
4	Stakeholder-centricity	Close relationships with all stakeholders are essential
5	Strategic consistency	Exhibits both unity of purpose and the diversity necessary for innovation
6	Stakeholder focus and segmentation	Excellent organisations gear decisions and actions to the needs of customers, people are seen as important
7	Sustainable success	
8	Corporate mission	Demonstrates a strong, unifying corporate philosophy and mission
9	Stakeholder conscious employees	
10	Message consistency	
11	Contact synergy	A strong corporate culture creates a distinction between one organisation and another; projects the organisation's uniqueness
12	Purposive dialogue	
13	Financial accountability	

	Basic principles of IC	Corporate culture components
14	Cross-functional planning	Avoid complex structures and divisions of labour
15	Core competencies	Stay focused on what they do best and avoid radical diversification
16	Database management	An excellent organisation reacts quickly and does not spend excess time planning and analysing
17		Encourages employees to take risks in the development of new ideas

Table 1 illustrates a comparison between the IC principles and key components of an excellent corporate culture. In the following discussion, the three categories in the model (figure 2) are elaborated on, and the position of the corporate culture components (CCC) is reflected on to illustrate the task it performs in IC.

A STRONG AND EXCELLENT CORPORATE CULTURE TO LODGE IC

Organisational structures are formal systems created to enable organisational members to achieve organisational goals. The corporate focus level entails approaches, processes and activities that aim to create an environment in which an organisation can develop to maximise its long-run ability to create value (Jones & George 2003). The second category consists of institutional processes implemented to take advantage of opportunities and compete effectively in the marketplace. The principle responsibility on this level is to establish processes and procedures to execute the strategies of the organisation by developing annual objectives and short-term strategies. The infrastructure category suggests the different resources and means necessary to support the processes level activities to reach the corporate level focus.

Category one: Corporate focus

Viewing IC as a holistic business approach or “business process”, as suggested by Schultz and Schultz (1998), means communication is no longer a peripheral function. It focuses on integrated business strategies that promote organisational growth (Wiscombe 2005). Niemann (2005) opines that the strategic intent of the organisation as a whole should drive all the communication of the organisation. If IC is not part of the core decision making processes of a company, the true value thereof cannot be realised and it will not be able to make a real contribution to an organisation’s bottom-line (Kitchen 2005; Hutton & Mulhern 2002). An important CCC that underscores this approach is that corporate culture (ethos) is the driving force behind the successful operations of the organisation. Within this context, brand communication is more than a name, term, sign, symbol, or any other feature. A brand is the promise of an experience (Moriarty *et al.* 1995). According to Schultz and Barnes (1999: 44) “the brand has become a part of the relationship management process between the organisation and the stakeholders”. A powerful brand enhances awareness,

differentiates the organisation and commands a premium in today's highly competitive marketplace, just as a strong corporate culture projects an organisation's uniqueness and differentiates it from other organisations. The brand should be entrenched in all organisational activities and strategic consistency and ethos should be maintained.

Satisfied stakeholders are the ultimate determinant of product or company success. Stakeholder-centricity therefore also forms part of this category. The concept of integrated communication begins with the people impacting on the organisation (Schultz 1998; Burnett & Moriarty 1998; Shimp 2000; Hansted & Hemanth 1999/2000). Stakeholders are increasingly viewed as assets, with tangible equity (Blattberg & Deighton 1996) and lifetime value (Pitt, Ewing & Berthon 2000). A strong corporate culture recognises that close relationships with the stakeholders are essential. A stakeholder-centric approach in IC necessitates the mention of two closely related and important aspects, namely dialogue or two-way communication, and the consequent building of long-term relationships. In IC all stakeholder contacts take on the role of communicating the brand's marketing message to them. According to Harbison (1997) stakeholder intimacy is one of the key components of IC, and involves the managing of all stakeholder moments. Positive and respectful relationships are encouraged.

Stakeholder segmentation is a very important concept in IC (Reich 1998). In essence, stakeholder segmentation entails the identification and formulation of meaningful and profitable niches and includes all stakeholders of the organisations. Kliatchko (2005) describes IC as audience-focused. The use of the term audience rather than consumer is deliberate as it gives prominence to the fact that IC programmes are not directed solely to consumers, but to all relevant publics of an organisation (Kliatchko 2005: 26). To be audience- or stakeholder-focused means IC programmes are directed at the multiple markets that have a direct or indirect impact on the business of an organisation (Moore & Thorson 1996), internal as well as external (Kliatchko 2005; Burnett & Moriarty 1998). The main idea behind this criterion is that gaining the support of key stakeholders in the short term generates greater long-term profits for investors. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) underline that brand equity is determined by the number and quality of relationships that a company has, not only with customers, but with all its stakeholders. An excellent corporate culture acknowledges that people are important.

In the IC paradigm communication is goal directed because of the stressed importance of efficiency (Burnett & Moriarty 1998), financial accountability (Rensburg & Cant 2003), and ultimately sustainable success. The communication strategy must have an objective that can be interpreted as the achievement of a substantive goal. The ultimate goal of the integrated communication strategy is to help sell the product or service to keep the company in business (Burnett & Moriarty 1998). A CCC that links up with this viewpoint is that employees and managers share the same core value of productivity and performance.

Category two: Institutional processes

It is suggested that a company with a strong and excellent corporate culture demonstrates a strong and unifying philosophy and mission. Duncan and Moriarty's (1997) proposed mission marketing relates to this and links up with sustainable success in the corporate focus category. A mission creates an integrity platform and helps define a company. One of the benefits thereof is that it keeps employees focused on the company's fundamental objective of growing profitable relationships. Mission marketing is a long-term corporate activity that requires companywide buy-in. An aspect that goes hand in hand with the changes in the internal environment is the growing importance of employees. The internal marketing process in IC is of the utmost importance to establish an effective base from which a company can operate, i.e. a strong corporate culture. The experience each customer has when buying and using a company's product or service and interfacing with its employees is an integral part of his/her perceived value. Brand equity starts with attracting employees who have an affinity for the product and are themselves satisfied and loyal (Robinette & Brand 2000). Studies show that employee satisfaction correlates with customer satisfaction (Feig 1997; Freemantle 1998; Maddock & Fulton 1996). This indicates the importance of an integrated internal communication programme in any organisation that wants to be successful (McGoon 1998/99) and fosters stakeholder-conscious employees. They should enhance the brand experience and include purposeful dialogue.

The importance of internal marketing is also reflected in the discussion on contact synergy. An organisation should strive to direct each contact point between the organisation and its stakeholders. The significance of this concept is the notion that every contact between a company and the stakeholders should be managed in such a manner that synergy is created (Egan 2007). From a corporate culture perspective, this will enhance the distinction between organisations. The bottom line of contact synergy is that many marketing and communication techniques should be combined to present a unified and consistent message with a feedback mechanism built into the process to make the communication a two-way flow of information. The more the brand's position is strategically integrated into all the brand messages, the more consistent and distinct the company's identity and reputation will be (Duncan & Moriarty 1997). These areas demonstrate corporate integrity and provide a platform for integrated communication.

One of the biggest problems facing marketing and communication managers is the fact that they are under more and more pressure to be accountable for the money they spend (Duncan, Caywood & Newsom 1993; Thornson & Moore 1996; Shimp 2000). A simple argument for IC is that "there are financial, competitive and effectiveness benefits to be achieved through the synergy afforded by the process of integration" (Pickton & Hartley 1998:458). IC should be results driven, suggests Kliatchko (2005). This author considers financial measurement as a pillar of IC. In the initial Duncan and Moriarty (1997) model it became apparent that zero-based planning addresses the financial approach and management aspect in IC. However, to allow for a broader application of financial planning, zero-based planning was replaced with financial accountability in the process domain.

Category three: Infrastructure

According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997) core competencies are another important IC driver. As CCC it encourages employees to stay focused on what they do best and avoid radical diversification. This criterion supports the notion that marketing and communication managers must have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the major marketing communication functions or techniques. They must objectively evaluate and respect these strengths and weaknesses and apply them in a mix that maximises the cost-effectiveness of each function (Duncan & Moriarty 1997). A cross-functional management system should be in place in an organisation to coordinate all efforts (Duncan 2002). In an organisation with a strong corporate culture, complex structures and division of labour are avoided.

Technology has a profound impact on the marketplace (McGoon 1998/99; Duncan & Moriarty 1997; Kitchen 2005; Dewhirst & Davis 2005). As Reich (1998: 28) suggests, “a multi-faceted relational database-driven approach packs a far more potent wallop than any single advertising component in terms of positioning, brand building/product awareness, and cementing that all important bond – customer loyalty”. However, this same author maintains that a mix of traditional marketing communication techniques and interactive programmes should blend to yield a more powerful IC programme. The infrastructure category accommodates database management. The essence of the arguments presented on the use of technology is captured in this concept. It also encapsulates the importance of being able to react quickly and not spend excess time on planning and analysing.

CONCLUSION

All customer touch points affect the brand and brand equity of an organisation. When the individuals touched by the company are from different cultures, their experiences of the touch will vary – making it very difficult for the organisation to manage these experiences and perceptions effectively. The challenge each organisation face, is to gain cultural competency by developing an understanding of how individuals perceive and react to their different cultural rules. It is important to acknowledge that differences are not deficiencies, state Conrad and Poole (2005). The examined literature point towards the fact that an organisational culture that is sensitive to cultural diversity could contribute towards the organisation’s cultural competence. An organisation should have a strong and excellent corporate culture, which implies among other things that the organisation will foster sensitivity towards diversity and the competitive edge it can provide. This article recognises the growing importance of cultivating an organisational culture that is accommodating to diversity.

Most modern organisations in South Africa and around the world are faced by cultural diversity. Through integrating the basic principles of integrated communication and the intercultural communication competence indicators, guidelines are provided to use as practical tools to address aspects of integrated communication in a multi-cultural marketplace. Although these guidelines do not presume to be a quick fix to intercultural challenges, it will create an awareness of the importance thereof to deal with intercultural aspects.

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