A Strategic Approach to Corporate Communication

An analytic creating strategic alignment and measuring results

Submission for the requirements of a Doctor of Professional Studies
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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of 2009, the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) senior executive tasked its Corporate Communication and Public Relations Office to conduct extensive stakeholder qualitative research to understand specific issues that may potentially impact on the University's reputation. The research findings provided trending data of the key issues and concerns from staff and external stakeholder groups. To address these perceptions, communication strategies were developed to ensure that USQ was recognised as a thriving, contemporary university, renowned for its connectedness with internal and external stakeholders. Given the diversity of each stakeholder group, this high-level communication approach included individual strategies and messages to engage, inform and interact with the communities in which the University operated. Recommendations were demonstrated to the senior executive but an accurate measure to show the effectiveness of resourcing these initiatives proved difficult.

Senior university executives are accountable for their decisions when dealing with public money but how do communication professionals provide a quantitative measure and metric when the area of expertise is defining and responding to subjective stakeholder perceptions? This case study signalled interesting opportunities and directions to investigate the appropriate alignment, measurement and value in incorporating community opinion in decision-making and identifying future strategic directions.

I reflected on a concept of using a recognised risk management scale to measure the impact of various stakeholder perceptions on a university's reputation and contacted a risk-management company in Sydney which saw merit in this idea. We worked together to develop a computer database system which evaluated the benefits of initiating communication actions in response to known stakeholder issues and concerns.

The future development and modification of the system was dependent on knowing if university communication practitioners engage in typically journalistic activities at the technical level, or if they held a leadership role that sits closer to the top of the

management hierarchy to influence decision making and take responsibility for the public's orientation toward their university.

This research set out to discover current communication practices in a sampling of Australian universities; the responsibilities and related issues of communication offices; the communication measurement tools utilised and if measurement was an issue in the sector; and how a communication measurement system may offer a solution to some of these dilemmas.

Findings from this research identified the value of public relations to the overall business initiatives undertaken by universities, the practical concerns facing communication directors, and how public relations professionals currently measure the impact of their work.

Through this exploration, the thesis shows how the system that has been developed contributes new knowledge to a problematic situation of measuring the value of strategic communication. The system's measurement indicator can ultimately influence the communications profession and enhance the reputation of the strategic communication function.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma at the University of Southern Queensland or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research of colleagues with whom I have worked with at the University of Southern Queensland or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of the thesis.

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Judith Marie Halter

ENDORSEMENT

Signed

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Professor Glen David Postle AM (Supervisor)

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Dr Aidan Burke (Associate Supervisor)

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To my parents … Mum, I wish Dad were here to see what you both instilled in your children. John, Brian and I have all been privileged to have you as our parents and this has allowed us to take risks and enjoy our lives to the hilt! I've been absent for a while, but I'm back. Thank you Mum, John and Jo, Brian and Dawn for all you have given me – tears of gratitude to you. To my mother-in-law, Norma I thank you too for your support and patience. I am very grateful for you in my life.

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FORWARD

The USQ Professional Doctorate program provides the platform to undertake this research, but many may ask, 'What is a Professional Doctorate?'

Professional Doctorates are being established within many universities in Australia and elsewhere. A Professional Doctorate is the highest form of academic recognition of learning in the workplace (Clarke 2008). The award provides a practice-based equivalent of the research-based doctorate. It is oriented to professional practice and applied research.

The breadth and depth of thinking and understanding, investigation and evaluation involves innovation and originality, such that the work is at the leading edge of practice (USQ 2013). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA 2001, p. 2) outlines parameters as:

> A doctorate is awarded for the creation and interpretation of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research. Holders of doctorates will be able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge or understanding.

A composite view of how British Universities express this intent would be:

> A doctoral degree may be awarded to a person who has made an original and independent contribution to knowledge and thereby demonstrated critical capabilities of scholarship and appropriate modes of investigation (Land, Meyer & Smith 2008).

Both statements emphasise scholarship and conceptualisation as essential components of doctoral research.

This thesis depicts the key actions, interventions, knowledge and learnings developed through individual study and positions them within the Action Research framework. The 'project' or practical undertaking is a consistently central feature of work-based doctorates, even if the form and focus of the project is highly varied, methodologies are diverse and are individual if tending to be dominated either by a thesis-style output or a portfolio accompanied by a critique or reflective narrative (Costley & Stephenson 2008, O’Mullane 2005, Zuber-Skerritt 2006).

PREAMBLE: THESIS CONTEXT AND FRAMEWORK

Work set out in this thesis is the result of the contextual 'common ground' found with personal aspirations and ambitions, professional experience, organisational position and responsibilities, and relationships with a wide range of colleagues.

This approach is consistent with the findings of Doncaster and Lester (2002), as reported by Lester (2004, pp. 3-4), in that one of the key reasons practitioners see benefit in current work-based learning programs is that it provides a framework for 'taking forward an idea, maintaining a high level of thinking and action within and around it, and encouraging reflective and critical thinking that goes beyond the immediate practice thinking'.

Lester's framework has been used to approach the planning, research and development in various dimensions of this thesis. This impact is shown in the learning reflection and subject introduction (chapters one and two), and literature review (chapter three), the research design, development and findings of research outcomes (chapters four and five) and concluded through a discussion, the conclusion, the system overview and recommendations (chapter six). The content of this professional doctoral study is individually determined within an academic framework.

The structural relationship of this thesis is:-

- *Chapter One:* Learning Reflection (outlines formal and informal education positions and personal reflection)
- *Chapter Two:* Positioning the Thesis (subject of the research)
- *Chapter Three:* Literature Review (why this empirical research merits study and how it relates to others')
- *Chapter Four:* Methodology (explains the research approach)
- *Chapter Five:* Survey Research and Results (the research findings)
- *Chapter Six:* The System Overview, Limitations, Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion.

There are similarities between this structure and that proposed by Williams (2004) and which he calls a 'rich modelling' layout. In essence he proposes an early phase, a middle phase and a final phase, which he 'bookends' with an introduction and a discussion. Williams' phases are reflected in this thesis with the early phase being covered in chapters one and two; the middle and final phases are embedded in chapters three, four and five (with each chapter covering the planning, implementation, research, and review); and chapters one and six are the 'bookends' that bring the phases and project together as a whole. Consideration for this thesis framework was informed by the structure of the DPST program at USQ.

Further to the professional doctoral framework outlined above, it is a prerequisite requirement of USQ to state the institutional, professional and personal contexts for undertaking this study. Aligning with the needs of the University, these contexts are detailed below.

Institutional Context

The author has been employed by the University of Southern Queensland during the course of this study, initially in the role of Corporate Communications Project Officer and later as the Senior Public Relations Coordinator and then, Associate Director. This is a leadership role working under the broad direction of the Director, Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations. The position provides supervision, direction and guidance to the multidisciplinary communications team, ensuring that performance is managed and strategic objectives are met.

The position within the organisation is shown in the partial organisation chart in Figure 1.

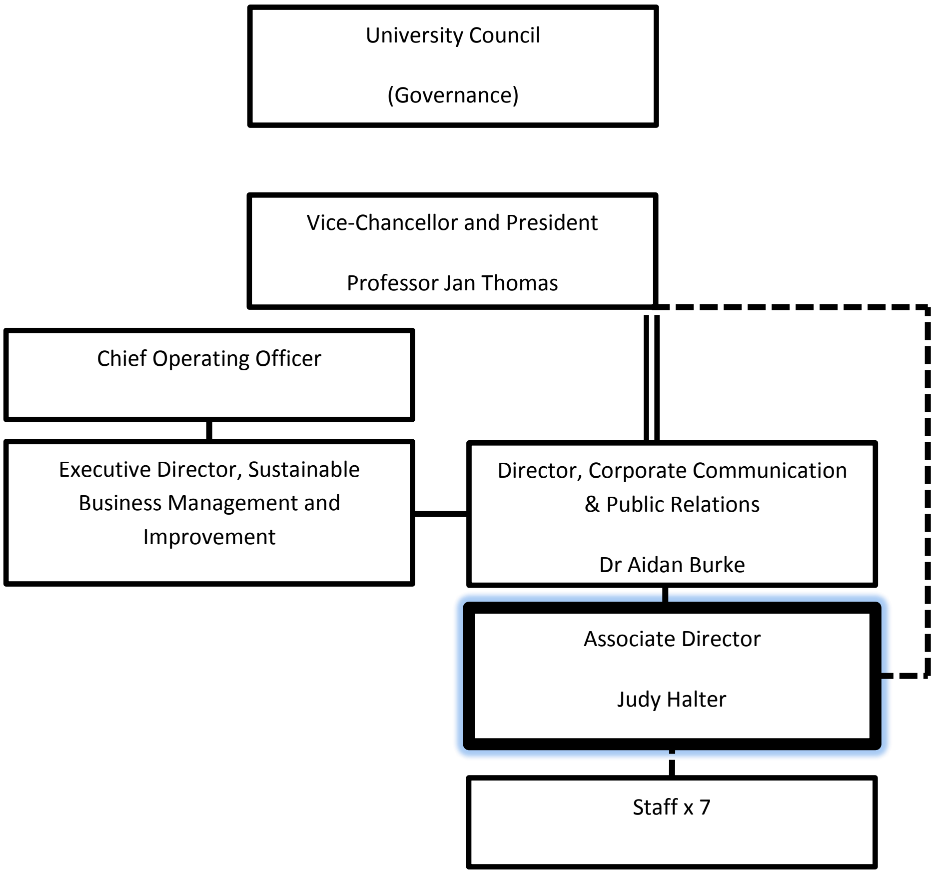


Figure 1: Organisation chart extract

It is shown that the position of Associate Director reports to the Director of Corporate Communication and Public Relations, with the Director reporting to the Executive Director for Sustainable Business Management and Improvement (SBMI). The Director of Corporate Communication and Public Relations, and Associate Director, also have a strong dotted reporting line responsibility to the Vice-Chancellor and President.

The Director is also my Doctorate Associate Supervisor and has played an important role in the progression of this doctoral study. Throughout my studies I have also received the support and encouragement of the current and former University Chancellor, the current and former Vice-Chancellor, and the Executive Director, SBMI.

Dick (2002, p. 167) refers to the trade off, in action research, between 'discovering general truths and being relevant to the local situation'. Armsby contends that:

> The work based learner is both helped and hindered by his or her organisational context. But the context is part of the reason for the research and hence cannot be denied. Work based learners must grapple with being a part of the problem, situation or development they are investigating (Armsby 2000, p. 35).

The decision to undertake this Professional Doctorate study aligns with the professional needs of the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations and was influenced by the need to identify a communication measureable that would be accepted by Australian university vice-chancellors as outlined in the USQ Case Study (detailed in chapter two).

Professional Context

The learning reflection, described in chapter one and detailed in appendix A, more fully describes the incidences that have shaped changes in the Author's personal and professional life to date. However, to set the professional context for this study, career and interests have been repetitively contiguous to the field of communication.

It will be shown in later chapters of this study that communication is a critical business tool for accelerating change and improving organisational performance (Hutchison 2013). However, within the university sector, key performance indicators measure areas of success and identify areas in need of improvement. Without a quantifiable measurement tool, the importance of strategic communication appears undervalued and, as will be shown, resourcing for initiatives is being refused in the weakening fiscal environment.

I am optimistic that this study on communication measurement has the potential to make a contribution to professional knowledge and practice, as well as adding value to the strategic direction of USQ by evidencing the value of listening to stakeholders. As indicated by Green, Maxwell & Shanahan (2000) the success of professional doctorates is likely to rest largely with the long-term advocacy and support of the professional associations representing the interests of a profession in Australia.

During the course of this study, a partnership has been developed with the Sydney-based specialist risk management company, CorProfit. The concept for measuring strategic communication was possible through the significant modification of a risk management database which had the underlying component of quantifiably validating a communication measurement. The company understood the theoretical concept, and through a combined effort, a design was formed to develop a database (the System) to measure the value of strategic communication.

Initial presentations to the former Chancellor and former Vice-Chancellor, the senior executive and colleagues received favourable feedback, as the System provided a solution which was previously esoteric in proving the value of listening to stakeholder perceptions. The development of sustainable partnerships between industry and universities is crucial to the service and support of doctoral education (Kemp 2013).

Personal Context

Personal growth was experienced through increased knowledge in areas of intellectual inquiry, analyses and learning to drive the process of research and investigation while developing and applying new practice knowledge in a professional setting. Putting together work and part-time postgraduate study for an extended period of time is not an easy task and for most professional doctorate candidates the prime reason for undertaking this pathway is to improve professional practice and organisational performance, and consequently personal job enhancement and satisfaction (Kemp 2013).

This professional doctorate study is the culmination of professional and personal achievements. The motivation was more for practical than personal reasons, but a personal growth has been realised through achieving this goal which has brought a renewed confidence and personal identity. Creativity and originality are integral to doctoral study regardless of the doctoral route (Gregory 1995). The personal context for work-based learning has several dimensions. One dimension, relevant to doctoral learning, highlights that any research is a form of human activity and that our minds are the 'instruments' through which all data is generated and then interpreted (Cherry 1999). This can lead to the view implicit in Usher and Edwards (1994) question as cited by Armsby (2000, p. 40) 'Can research ever be anything more than a subtle form of writing the self?'

Work at the beginning of the doctoral learning journey to develop and present a learning reflection (chapter one) assisted in the understanding and appreciation of the personal dimension, its significance in undertaking doctoral learning, and its contribution to rigour in research.

Format

To provide further detail to the thesis structure mentioned earlier, the theoretical framework and thesis approach is shown below with the literature review leading into the conceptual framework that is the research problem. The research survey participants are determined, patterns in the data collected are analysed and the discussion, conclusions, recommendations and an overview of the measureable system are made in chapter six. A detailed overview of each chapter follows.

Chapter One Overview

Chapter one outlines the more significant elements of the learning pathway and experiences prior to entering the Doctoral program. A reflection of life experiences and past formal education is provided to not only credit relevant prior learning and assessment, but to provide a primary point of analysis of how engaging in doctoral level learning results in the growth and development of a practitioner researcher.

Lifelong learning is characterised by Jarvis as:

> A combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically and integrated into the

> individual's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person (Jarvis 2007, p. 1).

Chapter Two Overview

Chapter two positions the thesis, focusing on the subject of the core research and the background to the problem of strategic communication measurement. The gap in knowledge is evidenced in the outlined case study which leads to the problem being addressed in this thesis. The aim and approach are presented to inform the reader of the research investigation to be undertaken.

Chapter Three Overview

Chapter three extends a critical review of the knowledge and ideas established in the field of public relations, specifically in the area of measurement. Through the completion of a postgraduate Master's degree, moderate existing theoretical knowledge in the field of public relations was cognisant; however undertaking a literature review at the beginning of this study provided a cogent rationale, including a justification for the specific research. The literature review assists the reader to understand the definitions of public relations terms used within the thesis, what has already been said, who the key writers are, and what questions are being asked. The literature review defines strengths and weaknesses and is an evaluative report that was used as a guiding concept before commencing research, data collection and analysis.

There are arguments that engaging with existing theory at an early stage of the research process potentially detracts from the quality and originality of the research. Nathaniel (2006) espouses this argument, while Holton (2007 p. 269) is also resolutely purist in her view, arguing that 'grounded theory requires the researcher to enter the research field with no preconceived problem statement, interview protocols, or extensive review of literature'.

For this doctoral research, postponing a literature review until data collection and analysis were completed would have proven unworkable, as ethical approval and progression through the doctoral process was dependent upon producing a detailed literature review prior to commencing primary data collection and analysis. This issue is acknowledged by several authors, including McGhee et al (2007), Nathaniel (2006) and Glaser (1998.)

Chapter Four Overview

During the planning phase of this study a problem was formulated, including the research design and rationale. The literature review was carried out to justify the research methodology.

Chapter four justifies the methodology used for the research, what steps were followed and why. Qualitative research will determine various university communication practices and action research will be engaged into the research process to develop and implement improvements. Insights will emerge from the process of qualitative and action research.

Chapter Five Overview

A survey was conducted to establish an understanding of current strategic communication practices used by a sampling of Australian universities. This chapter describes how the participants were selected and the sample size; ethical clearance; an explanation of the survey questions; and how data was collected and analysed. Referring back to the conceptual hypothesis, survey result summary analysis will be outlined.

Data once collected will also be referred back to the purpose of this research to determine if there is a need to further develop and improve a system to measure strategic communication initiatives for use within the higher education sector.

Chapter Six Overview

Chapter six will link the research survey findings to the literature review within the context of the research problem theory. A discussion of the research findings, an overview of the system, conclusion and recommendations will be made outlining implications for professional practice.

Chapter One: Learning Reflection

1.1 Introduction

The development of this study has been influenced by professional and personal didactic and experiential learnings. As explained in the forward and preamble to this doctorate, a reflective learning approach is a prerequisite to undertaking the professional doctorate. Throughout this chapter the need for a reflective approach is explicated and a summary of the author's learning portfolio is included for the reader in appendix A.

Work-based pedagogies focus on the creativity and reflexivity of individuals within a work-based context (Costley 2010) (rather than the learning of a set syllabus), and reflection is an integral part of higher education work-based learning programs (Solomon & Gustavs 2004). Numerous learning theories emphasise reflection as a key element of the learning process (Kolb 1984, Honey & Mumford 1986, Boud 1987, Stewart 2001).

Reflective learning is a fundamental element of work-based learning as it enables exploration of past experiences in order to lead to new understandings and improved practice. It assists to define what is already known to better understand learning processes with a view ultimately to improve deeper learning.

Reflection-in-action (while doing something) involves understanding new concepts through improvisation and experimentation during an exercise to solve problems in practice. The motive for this doctoral study was strengthened through reflection-in-action where the opportunity was provided to put thoughts into words. There was no ready answer to the puzzle of strategic communication measurement, and re-shaping what the problem was, while working on it, and self-questioning during this process, provided a greater probability of achieving a result. For example, Marquardt tells us, '... in action learning, questions are not only seeking answers. Rather, they are seeking to go deeper, to understand, to respond to what is being asked, to give it thought. Asking questions is not only a quest for solutions but also an opportunity to explore' (Marquardt 1999, pp. 30-31).

Reflection-on-action is a self-evaluation of performance. It is a process through which one can develop or change opinions. On completion of reflection-on-action, a learner reviews an experience and appraises what was learned. Learners can develop into reflective learners by using the following methods:

» Create a learning diary or portfolio
» Keep reflective notes
» Make constructive use of feedback from advisors, consultants, examiners
» Not be hard on themselves or underestimate their skills, but be honest
» Think positively about moving themselves and their skills forward (Cottrell 2003a, 2003b).

Reflective learners continually cogitate on what and how they are learning: how they are using what they are learning; what their strengths and weaknesses in learning are; what their learning priorities are; how they can improve and build upon their learning process; and how well they are working towards their short, medium and long-term goals. Reflective learners consider their motivation, their attitudes and ideas, and discover a way of confronting real problems and providing tailor-made solutions in real time.

Reflecting on experiences provided scope for this study to frame a complex problem, test out various interpretations, and modify actions with a view to resolving the issue of strategic communication measurement. Thought processes were extended and became more systematic as confidence in making judgements about the worth of this study became clearer. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action raised self-awareness of prior knowledge and connected into the existing cognitive and metacognitive network of ideas to seek a strategic communication measurement. The self-assessment of reflective learning was beneficial in reflecting back to realise the importance for further study in this area. Understanding what was known, and how and why one learns, was constructive in articulating strengths and weaknesses to move forward with a more insightful approach to this study.

Reflection underpins learning at university, and it is a vital part of professional practice. Osterman (1990) argues that, ‘while experience may serve as the stimulus for learning, reflection is the essential part of the process that makes it possible to learn from experience' (Osterman 1990, p. 135).

Experiential learning is 'education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life' (Houle 1980). While experiential education has proved itself of value in many situations, it cannot replace all forms of learning. A number of meaning schemes work together to generate one's meaning perspective and learning that has occurred during childhood, youth, life experiences and formal education. Reflection leads to what advocates of experiential education embrace as an educational philosophy that focuses on learning from experience, or learning by doing (Walter and Marks 1981), and reflection on that experience.

In experiential learning, immediate personal experience is the focal point for learning. As pointed out by David Kolb (1984, p. 21), personal experience gives the 'life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts'. At the same time it also provides 'a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process' (Kolb 1984). Experience alone is not, however, a sufficient condition for learning. Experiences also need to be processed consciously by reflecting on them. Vidal refers to Kolb's learning cycle (1984) in Figure 2 below:

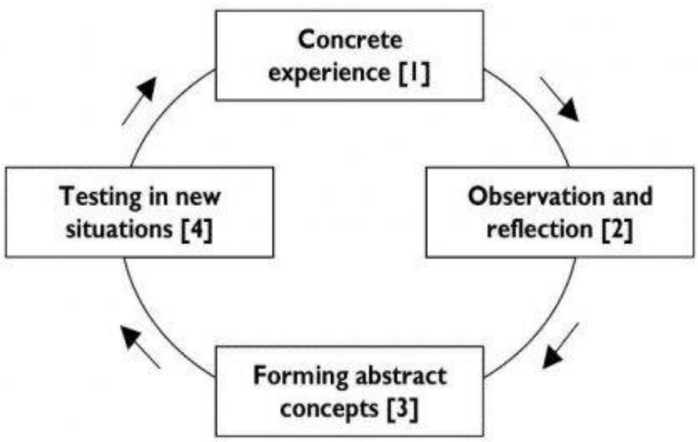


Figure 2 – Kolb's Learning Cycle

Although the elements are numbered from 1 to 4, Kolb and Fry (1975) concede that the learning cycle can start at any element and, also, the form of a circle can very well be understood as an open circle, even a continuous spiral (Vidal 2008). The reflection is a life experiences debrief where it was asked what I learned from these experiences. Mezirow (1997, p. 16) states that, ‘Meaning perspectives naturally change and evolve in response to life experiences, especially those which induce powerful emotional responses in the individual. Often these life-changing events are personal crises such as divorce, death of a loved one, natural or man-made disasters and accidents, health crisis, financial upheaval, or unexpected job changes’. It is these meaning perspectives which Mezirow saw as the raw material of the changes that occur in transformational learning. What have I learned? What have personal experiences taught me?

Affective learning is demonstrated by behaviours indicating attitudes of awareness, interest, attention, concern, and responsibility, the ability to listen and respond in interactions with others, and the ability to demonstrate those attitudinal characteristics or values which are appropriate to the problem and the field of study. An added depth and breadth to an individual’s personal and professional life can be gained by examining and questioning beliefs, opinions and values.

Krathwohl's affective domain taxonomy (Figure 3) is perhaps the best known of any of the affective taxonomies. ‘The taxonomy is ordered according to the principle of internalisation. Internalisation refers to the process whereby a person's affect toward an object passes from a general awareness level to a point where the affect is 'internalised' and consistently guides or controls the person's behaviour’ (Seels & Glasgow 1990, p. 28).

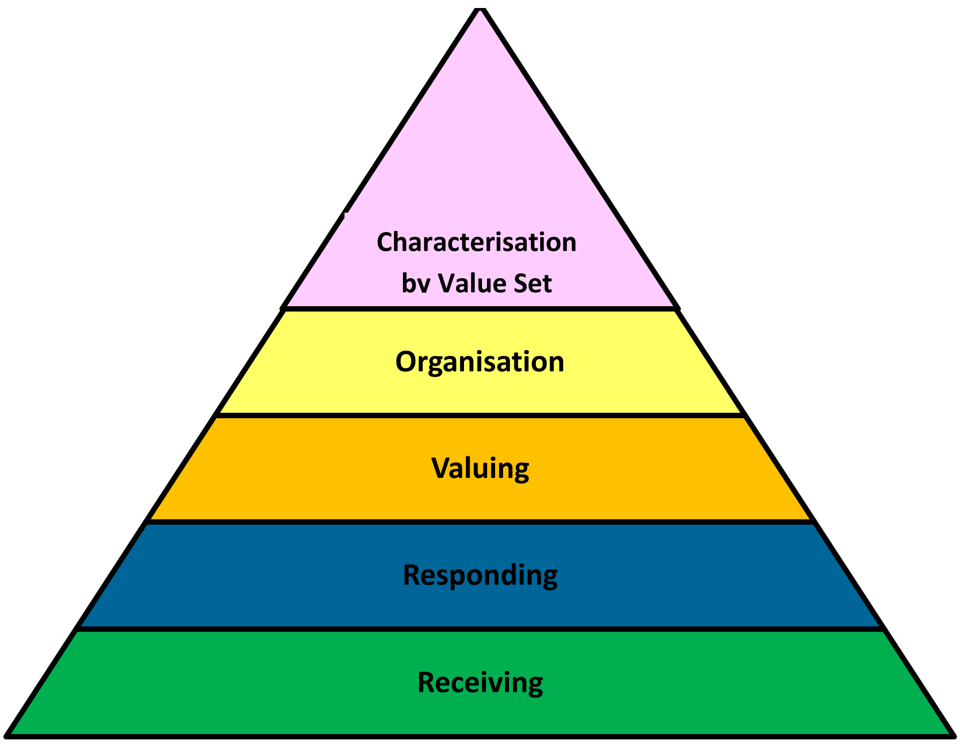


Figure 3: Krathwohl's Taxonomy of Affective Domain

Receiving is being aware of or sensitive to the existence of certain ideas, material, or phenomena and being willing to tolerate them. Examples include: to differentiate, to accept, to listen (for), to respond to (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia 1964).

Responding is committed in some small measure to the ideas, materials, or phenomena involved by actively responding to them. Examples are: to comply with, to follow, to commend, to volunteer, to spend leisure time in, to acclaim (Krathwohl et al. 1964).

Valuing is willing to be perceived by others as valuing certain ideas, materials, or phenomena. Examples include: to increase measured proficiency in, to relinquish, to subsidise, to support, to debate (Krathwohl et al. 1964).

Organisation is to relate the value to those already held and bring it into a harmonious and internally consistent philosophy. Examples are: to discuss, to theorise, to formulate, to balance, to examine (Krathwohl et al. 1964).

- *Characterisation by value* or value set is to act consistently in accordance with the values he or she has internalised. Examples include: to revise, to require, to be rated high in the value, to avoid, to resist, to manage, to resolve (Krathwohl et al. 1964).

Confidence is gained to enable better management of professional situations through the learnings of life experience. When challenging barriers, strength and persistence to analyse issues is developed, not only to identify a problem but to look for a solution. Making mistakes during the life's learning experiences is also an enabler towards the acceptance of situations that cannot be changed.

Appendix A contains a compilation of experiential learning evidence, an overview of professional practice background, and formal education to enable the reader to gain an understanding of the Author's life experiences, work experience, and training experience. The learning portfolio in Appendix A is outlined in four sections:

» Learning from Life Experiences;
» Professional Career;
» Formal Education; and
» Critical Incidences.

Reflection and analysis of critical incidences is widely regarded as a valuable learning tool. A critical incident is a vivid significant moment where evidence, insights and feelings may contribute to professional development by bringing improvement forward. Critical incidents are an excellent way to develop an increased understanding of and control over professional judgement, and thereby over practice (Ghaye and Lillyman 1997).

The following chapters position the thesis and reveal the professional critical incidences which generated significant and powerful learning experiences to demonstrate the reason for undertaking this doctoral study into strategic communication measurement.

CHAPTER TWO: POSITIONING THE THESIS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is a core strategic function of any organisation, and with the diversification of the global information landscape it has increasing importance. Opinions are built and shared globally, 24 hours a day - every day, through and in web-based communities and traditional media.

Since the development of digital communication and the 24-hour news cycle, audiences are relentlessly bombarded with a myriad of communication messages. Organisational actions can be communicated or exposed to global audiences within a matter of seconds, better educated publics process information in greater quantities, and an increase in online activist and consumer groups has decreased the probability that a problematic organisational issue will slip under the radar (Botan 1997).

The result is that audiences are hugely accessible to businesses and corporations, and are necessarily more discerning when it comes to the products they purchase, the trademarks they align themselves with, and the messages they choose to take on board. The need to convey authenticity and transparency in communication is more important now than ever before.

If organisations strategically share who they are, their values, their knowledge and, importantly, their mistakes, they will appear more visible, genuine, and available when engaging with their audiences and if future public relations and communication opportunities arise. If they mask their identities, organisations risk not only missing out on public profiling opportunities, but also compromising their credibility as a leader or trusted source in their field and with their stakeholders.

The role of the communication professional is to plan strategically, manage and sustain an organisation's relationship with key audiences, taking responsibility for the organisation's reputation and thereby helping leaders to achieve strategic and operational goals. As such, communication is an integral part of leadership responsibility.

Today, in both the public and private sectors, accountability and, therefore, measurability are key principles of leadership. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) represent a set of measures for organisational leaders which focus on aspects of their performance. In a relentless news environment, leaders are increasingly answerable to new organisational reputation KPIs, and as communication professionals we have not met the growing need to provide an accurate measurement of our work in response to industry requirements. In today's world of public scrutiny, measurement and evaluation of communication actions need to be more than anecdotal and informal by aligning more similarly to other professions within organisations.

It is interesting to note the occupational and professional composition of the communication industry. The vast majority of public relations professionals are trained in arts and humanities, coming from backgrounds in and completing courses in strategic communication, crisis communication, journalism, media studies and social sciences (Macnamara 2005). Specifically, most communication professionals are trained in and orientated primarily towards, words, visual images and sound – what, in classic Greek terms, are *rhetoric* (Macnamara 2005).

In comparison, 'dominant coalition' theory developed by professors of industrial administration, Johannes Pennings and Paul Goodman, at the University of Pittsburgh, shows that the orientation of the 'dominant coalition' in modern companies and organisations is predominantly numeric, with boardrooms populated by accountants, engineers, technologists, sales and marketing heads, and lawyers (Grunig and Hunt 1984, p. 120). While the latter do not deal specifically in numbers, their currency is proof. Studies of 'dominant coalitions', and half an hour in any boardroom, will show that the 'language of the dominant coalition' is, most notably, financial numbers (dollars); raw numbers in data such as spreadsheets; percentages; and charts and graphs presenting numeric values. Text - words and even some visuals - do not rate highly (Macnamara 2005).

Objective rigorous methods are required that deliver credible proof of results and Return on Investment (ROI) to an organisation's board and other key stakeholders, but how do leaders place a measureable numeric value on communicating strategically and effectively with their internal and external stakeholders?

2.2 USQ Case Study

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) is a medium-sized university (enrolling 28 000 students) located in the State of Queensland on the east coast of Australia (USQ 2014). The University's main campus is in the regional city of Toowoomba and there are three smaller campuses – one on Queensland's Fraser Coast and two campuses in outer metropolitan Brisbane, one located in Springfield and another in central Ipswich. USQ also has two student centres at the Queensland College of Wine Tourism in Stanthorpe and at the Educational Hub in Maryborough (USQ 2014).

Since the late 1970s the University has been a leader in technology-enhanced open and distance education, with up to 80 percent of its students studying off campus (USQ 2014). As a regional university, USQ has obligations to serve its regional communities, maintain an appropriate breadth of study to satisfy local demand and regional needs, and provide a basis for regional economic and social development through meaningful engagement with its stakeholders.

USQ's antecedent institution - Queensland Institute of Technology (QIT) and Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (DDIAE) - was established in 1967 and developed as a college of advanced education during the 1970s and 1980s. The limitations on the recruitment of students from the local region, and a mission that included responsibilities to serve the vast rural areas of southern and western Queensland, pushed the college to expand into distance education – quickly becoming a leader in this area. USQ has maintained this acknowledged leadership position – as reflected in a number of prestigious awards, including being named Joint Winner of Australia's Good Universities Guide University of the Year Award in 2000-01 for 'developing the e-University' (USQ 2014). The institution also built on this position to become an early and successful entrant into international education in the 1980s and, more recently, by establishing branch campuses in Fraser Coast, Springfield and Ipswich, and student centres in Stanthorpe and Maryborough, as a basis for securing new markets.

By virtue of its location outside Australia's larger cities, its background as a college of advanced education and its heavy involvement in flexible resource-based education, USQ has a high proportion of its student body which may be categorised as non-traditional. The University is over-represented by people from groups that are otherwise under-represented in Australian higher education as a whole, particularly people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and people from rural and geographically isolated areas. Many USQ students are the first in their family to attend university.

2.2.1 CHANGE IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The impact on higher education from the economic, social, political and educational changes associated with globalisation, post-Fordist development and the rise of the information age is well documented (Drucker 1994, Limerick et al. 1998, Marginson & Considine 2000). In business terms, however, these changes manifest in a more deregulated, competitive and discerning higher education market: in modified student behaviours and in revised requirements for learning and teaching. These changes are, in turn, associated with a major shift in the functioning of universities. Marginson and Considine (2000) describe these trends in terms of the development of 'enterprise universities':

> All Australian universities are now enterprise universities. The enterprise university joins a mixed public-private economy to a quasi-business culture and to academic traditions partly reconstituted, partly republican, and partly broken. This is not so much a genuine private business culture as a public sector variant in which certain of the conditions and techniques of business (such as competition, scarcity, marketing, goals defined in money terms) have been grafted on to existing bureaucracies now opened up to external

> pressures …. In their political economy, enterprise universities sit somewhere between the public academic institutions they were and the private companies that some imagine them to be already (Marginson & Considine 2000 p. 28).

As is the case in all developed countries, governments have served as major change agents for higher education development. The Australian government uses numerous strategies to promote specific agendas, with increasing sector deregulation featuring as a major goal by successive governments over an extended period. Strategies to increase competition through encouraging private higher education providers and by allowing alternatives to the government funded places that have been the mainstay of Australian higher education - including allowing full-fee undergraduates - have also been pursued. In addition, entrepreneurism and a stronger business orientation for universities have been encouraged. For the Australian university sector, these changes commenced in 1988 with the Federal Government's *Higher Education: A policy statement* and the establishment of the Unified National System (UNS) of higher education. This policy required universities to adopt private sector management techniques to improve planning, budgeting and decision making. It also required improved public accountability. One of the essential elements for public accountability was the development of performance indicators and their publication in university annual reports. The planned reduction of higher education funding in real terms has obliged universities to seek alternative funding sources and to exploit the opportunities created by deregulation.

At the same time, the market has changed radically. High employment rates, increased demand for vocational education and training sparked in part by a commodities boom, rising university costs for students, and an oversupply of government funded higher education places have contributed to a softening of demand for higher education over the last few years in Australia. Universities are obliged to take action to address the challenges and attempt to exploit the opportunities that the changing higher education operating environment affords - moving towards becoming enterprise universities. However, for USQ, the enhanced business orientation that this movement implies must co-exist with the institution's continued obligations as a regional university to engage meaningfully and productively with its communities and to provide educational opportunities for a diverse student constituency.

The need to balance competing agendas is, of course, a dilemma that all modern universities face to a greater or lesser degree. Watson (2003) notes that the impact of the expanding expectations on higher education has re-created a series of problems for universities including: 'being at once …. competitive and collegial, private and public, excellent and equal, and entrepreneurial and caring' (Watson 2003, p. 4).

To position itself to more effectively address these competing agendas – prospering as a sustainable, efficient, business enterprise while fulfilling its social and community obligations - USQ undertook what was called the *Realising our Potential* initiative.

2.2.2 USQ's Realising our Potential Initiative

USQ's *Realising our Potential* (RoP) initiative was undertaken in 2007 and 2008 to address the core challenges of tighter budgets and increased competition for students by pursuing several related business strategies, namely:

- Forging a unique identity – the USQ 'brand';
- Striving for consistent excellence in learning and teaching – optimising the whole student experience and the achievement of desired graduate qualities as a basis for achieving competitive advantage;
- Improving quality and student demand, retention, progression and completion;
- Optimising operations in terms of efficiency, focus, quality and impact; and
- Building capacity (Pearson 2007).

One of the major projects within the RoP initiative centred on re-examining the University's academic program portfolio as part of a wide-ranging 'Academic Program Rationalisation' exercise. Previous approaches to flexibility at USQ left the institution with a significant number of programs that suffered from low enrolment and/or that failed to return a positive financial contribution. The Academic Program Rationalisation involved eliminating non-productive programs in order to free up resources to ensure new more attractive course offerings. Clearly, this was a major challenge for the institution to reduce the overall size of academic program offerings.

In 2008, the number of degree programs reduced from 353 to 93, a 74 percent reduction, and the number of courses reduced from 1592 to approximately 751, a 53 percent reduction, leaving a suite of strong and defensible programs (Lovegrove 2008). Significant rationalisation and re-profiling of academic staff was also undertaken through RoP to match the programs on offer, although the changes were clearly more evident in some areas of the University than in others (AUQA 2009).

The aim of achieving a 'new level' of quality student courses was viewed with concern by several USQ stakeholder groups and negative coverage in the local, state and national media began to surface from November 2007. Toowoomba Chronicle headlines, listed in Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7, caused unease and disquiet in USQ communities.

Reproduced from The Chronicle on November 27 2007 - “Job losses expected at USQ”

Job losses expected at USQ

27th Nov 2007 8:00 AM

By Elizabeth Pullen

JOB losses are expected to be part of a major strategic review of resources at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ).

The outcomes of a major review will be announced today by Vice-Chancellor Bill Lovegrove.

Professor Lovegrove will reveal the findings of the "Realising our Potential Project" which analysed the university's academic programs, student management, facilities and corporate services.

Staff and students believe Professor Lovegrove's announcement will include information about staff redundancies and course cuts.

USQ's Student Guild general manager Kevin Stapleton said he believed redundancies would be outlined today.

"I'm not sure of how many redundancies there are going to be. I wouldn't want to speculate on it. It's obviously a worrying time for staff and the timing I think is unfortunate. Making an announcement like this before Christmas isn't good, but I don't think there's a good time," Mr Stapleton said.

"They have said they're not making redundancies based on preconceived ideas of cutting x number of jobs. I will take them at their word and wait until tomorrow's announcement," Mr Stapleton said.

Branch president of the National Tertiary Education Union (Toowoomba branch) Brad Astbury isn't expecting staff redundancies to be featured today.

"As far as I know, the blueprints announced are more to do with the strategic direction for the future," Mr Astbury said.

Professor Lovegrove was unavailable to comment yesterday.

However, "Realising our Potential Project" spokesman Aidan Burke said "the Vice-Chancellor will outline ... all four areas considered where savings and efficiencies might be made in the light of the rising costs of higher education."

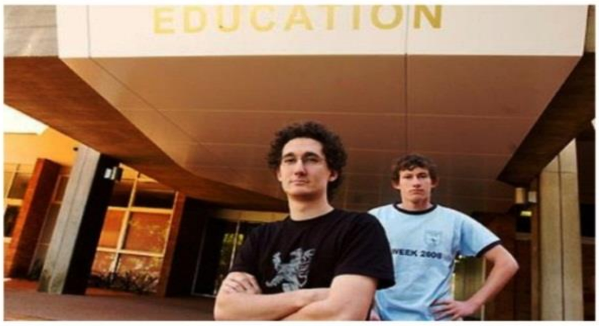
The Chronicle

Figure 4: “Job Losses expected at USQ”

Reproduced from The Chronicle on April 4, 2008 - “USQ reforms leave students in limbo”

USQ reforms leave students in limbo

Elizabeth Pullen | 4th Apr 2008 7:55 AM



USQ students Cameron McDonals (front) and Damien Wrench.

Dave Noonan

UNIVERSITY of Southern Queensland students believe they have been left in limbo during a major reorganisation of staff and courses.

They are fed up scanning the media to find out how the university's "Realising our Potential" project will affect them.

"We've received no email or written communication about it," science student Cameron McDonald said.

"We've only heard what lecturers have said and what we've read in the paper and heard on the radio.

"We've not been given a voice and we're the stakeholders of the university."

Mr McDonald, of Toowoomba, said USQ was the only university for him.

"I want to continue working at Suncorp and living at home," Mr McDonald said.

"The cuts will encourage people to leave town and do degrees in Brisbane or other major cities."

Similarly, Damien Wrench, an education student from Warwick, enrolled in 2007 because the university was close to home, allowing him to save on living and travel expenses.

But after deferring starting his degree until this year, Mr Wrench said he wondered how the reforms could recommend 130 jobs being cut and 260 degrees and 751 courses being slashed to save $8.5 million without affecting students.

"I've spoken to a few guys in the physics area and no-one knows what they are doing," Mr Wrench said.

"I'm shocked that they allowed us to enrol without telling us of the changes."

But Vice Chancellor Bill Lovegrove is adamant no student will be worse off with the changes, instead being better catered for through a new generation of degree programs implemented in 2009.

Professor Lovegrove said the new programs were "designed to increase flexibility in degree design and career opportunities for students".

"Staff are now encouraged to provide feedback on the draft plans to their respective Deans ahead of the close of the consultation period on April 14.

"The submissions will then be analysed and, where relevant, incorporated into the final plans which will identify what degrees and majors will be offered from 2009.

"At that stage the university will formally communicate the changes to all students.

"In the interim, the university is encouraging all students to contact their respective faculties if they have any questions relating to the process at this stage," Professor Lovegrove said.

The "Realising our Potential" project's final draft is due to be completed by the end of this month.

The USQ Student Guild general manager Kevin Stapleton could not be contacted yesterday.

The Chronicle

Figure 5: “USQ reforms leave students in limbo”

Reproduced from The Chronicle on April 19 2008 - “Sayonara: USQ sacks its curator”

Sayonara: USQ sacks its curator

Lacey Burley | 19th Apr 2008 8:35 AM

Toowoomba Japanese Garden curator Rusell Campbell has been sacked by the University of Southern Queensland.

Kevin Farmer

THE Toowoomba Japanese Garden curator Rusell Campbell took a sad last walk around the famous tourist attraction yesterday after being sacked by the University of Southern Queensland.

Mr Campbell is a familiar face to many in the community and over the past 20 years has put his blood, sweat and tears into the Japanese Garden (located on the USQ campus) to transform it into an internationally-acclaimed tourist attraction.

But his dreams of retiring at USQ came to an abrupt end as he left the university grounds yesterday yet another victim of the "Realising Our Potential" (RoP) project designed to cut costs at the university.

Mr Campbell, who emphasised he had no hard feelings towards USQ, said his sacking was quite ironic as it was part of the project he had fully supported and helped put into action.

"I just happen to become the first casualty of it. But I still believe in it," he said yesterday, expressing his sadness at leaving the gardens he put his lifeblood into.

Mr Campbell was notified two weeks ago that his position had been made redundant as management decided to cut 12 ground maintenance staff jobs down to just five.

"It was a surprise and it was emotional. I thought I was going to retire at USQ. It's going to be difficult but I feel proud along the way."

Mr Campbell said he was concerned about the quality of future grounds maintenance with less than half the original staff.

"I fear it may slip in the short term. USQ is stripping down this place to a bare skeleton, and then seeing what they need to rebuild.

"There is no way five people can maintain 200 acres. The Japanese Garden put Toowoomba on the international map and people have expressed concerns about its future."

Mr Campbell said he had fond memories of the garden.

"I consider this the largest and most successful project undertaken by the community. We had little old ladies growing plants for it and selling cakes at stalls to raise money for it. And the uni sent me to Japan in 1989 to study (their gardens).

"When I first came, there were 10 little sticks for trees, a lake that wouldn't hold water and no funds."

USQ general manager Dr Neil Peach said there was no longer the need to retain specialist staff to design and supervise the ongoing maintenance.

"However, the community can be assured that the upkeep of grounds such as the Japanese Garden will continue," he said.

Dr Peach said redundant staff was given the chance to move into new areas of employment or separation packages.

Mr Campbell was not offered another job.

The Chronicle

Figure 6: “Sayonara: USQ sacks its curator”

Reproduced from The Chronicle on May 5, 2011 - "Union fears 100 USQ jobs may go"

Union fears 100 USQ jobs may go

Adam Davies | 5th May 2011 2:00 AM

UNION officials believe the University of Southern Queensland plans to sack 100 support staff.

The moves, which were initiated over the Easter break, have been temporarily delayed after the threat of industrial action.

Documents leaked to The Chronicle by a senior USQ employee revealed the planned sackings were so secretive that some of the university's senior executives and the communications department were unaware of the plan.

An injunction was sought in the Fair Work Australia Tribunal after the Australian Services Union became aware of the plan on Tuesday.

USQ Vice-Chancellor Professor Bill Lovegrove said: "A number of draft strategic initiatives undertaken earlier this year as part of the University of Southern Queensland's continuous improvement processes are currently being put to staff for feedback and comment."

However, the process has angered staff and union officials.

The affected level three, four and five employees form part of the university's Office of Facilities Management and ICT departments.

Employees were not consulted about the proposed redundancies until they were issued with a letter on Thursday, April 21.

The letter indicated the employees had four business days (until yesterday) to prepare a PowerPoint presentation on their positions which were being reviewed.

Another document leaked to The Chronicle had union officials fuming.

An email from a USQ manager said: "This may seem a daunting task, but don't worry, the presentations are not being judged and it's not about your aptitude in MS PowerPoint. It is seen as a public speaking development opportunity and to have a bit of fun."

Australian Services Union Queensland branch manager Julie Bignall said no consultation had been entered into between the university and staff and the union was only made aware of the plans on Tuesday.

"Clearly the university have stuffed this up as the timeframe was unachievable," Ms Bignall said.

"The university has an obligation to their employees, one that they clearly have not met."

The union representative said that the secretive move without any consultation was disturbing.

"We have had no formal consultation with university management about the plans and they will not divulge to us the number of employees who will be affected," Ms Bignall said. "However, we believe more than 100 will be affected."

Three years ago the university conducted a "Realising our Potential" review which resulted in 130 staff losing their jobs - 45 academics, 40 staff from student management, 35 staff from corporate services and 10 staff members from building and facilities management - resulting in a $7.5 million saving in wages.

An employee who is directly affected by the review spoke to The Chronicle on the condition of anonymity, fearful of holding on to their job.

"There was no consultation between management and staff whatsoever," he said.

"No-one is game to talk about it, we are all scared shitless.

"We all know that there will be mass sackings but the staff do not know who will be affected."

Yesterday, USQ Vice-Chancellor Professor Bill Lovegrove said the rolling program of organisational reviews were in line with best practice in the university sector.

Professor Lovegrove said that in common with other Australian universities the processes for conducting those reviews included extensive staff consultation across all affected work areas.

"Recently an initial consultation document was circulated to USQ Facilities Management providing employees with the opportunity to comment on ways the university might best move forward in bringing a number of separate areas under a campus services model," he said.

"The evaluation of Facilities Management FM is similar to other assessments already carried out involving the university's Global Learning Division and more recently the Division of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)."

Professor Lovegrove said the extensive formal consultation processes being undertaken were part of the university's normal organisational reviews which periodically looked at how things could be done better.

In relation to the draft Facilities Management plan, Professor Lovegrove said the document had put forward strategies to integrate and amalgamate work areas so that more even and equitable workloads could be achieved.

"Currently we have some areas that duplicate each other's work and we are looking at ways of bringing these together to achieve better administrative practices that help reduce our operational costs."

"Any decisions in relation to individual employees and positions will occur after the consultation processes have been undertaken and will be managed in accordance with the university's current Enterprise Agreement and HR Change Management principles," Professor Lovegrove said.

"Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that our organisational processes are focused on efficiency gains, process improvements and removing duplication rather than on targeted staff reductions and savings."

Professor Lovegrove said given the scope of the review job losses were inevitable.

"However, given the scope of the reviews it may be that a small number of positions will no longer be required in their current state and as such a small number of individuals may be involved in the university's voluntary severance and redundancy and redeployment processes," he said.

Professor Lovegrove said that in response to initial feedback received from staff and unions the consultation period for the FM project had been extended to May 13 because of the large number of public holidays that have occurred.

Currently 54 staff are employed within Facilities Management and 99 staff within the Division of Information Communication Technology.

The Chronicle

Figure 7: "Union fears 100 USQ jobs may go"

Simultaneously, an online forum, 'Mathematics in Australia', published several articles with expert comment from academics both within Australia and abroad querying the decision of USQ to dramatically cut mathematics courses.

With Government funding pressures combined with the negative media attention from the RoP initiative, senior executives recognised that they were facing a number of internal and external challenges which had the potential to impact on the success of USQ's 2009-2013 Strategic Plan.

USQ Vice-Chancellor Professor Bill Lovegrove recognised the impact that these environmental influences might have on the successful implementation of USQ's operational initiatives and identified the importance of communicating openly with stakeholders over these perceived issues. Professor Lovegrove tasked USQ's Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to assist with internal and external communication strategies to address the concerns of stakeholders.

2.2.3 2009 Stakeholder Research Report

As previously conveyed, like all Universities throughout Australia, USQ was facing a number of internal and external challenges which had the potential to impact its operations into the future. Stakeholder perceptions of media coverage of the

University appeared to have been formed at a particular point in time (during the RoP process) which, although not ongoing, was controversial at that time and hence memorable. In addition, anecdotal and formal research had also shown USQ's RoP initiative (Burke 2009, p. 7) had impacted some stakeholders and their perceptions of the University. It was important for the University's internal and external communication strategies to address each of the stakeholder specific issues as well as acknowledge the potential impact these environmental influences might have on the successful implementation of its operational and communication initiatives.

At the beginning of 2009, an external public relations consultant and the USQ Corporate Communication and Public Relations Office conducted qualitative research to understand the perceptions of stakeholders and to determine stakeholder-specific issues - knowing the 'where we are now'. The research methodology was designed around USQ's directive to secure qualitative data about the perceptions of a number of key internal and external stakeholder groups (shown in Figure 8).

Internal stakeholders (staff)

- Middle-level managers
- Faculty and group managers
- Academic staff
- Administration staff

External stakeholder groups

- Brisbane- and Toowoomba-based Alumni who had graduated in the last five years
- State Government funding decision-makers, based in Brisbane
- Media in Toowoomba
- Potential post-graduate students from Brisbane and Toowoomba
- Toowoomba business leaders
- Members of the Toowoomba and Darling Downs communities
- High school principals
- Toowoomba and Darling Downs year 12 school students
- Toowoomba Regional Councillor

Figure 8: 2009 USQ key stakeholder engagement groups

A program comprising focus groups and telephone interviews was constructed to research the USQ-identified stakeholder groups and throughout all, questioning was based on determining perceptions relating to the University's reputation, positioning, stakeholder experiences and values and culture.

Following the results of the stakeholder research analysis, and prior to developing internal and external communication plans, it was first necessary to undertake an audit of the stakeholder issues. For example, was USQ already active in the area of stakeholder concerns and not communicating our work in a particular area? Or was the stakeholder concern an issue that USQ needed to address and improve on? An informed intelligence was gathered about each stakeholder issue. An example of one stakeholder issue, USQ's response, and strategic communication actions appears over.

Stakeholder issue

a) A couple of years ago we proposed a stronger connection between USQ and [school] but it simply didn't get the legs because of lack of interest and response from USQ.

Focus Group Recipient Comments

» Bring school students on to campus more – fund buses to bring grades 11 and 12 students on campus
» Invite teachers on campus
» Make schools aware of what Faculties are doing
» Framework needs to be put in place – strategic direction required – repeated comment
» Remove 'Secondary' from all communications – should be across the entire school journey – long term commitment. Strategic, managerial, operational structure to be constructed
» Expand concepts to include primary school children
» Increase involvement of Artsworx into secondary schools
» Increase use of creative arts into schools in the South West region – make it their University too
» USQ should integrate with schools' core business – add into their curriculum not to their workload

Following research into the perceived stakeholder issue outlined above, it was discovered that USQ currently:-

**XXX is conducting a major review of the school partner program. Written to all school principals and guidance officers in Toowoomba Education Coalition (34 schools) and will collate responses – not one solution for all – different approaches required depending on the needs of schools. Need school partnering engagement policy – review, upgrade to multi-layered approach. April/May time proposed to collate information, decide direction and apply to BMC to implement ideas.

**The Faculty of Education is supported by schools in the SW Qld region by way of early learning centres and schools hosting student teachers on various school placements. The centres and schools are very welcoming of these placements, which also informally provide opportunity for professional development for educators/teachers in the participating schools and centres. A proposed collaboration between the IDEAS research group in the Faculty of Education, and Dare to Lead project, is engaging with the South West community and improving outcomes for indigenous students.

**The Faculty of Sciences has been seeking the means to expand the availability and accessibility of its school engagement program, "Future Link", to the area covered by the tour as well as the border region. The activities offered within that program, either for students or teachers, have been promoted in those regions and material made available digitally, but many actual events require travel to the Toowoomba campus. The Faculty has successfully sought joint funding through its partnership in PICSE (Primary Industry Centre for Science Education) to appoint a very experienced schools liaison officer in 2010. This position will provide support for improved capacity and quality of teacher professional enrichment, school liaison and teacher support partnerships with a specific task relating to the delivery of these as distributed points within the regions. The goal is to have a multi-facetted development and engagement event at probably Roma, Goondiwindi and Charleville. The South Western tour highlighted the success of the ongoing placement of nursing students with a range of providers within those regions but also highlighted the issues mainly around resources associated with placements in rural and remote locations. The Faculty is engaged in an ongoing strategy to improve as far as possible its management of such placements including the support and training of supervisors and the preparedness of students. The tour by the Departmental Head of Nursing and Midwifery of providers in the region in late 2009 has highlighted opportunities to expand further placements that the Faculty will be pursuing in 2010. In 2009, the Faculty was able through external funding to appoint two additional part-time Indigenous student support officers, providing further capacity to continue USQ's on-going success with Indigenous students. In 2010 the intention is to pursue initiatives to further enhance the strong engagement with the source indigenous communities including those within the regions covered by the South Western tour. For example, in the first semester 2010 the Indigenous nursing student support team are working with USQ's Indigenous marketing officer to update USQ's Indigenous nursing brochures. These will be distributed at high schools in the western region during NAIDOC week celebrations to encourage Indigenous nursing enrolments for our 2011 intake. The above mentioned location of USQ nursing students on clinical placements within those regions contributes to this. The possibility of using these students as role models for local school students is under consideration.

***Artsworx activities directly into schools:*
Black Box Shakespeare School Tours, 12-16 Oct & 4 Nov
Big Band, 18 Aug (Stanthorpe), 3 Sep (Chinchilla) & 13 Oct (Millmerran) (service provided free of charge)
***Artsworx activities schools came to us:*
Threepenny Opera workshops 21-30 Aug (at USQ campus)
Shakespeare in the Park Festival (SitpF) Twmba Workshops 25 Feb (in Queens Park)
Shakespeare on the Bay Festival (SOTB) HB Workshops 18 Mar (at Seafront Oval - Hervey Bay)
Children's Festival performance, CHSHS 4/6 & Warwick SHS 3/6 (USQ campus)
Archaeology Talk, Kingaroy SHS 27/5 & School of Total Education 27/5 (USQ Campus)
2010 so far:
SITPF in-school tour to Downlands 5/3 (in lieu of Queens Park)
SITPF school tour at USQ for St Mary's Kingaroy 10/3 (in lieu of Queens Park)
Big Band touring into high schools (locations yet to be determined) (service provided free of charge)

Following research into USQ's involvement with schools, it was clear that this stakeholder perception was somewhat unfounded and the University needed to implement a strategic communication plan to evidence the work undertaken with this stakeholder group. The acquired knowledge gained from stakeholder qualitative research ensured that the internal and external strategic communication plans were founded and developed to improve USQ's stakeholder relationships. The strategy sought to affect the awareness levels, attitudes and behaviours of key stakeholders by setting the direction for communication in the communities within which USQ operates, and the government funding decision-makers. For the stakeholder issue shown above, the following communication actions were developed.

Communication actions to improve this issue:-

(1) Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to initiate a Public Relations campaign to roll out to schools when the multi-layered approaches are identified from the review responses
(2) Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to contact XXX for the school visit strategic plan
(3) Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to contact XXX re Artsworx involvement in secondary schools
(4) Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to target press releases in SW QLD relating to USQ activities
(5) Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to continue with USQ insert into Toowoomba, Ipswich, Fraser Coast, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Goondiwindi, Dalby, Chinchilla, St George, Charleville and Roma newspapers. Insert to promote 2010 Year of Research
(6) Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to contact the XXX to inquire about USQ's involvement in primary schools

Communication Tools

- ***Media Releases, Feature Articles, :***

(1) Major review of school partner program; (2) School partner engagement policy; (3) Faculty of Education supported by schools in SQ Qld region; (4) SW Qld early learning centres; (5) Schools hosting student teachers on various school placements; (6) Professional development for educators/teachers; (7) Collaboration between the IDEAS research Group; (8) Faculty of Sciences expanding the availability and accessibility of its school engagement program; (9) Future Link; (10) Activities offered to teachers or students; (11) Faculty of Sciences joint funding project its partnership in PICSE; (12) Multi-faceted development and engagement

event at Roma, Goondiwindi and Charleville; (13) South West success of the ongoing placement of nursing students (14) Ongoing strategy to improve as far as possible its management of placements; (15) Dept Head of Nursing and Midwifery Tour of SW Qld to SQ region; (16) Appointment of Indigenous student support officers; (17) Enhancing strong engagement with Indigenous communities; (18) Indigenous Marketing Officer to update USQ's nursing brochures; (19) USQ nursing students on clinical placements.

The research findings from the comprehensive qualitative stakeholder research provided trending data of the key issues and concerns from various internal and external stakeholder groups.

As described in Figure, USQ's internal and external strategic communication approach was formulated to progressively close the gap between stakeholders' current and desired perceptions through implementation of the following strategies:

1. Articulate the University's corporate story and key messages and use them as the basis of communication with all stakeholders

2. Establish and promote mechanisms for receiving, acknowledging and acting on feedback about stakeholders' expectations and perceptions of USQ

3. Formalise the University's corporate social involvement program and promote it to all stakeholders

4. Formalise relationships with USQ Alumni and use them as key influencers and advocates

5. Design and implement a targeted government relations program aimed specifically at those funding decision-makers whose policy areas support USQ's strategic priorities

6. Refine and maintain targeted engagement programs with:
    - Regional councillors
    - Secondary schools in the regional areas where USQ operates

- Business leaders in USQ's regional communities

7. Refine the University's approach to regional media relations.

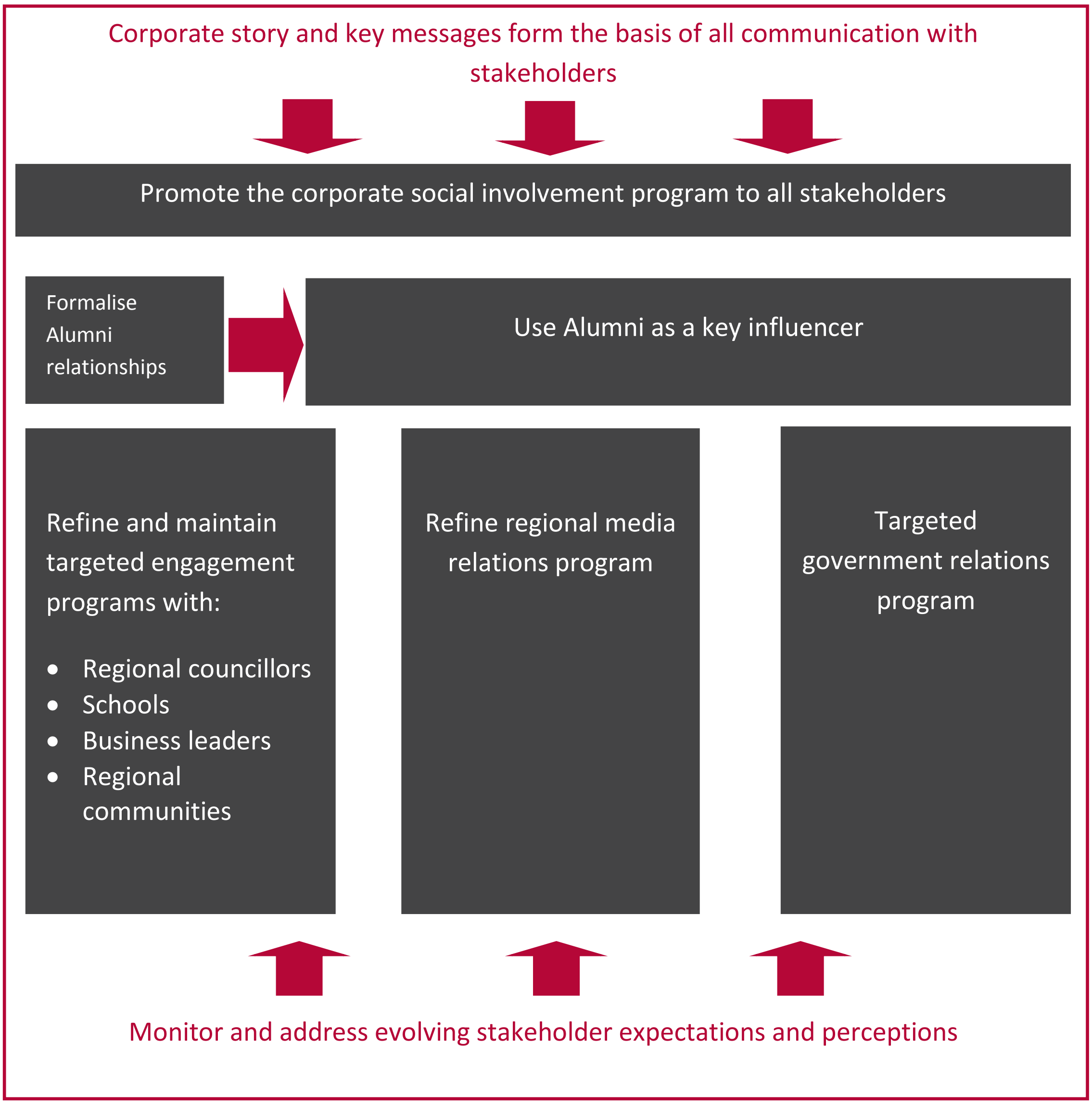


Figure 9: USQ's Strategic Communication Approach

The implementation of USQ's internal and external strategic communication plans was developed to assist in positioning the University in the minds of its stakeholders, in ways which would support the University to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in its Strategic Plan 2009-2013. The strategic communication plans were completely consistent with the University's overall strategy.

A range of specific messages and communication tools was developed to implement the strategies detailed earlier, and a customised set of media fact sheets was formulated to cover specific messages including general information about USQ and its importance to the regions. Other written communication tools included brochures, a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ document, and human interest stories of relevance were planned to be more inclusive of local communities and outline special events scheduled throughout 2009 and 2010.

A broad range of communication tools was utilised to build awareness and support of USQ and to increase community awareness about the university so that USQ became 'top of mind' when stakeholders thought about higher education and the role of USQ. By targeting various types of communication and different levels of information, several levels of influence were determined.

In order to measure the success of USQ’s strategic communication plan, it was proposed that all aspects of the research, planning, and implementation were to be evaluated to find out what aspects were successful, what aspects were unsuccessful, and how perceived issues could be improved. In addition to measuring whether the campaign objectives were met it was proposed to Senior Management that USQ should consider using the following evaluation methods at the conclusion of the campaign:

- Content analysis of media coverage to gain an understanding of how effective the campaign was in conveying specific messages;
- Follow-up research of community groups to measure whether there had been a change in community awareness and attitudes towards USQ;
- Analysis to determine whether the funds spent on the campaign achieved an outcome that delivered the desired benefits to USQ; and
- Follow-up research to assess how stakeholder groups viewed USQ following the implementation of the strategic communication plans.

To assist with the development of the strategic communication plans a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was used to categorise known information into a logical order. A SWOT analysis is a classic strategic planning tool and by using the framework of strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats, it provided a simple way to assess how the communication plans could best be implemented. Based on this analysis, a set of objectives and goals for the University became clearer and a more objective overall intelligence was identified to base decisions in developing the communication plans.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• USQ has a good reputation • Generally well-regarded • Advertising and marketing • Vital to the local economy; a major employer in the region • USQ is an important player in the local community • Engaging the community through the Arts ie Shakespeare in the Park • Staff are well regarded / welcoming / positive • Management team are well-regarded • Engage certain stakeholder groups well (regional councillors, schools) • Established as a business success by targeting distance education and international students – online education • Staff are dedicated / committed to the University • USQ takes a personal approach to students; staff don't see students as numbers • USQ is the only local University – it is the only University in Toowoomba.	• Inconsistent stakeholder engagement • Lack of community engagement – broadly communicating to all stakeholders the same way • Not regarded as a prestigious university • Staff don't feel engaged by senior management • Focus on distance education and international students (no local focus) • Perceived lack of strategy behind engagement • Reluctance to engage effectively with media • Lack of internal communication • Perceived lack of direction (for staff) • Lack of on-campus activities to attract students (on-campus student experience) • Identity is not clearly defined (external) • The marketing and approach to marketing isn't resonating with the local community • Perceived to be disorganised / confused / last minute / under prepared • The University isn't demonstrating its 'value' to the local community.
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• Build on reputation and raise community awareness • Develop and implement an effective media engagement strategy • Partner with other local education providers to position Toowoomba as an Education City • Be more visible in the local community (via events, shop fronts etc) • Identify research opportunities of relevance to region • Revisit partnerships with local businesses to ensure relevance to graduates and to business • More actively engage with Alumni and enlist their input and support • Improve the University's relationship with key government stakeholders • Re-engage staff by demonstrating accomplishments and future direction • Leverage the support of Regional Councillors • Increase the attractiveness of on-campus student life – increase relevance to students • Demonstrate credibility and the expertise of teaching staff.	• Damage to reputation through ongoing negative media coverage • A perceived lack of cohesion among senior management • The local community's acceptance of international students • USQ could lose its appeal to the local community due to its focus on international and distance education • Lack of closure of the RoP process (internal and external) • Potential difficulties in securing government funding • Lack of on-campus student life impacting on-campus and local enrolments • Lack of effective engagement with media resulting in a distorted perception of USQ • The loss of local support if the local community is ignored • Lack of attraction to the top percentile students – this demographic finding other universities more attractive • Changing student expectations and the changing education landscape • Increasing course costs making education prohibitive to many (post grad).

Figure 10: SWOT Analysis

A Gantt chart for the strategic communication matrix project, was also created to assimilate multiple communication tasks and timelines to implement the plans into a single document. The Gantt chart clarified the process to focus work at the front of a task timeline bringing together independent elements to achieve project completion.

The Strategic Communication Matrix Gantt Chart (Figure 11) is shown below to demonstrate the basis in developing the strategic communication plans.

Strategic Communication Matrix Project

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Project Manager: Judy Halter

Date of Report: future 2010

	Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	Interviews with USQ senior staff re stakeholder issues	■	■										
2	Collate interview results		■	■									
3	Document priority areas		■	■	■								
4	Identify communication action to each stakeholder issue		■	■	■								
5	Develop initial stakeholder group on system		■	■	■								
6	Identify system requirements for USQ Strategic Communication Plan		■	■	■	■							
7	Produce requirements report			■	■	■							
8	Assistance from CorProfit Systems			■	■	■	■	■	■				
9	Implement system for all stakeholder groups				■	■							
10	Modify system as required				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
11	Continual surveillance of University issues	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
12	Identification of further key stakeholders	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
13	Focus groups and interviews with stakeholders						■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Figure 11: Strategic Communication Matrix Project

At the same time as the above stakeholder research was being conducted, the University Council and senior management conducted a ‘Western Queensland Outreach Tour’ of Darling Downs centres outside Toowoomba. The Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations was responsible for organising the Tour with the aim to gain an understanding of the issues that confront people living in rural communities and to discuss how USQ might further strengthen its research and teaching collaborations to assist each region. Members of the Tour included the USQ Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Global Learning), and USQ’s five Faculty Deans. The tour was conducted over five days in the major western towns of Dalby, Chinchilla, St George, Roma and Charleville and included meetings for each member of the senior executive team with individual businesses and government departments in each town, and lunch and/or evening functions with current and past students.

USQ’s stakeholder knowledge of issues/perceptions in our Western Queensland communities was collated and incorporated with the existing external stakeholder group feedback which was gained through focus groups and telephone interviews mentioned previously.

In October 2009 the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations presented the strategic internal and external communication plans to the executive committee of the University, the Vice-Chancellor’s Committee. It was demonstrated how USQ stakeholder groups impact on the University’s reputation, but determining the value of the strategic communication plan to University senior executives proved difficult, as the qualitative research results were personalised, and the measurement for actioning stakeholder issues was dismissed as unviable when gauging the effectiveness of listening to stakeholder perceptions and applying communication strategies to enhance reputation and minimise reputation risk (USQ VCC October 2009).

The budgetary resource requested by the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations to implement the communication actions in response to USQ’s stakeholder perceptions was questioned, because an acceptable measure to show improvement in the gap analysis was weak and public monies (to the amount being asked for) could not be allocated when results from expenditure could not be proven. A budget of a much lesser amount than requested was approved and this severely limited the communication actions that could be initiated.

2.2.4 Measuring the Effectiveness of the Strategic Communication Plan

The implementation of USQ's strategic communication plans was developed to assist in positioning the University in the minds of its stakeholders, in ways which would support the University to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in its Strategic Plan 2009-2013. It was demonstrated to the senior committee of the University, the Vice-Chancellor's Committee, how USQ stakeholder groups impact on the University's reputation, but determining the value of implementing the internal and external strategic communication plans to present to University senior executives proved difficult. The qualitative research was questioned and an accurate measure on the effectiveness of resourcing the execution of the plans was debated. The USQ Corporate Communication and Public Relations Office could not provide a numeric measure which satisfied members of the Committee for the resourcing requested to apply the communication strategies in response to stakeholder perceptions (USQ VCC 2009). Senior executives are accountable for their decisions when dealing with public money but how do communication professionals provide a quantitative measure, showing profit maximisation, when the area of expertise is defining and responding to subjective stakeholder perceptions?

It might be assumed from the senior executive feedback to the results of this intensive stakeholder research that the public relations profession is not highly valued by senior university management. Unlike areas such as business management improvement, marketing, or learning and teaching quality, strategic communication is a relatively new field. Delivering value through the initiatives of strategic communication is difficult to demonstrate when communication professionals cannot provide acceptable measureable evidence.

The problem was that there was a fundamental mismatch between what the communication division produced to measure effectiveness and what the senior managers can recognise as their benchmarks. Senior managers are appraised on business outcomes, such as revenue, earnings and market share, but communication professionals are only able to evaluate efforts by calculating the outcomes of specific communication activities.

There are communication-measureable equations to show 'Return on Investment'; media tracking and analysis (the monitoring of a university's coverage by the press on various media vehicles such as television, cable, internet and radio (Weeks 2011)); stakeholder attitudes and advertising equivalencies (the calculation of space or time used for publicity or news content by comparing it to the cost of that same space or time if purchased as advertising (Rawlins 2010)), but these measurement tools did not provide the value evidence required by the University leaders to fund the recommended communication initiatives to address identified stakeholder issues.

The resultant funding support to implement initiatives for internal and external communication strategies at the University was accepted but on a much lesser budget than was requested. The Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations implemented creative initiatives and produced results, but measurement of communication outcomes was not accepted by all members of the senior University executive.

It is interesting to note at this point that few circumstances test an organisation's reputation or competency as severely as a crisis. While USQ was contending with negative media coverage as a result of the RoP, and the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations was grappling to find a metric to satisfy senior executives as to the value of implementing the strategic communication plans, a crisis situation developed in Australia which had the potential to damage the lucrative international student market. From a communication standpoint, a crisis is an organisational problem that is exposed to public attention through the media and, arguably, the most important document is the crisis communication plan and the professionals who can implement strategies successfully to minimise reputational risk. Reputation is ultimately a measure of trust and it is a challenge to put a value against reputation risk. Damage to reputation is almost impossible to measure before a crisis occurs and always easier after it. Damage is not just about financial cost, immediate or deferred, but it is about what it leaves in the way of diminished trust among stakeholders.

The significance of having a reliable measurement of reputation was evidenced when Australian media reported on a number of violent attacks against internationally enrolled Indian students who were studying in Australia. In order to properly prepare for the immediacy of any negative fallout from such publicity, corporate communication specialists and university senior executives need a highly structured, relevant issues indicator to help promote and counter communication messaging.

2.2.5 2010 Violent attacks on Indian Students in Australia

From January 2010, an emerging crisis developed following a series of violent attacks on Indian students in Australia. It was reported in the Sydney Morning Herald (April 13 2010) that Australia suffered real reputational damage, real economic cost and real diplomatic disadvantage following Indian student attacks in Victoria. A survey in India found Australia, previously considered the fifth most welcoming country for Indians, was now 40th (Sydney Morning Herald April 2010).

As global media reports developed, the risk to USQ's international student market was unclear. Higher education is Australia's third biggest export sector, worth $17 billion a year and the effects of the assaults were twofold (Sydney Morning Herald April 2010). Firstly, the total number of Indians studying in Australia was down by 5 percent in 2010 compared to 2009, about 1500 students, when the numbers from other major source countries were up. With the total average economic benefit to Australia of more than $34,000 per student per year, this meant an annual cost of approximately $50 million. Secondly, there was the loss of potential student numbers. The number of new Indian enrolments was down by 40 percent in 2010 compared to the previous year (Sydney Morning Herald 2010).

Strategic communication actions were developed and implemented to reduce the possible negative critical impact of declining international student numbers at USQ. Profiles on international students studying at USQ were produced and these appeared in Indian media provinces. The question of providing a communication measurement value was never raised in the course of dealing with this crisis.

During this time, I worked closely with the University's Audit and Risk Manager and became aware of a company named CorProfit Systems. CorProfit Systems is an Australian owned and managed company that has been assisting government organisations in the design and implementation of risk management systems since 1998 (CorProfit 2013). CorProfit's head office is in Sydney with branch offices in Johannesburg, Dubai and Toronto. The Company's aim is to transfer knowledge which enables organisations to effectively deal with and manage risks to which they might be exposed (CorProfit 2013).

The USQ RoP case study previously mentioned signalled interesting opportunities and directions to investigate an appropriate measure and value in incorporating community opinion in decision-making and identifying future strategic directions. I sought to understand whether the CorProfit risk-management system could be modified to provide a quantifiable measure of strategic communication initiatives, and therefore be used to raise the profile and importance of the work of Public Relations.

I consulted with the Director of Corporate Communications and Public Relations about the possibility of modifying a risk management system to measure the benefits of strategic communication. The Director suggested that this project merited scope for a Doctoral level approach.

Rogers (1996) defines that advancement in the field of experiential learning occurred when authors such as Mezirow, Freire and others stressed that the way we process experience, and our critical response to experience, are central to any conception of learning. They spoke of learning as a cycle that begins with experience, continues with reflection and later leads to action, which itself becomes a concrete experience for reflection (Rogers 1996).

As has been shown with examples, the higher education sector is required to provide measurement and benchmarking to show continuous improvement. Today, there is a constant need to measure and quantify activities and performance at universities (Thomson Reuters 2010). Between November 2004 and January 2008, Thomson Reuters commissioned and conducted a series of interviews with 89 college and university administrators in the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The research yielded information about the context for performance measurement in higher education (Thomson Reuters 2010). These leaders summed up the importance of performance measurement as an investment in quality. Measurements help them to set strategic goals, allocate budgets, and promote their institution's achievements to potential faculty, collaborators, funders, and students (Thomson Reuters 2010).

Institutional leaders were clear: no one expects the need for performance measures to abate (Thomson Reuters 2010). Institutions can no longer rely solely on peer assessment and past reputation; they must be able to measure current performance. Different institutions and different countries have varying needs, but the research conducted by Thomson Reuters (2010) acknowledged that college and university leaders worldwide stressed the requirement for objective, reliable data when it comes to gathering and applying the information they use to determine strategy and future direction at their respective institutions. They recognised the increasingly important role played by metrics in tasks such as resource allocation, fundraising, faculty evaluation, and program review (Thomson Reuters 2010), and they are seeking the right combination of evaluative content and tools to complement their current methodologies for measurement.

'Demonstrating the value of Public Relations/Communication to organisations' was rated the single most important key to advocating success and promoting the value of public relations and communication management in the 2011/2012 Global Public Relations Advocacy Survey (Global Alliance 2012).

Postle, Burton and Danaher (2014), in their book, Community Capacity Building, suggest that societies now demand that universities engage in ways that are meaningful, mutually respectful and attuned to the problems and issues that society sees as relevant. Effective community engagement allows universities to tap into different perspectives and potential solutions to improve the quality of its decisions, but living in a world where public monies must show profit maximisation for every dollar spent is frustrating when there is no definable measure for university executives to prove return-on-investment when engaging in strategic communication initiatives.

2.2.6 Critical Incidences

Failing to produce a measurable metric to satisfy university senior executives when implementing the 2009/2010 RoP internal and external strategic communication plans and delivering communication actions to minimise reputational damage during the 2010 international student crisis generated significant and powerful learning experiences. These critical incidences demonstrate the reason for undertaking this doctoral study to understand if the system developed could provide a relevant issues indicator to help promote the value of strategic communication in providing a reliable measurement of reputation.

2.3 The Problem

On the financial side, university senior executives are increasingly interested in measuring communication activities in terms of market value. This is in part due to having tighter budgets in a time of limited resources, but it is also the result of having new executive communication KPIs which establish a direct link between a university's intangible assets and performances. Strategic communication is an intangible, although it adds to the value, credibility and the ease with which universities operate. With the development of additional scrutiny around public monies, as well as the creation of industry standards, the connection between a university's communication activities, business outcomes and value creation necessitated a more definable accepted value measurement.

Now, more than ever, Vice-Chancellors are not only the thought leader but the face and voice of a university, setting the tone for the executive team and the university as a whole. Senior executives who think that communications can be delegated to the head of the corporate communication team are mistaken. In fact, in many organisations, the CEO acts in effect as the senior communications officer of the company.

As outcomes-based measures of communication develop, even the most reluctant senior executives will see the demonstrated value that communications brings to the implementation of strategy and will recognise the critical role they must play in that effort.

The problem to be addressed in this study is to understand how a communication measurement concept may deliver a quantitative performance indicator which enables university senior executives to place a value on areas where it matters most: its strategic communication to varied communities. Figure 12 shows the author's initial strategic communication measurement concept.

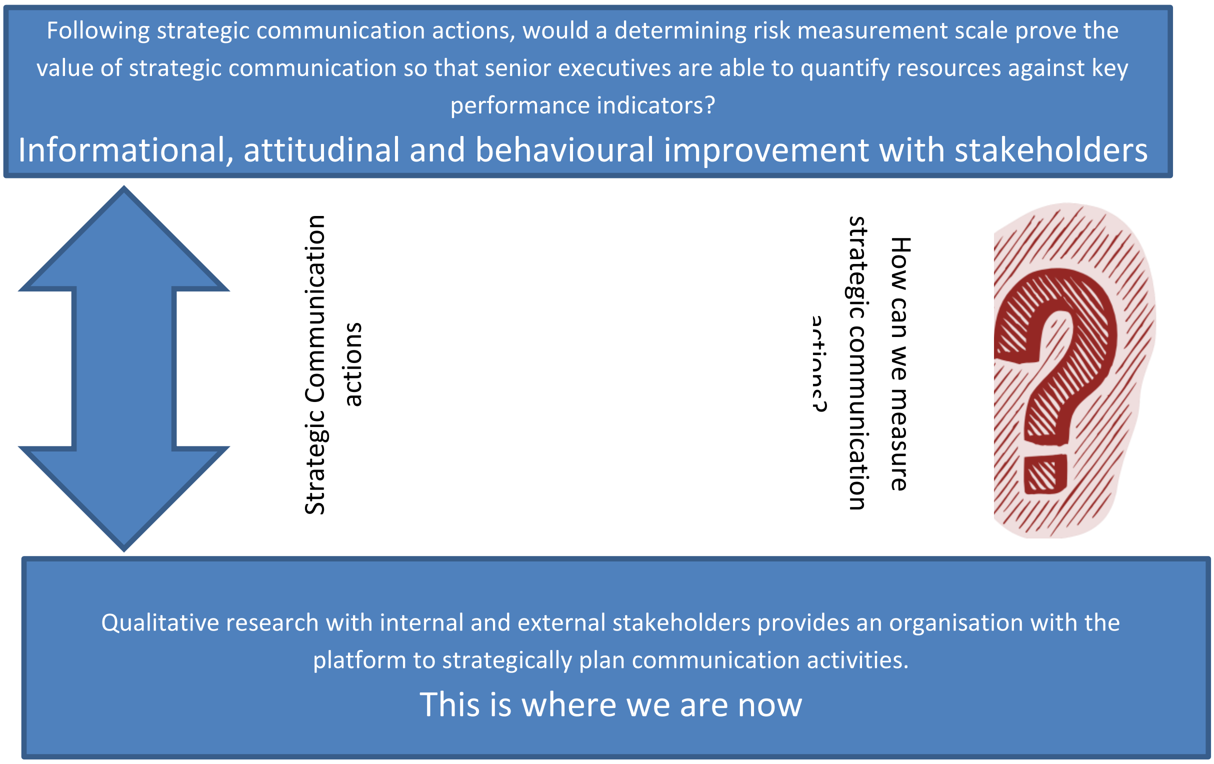


Figure 12: Initial strategic communication measurement concept

To explain further, a communication gap in an organisation means that the goals and objectives that are set by management are either not communicated to stakeholders or if communicated they have not been understood properly. If a stakeholder doesn't understand what an organisation is saying - maybe because of technical language, a foreign language or words of unknown meaning - that could be a communication gap. Communication gaps result in confusion amongst stakeholders, unclear motives, misaligned priorities and indecisive actions. Understanding stakeholder perceptions and then developing strategic communication actions to respond to issues results in corrective steps to rectify problems. The dilemma is how to measure the value of planned strategic communication initiatives to close the communication gap between an organisation and its stakeholders.

2.3.1 THE AIM

The aim of this study is to understand the characteristics of current-state communication needs of Australian universities by comparing the communication practices and organisational performance of Australian university Communication Directors congruent with the reputational demands of the workplace. It will be determined if there is a need to measure strategic communication value to better manage reputational issues in Australian universities and if the conceptual paradigm of this research study should be further developed. The investigation will action the research questions below:

- » Do senior executive in Australian universities believe stakeholder perceptions are important to overall reputation?
- » Do Australian universities passively participate with their stakeholders, or are they actively interacting to seek mutually beneficial outcomes?
- » Is it important to measure the risk of public issues and opinions to form the strategic direction of an organisation and to its overall reputation?

The thesis is primarily written from the perspective of an action research practitioner and has been largely drawn from experiences and learnings as a public relations specialist, supplemented later by rigorous academic research.

A sampling of Public Relations Departments in Australian universities was undertaken and an audit of current communication strategies was carried out to identify the potential development of a concept to measure the value of communicating strategically.

The concept of building a system to measure the value of strategic communication was established prior to commencing the Doctorate of Professional Studies (DPST) program at USQ. The indicator for communication measurement appeared of strategic importance, but further research was required to understand whether the model reached beyond exemplars suggested in current literature, and to explore the relevance of communication measurement in the higher education sector.

Through this doctoral research, it is anticipated that the study will increase foundation knowledge to benefit the discipline of Public Relations, and to my personal and professional development.

2.3.2 Approach

The approach adopted, and the methods of data collection selected, depends on the study and the type of information required. This study explores communication practices within the Australian Higher Education Sector to deliver a better understanding of the current practices and value that universities place on measuring strategic communication.

As Richard Hackman (1992) said 'The research question should drive the methodology . . . we take as a given whatever methodology we are comfortable with or skilled in using and then adjust our research questions to fit'.

The processes and methodology informing the study, and the subsequent development of this thesis, are founded on the approaches, processes and actions associated with work-based learning and action research (Armsby 2000, Armsby 2012, Cherry 1999, Costley 2010, Dick 2002, Garnett 2009, Lester 2004, McNiff 2000, Williams 2004, Zuber-Skerritt 2002) and the personal learning philosophies adopted by Kitchener (2006), Peters (2009) and Whitehead (2012).

In part, this study also considers how some universities have adopted a philosophical approach to strategic communication which impacts on their quality, effectiveness and responsiveness to their stakeholders, especially in times of crisis. Integral to this economic rationalist approach is the reliance on a university's abilities to operate efficiently and effectively in environments where change is constant.

Dick (2002) says that by using qualitative approaches quite imprecise research questions and methods can be used. These imprecise answers he says then help refine future questions and methods. Each cycle can be a step in the direction of better action and better research (Dick 2002).

A relevant description of work based learning is provided by Armsby who states:

> In work based learning, research, development and reflective practice are located within a real social and work based community that gives them meaning rather than in a hypothetical or devised scenario. The focus is in 'real' research and development projects and reflection on 'real' pragmatic and applied activities is what makes work based learning meaningful to practitioner researchers … a variety of influences within the organisation and the individual affect the worker researcher's perceptions and choice of methodology. These must be acknowledged and considered to enable a real project outcome or product (Armsby 2000, p 42).

In conclusion, the research approach, planning and development outlined in this thesis have been founded on the contemporary notions of work-based learning and action research. This has contributed new knowledge and a practical contribution to the professional theory and practice of public relations.

The following literature review provides the reader with a synopsis of:

- the public relations terms needed to understand this study; and
- an examination of previous research to identify the critical points of current knowledge, including substantive findings.

Chapter Three Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This literature review explores the definitions and themes relating to the research questions as proposed by the inferences in chapter two:

» Do senior executive in Australian universities believe stakeholder perceptions are important to overall reputation?
» Do Australian universities passively participate with their stakeholders, or are they actively interacting to seek mutually beneficial outcomes?
» Is it important to measure the risk of public issues and opinions to form the strategic direction of an organisation and to its overall reputation?

To appreciate the value of measuring strategic communication, I have examined what other researchers have written to gain a more in-depth understanding of the relevancy of this study. While it is not possible to refer to every piece of literature in the field of public relations, I have chosen topics which relate to my area of research.

The scope of this review provides an academic framework around the above questions by examining the significance of the general field of study, then identifying where a new contribution could be made. The following literature review provides the basis on which intellectual and applied analysis can be made.

The intent of the literature review is to show 'that the writer has studied existing work in the field with insight' (Haywood and Wragg 1982). While the term 'public relations' seems rather simple, the discipline has evolved and advanced through many phases since its inception, but unfortunately the term 'public relations' is still often misused and misunderstood. This is largely because it encompasses such a broad range of philosophies and techniques being conducted by a wide range of practitioners.

In this review an overview of the origin of public relations is provided to give clarity and greater understanding of past and present practice. The way the profession has evolved demonstrates parallel development in addressing the research questions of public relations measurement and evaluation.

To further explicate public relations terms needed to understand this study, later in this chapter the review will evaluate the differences between public relations and marketing and reputation and brand, before looking at the roles of leadership and management. Communication practices in contemporary universities and organisational culture and climate will be examined subsequent to investigating current trends in public relations measurement.

3.1.1 Evolution of Public Relations Practice

Although opinions differ about the exact origins of public relations, it is generally accepted that the underlying objective of public relations was to influence the public and mould their opinions. Public relations has been utilised by individuals, corporations and groups throughout history to induce understanding and develop good rapport with different audiences. Public relations industrialised as a professional endeavour in the 20th Century, most conspicuously in the United States, but its roots, both philosophical and pragmatic, can be traced throughout civilisation.

While theorists believe that public relations was born with the Neanderthal's trading techniques, the earliest concrete roots of public relations can be traced back to around 1800 BC in the Middle East (Cutlip 1995). Archeologists unearthed farm bulletins in Iran that exhibit a primitive attempt to influence farmers to use certain techniques. This type of public relations can be evidenced by ancient writings, pottery, hieroglyphs, and art. Other exact examples of archaic public relations can be found in Caesar's commentaries (Nolte 1974), as it was common practice to try and sway the population's opinion on rulers and leaders of the land.

The Catholic Church was one of the first organisations to employ a public relations group to help their cause. They formed the 'Society for the Propagation of the Faith' to raise public opinion of Roman Catholics and increase the membership of the Church. It is from this organisation that we get the term ‘propaganda’ which is used with a considerably broader meaning in public relations today (Nolte 1974). ‘The difference between propaganda and public relations is that propaganda presents an issue by focusing only on the good, and its success depends on a biased view of the issue. Public relations, on the other hand, strives to present an unbiased view and, in so doing, seeks to achieve mutual understanding between an institution or organisation and its publics’ (Du Plessis 2000).

Public relations as a career, and modern public relations in general, owes itself to three key men: Ivy Lee (1877-1934), Carl Byoir (1886-1957), and Edward L. Bernays (1891-1995) (Hiebert 1988). Lee is credited with making United States businessmen more communicative about their businesses by using press releases, providing more information rather than less, and listening to the opinion of the press and the public, which no one had really done before.

Carl Byoir, another early pioneer of public relations, concentrated on looking for what drove public opinion to support his client’s objectives. He designed one of the first successful public relations campaigns that advanced the work of a press agency to a more professional business (Spector 1997). As an accomplished strategist, Byoir led several other public relations campaigns and was asked and agreed to be a part of the United States Committee on Public Information, a year before Edward Bernays entered the organisation.

Edward L. Bernays is known as the father of modern public relations. He invented techniques that are still observed in the public relations career field today. Bernay's techniques were positioned on the heavy use of psychological influence and manipulation. He initially analysed the client’s problem and then analysed his stakeholders. His 1920s philosophy was quite comprehensive, but the defining difference in public relations today lies in the efforts to match both the client and stakeholder needs, as it is no longer acceptable to manipulate the public to achieve good business results.

It is unfortunate that many still associate negative connotations to the public relations profession because of campaigns run more than 100 years ago. Creating a ‘shift’ in the perception of public relations from stakeholder manipulation to stakeholder engagement is made more difficult by the historical functions of the profession.

While these key figures cultivated public relations, they were shaping the history of the United States. During the 1920s, Americans created a consumer culture in which automobiles, home appliances, and other goods were purchased at an unprecedented rate. Advertising helped to fuel this desire to purchase, and the popularity of radio and motion pictures helped to create a more uniform national culture. With the conception of democracy the value of public relations became more obvious; practices of persuasion and influence were utilised to bring a consensus between the multitudes of stakeholders, but without effective dissemination of facts, interaction between groups and an exchange of ideas, a democratic society could not succeed.

Although Edward Bernays is often cited as the most influential figure of public relations practice, it was Arthur Page who introduced systematic opinion research into corporate public relations and organisational communication. He championed the use of surveys which were to be an important factor in developing a customer-facing culture. ‘He deserves credit for recognising the need for feedback and encouraging development of systems to gauge the moods of publics. Integration of formal feedback systems into the public relations function is one of his contributions to public relations practice’ (Griese 2001, p. 122).

This timeline narrative provides a brief overview of the evolution of public relations as it is important for the reader to understand how a profession that can be traced back to biblical times has not addressed the issue of evaluation and measurement.

While the first exhibitions of public relations were inadvertent and simply an attempt at persuasion, the later uses were well crafted and took on more of the aspects we relate to public relations today. As people began to see how important it was to gain the support and help of the public, groups began to employ strategy and technique in an attempt to reach the optimum number of people while achieving maximum results. Public relations professionals and organisations began to monitor press coverage as a way of measuring the value of their and others' activities, but these measurement techniques were often distorted as initial attempts to show potential clients the value of public relations activities were excessively biased.

In 1942, Harlow wrote that public relations practitioners and their employers 'should not be impressed by sheaves of press clippings' (p. 43) as a volume indicator of what was going on. Most books on public relations across the initial 40-50 year period discussed measurement of the volume of press coverage, its length in column inches and whether it was positive or negative. The creation of the clippings or cuttings book became an art form with thick card paper on which clippings were mounted. Plackard and Blackmon gave this advice in 1947: 'The publicist must learn the art of "pepping up" publicity results. Publicity clippings as such are not sufficiently interesting to show to a client. However, they can be dressed up or dramatised in unusual ways' (p. 299). Examples given included 'trick photography' by blowing cuttings up and then printing large sheets of folded card on which they were placed; graphic presentation of cuttings beneath newspaper mastheads; and displays on large display boards, especially in hall corridors to emphasise the volume.

Although professional public relations has certainly been misused from time to time, its record of historical achievement suggests a much deeper and abiding respect for, and adherence to, openness and honesty in its dealings and communications. Publicity had always continued as a practice, but it was seen as a delivery sub-set of public relations. The mid-century view, expressed by Griswold and Griswold (1948), was that public relations was a management function to create relationships and 'earn public understanding and acceptance' (p. 4). Plackard and Blackmon (1947) separated public relations, as 'the administrative philosophy of an organisation' which 'stems from corporate character and over-all operations' from publicity, which was 'the art of influencing opinion by special preparation and dissemination of news' (p. 14). Communication or publicity was therefore delivery and dialogue processes, but not public relations itself.

That view changed quickly as consumer products were developed and notions of corporate and product brands grew. Public relations lost that holistic concept and became typified by publicity practices. L'Etang (2004), writing about the 1960s, summarised the changed situation as: 'business managers saw public relations as a cheap way of getting media coverage in comparison with advertising'. As a profession we had returned to past practices of swaying public opinion through media channels in an attempt to manipulate the populace. During the 1960s, the parallel impact on public relations measurement and evaluation was a move away from the social science-led emphasis on public opinion research to a more pragmatic analysis of media coverage, which was to dominate the second half of the 20th century.

Beginning in the late 1970s enterprises began understanding the consumer movement and vowed to keep the public educated so that each individual could exercise 'sound judgment' (Pearson 1990). As a natural response to a rapidly changing society, public relations was forced to grow and metamorphose. As the community culture became increasingly specialised and complex, public relations as a profession began to mature. Organisations sought the assistance of public relations professionals more readily to engage with their communities. The big companies and businesses that profited from the technological boom were no longer in touch with the community. Their sights were too large to relate to individual consumers and they took for granted the public that kept them afloat.

All this condescension among big corporations bred an overwhelming anti-business sentiment (Pearson 1990). Public relations came back in force to convey big business sentiments to the population. Seeing how the tide of public notions affects their industry, entrepreneurs and professionals changed their tune from that of 'damn the public' to 'inform the public' (Pearson 1990).

Since the industries and entities represented by public relations have become accountable, the field of public relations has gained a lot of respect for being honest and not just fooling the public.

In the past, public relations exhausted all available outlets for disseminating information and, as designs grew more complex and inventions became more common, public relations was strengthened. The telephone, television and radio all helped foster the public relations industry and facilitate its expansion. Over the last three decades the public relations industry has been enhanced by the advent of more convenient technology. Agencies are now able to utilise satellites to transmit information much faster and more efficiently. In addition to being able to reach multitudes of people almost effortlessly, software and computing techniques are making the transmissions more professional and persuasive with graphics and designs. The common-place of computers has also fueled the explosion of public relations and would seem to dictate that the industry could only be headed upward (Newsom 1993).

Today, public relations has developed into a multimillion-dollar industry. Most modern developments in public relations are linked with political reform movements, as public relations is an important part of politics, playing a major part in who becomes elected and what laws are passed. Politicians use public relations to keep themselves in good standing with the public, which is very necessary for their job. What began as mere publicity has grown to include many other uses, from interpreting public opinion and its impact on an organisation to researching ways of helping a business to maintain its goals.

In 2014, the definition of public relations as adopted by the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) is, 'Public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation (or individual) and its (or their) publics. It's the key to effective communication in all sectors of business, government, academic and not-for-profit' (PRIA 2014). Philip Lesly's Handbook of Public Relations and Communication describes public relations simply as: helping an organisation and its publics adapt mutually to each other (Lesly 1997).

The evolution of public relations practices outlined in this section have shown that the fascination of practitioners with media relations strategies and tactics have remained consistently prominent. Methods described by Batchelor (1938) and Harlow (1942), such as frequency, reach, and tonality of media references are widely-demanded practices in measurement and evaluation. Validating a communication measurement is important as it is the evidence that shows if change leads to improvement. Measurement is the foundation in establishing credibility. However, academic discussion of measurement and evaluation has taken more than 70 years to gain traction, with the 1970s being the starting point (Watson 2003).

By 1990 the range of methods for research into the effectiveness of public relations had been well-established and excellently presented in Broom and Dozier's seminal text (1990). Yet, despite extensive discussion in academic journals and books (Broom and Dozier 1990; Stacks 2002; Watson and Noble 2007), no applied theory of public relations measurement and evaluation has been developed. Methods have been adapted from social sciences and market research, but no theory proposed. As Watson (2003) says, perhaps this signifies an immature profession, which is unconfident in its practices.

It appears that the public relations profession became lost in the 1960s as practice returned to responsibilities of increasing publicity to gain organisational advantage. It was a time of enormous change and computer technological advances launched the age of information. The need to measure and evaluate public relations activities stalled as many practitioners monitored activities by simple measurement of volume. The Author agrees with Watson (2003) that the approaches of public relations have a considerable history, and early efforts to search for a method of measurement were suspended through the repetition of themes during the emergence of the information age.

In recent years, public relations professionals have moved toward an emphasis on building and maintaining organisations' internal and external relationships and on becoming skilled, active counsellors at the executive-level decision-making table. Driving this latest evolutionary movement are influential societal trends: global business operations; the empowerment of public opinion within the global community; segmented, fragmented audiences; the information explosion that has led to uncontrolled, gateless dissemination of messages; increasing government regulation and oversight; issues of diversity and multiculturalism in the workplace; and the introduction of technology, including automation and computerisation.

The next section reviews the maturing of the public relations profession, specifically the role of the strategic communicator in the arena of public relations.

3.1.2 Strategic Communication

Communication is one aspect of an organisation that is often unappreciated because communication is continuous and takes place in so many forms. However, communication in a strategic sense is much more than simply creating awareness. It is a way to create the effects and outcomes needed to achieve results. The communication strategy is a plan that serves as a blueprint when significant events or issues arise, as it assists to organise information that needs to be communicated, identifies concerns that may be raised, and ensures the proper audiences are reached. It is a key tool driving the success of organisations.

What does it mean to be strategic? Strategy is the art and science of directing a systematic plan of action toward a specific, intended result (Walkington 2011). It entails linking clear objectives to actions, evaluated to assess the result (Walkington 2011). Strategic communication planning, then, is the process of guiding alignment between the communication function and an organisation's core objectives. It is about aligning organisation work groups, departments, divisions and external stakeholders with its overarching goals and objectives. Strategic communication requires deliberately developing plans, tactics and messages to help promote reputation and performance.

Being strategic is a state of mind - taking a step back from the noise to consider how communication activities contribute to an organisation's desired end state (Kealey

2009). It is also about finding creative solutions to help an organisation maximise positive opportunity for profile or goodwill, while minimising potential risk exposure. There is nothing more relevant to the communications function than contributing strategic value.

The most successful strategic communication endeavours not only aim to communicate in order to influence a target public or to advance an organisation's mission, but encompass rational debate to achieve understanding, dialogic communication and authenticity. Public relations as a profession matured from its origin of manipulating public opinion with communication messages to considering the public's needs, concerns and expectations.

Further maturation of public relations can be observed in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* where Jurgen Habermas postulates that the concept of a public sphere was formed when journalism became a public institution with the aim of promoting public debate (1987 p. 182). Strategic communication practitioners began to apply this concept to facilitate rational debate and achieve understanding among target publics. While debates are rarely conclusive, they constitute a complex source of social power, trust and legitimacy for individuals and organisations both in private and government settings (Jensen 2002).

According to Habermas, a public sphere is formed when citizens communicate, either face-to-face or through letters, journals, newspapers or other mass media, in order to express their opinions about matters of general interest, and to subject these opinions to rational discussion (Edgar 2005, p. 30). For Habermas, the success of the public sphere is dependent upon rational and critical discussion where all participants are able to equally engage, and achieving audience understanding is the ultimate goal. There is a clear distinction between achieving understanding and achieving consensus. The concepts and preconditions of the public sphere are still relevant and should be further developed to reflect on public relations as a profession in its societal context (Jensen 2002).

New technologies and digital communication platforms demonstrate ways in which various publics, including lay people and experts, can collaborate and communicate openly to achieve understanding. For example, the online news forum *The Conversation* is an independent source of analysis, commentary and news from the university and research sector (Jaspan 2012). It aims to provide a space in which individuals and organisations can engage in public debate and discussion across a diverse range of topical issues of concern. One of the key objectives of *The Conversation* is to make evidence-based content accessible and useful to both experts and lay publics by combining 'academic rigour with journalistic flair' (Jaspan 2012). In many ways, *The Conversation* exemplifies a contemporary working public sphere, as it embodies Habermasian values and attributes and puts them into practice.

Digital platforms like *The Conversation* are arguably setting a new standard for ethical journalism, news reporting and more broadly strategic communication, by challenging traditional content creation and dissemination processes, and deliberately refuting accepted views of the industry as untrustworthy, sensationalist, and biased. It has become clear that in today's contemporary communication environment organisations can no longer simply 'deliver' key messages to disengaged and passive publics.

It was shown in chapter two, through the negative publicity received following USQ's RoP Review, that stakeholders have the potential to negatively impact on a university's reputation if they perceive a lack of strategic engagement. Successful strategic communication is about meaningful engagement and building relationships with key audiences. In the areas of welfare, health, crime, employment, education and the environment, achieving significant progress requires the active involvement and cooperation of citizens (Australian Public Service Commission 2007).

Since the development of digital communication and the 24-hour news cycle, audiences are relentlessly bombarded with a multitude of communication messages. The result is that audiences are hugely accessible to communication professionals, and are more discerning when it comes to the products they purchase, the brands they align themselves with, and the messages they choose to take on board. The need to convey authenticity and transparency in communication is more important now than ever before. Organisational actions can be communicated or exposed to global audiences within a matter of seconds, better educated publics process information in greater quantities, and an increase in online activist and consumer groups has decreased the probability that a problematic organisational action will slip under the radar (Botan 1997).

If organisations strategically share who they are, their values, their knowledge and, importantly, their mistakes, they will appear more visible, genuine, and available when engaging with publics and when future public relations and communication opportunities arise. If organisations mask their identities with an expectation of avoiding public scrutiny, they risk compromising their credibility as a leader or trusted source in their field and with their audiences.

Strategic communication is about more than merely planning for the long term, implementing a set of tactics, and being aware of the ever changing external communication environment. It's about fostering rational debates to achieve understanding among publics' working within a dialogic communication paradigm to build relationships, and recognising the importance of maintaining authenticity in organisational messaging.

In the contemporary communication setting where digital communication platforms are now widely available, organisations and individuals are constantly under scrutiny, and any weaknesses can be very rapidly and very publicly unearthed. The field of strategic communication would arguably attract less criticism and scepticism if practitioners adopted an underlying principle of authenticity, and worked towards the Habermasian concept of a public sphere.

The Author agrees with Shayna Englin (2013) that being strategic means communicating the best message, through the right channels, measured against well-considered organisational and communication specific goals. It's the difference between doing communications stuff, and doing the right communications stuff (Englin 2003). Tom Keleher, Chair of the School of Communications at the University of Hawaii, said that the opposite of strategic communications is 'seat of the pants' communications (Keleher 2013).

Warren Mason, Professor of Business and Communication Studies at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire, says that in his course, strategic communication is about dealing with 'issues that might jeopardize an organisation's very survival', and nothing to do with marketing (Mason 2013).

To Mason, it's about 'Issues Management/Planning' and is an effort to anticipate problems and crises before they occur. Mason says, 'For example, with an internal audience, such as employees, this planning could include planning for a potential layoff by management or a strike by employees. As to external threats, this could be anything from a fire or explosion at a place of employment, to an oil spill improperly handled by a large oil company, or workplace violence anytime, anywhere'. These issues can be internally or externally driven, and call for a strategic communication plan, meticulous implementation, and diplomatic follow-up. 'Proper media relations, both during and after these scenarios, will drive perceptions in the court of public opinion and greatly impact the organisation's image and reputation' (Mason 2013).

Our collective future depends on all components of our societies and all sectors of our economies communicating and functioning with greater effectiveness for the public good.

Over the last two decades, the term 'strategic communications' has become more prevalent. It means infusing communication efforts with an agenda and a master plan. Typically, that master plan involves promoting the reputation of an organisation. The field of communications is broad, encompassing professionals who create news or want to push information to the public (public relations, public information), people who deliver news and media to the public (journalists), and people who study the interplay of media and society (researchers).

The leaders of institutions need to understand the attitudes and values of their publics in order to achieve institutional goals. In 2011/12, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) led an international effort to modernise the definition of public relations. PRSA initiated a crowdsourcing campaign and public vote that produced the following definition:

> Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics (PRSA 2012).

This research has shown that the definition succinctly describes the basic concept of public relations - as a communication process, one that is strategic in nature and emphasising 'mutually beneficial relationships'. Taking a structured approach to communication, based on identifying perceived stakeholder issues and defining how outcomes can be reached, is achieved through a strategic communication plan.

This study will determine the practices of corporate communication offices in the Australian university sector to understand whether senior executives believe stakeholder perceptions are important to overall reputation, and to investigate current procedures and measurement for interacting with stakeholders to seek mutually beneficial outcomes.

The next section provides context to the various elements involved in creating a strategic communication plan.

3.1.3 The Elements of a Strategic Communication Plan

In helping to define and implement policy, the public relations practitioner uses a variety of professional communication skills and plays an integrative role both within the organisation and between the organisation and the external environment (PRSA, 2013).

The following diagram (Figure 13) shows Argenti's Corporate Communication Strategy Framework where communication messages are channelled through to constituencies for feedback before a decision is made whether to revise the message or proceed. The Framework shows how to communicate effectively with an organisation's stakeholders.

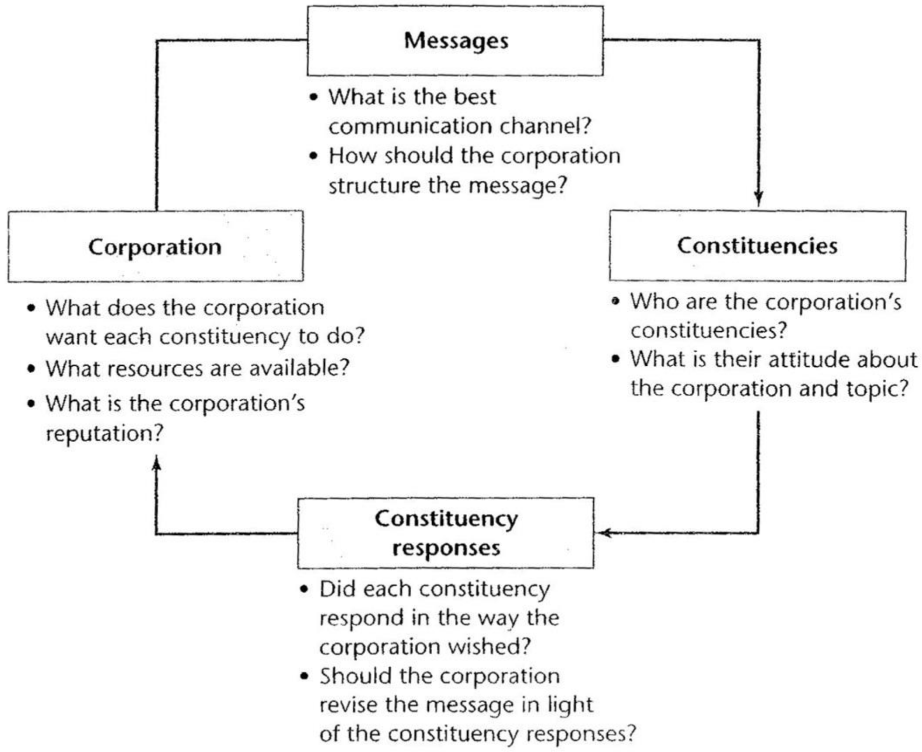


Figure 13: Power of Corporate Communication - Argenti 2007

A strategic communications plan defines strategic, actionable goals, and implements an approach and plan to guide communicators and others in designing, preparing and executing strategic communications. It frames internal and external communications, and clarifies priorities, target audiences, resources, media activities and staff assignments.

The document devises a strategic framework around communications, recommends appropriate communication tools, guides key messaging, strengthens reputation and positions an organisation for each stakeholder group, given the diversity and different needs, drivers and channels of these audiences.

The elements are basically the same whether the institution is a business, trade union, government agency, voluntary association, hospital, school, university or religious institution. To achieve their goals, organisations must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders and other institutions, and with society.

A communications plan affirms and is driven by the organisation's goals and outcomes, its vision, as expressed in a mission statement, and its values and beliefs. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) describes the strategic communication plan as a management function which encompasses the following:

» Anticipating, analysing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organisation;

» Counselling management at all levels in the organisation with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organisation's social or citizenship responsibilities;

» Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organisation's aims. These may include marketing, financial; fund raising' employee, community or government relations, and other programs;

» Planning and implementing the organisation's efforts to influence or change public policy. Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities - in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above (PRSA 2014, p. 6).

When Bill Gates left Microsoft in 2008, he took two staff members with him, his Chief Financial Officer and his Strategic Communication Advisor. Named as one of the 12 greatest entrepreneurs of our time by Fortune Magazine, Gates is quoted in his biography by Rodney Ohebsion (2012):-

> ‘It’s important to have someone who you totally trust, who is totally committed, who shares your vision, and yet who has a little bit different set of skills and who also acts as something of a check on you. Some of the ideas you run by him, you know he’s going to say, “Wait a minute, have you thought about ...”’, Bill Gates.

So what does a public relations/strategic communication advisor do? Melcrum (2013) states that professionals add value to an organisation through:-

- Business knowledge
- Stakeholder understanding
- An ear to the ground
- Speaking people’s language
- Making the complex simple
- Raising awareness, spotting the ‘what’s in it for me’
- Taking the helicopter view
- Developing plans, advising on channels
- Implementing the plans.

It is acknowledged in the Melcrum Pty Ltd Black Belt Program (2013) that the following steps are essential in the development of a strategic communication plan:-

1. State the business needs
2. Define the communication objectives
3. Set out the measure
4. Understand and segment audiences
5. Develop key messages
6. Develop approaches and tactics
7. Define roles and responsibilities (p. 2:2).

To explain and give further understanding of the elements included in a one page strategic communication plan, an example of USQ’s Office of Corporate

Communication and Public Relations external strategic communication plan appears in Figure 14.

USQ Corporate Communications and Public Relations 2013 Strategic Communication Framework

Desired goal

Ensure USQ is recognised as a thriving, contemporary university, renowned for its connectedness, leadership in providing higher education opportunities to a diverse student population, graduate employability, leadership in the provision of regionally-relevant research and its global impact from a regional base in Queensland.

Objectives

- To profile USQ's research excellence and regional expertise locally, nationally and globally
- To position USQ as the global authority in the areas of agriculture science, hydrology and climatology
- To increase enrolments and improve student retention and engagement
- To raise USQ's profile in the digital learning space; nationally and globally
- To reinforce USQ's commitment to providing educational leadership in its home regions of southern and western Queensland, northern NSW, Toowoomba, Springfield and Fraser Coast
- To increase the University's responsiveness to a rapidly changing, competitive and expanding university sector
- To ensure all communication for the University is clear, consistent and impactive.

Strategic approach

- Ensure all communication reflects and supports the four pillars of the Strategic Plan:
  - **Personalised learning** – focus on promoting the student experience and differentiating USQ through highlighting the practical, relevant and innovative modes of education delivery with an individualised approach to learning
  - **Focused research** – promote USQ as a 'living laboratory for regional issues with national significance' – highlight leadership, projects and achievements and strong industry and collaborative partnerships. Research focus to concentrate on the agriculture Landscape and environment; and regional systems/regional resilience
  - **Enriched communities** – demonstrate the work USQ does in local communities and regions, promote its leadership in social inclusion/access to education, profile USQ's results in strengthening regional resilience
  - **Engaged enterprise** – highlight the expertise and achievements of USQ's staff and the University's commitment to evidence based decision-making and continuous improvement; build, manage and protect USQ's reputation as a diverse, distinguished and thriving University that is a vital and active component of regional Queensland and advances local, national and global issues of significance through regionally-relevant research
- Differentiate USQ through profiling its leadership positions in research, regional issues and social inclusion/access
- Focus on achievements/success stories of the University and its people (eg. Indigenous Nursing Program graduates) to demonstrate the significance of USQ's results and bring the culture to life
- Ensure all communication is interesting, relevant, targeted and informative
- Monitor success of key messages and communication channels and revise plan as required

Key opportunities and challenges

Opportunities

- Build on USQ's regional expertise to raise awareness and create an understanding and knowledge about USQ's research capacity in regional issues with global relevance – use this as a competitive advantage/value proposition for the University
- Strengthen and expand USQ's reputation for high quality online learning – leverage digital identity and current political focus on online learning
- Leverage the Strategic Plan and academic restructure as mechanisms to drive communication
- Highlight USQ's leadership in the provision of equitable/inclusive education
- Leverage membership of Regional Universities Network and current media, industry and political focus on regional issues to demonstrate leadership in this sector

Challenges

- Competing with established 'research' universities for recognition and funding – there is increasing ownership of the 'research' space
- Issues with internal communication – lack of cross unit communication, inaction, lack of flexibility, managing academic restructure
- Maintaining/increasing student retention – competing with new players, new offerings
- Policy issues during Federal Election – HEPP funding; opening up online learning
- Academics over sharing intellectual property, damaging USQ's competitive advantage
- Lack of awareness of USQ's programs through lack of promotion – less advertising, more public relations
- Smarter Australia paper focused on the G8 universities
- Dislocation – need to be 'seen' more throughout target markets and stakeholder locations to be top of mind/reinforce key advantages

Narrative drivers

Leaders in learning

- We are leaders in innovative and flexible education delivery and supporting people throughout their time at USQ.

Champions of regional research

- We are leaders in the provision of regionally-relevant research of matters that have local, national and global significance.

Ambassadors for local communities

- We are committed to capacity building in our local communities and supporting regional development through productive partnerships.

World-class people and systems

- Our staff are leaders in their fields and are supported by world-class infrastructure and a strong focus on continuous improvement and innovation.

Communication tools

Industry/ community e-newsletter	**Promotions/ competitions**	**Student Profiles**	**Media releases**	**Social media**	**USQ chat**	**External speaking engagements**	**Campus events**	**Careers Expos**

Figure 14: Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations Communication Plan

It has been shown leaders understand that communicating strategically with stakeholders is important; we can produce communication plans to assist the business objectives of an organisation, but the gap still appears to be in our ability to produce sound metrics to measure the benefits of delivering this overall intelligence. For this reason, it is very often that credit is not afforded to the communication department.

The practice of public relations has transformed markedly over the last 100 years from one of manipulation and propaganda to the more common practice of research and stakeholder engagement. Professionals are commonly questioned about the terms of marketing and public relations so, to provide clarification, the next section provides a brief outline of marketing and public relations, and reputation and brand.

3.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

Some refer to the confusion between marketing and public relations as a 'turf war'. As public relations professionals, we are often asked how public relations differs from marketing. It's easy to describe from a tactical point of view, however the difficulty often lies in articulating how each role contributes to business success.

Public relations is often misunderstood, and it is probably the fault of the public relations industry that most people are not sure about the role of public relations. Much depends on the public relations professional's role within an organisation. Does he or she report to the CEO, or service the marketing department? Such categorisation can hide the wider role of public relations as a form of communication designed to aid in generating understanding among stakeholders, rather than just achieving awareness and publicity. When working in the marketing field, the public relations manager can, therefore, suffer from misunderstandings about his or her role as a particular kind of communicator. Research has indicated that the traditional marketing mix approach can prove very restrictive (Gummesson 1987) in strategy development, particularly as it appears unsuited to the modern dynamic environment of public relations (O'Malley and Patterson 1998).

The Public Relations Society of America defines 'public relations' as:

> Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics (PRSA 2012).

The American Marketing Association defines 'marketing' as:

> Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organisational goals (AMA 2013).

Though related, I believe that marketing and public relations are very different strategies as there are four key areas of difference:

1. Traditionally, marketing is paid advertising and public relations focuses on purpose-driven, active dialogue with an organisation's stakeholders with the goal of developing visibility and a positive corporate reputation. Marketing efforts require financial investment to purchase advertising space or to sanction a campaign. Public relations is focused on creating awareness, goodwill and a climate of opinion amongst stakeholders that will translate into support for the organisation.

2. Marketing focuses on the market and building sales, and public relations is a management function that helps an organisation build healthy, mutually supportive relationships with all its key publics, both internal and external.

3. Marketing is about finding the right creative angle to package products or services in ways that draw an audience. Public relations on the other hand focuses on reducing conflict and improving cooperation with an organisation's stakeholders.

4. Perhaps one of the biggest differences between marking and public relations is the level of control. Marketing has full authority over promotional materials, as they enjoy paid advertising. With public relations, once a story is released there is no control over how the media presents information.

> Public relations uses media as a communication channel in a more traditional way with the tone of a news story.

The key to public relations is that it does not just happen, but rather is a process that is planned and controlled (Argenti 2007). Another definition highlights the importance of 'objectives':

> Public relations consists of all form of communications outwards and inwards, between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding (Jefkins, 1994, p. 84).

The stress here is on 'specific objectives' - if there are specific, measureable objectives it then becomes possible to evaluate results. This makes public relations accountable, cost-effective and tangible. To be successful, and justify the effort and cost, a public relations program has to be organised like a marketing strategy, an advertising campaign or a production schedule. The nature of public relations can be seen as solving problems and changing attitudes, which is rather more complex than the one so often advanced of seeking favourable images, favourable coverage and favourable climates of opinion (Jefkins 1994).

According to Center and Jackson (2003) the public relations practitioner serves two masters - the first is their employer and the second is the public interest. The media, they suggest, often stands between the two.

The ongoing challenge is to track and rate public relations activities against specific KPIs. We can use 'media monitors' to document when and where a story was published and compare that coverage to what it would cost to buy the space (AVE, advertising value equivalents). We can also look at readership figures, the number of times a key message appears in a piece of editorial, and by conducting awareness research. Marketing is more trackable, directly related to a promotion, to a lead, but the true breadth or power of public relations is much broader.

As Jane Toohey, a Melbourne-based marketing and business consultant, said, ‘It seems that justifying the value of public relations is a battle, especially if the client does not fully believe in the value of public relations’ (WNA Blog 2012).

It has been shown that the roles and responsibilities of public relations and marketing professionals vary depending on the position required within an organisation. The Author strongly contends that these roles are different, and confusion, both within and outside organisations, is fuelled by grouping the two professions into one department. The marketing profession appears to have advanced as CEOs are able to produce a KPI for expenditure for this function.

Wealth creation through marketing activities can be measured in universities through the number of student applications, number of enrolments, number of dollars brought to the university per student load, completion rates and graduation rates. Public relations objectives continue to go unmeasured in a form that CEOs can recognise and benchmark against a KPI. This tension between public relations and marketing has been heightened by changing government policy (less funding afforded to public relations as it cannot be shown how resources allocated to public relations activities raises a significant component to budgets).

At USQ, marketing, corporate communication, public relations, events, employee communication, external and community relations, and branding activities are currently undertaken by disparate work areas. Whilst all of these areas have components of their responsibilities which relate to strategic communication, stated goals and objectives are the functional domain of the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations (among a diverse range of other functions performed by this work area). However, while the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations is responsible for the development of a strategic framework and plan, and the provision of supporting tools and tactics for internal and external communication, the actual implementation and operation of any strategy and action is the responsibility of all USQ executives, managers and employees.

Through this study, the role of public relations professionals in the Australian higher education sector will be investigated. The response will provide increased understanding in knowing if a system that measures stakeholder consultation will be beneficial to the Australian university sector.

The next section examines the difference between an organisation's reputation and an organisation's brand.

3.2.1 The Difference Between Reputation and Brand

Reputation is a much used word today. Pick up a newspaper and turn to the business, sport or travel section and you will find the word reputation in relation to a person, organisation or place. The terms 'brand' and 'reputation' are frequently confused and often used inaccurately. Many executives talk about corporate reputation and brand as if they are one and the same. So it's not surprising that marketing (the traditional domain of brand management) and public relations (the traditional domain of reputation management) have blurred as well.

According to Ettenson and Knowles (2008) they are not the same, and confusing the two can lead to costly mistakes. The confusion arises because the term 'brand' is used very loosely and so has come to encompass everything from visual identity, to advertising, to culture and, yes, reputation. The recent series of corporate scandals and executive misdeeds, which include incidences reported about the Australian higher education sector, has placed a renewed emphasis on protecting and enhancing corporate reputation. This renewed emphasis on protecting and enhancing reputation is both reflected in – and fuelled by – the growing number of reputation rankings published in the media.

It is interesting to note that Professor Jan Thomas, USQ Vice-Chancellor and President, spoke at a 2013 all staff forum about reputation – one of USQ's apical key performance indicators. Reputation is a challenging indicator and not one that is often used in the higher education sector. So, you may ask - what is reputation? (Thomas 2013).

The short answer is that for USQ, reputation has a bearing on the University's value. USQ's reputation is influenced by performance, policies and people, but ultimately it is the stakeholders who decide what the reputation of the University actually is. A stakeholder is anyone affected by an organisation and we commonly group stakeholders by interest groups – government, business, high school leavers, etc. It is of course possible to have a good reputation with one group and a poor one with another.

There is significant confusion about whether 'brand' and 'reputation' are the same thing. The true nature of a brand is as a customer-centric concept that focuses on what value the product (or service or company) promises to deliver to the customer. Brands are therefore about relevance, difference and added value to the customer. A strong brand helps communicate that the company and its offerings are relevant and uniquely able to meet customer needs. By contrast, reputation is a company-centric concept that focuses on the credibility and respect that an organisation enjoys among a broad set of stakeholders. Reputation is therefore about legitimacy and the perception of the company as a responsible employer and valued member of the community. Reputation affects stakeholder confidence, staff recruitment, consumer attitudes and a myriad of other factors in its capacity as relationship capital. A brand is created and controlled by an organisation, but a reputation is something that is attributed to it by others.

As mentioned, reputation is one of two apical key performance indicators for USQ – the other being financial. There are many ways to capture the notion of reputation and USQ is currently measuring media exposure and trialling an instrument that tests the sentiment in the media. The University has quantitative data which shows how we are benchmarking in the sector but Professor Thomas invited staff to consider and provide feedback on – 'What constitutes a good reputation?' (Thomas 2013).

Professor Thomas outlined the Arlo Brady model (2005) that lists seven elements of reputation management for staff to consider:-

- Knowledge and skills – employee talent pool;

- Emotional connections – consumers' perception of value, stakeholder alignment;
- Leadership and vision – governance style and practice, motivation and vision;
- Quality – products and service delivery;
- Financial credibility – history of creating better returns;
- Social credibility – good citizen; and
- Environmental credibility.

The difficulty facing the senior executive of USQ with naming reputation as one of the apical key performance indicators, is finding a way to accurately measure performance in this area.

Over a period of seven years Hill and Knowlton Strategies, a company which offers expert strategic communication advice in 52 countries around the world, conducted 150,000 interviews on corporate brand and reputation in order to arrive at robust, data-driven definitions of brand and reputation, and to explore the interaction between the two concepts (Zandan & Lustina 2013). Similar to the definitions offered by USQ, the survey's analysts defined brand as 'the sum of perceptions, held primarily by a company's current and potential customers or clients, about a company's specific product, service, or line of products or services'; and the definition of reputation as the sum of perceptions about a company's corporate actions held by the public in the areas where the company operates.

Hill and Knowlton Strategies claims, 'In order to manage Brand and Reputation properly, companies first need a straightforward, repeatable strategy for measuring each'. Across hundreds of studies, they have seen the best results from a four-step process:

1. Identify key attributes for brand(s) – e.g. value, shopping experience, expertise, client/patient results.

2. Identify key attributes for reputation – e.g. community engagement, sustainability, job creation.

3. Identify key stakeholders – e.g. current and potential customers or clients, investors, legislators, suppliers, opinion leaders, general public.

4. Survey stakeholders regularly over time – quarterly key-attribute surveys are optimal for most audiences. Monitoring differences in attribute ratings over time allows firms to pinpoint potential threats to brand and reputation. In a stable environment, less frequent monitoring may suffice while more frequent monitoring is recommended after any crisis on brand or reputation fronts.

After baseline research on any major internal or external event, Hill and Knowlton Strategies recommends reviewing the attributes monitored to ensure the list provides complete coverage. It will also ensure any themes that are emerging in the qualitative portions of the monitoring are included (Zandan & Lustina 2013).

As thought leaders in the reputation field, global public relations firm, Weber Shandwick, and its research arm, KRC Research, conducted similar research to Hill and Knowlton Strategies asking both consumers and executives to answer the frequently-raised question from corporate officers about how brand and reputation are evolving in this new see-through, nowhere-to-hide world (Shandwick 2012). The research aimed to help marketing and communication executives adjust to what they could foresee as a tectonic shift in communicating the voice of the 'enterprise' to key stakeholders. The research was conducted in October and November 2011 among 1,375 consumers (ages 18+) and 575 senior executives in companies with revenue of $500 million or more. Respondents were located in four key markets: two developed markets (United States and United Kingdom) and two emerging markets (China and Brazil) (Shandwick 2012).

The results of this research showed that corporate reputation and brand reputation are now nearly indivisible. It was found that the importance of a firm's reputation matters more than ever and is unified with the reputation of product brands to create one powerful enterprise brand. Consumers want assurance that their well-earned dollars are spent on products produced by companies that share their values. They have higher expectations for the companies and the brands they like, and are not hesitant to turn their backs when they are disappointed or fooled. Because employee treatment and wrongdoing are now staples of consumer discussions when companies are discussed, executives should be vigilant about building better internal cultures and being as transparent as possible when the chips are down. As their research confirms, executives are right to be paying greater attention to reputation-building internally and externally and should never lose sight of engaging with their stakeholders (Shandwick 2012).

An organisation should make every effort to safeguard and improve its reputation. Society is placing increasing importance on business ethics, and stakeholders are more prepared than ever before to hold corporations accountable for their actions. A favorable reputation also plays an important role in attracting the best employees, suppliers and investment. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance that employees place on working for a company that they can be proud of.

A company's reputation is affected by a variety of factors, not only its management strength, financial performance and innovativeness, but also its treatment of employees, efforts in workplace diversity, handling of ethical issues and commitment to the environment. It is interesting to look at the recent case study of the University of Queensland's nepotism scandal. This story surfaced in November 2011 and much has been said about transparency - or lack of it - as to who did what and when.

The Crime and Misconduct Commission's (CMC) report into the matter, which was released on 13 September 2013, 21 months after it began, gave a disturbing account of an organisation that at the time seemed as concerned with protecting reputations as it was with its responsibility to explain to staff, students, the public and the media what had actually happened to lead to the resignation of its two most senior academic staff.

The issue under investigation was serious enough - how the daughter of the then-University of Queensland (UQ) Vice-Chancellor was offered a place in its 2011 undergraduate medical program although the student did not meet the requirements of the course. More than 340 qualified students were refused entry. It was sufficiently serious an issue that both the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor resigned after an internal investigation.

Just as significant was the way UQ failed to explain itself publicly. In the words of the CMC's report: ‘It may be considered that the right balance was not struck between the public interest on the one hand and protecting the reputation of the university and the reputation of the two most senior officers on the other’ (CMC 2013). The University's attempts to limit the public fallout failed, as the Chancellor acknowledged in correspondence in January 2012, two months after the story broke and days after the CMC announced it would conduct its own inquiry (CMC 2013).

‘To date, the approach has been to provide the minimum of information with an overlay of spin, and absorb the pain. The concern was that the disclosure of additional information opened up the Pandora's box, which would ultimately lead to a CMC inquiry, - UQ Chancellor wrote, ‘That approach has failed in that we have the inquiry and it has done a lot of damage in the meantime’ (CMC 2013).

This may be the official end of a deeply embarrassing episode in the history of UQ but it is important that lessons are learnt, most important among them that, as Acting CMC Chair Dr Ken Levy, writes in his foreword to the report – ‘Merit, equity and transparency must be the guiding principles for public sector decisions’ (CMC 2013).

Dr Levy acknowledges that conflicts of interest will inevitably arise in organisations, but ‘it is the manner in which they are managed which can be problematic’ (CMC 2013). ‘However, transparency remains vital’ he says, noting that in this particular case formal complaints about the enrolment decision were not made until nine months later, although 'many within the University of Queensland community, including staff suspected misconduct' (CMC 2013).

The CMC says it accepted that the Chancellor and University Senate genuinely acted in what they believed to be the best interests of the community, before continuing with what is perhaps the most crucial observation in the report: 'However, the CMC also considers that the University has a public duty to the community' (CMC 2013).

A solid reputation is desirable because all businesses ultimately depend (either directly or indirectly) on the goodwill of the governments and communities in which they operate.

So, why the confusion between reputation and brand? There are several reasons. Firstly, reputation and brand are both recognised as valuable intangible assets that manifest themselves in a company's operations. As such, the actions of management and employees can simultaneously affect both reputation and brand (either positively or negatively). Secondly, both concepts rely on strategic communications to shape people's perceptions, and both share a similar goal: to ensure that the appropriate audience considers the organisation and its offerings in the best possible light.

Strategic alignment and measurement will position communications at the most senior levels of the university sector. In an interview with USA Inc, Pete Peterson, Chairman of the Blackstone Group, spoke about the Global Financial Crisis and said, 'What matters is what the public thinks, and the public trust is what's really crashed' (June 2011).

According to Professor Paul Argenti (2007), well regarded organisations generally:

» Command premium prices
» Pay lower prices
» Entice top recruits
» Experience greater loyalty
» Have more stable revenues

- » Face fewer risks of crisis
- » Are given greater latitude by constituents
- » Have higher market valuation and stock prices
- » Have greater loyalty of investors and thus smaller price volatility (Argenti 2007).

The Author argues that reputation is not the same as brand, as stated by Ettenson and Knowles (2008).

Corporate reputation is a summary of how everyone feels about the organisation. If one can imagine an aggregate evaluation of an organisation from every stakeholder's perspective, this is reputation. Brand is how you position the organisation as a whole rather than its individual products. You create a corporate brand; you earn a reputation.

Measuring an organisation's reputation is difficult, as the kind of measurement systems available may not be meaningful. As a result, public relations practitioners have to have a management team that is willing to invest, or willing to live with the limitations of less effective measurement tools. Through this study, the Author will seek to further understand how Australian universities determine and evaluate their reputation among stakeholder groups.

At the end of 2011, Weber Shandwick and KRC Research conducted *The Company behind the Brand: In Reputation We Trust*, a survey designed to investigate the rising interdependence of brand and corporate reputation (Shandwick, 2012). Findings from this survey revealed that the CEO and company reputation are inextricably linked – corporate reputation is not isolated from the public's views of a company's top leadership (Shandwick, 2012).

The following section examines the roles of leadership and management and how each impacts on the overall success of an organisation.

3.3 Leadership, Management and Communication

What is the difference between management and leadership? The manager's job is to plan, organise and coordinate, and the leader's job is to inspire and motivate (Wall Street Journal 2012). Leadership is the single most important determinant of organisational climate. The day-to-day leadership style has a powerful influence on the expectations and behaviours of everyone in the organisation (Kennedy 2009). A leader has to strategise as much about the changes needed to compete in the future as the best ways to engage internal and external stakeholders to gain support and commitment.

Attempts to define leadership and its role in the organisational communication process are not new. What is new is the concern that leaders in organisations now have, for individuals and for the role that each employee can play in the creation of an organisational culture. As Pace and Faules (1989) suggest 'leadership and communication are intimately intertwined'. While they are not suggesting this metaphor in the biblical sense, they nevertheless see the ability to lead as essentially linked to the ability to communicate.

There are, it seems, two essential elements of leadership worth discussing in any debate about the leadership process and what it means to management. Firstly, an overall definition of leadership needs to be delineated before leadership styles and supervisor/subordinate relationships can be considered. Secondly, the question of whether or not leadership is a good thing, cannot be ignored. Pace and Faules (1989), in their examination of leadership, see leadership and management as parallel requisites, when they talk about 'a management or leadership style' as being synonymous and concerned with interpersonal influence.

Zaleznik's (1992) approach takes the debate further seeing leadership and management as separate issues and opposite concepts. While both ideals are about interpersonal influence, each attacks the philosophy of leadership from different sides. Management for Zaleznik is an 'enabling process' while leadership is more about developing fresh approaches and projecting them in a way that excites people. Leaders, he sees, have an added dimension, something mystical and charismatic, or at least having something intangible about them, something extra that predisposes people to follow their lead. Leadership represents the ability to direct, motivate and challenge others.

An objection that can be levelled at Zalenik's image of leadership is that it does not fit in with contemporary organisational management approaches that encourage employee participation and empowerment. Pace and Faules's approach seems to be more appropriate, given that good management often means simply allowing others to initiate by management giving encouragement and support; a process that employs basic management objectives of allowing people to work together and concentrating their efforts in a unified manner.

Locke (1991), in *The Essence of Leadership*, defines leadership as the process of inducing others to take action towards a common goal. While this might leave itself open to being a broad-based definition of the term 'leadership', it does nevertheless suggest that three elements make up the definition. Firstly, leadership is a rational concept - it exists only in the relationship the leader has to others in their attempt to accomplish a task or goal. By definition, should there be no need to accomplish a task or goal it would be impossible for leadership to occur.

Secondly, leadership is a process. A leader must not only do something but be seen by others to go beyond what is needed to accomplish the task. Gardner (1988) suggested that leadership is more than simply holding a position of authority. Although a formal management position might help others perceive of someone as a leader, simply occupying such a position is not enough to make someone a leader.

Lastly, leadership induces others to take action. Leaders can do this by using their given authority, by setting examples and goals, by rewarding subordinates, or by helping in the restructuring of the organisation to inspire team building and better communication. Locke (1991) goes on to say that leadership can bring about an organisational climate of effective communication, high morale and increased productivity by:

- convincing subordinates that both the organisational goal and the subordinate’s role in it is important, interrelated and attainable;
- challenging subordinates with goals, projects, tasks and responsibilities that allow them to feel a sense of personal (as well as group and organisational) success, achievement, and accomplishment; and
- rewarding subordinates who perform well with recognition, money and promotions (Locke 1991).

There seems to be a timeless debate as to whether leaders are born or made. Do effective leaders learn to become superior communicators and relationship builders? Or do people with exemplary communication and teamwork abilities naturally have an aptitude for leadership?

Recently, the Wall Street Journal’s online edition, citing the need for - and lack of - these leadership qualities in business, asked its readers whether business schools should ‘put more focus on communications and interpersonal training within their programs, or should the programs require a greater degree of proficiency in these skills in the students they admit?’ (Stephenson 2014). Inevitably, the discussion revolved around the question of whether communication and relationship skills are inherent or learned.

As Ivey Business School, Professor Gerard H. Seijts, illustrates in his compelling article about the behaviours of effective leaders, communications and interpersonal skills are absolutely critical, especially when a crisis erupts or when leaders ‘have to navigate the rough seas of organisational change’ (Stephenson 2014). And since ‘most businesses operate in a complex and uncertain environment’, the best business leaders possess foresight, decisiveness and the confidence to take risks - behavioural traits gained by communicating and working with others (Stephenson 2014).

He further observes that when problems occur, leaders need the ‘visibility’ that arises from remaining in touch with your people at all times (Stephenson 2014).

Equally vital is a leader's eagerness to communicate widely because there is 'no such thing as over-communications during a crisis'. He also underscores the critical leadership ability of being able to 'connect with people' – to engage them, secure their commitment and gain their trust (Stephenson 2014). Most important, he shows how these mindsets not only help during a crisis, they inevitably help to avoid crises (Stephenson 2014). Effective communication and interpersonal skills provide leaders with an acute understanding of what could happen, how to minimise surprises, and how to keep people on side – no matter what occurs.

It would appear that there is a very real distinction between leadership and management. For a while, it seemed an alternative to the scientific management approach had been found through the efforts of Elton Mayo (1880-1949) when he attempted to introduce a more humanist approach to the leadership task by examining the effects of working conditions, work output and employee efficiency on organisational output and production (Riley 2012). Mayo suggested too that leadership must respond effectively to the real and perceived needs of the individual worker as well to the goals of the organisation (Riley 2012). This was in contrast to the notion of management that typically involved maintaining existing organisational structures and procedures rather than having a concern for workers.

Leadership studies undertaken by Douglas McGregor (2000), influenced by the work of Taylor, Mayo and Maslow, developed the belief that traditional organisations that had a top-down one-way management approach assumed certain facts about human behaviour which were then used in leadership situations. McGregor said that if people desired external control in their life it was only natural that management should provide an organisational structure that directed workloads and determined salaries - an assumption he termed Theory X - wherein management acquires a central authoritative role in its exercise of authority.

To recapitulate on earlier readings, McGregor (2000) saw Theory X leaders as those

» who promoted message flow from the top down to the rest of the organisation and who restricted any communication to subordinates to informational messages only thus reinforcing the need for an informal communication network to exist within the organisation;

» who restricted decision-making to between a few people near the top of the organisation;

» who limited upward communication and strictly controlled employee input thereby causing decisions to be based on partial, often inaccurate, information.

While McGregor admitted that the principle closely resembled Taylor's scientific management approach, he said that it would be improper for leaders to take such an approach as the organisational climate created would lead to distrust, fear and misunderstanding among those in the organisation. As a result, morale and production would suffer. Influenced too by the human relationists of Mayo et al, McGregor later hypothesised another set of assumptions for leadership which he called Theory Y, which more accurately met the motivational needs of affiliation, esteem and self-actualisation that Maslow suggested employees required.

Under Theory Y an effective leader was one who

» demonstrated a willingness to have messages travel up, down and across the organisation and to have decisions spread throughout all levels of the organisation and which were based on input from all levels;

» gave adequate and accurate feedback to employees thus eliminating the need for informal communication networks;

» provided frequent and honest interaction with employees in an atmosphere of confidence and trust.

McGregor said that managers who adopted Theory Y leadership approaches would create an open communication system with an organisational climate of trust, goodwill and harmony (McGregor 2000). To those critics who said McGregor simplified complex management strategies, he gave himself an each-way bet, insisting that his theories were not absolute. He stated,

> Theory X and Theory Y are not managerial strategies. They are underlying beliefs about the nature of man that influence managers to adopt one strategy rather than another. In fact, depending upon other characteristics of the manager's view of reality and upon the particular situation in which he finds himself, a manager who holds the beliefs that I call Theory X could adopt a considerable array of strategies, some of which would typically be called "hard" and some would be called "soft" (McGregor 2000).

Two concepts of leadership that have resurfaced in recent times deal with transformational and transactional leadership behaviour. Transformational leadership, as defined by Bass (1985); sees leadership as a change agent within the organisation; leadership that involves motivating others to work for goals other than those that might benefit their own self-interest. In contrast, transactional leadership is leadership that maintains or continues the status quo, whereby employees in the organisation get immediate, tangible rewards for carrying out their work orders.

While all styles of leadership are in nature transactional, in that workers are rewarded in some way, the transformational leader is one who goes beyond meeting employees' physiological needs by giving them the opportunity to become a real part of the organisation. It would appear that effective leadership occurs only when the communication process actually motivates subordinate behaviour.

Alvesson (1992) sees leadership as 'not standing above or being able to change culture, but rather as trying to influence people's minds'. His definition of leadership formed part of on-going research into the study of leadership as a social integrative function. Alvesson found that an organisational culture which promoted social cohesion between staff at all levels by communicating to employees the ideals of being personal, open and informal, was able to motivate and integrate employees into the organisational climate more easily.

Because of the traditionalist functionalist view that different leadership styles can produce different behaviour in subordinates (Pace & Faules 1989, p. 180) scholars have been interested in knowing the traits and skills of successful leaders. While there have emerged many interesting and varied studies, one clear contextual element is apparent - leadership is dependent upon the situation. Albeit situational, it appears that a leader could be great at one point in time but abysmal in another; it is how people perceive them that is important. Pace and Faules 1989 (p. 180) write, 'The context or culture is the dominant factor in determining what behaviours mean'.

Leaders who want to build trust with key stakeholders have a plethora of communication tools at their disposal, and capable communication professionals to assist them. The performance of strategic communications depends heavily on the perceptions, beliefs, and expectations that Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and other top executives hold towards communication and its contribution to organisational goals.

Researchers and professional associations alike argue that having a seat at the board table or being a member of the dominant coalition would solve the problem (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier 2002, pp. 140–182; Smudde & Courtright 2012; Arthur W. Page Society 2007; Watson 2012). As such, structural arrangements and better qualified, business-savvy communicators are necessary. However, others have criticised this view as simplistic. In fact, communication professionals are limited by a large number of organisational and relational constraints (Berger 2005), which cannot be reduced to reporting lines or personal competencies.

The gap between the rising importance of communication for organisations and the relatively slow advancement of professional communication functions may be explained by taking a closer look at the distribution of communication responsibilities in universities. University CEOs are enacting their environments by interpreting markets and stakeholder settings and by defining visions and business models. As such, the core responsibility for communication as well as for all other strategic decisions and activities is located within the boardroom. Depending on the structure of a university, the Vice-Chancellor, or members of the top executive group on the first level of the hierarchy, are in charge of communications.

This means that 'the CEO should be the person most involved with both developing the overall strategy for communications and delivering consistent messages to constituencies' (Argenti 2005, p. 54).

It is important for this study to investigate how Vice-Chancellors interact with their public relations practitioners and how much they value their expert advice. No one style of leadership seems to be effective in all organisations. Organisational cultures are such that leadership tends to take more of a contingency approach to effect motivation, production and communication.

The next section explores varying contemporary models and theories of extension and communication practice exercised in contemporary universities.

3.4 Communicating in the Contemporary University

Often, communicators are in the business of generating materials – speeches, media releases and promotional materials. This form of communication is essentially one-way and output-oriented which lacks the essential ingredient of human interaction, namely, two-way communication. As a result, there is no guarantee that the intended message is appropriate or well-timed. The importance of a sound strategic communication process that supports business goals, enables individuals and teams to contribute their best, and encourages dialogue, is often misunderstood by university executives as it appears there is no common definition for 'communication positions' within and among universities. One person's understanding of a 'communication professional' may involve strategy and key messaging, while another's may involve working solely with the media.

Many of the theories on media explain the effects media has on people. It is the theory which explains how people use media for their need and gratification. The Uses and Gratifications Theory emphasises motives and the self-perceived needs of audience members (Blumler & Katz 1974). Blumler and Katz (1974) concluded that different people can use the same communication message for very different purposes. The same media content may gratify different needs for different individuals, showing there is not only one way that people use media, and there are as many reasons for using the media as there are media users (Blumler & Katz 1974). The communications function is much more effective when it is driven to generate results, such as increased rates of awareness, and in improved stakeholder relationships or strengthened internal alignment.

In the 1970s some theorists adopted a systems perspective, viewing organisations as complex organisms competing to survive and thrive in challenging environments. In general, any system is a group of parts that are arranged in complex ways and which interact with each other through processes to achieve goals (von Bertalanffy 1951, 1968). Universities, for example, consist of a number of departments or units (faculties, marketing, finance, student management), each of which includes individuals and teams. The functioning of any of these units or subsystems cannot be divorced from the ways other units or subsystems operate within a university; they are interdependent. Universities are also a part of a larger system – Universities Australia.

Systems and subsystems have boundaries that are selectively opened or closed to their environments, allowing the flow of information and other resources. *Open systems* use information exchange (input-throughput-output) to grow and thrive; *closed systems* do not allow a large amount of information to move in or out (Stacks, Hickson & Hill 1991). To survive and adapt, all social systems require some degree of permeability (Stacks, Hickson & Hill 1991).

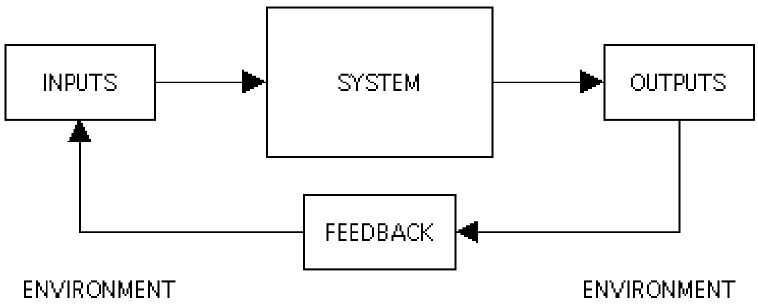


Figure 15: The Open System Model (von Bertalanffy 1968)

Communication is vital for exchanging information in and among subsystems through multidirectional channels which are used in internal communications. Feedback processes help systems adjust, change and maintain control. Collective decision-making processes and shared responsibilities for communication are more prevalent in a university environment because of the inter-reliance on organisational responsibilities.

When organisational communication was first studied, it tended to borrow from the foundations of the behavioural sciences that saw organisations simply as machines which regarded communication between and among employees as a machine-like process (Goldhaber 1990, pp. 15-25). Contemporary approaches see organisations as living systems and communication as having a real presence in the life of the organisation (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983, pp. 266-47). Despite these changes, strategic organisational communication has helped define the structural elements that lie within the constraints of the business environment (Goldhaber 1990, pp. 24-25).

Employees at all levels are major players in the communication environment that not only affects the organisation directly but also the lives and actions of other people (Giddens 1989, p. 735). Any examination of the communication process within organisations enables management to better understand the expectation of employees and others, and gives a valuable insight into the policies, procedures, customs and habits of those who help make up the organisation (Daniels & Spiker 1991, pp. 29-49).

While a hierarchical organisational structure within any university may induce efficiency by way of the perceived power supervisors may have over subordinates, Koehler and Applbaum (1981) and Goldhaber (1990) suggest that such power can be at the expense of information accessibility. As mentioned, the Uses and Gratification Theory has the ability to persuade the audience by giving them the power to control which messages they take in and which messages they pass over, whereas real stakeholder engagement and intelligence provides the opportunity to communicate strategically.

As Whyte (1956) says, only with trust can there be any real communication. However, until trust is achieved, the techniques and tools used to disseminate communication can be wasted if employees do not have confidence in the motives and sincerity of management's actions (Baskin & Aronoff 1988). The importance of strategically communicating information to employees and key stakeholders, and involving them in decision-making processes, increases trust and efficiencies.

Communication specialists talk about the measurable result of communication activities and how proactive communication generates more impact at less cost and less risk to organisations, but measuring the outcomes of strategic communication is inconclusive. It appears that the most significant weakness of public relations practitioners within the Australian university sector is being able to define the benefits of their vocation.

An organisation's culture and climate is impacted by the leaders and managers of the workplace. Following is a review of how communication patterns impact on desired behaviours in a university environment.

3.5 Culture and Climate

The culture and climate of universities are the natural forces which leave an imprint on the organisation. Communication is an important component of desired behaviours, measured by an organisation's communication patterns (Kennedy 2009). Acceptable behaviours are reflected in direct, constructive and timely feedback; open communication; mutual respect; and use of conflict as an asset. Unacceptable behaviours, such as blaming others; focusing on problems rather than solutions; and allowing rumours, gossip and criticism to prevail, corrupt the corporate climate.

3.5.1 Culture

Organisational culture has been defined as how an organisation sees itself. Culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore can be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Edgar Schein, quoted in Kendall, 1996)

Culture is more deeply embedded and long term, taking longer to change and influencing performance across many areas of functioning. Organisational climate as described in section 3.5.2, on the other hand, changes faster and more immediately reflects the standard of leadership.

One of the main influences on Australian university organisational culture approaches emerged in the 1970s within the context of increasing competition from Japan and other nations in the global marketplace. At the end of World War II, the world economy experienced a spectacular growth rate never witnessed before in human history, primarily led by large United States companies in the 1950s and 1960s, then by European and Japanese companies in the 1970s (Globalisation Imperative, 2009). Multiculturalism evolved as the dominant bipartisan policy approach to address Australia's cultural diversity in the early 1970s (Australian Government, 2000). Since that time significant advances have been made and we have begun to use cultural diversity for our economic benefit.

Culture provides a sense of identity, clarifies and reinforces standards of behaviour, and enhances the commitment to a university's mission. Culture refers to an organisation's distinct identity – the shared beliefs, values, behaviors and artifacts that an organisation holds, which determine how it functions and adapts to its environment (Schein 1985). However, in terms of their operating environments, the culture is expressed through such documents as the annual report, and various publications, brochures and booklets (Moses 2007).

Edgar Shein (1992) states that the way to an organisation's success depends on three cognitive culture levels:

- Artefacts: facilities, furnishings, awards and recognitions, uniform or dress code and interaction;
- Espoused values: conscious strategies depicted by goals and philosophies, slogans, and mission statements; and

» Basic assumptions and values: unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings.

The organisational culture of USQ clearly defines and establishes organisational objectives, goals, values, beliefs and operating procedures, which are advantageous for the company.

The organisational culture at USQ was created through the Institution's Founding Director, Professor Lindsay Barker AM, in 1967. Professor Barker brought together a core group of people with a common vision of building a regional higher education institution. In the two decades between 1970 and 1990, the student body grew from 1000 full-time students to 8000 full-time students (USQ 2012). Distance education emerged as a major mode of delivery during the mid-1970s and by 1980 external enrolments exceeded internal enrolments (USQ 2012). The culture of USQ was founded by this small group of staff who could only be described as innovative and visionary, developing an international student cohort and quality distance education learning programs. The USQ international student market boasted no less than three-quarters of Australia's off-shore international student enrolments in 1986-87 (USQ, 2012). The organisational culture was determined by Professor Barker and others who brought into the institution, then adopted, the culture with the behavioural norms described as a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterised USQ.

To explain USQ's organisational culture further, it is worth noting that many Australian regional universities were born out of community interest and support and a national policy perspective that sought to encourage equity and access (Postle & Garlick 2014). Regional universities formed out of the expansion of higher education in the 1960s either as purpose-built new universities such as The University of Wollongong in New South Wales or James Cook University in Townsville, Queensland, or as regionally-centred Colleges of Advanced Education that would become regional universities with the sector reforms of the late 1980s (Postle & Garlick 2014). Inevitably, these newer universities allowed for access by increasingly diverse cohorts of non-traditional students and, consequently, sector expansion from the 1960s has increasingly been linked as much to social justice as it has to increasing student demand meeting the growing need for a professional workforce (Postle & Garlick 2014). However, while the culture of USQ was determined in a single more practically oriented and democratically aligned sector, the allure of traditional attitudes based on institutional and individual prestige has tended to result in the persistence of elitist attitudes, inferred from the recent comments by Professor Jan Thomas (2013), Vice-Chancellor at the University of Southern Queensland, when she asks:

> 'So are we (still) instinctively benchmarking students in a mass education system against the old guard, the product of an elite system, to protect and preserve our disciplinary and intellectual reputations?' (Postle & Garlick 2014, p. 34).

This influence - elitist culture – develops a rationale to the corporatisation of university culture. Although universities need some separation from government, industry, and popular culture to engage in their unique role, a university is part of greater society and must accommodate the changing nature of the society in which it exists (Udas 2014). Contemporary universities need to engage and consider the impact that corporatisation and openness have on our cultures and our ability to do what no other organisations are uniquely meant to do (Udas 2014).

Australian universities may advocate strong cultures, but are they able to point to why they believe this, or to any evidence that the culture is indeed strong, or that the culture has any measurable impact on the its overall mission, vision, values or objectives? Have Australian universities undertaken stakeholder research and strategic communication initiatives to determine their real position? Simply stating it is, does not make it so, and many Vice Chancellors use this response claiming their future is strong and healthy when, in fact, their stakeholders may tell you that it is the very opposite.

The Australian National University UAC 2012 International Booklet states that, 'The strong culture of The Australian National University (ANU) offers students a learning experience unlike any other university in Australia'; and Murdoch University espouses its ‘strong culture of community engagement’ in its Annual Report. Whilst I do not doubt such statements, I ask what recent stakeholder research has been conducted to confirm these statements?

3.5.2 CLIMATE

The organisational climate differs somewhat from the culture of an organisation. Culture consists of employees’ subjective perceptions and such organisational realities as policy, structure, leadership, standards, values and rules (Baskin and Aronoff 1988). In essence, organisational climates are characterised by ‘feelings of trust, confidence, oneness, candour, supportiveness, security, satisfaction, involvement, produced in the organisation and high expectations’ (Baskin and Aronoff 1988).

In summary, it might be postulated that within USQ the organisational climate refers to an employee’s job satisfaction and is a label used to describe the dimensions of the work environment. It reflects employee perceptions about what gets rewarded, supported and expected in a particular setting which in turn affects organisational productivity.

According to research from Gallup, approximately 80 percent of employees in the Australian workforce are either not engaged or actively disengaged and cost industry between $33 and $42 billion per annum in lost productivity (Gallup 2011). Research also shows that one of the most effective ways to increase employee engagement is through clear and effective internal or employee communications. In August 2011, USQ conducted an Employee Climate Survey, via an external agency (the Macquarie Voice Project). The aim of the survey was to gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the University, through the University's most important asset, its employees.

Employees were provided with a core set of questions, including questions about organisational purpose, direction, leadership, career opportunities, Faculty/Section management, teamwork, and performance appraisal. Results from the survey were provided to both senior management and employees in information sessions conducted by the external agency in September 2011.

In response to the climate survey, a full internal communications action and resource plan was developed, identifying actions, tools, resources, responsibilities, timeframes and budgets for implementation. Monitoring of the implementation of strategy/actions by the responsible individual/work area, including completion progress and timeliness, was examined through regular progress reporting by the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations and reported to the Vice-Chancellor's Committee.

The Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations developed the communications action plan and was responsible for the implementation of initiatives, monitoring, and evaluation of the progress for the communication actions. It was frustrating that we could not produce a quantifiable measure to show areas of improvement through the communication strategies deployed. In an academic environment, the qualitative research was often questioned.

Attitudes arise from an inner framework of values and beliefs, developed over time. The values and beliefs that people in an organisation hold drive the way they think and behave. The following section explores the connection between an organisation's values and beliefs and how this impacts on a company's image or reputation.

3.6 Organisational Values and Beliefs

Every organisation, foundation, public society and institution has at its heart a system of values and beliefs. These values should be reflected in all that the organisation plans and does, including communication goals and strategic plans.

How do target audiences perceive the organisation and its issues? With the internet, it is not difficult to develop a profile of how the organisation's issues are covered in the media, how often the organisation is quoted or described, and what public opinion polls have been done on relevant topics. A short and simple media analysis can be an instructive tool and will indicate the amount of resources necessary to increase name recognition.

The move to seeking out people's opinions and feedback - and then using this information to shape how decisions are made within organisations - is a global trend that has gathered momentum. Today, this 'participatory model' is spreading beyond the workplace into the wider socio-cultural and political spheres. The trend towards more participative processes in government has resulted in an increase in people's expectations for public involvement in decisions affecting them. This demand that government decision-making should include community participation is fast becoming an organisational imperative (that is, 'expected practice') in many societies.

An important shift came about with the 'rise' of active publics. The beginnings of this 'rise' of active publics can be traced back to the 1960s, where various citizen-based political and social activist and pressure groups formed (Sarkissian, Cook & Walsh 1997). The focus of these groups was to ensure their voices were heard in organisations, and that their needs, issues and interests were recognised and acted upon. They were successful in attracting considerable media coverage which raised issues in the public sphere. They worked to ensure organisations were held responsible and accountable for their impact on the physical and social resources of communities - and of the nation.

Contemporary organisations need to find ways to find a balance between achieving efficiency, regularising practices and instilling conformity essential to achieving quality, while at the same time embracing chaos, change, variability and complexity essential to moving the organisations to greater levels of learning and innovation. In addition, organisations need to understand that they develop greatest strength from not controlling influences (both internal and external to the organisation), but in developing an increasing awareness of these influences and building a responsive system which embraces these dynamics.

However, governments around the world are still seen to be paying lip service to 'community consultation' and unfortunately, in many cases, it is an expensive exercise in selling a controversial project to a community. Such studies are often a cruel exercise in cynicism, using the face of consultation to rob people of their right to plan their own environment. They are a means of shifting the grounds of debate so as to exclude the ordinary citizen: the debate becomes purely one in which the scheme provides the best technical solution to a problem as perceived and defined by those initiating the community consultation (Engwicht 1992).

This deeper area of work, termed 'social responsibility', has brought about a different dynamic in the organisation-community relationship: as the organisation works on areas to 'care for' the community, the community in return also supports the organisation in its endeavour to create a better society.

Public and private organisations, large and small business, government and self-styled government sectors, clubs, charities, and community groups are all moving towards more mutual communication between themselves and their communities. This represents a more sophisticated interpretation and application of an open systems model guiding practices of extensive dialogue and 'dynamic, meaningful engagement between the community and the organisation' (Sarkissian, Cook & Walsh 1997, p. 11). It is an approach that embraces collaboration rather than autonomy.

An important shift is made when an organisation supports and contributes and engages the community. The organisation gives up the 'sole right' to make the final decisions. Instead, a more democratic allocation of resources takes place where decisions are determined by organisation and community together.

Today's challenge is to bring together the expectations of organisations and their stakeholders and communities into a relationship of trust where a shared vision for the organisation can be generated (Burke 1999). Developing this relationship of trust – a mutual 'psychological contract' (Burke 1999) - is by no means an easy endeavour.

Public relations professional and researcher James Grunig (1984) proposed four models of public relations communication which describe the type of communication that is taking place between organisations and their stakeholders. These describe a scale ranging from the lower end of one-way communication with no avenues of feedback (which Grunig called 'one-way asymmetrical') to the high end of two-way mutual communication (which Grunig called 'two-way symmetrical'). An important part of these models is the way they depict the shift in the organisation's influence over the communication from asymmetry (where the organisation's agenda is the primary factor in the communication) to symmetry (where the organisation seeks a mutual connection with the community). The more advanced the public relations practice becomes (the more it moves towards a symmetrical approach), the more 'the public should be just as likely to persuade the organisation's management to change attitudes or behaviour as the organisation is likely to change the publics' attitudes or behaviour' (Grunig & Hunt 1984, p. 23).

These models have challenged public relations professionals to identify the true nature of communication that is occurring between the organisation and its stakeholders, and to move to 'higher levels' of professional and ethical practice where more symmetrical communication takes place. Across the public sector, frameworks, policies and procedures have been developed to integrate participative processes, and particularly consultation, in many aspects of operations. Specific Acts of Parliament, Statutes (public, local, private), Statutory Regulations, and various forms of legislation now require that public sector (government) organisations undertake formal consultation processes.

The Victorian Local Government Act (1989) refers to consultation and engagement, noting that Councils' roles include 'Acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making' as well as ' … encouraging active participation in civic life'.

The Commonwealth Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society (1998) is endorsed by the three tiers of Government: Commonwealth, State and Local in Australia. It is relevant to 'the strategic planning, policy development, budgeting and reporting processes of government service delivery'. Consultation should be central to all of these processes. The Charter proposed seven principles, which can be applied to consultation: access; equity; communication; responsiveness; effectiveness; efficiency; and accountability (Commonwealth Charter 1998).

The organisation needs to be very clear about what level of participation it wants to build, and what is essential to the wider achievement of the organisation's strategic goals. It is equally important that the organisation also works to build community understanding of this, so that public expectations of the process are in line with what the organisation is offering. Indeed, community dissent is most often the result of the experience of the stakeholders not matching what the organisation says it is offering, or what they perceive the organisation to be offering.

Further, even when participation takes place, it may not be effective. Consultation practices can become dominated by individuals or interest groups. The views presented may not be representative of all publics, and focus may be redirected to issues which can be 'fixed', rather than identifying the issues that are of most importance to the whole community (Sarkissian, Cook & Walsh 1999).

If we think of social capital as the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together, then there is increasing evidence that shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Bertrand Russell was a British philosopher awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950 for championing freedom of thought and in his last lecture in 1948; *Authority and the Individual*, quoted:-

> Men who boast of being 'practical' are for the most part exclusively preoccupied with means. But theirs is only one-half of wisdom. When we take account of the other half, which is connected with ends, the economic process and the whole of human life take on an entirely new aspect. We ask no longer: what have the producers produced, and what has consumption enabled the consumers in their turn to produce? We ask

> instead: what has there been in the lives of consumers and producers to make them glad to be alive? What have they felt or known or done that could justify their creation? Have they experienced the glory of new knowledge? Have they known love and friendship? People do not always remember that politics, economics, and social organisations generally, belong in the realm of means, not ends. Our political and social thinking is prone to what may be called the 'administrator's fallacy', by which I mean the habit of looking upon a society as a systematic whole, of a sort that is thought good if it is pleasant to contemplate as a model of order, a planned organism with parts neatly dovetailed into each other. But a society does not, or at least should not, exist to satisfy an external survey, but to bring a good life to the individuals who compose it. It is in the individuals, not in the whole, that ultimate value is to be sought. A good society is a means to a good life for those who compose it, not something having a separate excellence on its own account (Russell 1948).

Therefore, as a concept, Russell's quote is highly relevant to community development today. Participatory approaches should become firmly embedded in the lives of community members across the globe.

Legal requirements, in many cases, dictate that public sector organisations consult the community about issues and decisions that will affect them. What is becoming evident, however, is that despite the legal requirement to include consultation processes, there are very few project changes gained from including the community in decision-making processes. Perhaps the greatest lesson for organisations is the importance of being very clear about what participation actually is, and what specific level of participation is being offered to the community in each consultation project. This helps manage expectations, and develops clarity on what promises are being made to the community as part of the level of participation being offered.

In the practice of consultation conducted by public sector organisations, there is great diversity, and differing levels of effectiveness. The experiences of people who have participated in consultation are not all positive, and so there is scope for practice to be improved. There are, however, some public sector organisations such as the New South Wales Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs and the Commonwealth Government's Trade Training Centres in Schools Program that have developed specific exceptionally-effective and innovative approaches. We can learn much from these 'leading lights' who inherit principles clustered under nine headings: clarity of purpose; commitment; communication; evidence; flexibility and responsiveness; timeliness; inclusiveness; collaboration and continuous learning (Woolcock & Brown 2005). A whole of community approach to the principals of community engagement is taken and carries the process beyond empowerment to making collective decisions.

It is also important to keep in mind that just because the public has the 'right' to participate, it does not necessarily mean that they have the 'capacity' to participate. So, just as organisations are obliged to include the community in participative processes, they also carry equal obligation to work to ensure that people develop the capacity to participate effectively.

It has been shown that effective community engagement delivers long-term sustainable decisions. It strengthens stakeholder relationships, builds goodwill and fosters ownership. Facilitating community engagement requires activities which include public information forums, workshops and focus groups.

Governments, business and industry have relied on forms of community and stakeholder participation for many years, but effective community engagement begins with strategic communication. Universities have a duty to inform, consult and involve their stakeholders, and they will be judged on how well they work with partners to improve their reputation. Effective communication is fundamental to promoting better community relations.

A focus of this research will look at how a sampling of universities in Australia strategically communicate with their stakeholders. The Author seeks to understand how advanced Australian universities are in knowing the perceptions of their stakeholders, and how they strategically communicate with each of their stakeholders. Pretty and Hine (1995) have developed a typology of 'participation' to differentiate actions according to the level of power agencies wish to devolve to participants in determining outcomes and actions (see figure 16).

Typology	**Characteristics of Each Type**
1. Passive Participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. Information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
2. Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. Process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
3. Bought Participation	People participate in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Local people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
4. Functional Participation	Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve their goals, especially reduced costs. People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives.
5. Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local groups or institutions. Learning methodologies used to seek multiple perspectives, and groups determine how available resources are used.
6. Self-Mobilisation and Connectedness	People participate by taking initiatives independently to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used.

Figure 16: Source: adapted from Pretty, 1995 p. 1252

Through this study, the investigation will identify which classification adheres most closely with Australian universities. Do universities passively participate with their stakeholders or do they actively interact with stakeholders to seek mutually beneficial outcomes? The answer will provide increased understanding in knowing if a system that measures stakeholder consultation is beneficial to the Australian university sector. Organisational value measures the sum of an organisation's components - tangible and intangible - and evaluates its worth to relevant constituents.

Often people ask what a public relations practitioner does.

A public relations practitioner at a university is a strategic communicator who works with a variety of stakeholders to best represent and manage relationships with the university. USQ's public relations team works with the media which includes television, radio, print, online, bloggers, etc, but it is becoming far more common for a communications practitioner to be involved with conducting and reviewing research to strengthen or develop communication efforts. A communications practitioner also manages internal and external communications, develops messaging in response to research findings, writes speeches, responds to unexpected crises and provides overall messaging of what is happening within the university.

The value of public relations efforts cannot always be equated to an X percent increase in sales, or X dollars in advertising equivalency. It's often an intrinsic value. How do we put a dollar amount on the university's good reputation, or the quick resolution of a would-be crisis?

As has been revealed throughout this chapter, the question of measuring the effectiveness of public relations seems to have surged in recent years as the profession has grown in size and sophistication, and as those who practice in the field have found themselves more often than ever being asked to be accountable for what they do. Measuring and evaluating public relations activities involves assessing the success or failure of a broad range of efforts that have the aim to improve and enhance the relationships that organisations maintain with stakeholders. The final section of this chapter investigates current public relations measurement practices.

3.7 MEASUREMENT

The debate over valid methods of measurement and evaluation of public relations has a considerable history. Practices of measurement of the output and outcomes of public relations activity can be traced back to the late 18th century and was evident in the United States and Germany in the following century (Lamme & Russell 2010; Watson 2012). At the beginning of the 20th Century, Cutlip (1994) identified early monitoring practices in Boston while public relations pioneers such as Edward Bernays and Arthur Page extensively used opinion research for the monitoring of public opinion and the shaping of communication strategies (Ewen 1996; Griese 2001). By mid-century and aided by the operations of press clippings agencies in many countries, most public relations practitioners were monitoring media coverage and undertaking simple measurement of volume (typically column inches) and judgements on its tonality (Plackard & Blackmon 1947).

Watson (2012) observed that the late 1960s and the 1970s were a period when books and articles addressing public relations evaluation started to appear. These were written by both academics and by practitioners. In 1969, Robinson's *Public Relations and Survey Research* was published. Pavlik (1987, p. 66) says that 'Robinson predicted that public relations evaluation would move away from "seat-of-the-pants" approaches and toward "scientific derived knowledge"'. Robinson confidently stated that practitioners would no longer rely on anecdotal, subjective measures of success, they 'would begin to use more systematic measures of success, primarily social science methods such as survey research' (Pavlik 1987).

While there were a small number of publications from both academics and practitioners in the early 1970s, the prime catalyst was a conference held in 1977 at the University of Maryland, chaired by James Grunig (Watson 2012). This was followed by the first scholarly special issue, 'Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Relations', in *Public Relations Review*'s Winter 1977 edition, featuring papers from the conference. In the decade that followed there was growing research in the field of public relations measurement. Watson (2012) notes that United States journals featured articles and research from Broom (Broom & Dozier 1983), Dozier (Broom & Dozier 1983; Dozier 1984, 1985) and J. Grunig (1979, 1983; Grunig & Hickson, 1976).

Cline (1984) produced an annotated bibliography of evaluation and measurement in public relations and organisational communication conducted between 1974 and 1984. Books, chapters and articles, by both academics and practitioners, were written on such subjects as methodological techniques, evaluation of public relations programs (such as employee, community relations or marketing communication programs), evaluation of communication campaigns, measurement of communication channels, measurement of communication products and measuring return on public relations investment (for examples of practitioners, see Graves 1975, Jacobson 1982, Sinickas 1983; Strenski 1980; Worcester 1983; for academics, see, for example, Lerbinger 1978; McElreath 1975, 1980, 1981; Wright 1979).

Measurement and evaluation consultancies, either as independent firms or as divisions of public relations agencies, were growing in number. The public relations service business of media analysis, which had started growing in the mid-1960s, started to expand with Katie Delahaye Paine announcing her first publicity measurement system in 1987 and establishing the Delahaye measurement business soon after. Pessolano (1985) wrote one of the first articles on the use of the then new desktop computer for analysing media coverage. In the late 1980s, public relations measurement and evaluation was still largely in the domain of clippings counts, with limited, simple media analysis mainly related to volume and tonality of coverage, much as it had been since the 1930s (Watson 2012).

In 1990, there was another major publication when *Public Relations Review* had a special edition on evaluation, 'Using Research to Plan and Evaluate Public Relations' (Summer 1990). It demonstrated that measurement and evaluation were consistently part of academic and professional discourse. All the authors emphasised the need for public relations to be researched, planned and evaluated -

using robust social science techniques. This attitude was particularly fostered by Broom and Dozier's seminal publication, *Using Research in Public Relations* (1990).

This escalation continued throughout the 1990s, with regular appearances of measurement and evaluation research in academic journals and association and trade magazines. By 2000, there was enough interest in measurement and evaluation to have specialised newsletters and magazines devoted to the subject, such as PR Publishing's *Jim and Lauri Grunig's Research* (a supplement in *PR Reporter*) and Melcrum Publishing's *Total Communication Measurement*.

In a 2004 survey by the Communications Executive Council of Chief Communication Officers in major corporations, respondents ranked 'measuring communication effectiveness' as the second most important issue facing the communications industry (Argenti 2005).

In 2010, the second European Summit on Measurement in Barcelona, which is the annual gathering of the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), and consequently of the public relations measurement service sector, adopted a statement of seven principles about measurement of public relations and corporate communication activity. Called the Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles (AMEC 2010), it was a normative statement that placed emphasis on the measurability of communication activity, and specifically rejected Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) as a valuation of public relations activity. (The definition of advertising value equivalency is the calculation of space or time used for publicity or news content by comparing it to the cost of that same space or time if purchased as advertising (Rawlins, 2010)). Media tracking and analysis is the monitoring of an organisation's coverage by the press on various media vehicles such as television, cable, internet and radio (Weeks 2011).

The development of the Barcelona Principles was seen as transformational in the way it challenged public relations practitioners and evaluation specialists alike to look at the role of measurement in a new, different and relevant way. Measurement, at its simplest level, helps professionals to prove the value of their work.

The Barcelona Principles for communication measurement as outlined by the AMEC (2010) states that the seven Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles are:

1. The importance of goal setting and measurement;
2. Measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs;
3. The effect on business results can and should be measured where possible;
4. Media measurement requires quantity and quality;
5. Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) are not the value of public relations
6. Social media can and should be measured;
7. Transparency and replicability are paramount to sound measurement.

Of the seven principles, three link with the social science emphasis of Excellence Theory in Public Relations, namely: (1) the importance of goal setting and measurement; (2) measuring the effect on outcomes is preferable to measuring media results; and (3) the effect on business results can and should be measured where possible (Grunig 2008).

To summarise the meaning of The Excellence Theory in Public Relations, the theory first explains the value of public relations to organisations and society based on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of relationships with stakeholder publics (Grunig 1992). For an organisation to be effective, according to the theory, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders as well as of management. If it does not, stakeholders will either pressure the organisation to change or oppose it in ways that add cost and risk to organisational policies and decisions. To behave in socially acceptable ways, organisations must scan their environment to identify publics who are affected by potential organisational decisions or who want organisations to make decisions to solve problems that are important to them. Then, organisations must communicate symmetrically with publics (taking the interests of both the organisation and publics into account) to cultivate high-quality, long-term relationships with them. Good relationships are of value to organisations because they: reduce the costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, and negative publicity caused by poor relationships; reduce the risk of making decisions that affect different stakeholders; or increase revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders (Grunig 2006, p. 1).

The public relations industry, by its own admission, has been slow to adopt standard measurement techniques, something that advertising, direct mail and other marketing and communication disciplines have been using to their advantage for years. The ‘Barcelona Principles’ were quickly adopted by public relations professionals and industry bodies in the United Kingdom, North America and globally (Watson 2012). They are a baseline which public relations organisations are using to encourage higher standards in research, planning and measurement.

As has been shown, the need for measurement in public relations had been identified for some years, yet as the world has suffered in economic turmoil, more prominence has been paid to budgeting in corporations large and small across the world. The value of everything has been under scrutiny and so now, more than ever, the importance of attributing an accurate value to public relations is critical.

The term, Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE), was rejected by the International Public Relations Commission on Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation, as the term erroneously suggests that the space and time occupied by earned media generated through public relations is equivalent to the same space and time of paid media when purchased as advertising (Rawlins 2010). It was advocated by the Commission that there is no evidence to suggest that advertising and editorial space hold equivalent value, as advertising is purchased and affords complete control to the advertiser for content, placement and frequency and is almost always positive (Rawlins 2010). In contrast, publicity, or earned media, is only semi-controllable after ceding the final output to the medium that may result in positive, neutral or negative messages (Rawlins 2010). While earned and paid media deliver messages, the editorial imprimatur represented through earned media is a key differentiator. The Commission determined that the two are not equivalent concepts and should not be treated as such (Rawlins 2010, p.1).

The industry needed a universal consensus that turned its back on Advertising Equivalency Values (AVE), and many public relations practitioners believed that the Barcelona Principles were the measurement guidelines we had all been waiting for. It has been said that this was the tipping point in the quest to find an authentic and credible measurement framework for the industry (West 2014). The Author disagrees. It's one thing to say we now have some measurement principles to live by, and here they are. It's another thing entirely to actually produce reliable and replicable results that are valid for determining the impact of public relations and research methods that will result in tangible measures. Measurement is only meaningful if the information delivered is beneficial to those who can act on it. The Barcelona Principles do not provide the measurable results necessary for senior executives to show the value of public relations outcomes in dealing with the credibility, relationships, reputation and trust of target audience perceptions compared to other industry standards.

Australian universities now operate in a competitive corporatised environment that necessitates evidence-based return-on-investment expenditures where creative ideas and strategic insight must now be rooted in data. The impact of public relations work must be measured, not on output, but on actual outcomes, and the value of our service must be expressible in the precise terminology of business, not the vagaries of public relations.

Practitioners have also shown reluctance to adopt proven methods. As Watson (1994) and Wright et al. (2009), amongst other researchers, have found, practitioners still talk more about evaluation than actually practice it. Gregory's 2001 article, 'Public relations and evaluation: does the reality match the rhetoric?' is an appropriate effusive question and summary of the situation after a century of public relations practice.

In reality, all too often the value of the public relations professional is vastly under-valued. The effect of our advice, service and content is under-represented in year-end reviews, and opportunities to assess the impact of public relations activities versus other expenditures go under-recognised. Public relations specialists must now take the next step, and business leaders are seen by far as the primary targets in advocacy for public relations and communications (Global Alliance 2012). Advertising value equivalencies and media tracking and analysis have failed to accurately reflect the value of strategic communication (Argenti 2005).

As previously mentioned in chapter two, USQ senior executive sought an accurate measure to show the value of expenditure for stakeholder engagement following USQ's 2009 Internal and External Stakeholder Research. Accurate measurement is an important step toward establishing the real and usually under-estimated value of public relations. The problem is that there is still an incompatibility between what communication divisions generate to evaluate their effectiveness and what senior executives view as benchmarks.

With the advent of Federal Government funding cuts in the Australian university sector, senior executives are forced to consider expenditure in business outcomes, such as revenue, earnings and market share, but communication professionals instead spend most of their measurement efforts calculating the outputs of specific communication activities because we have failed to determine an accurate measure for the outcomes of public relation engagement with stakeholders.

Weighing in on this persistent problem Paul A Argenti, Professor of Corporate Communications at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, argues that 'The average company already collects data in many different communication areas, but fails to convert this into useful information'. Professor Argenti writes, 'This shortfall occurs because communication professionals have not developed the right tools to demonstrate value to senior managers' (Argenti 2005 p. 31).

Libby Howard from Judge and Howard Public Relations Ltd, a 2012 award winner for the United Kingdom's Outstanding Small Consultancy Excellence Awards, said, 'While we would all applaud efforts to move the evaluation debate on from simply measuring column inches, many in the industry - myself included - were roundly unimpressed by the Barcelona Principles, which for the most part seemed a statement of the obvious and lacking in imagination' (2011).

David Rockland, CEO of Ketchum Pieon Change and Global Research (2012) says, 'Part of that maturation is also a shift from counting earned media, to counting what is much more important - target audience change and business results. Is the maturation of public relations measurement complete? No, far from it' (Rockland 2012 p.57).

The Barcelona Principles began the process by identifying guidelines for measurement but who's driving this? It is primarily a group called the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication; AMEC for short, a trade association that recognised that its own industry needed not an evolution, but a revolution, to stay relevant in today's fast-changing media landscape.

The Author believes that the Barcelona Principles formalise the obvious measurement standards of public relations, but the implementation of measurement is still the responsibility of the public relations practitioner. A measurement roadmap has been created by consensus of the Barcelona Principles but there is no vehicle to manifest how we get there. Ragan/NASDAQ OMX Corporate Solutions, a leading provider of trading, exchange technology information and public company services across six continents, conducted an online survey of 1467 public relations professionals in March 2013. It is interesting to note that all those surveyed were serious about finding a solution with the problem of measurement, but 66 percent of respondents had never heard of the Barcelona Principles, and another 17 percent had heard of them but didn't know how they would apply to public relations metrics (Working 2013).

Catherine Arrow (2010) says, 'While I was delighted to see this agreement finally putting the lid on the unethical tosh and nonsense that is AVE, I was still frustrated to see this list so closely tied to media, when public relations is concerned with so much more. I was also a little concerned to see the list tucked under the heading of 'research principles', when research and research methods don't get a mention. The steps and stages of public relations and communications evaluation have been around for decades and any practitioner worth their salt has a robust process in place that informs and guides strategy, engagement and relationship building as well as assessing effectiveness against organisational outcomes. Generating coverage centric numerics and retaining a focus on media measurement without moving it into an evaluation process generally leaves people with a list of nice looking but meaningless numbers' (Arrow 2010).

Measurement and performance assessment are critical tools for proving the value of communication efforts, building the business case for resources, and continuously improving everything communication practitioners do. Measurement supports success: companies with highly effective communications are three times more likely to measure and report results than low-effective companies. They are also 1.7 times more likely to outperform the market (Melcrum 2013). Despite the benefits, 43 percent of communication functions have no formal mechanisms for measuring or diagnosing performance (Melcrum 2013). Strategic communication plans are incomplete without a built-in measureable component as a way to check accountability and make improvements over time.

The final results of the 2011/2012 Global Public Relations Advocacy Survey revealed that 'Measurement and Return on Investment' was the greatest opportunity facing public relations/communication management professionals today at a global level, while 'Demonstrating the value of Public Relations/Communication to organisations' was rated the single most important key to advocating success and promoting the value of public relations and communication management (Global Alliance 2012).

Currently, evaluation activities include analysing media content and monitoring certain developments such as shifts in public opinion, policy changes, increased membership and organisational participation, and improved institutional capacity. These methods are often questioned by the senior executives of universities because they cannot place a quantifiable measure against their Key Performance Indicators.

Public relations professionals continue to be challenged by the need for accountability, with questions such as *'what are we doing to help drive the business?', 'what is the business impact of our efforts?'* Unfortunately, most practitioners confronted with the challenge of time, effort and money, struggle to move beyond output metrics like impressions or coverage. To effectively link public relations efforts with business results, public relations practitioners need to adopt a holistic approach to the science of measurement.

Essentially, the Author argues that the value of public relations can be found in the relationships it cultivates with publics/stakeholders. Relationships are intangible assets, and they are difficult to measure. Is it possible to conceptualise the financial returns to relationships? They reduce costs, reduce risk, and increase revenue to organisations, but high-level managers simply don't recognise return on investment (ROI) in the form that it is presented to them by public relations staff or consultants with current 'public relations metrics'.

Regardless of the challenge, there is no 'silver bullet' metric currently available to capture and track the value that strategic communication brings to an organisation. This study will determine if a strategic communication measurement is important to the overall reputation of universities in the Australian higher education sector to show value in listening and responding to stakeholder perceptions.

3.8 The Project

As has been shown, measurement tools have failed to accurately reflect the value of strategic communication. There are equations to show 'Return on Investment', media tracking and analysis, stakeholder attitudes and advertising equivalencies, but often these measurement tools do not provide the value evidence required by university leaders. In recent years, determining these aspects of business has taken on an increased urgency as efforts to gauge strategic communication value have continued to fall flat.

It has been shown that there is a disparity between what communication divisions produce to evaluate their effectiveness and what senior leaders view as benchmarks. With the tightening fiscal environment within the Australian universities sector, senior leaders are interested in business outcomes, such as revenue, earnings and market share, but communication professionals instead spend most of their measurement efforts calculating the outputs of specific communication activities.

As previously mentioned, through the Council of Australian Governments, Australian universities have set an ambitious goal: that by 2025, 40 percent of all 25-34 year olds will have a qualification at bachelor level or above (Gillard 2009). Strategic communication is an important channel to assist in the realisation of this goal to raise stakeholder awareness of the benefits of higher education. To accomplish this, and many other business objectives, the public relations profession needs to accurately measure its activities so that Vice-Chancellors are able to quantify the impact of communication.

Measurement and evaluation techniques that are widely understood, accepted and implemented are critical to the acceptance and growth of public relations. For that reason, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) has embarked on an effort to identify standard approaches for measuring the impact of public relations, convening a Measurement Task Force comprised of the current and past chairs of the Institute for Public Relations' Commission on Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation.

Through reflection, and applying the knowledge and experience gained, the Author will undertake evidenced-based research within the Australian university sector to understand if a system, that measures the benefit of strategic communication, may further develop the profession and enhance the reputation of the strategic communication function.

If this study determines a professional need/benefit to measure strategic communication within the higher education sector, the system which incorporates a risk indicator to evidence communication outcomes will be further developed and improved.

3.8.1 Aim

The system has been piloted by the University of Southern Queensland and has been demonstrated to the former Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor's Committee with favourable feedback. As a presenter at the 2010 National Public Relations Conference in Darwin; the 2012 Annual Higher Education Communication Officers' Conference in Melbourne; and the 2014 Public Relations Research Colloquium in Adelaide, the Author elucidated details of the system to peer public relations professionals. It was shown how the results of stakeholder qualitative research are entered into the database and, by using a recognised risk assessment scale, a measure shows the severity of the outcome if no action is taken. The System assesses the likelihood of the stakeholder perception, the severity of the outcome prior to communication action, and then determining an action and inputting this data into the program; an automated update of risk is provided. This risk indicator highlights priorities for management and delivers a scientific measure to strategic communication initiatives which address stakeholder perceptions.

The three aims of my doctoral research are:-

» to establish an understanding of the current strategic communication initiatives employed by Australian universities;

» to establish whether the senior executive of Australian universities appreciate the value of strategic communication to their overall business initiatives and, if so, how the sector can better manage and measure reputation amongst stakeholders through improved systems and efficiencies; and

» to develop an understanding of how a system that measures the benefit of strategic communication may further develop the communications profession and enhance the reputation of the strategic communication function.

Effective communication professionals are those who speak the same language as senior executives and have a deep understanding of the university and its strategy. Argenti (2005) states that,

> 'Companies that continue to take a laissez-faire approach to communication will find it increasingly difficult to compete. Although there will be a continuing need to tactical execution, the addition of an integrated, strategic focus will be critical to success. For communication professionals this imperative will not be a threat, but an opportunity to not only acquire a seat at the table but to stay there'.

3.8.2 Problems/Issues to be Investigated

» Who is really shaping the success of the higher education sector?

» As we exist in an age of timeliness with its constant demand for information, and where the media plays a crucial role in informing the public about the higher education sector, how does the sector currently keep updated on stakeholder issues and perceptions, or is this an area which is 'hit and miss'?

» Is the higher education sector serious about addressing the perceptions of their stakeholders and, if so, how would they utilise the expertise of strategic communication specialists and systems to map their strategic directions?

» Is the higher education sector interested in measuring the value of strategic communication?

» How can the public relations profession improve the impact of applying strategic communication actions to improve stakeholder opinion which will benefit the higher education sector?

» What elements are necessary to improve the developed system which evidences value by measuring the impact of honest community engagement in the higher education sector?

CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in previous chapters, the USQ RoP case study signified interesting opportunities and directions to investigate an appropriate measure and value in incorporating community opinion in decision-making and identifying future strategic directions. This study developed through the failure of being able to effectively measure communication actions to university senior management in response to identified stakeholder perceptions.

The concept of building a system to measure the value of strategic communication was established prior to commencing the USQ Doctorate of Professional Studies (DPST) program. A risk indicator for communication measurement appeared of strategic importance, but further research was required to understand whether the model reached beyond exemplars suggested in current literature and to explore the relevance of communication measurement in the higher education sector. The review of literature has produced recurring themes emphasising the need to measure communication effectiveness (Argenti 2005, Grunig 2008, Rawlins 2010, Watson 2011, Rockland 2012).

The basis of this study for communication measurement has been founded through the professional case studies and literature review research in previous chapters. Identifying how to measure the communication gap between an organisation and their stakeholders contributes to new knowledge and a viable research which may assist to deliver reputational analytics and organisational variables that interact with key stakeholder groups. This chapter outlines the overall aim of the study; the research questions; the general methodology of the study; the research approach; design; and data collection analysis.

The aim of this study is to understand the characteristics of current state communication needs of Australian universities by comparing the communication practices and organisational performance of Australian university communication directors congruent with the reputational demands of the workplace. It will be determined if there is a need to measure strategic communication value to better manage reputational issues in Australian universities, and whether the conceptual paradigm of this research study should be further developed. The results of this research will provide evidence to determine whether a risk indicator to measure effectiveness of communication activities would be beneficial and relevant to industry needs.

4.2 Research Objectives

The research forms part of this professional doctorate study. The purpose of this research is to:-

» establish an understanding of the current strategic communication initiatives deployed by Australian regional and metropolitan universities;

» clarify whether the senior executive of a sampling of Australian regional and metropolitan universities appreciate the value of strategic communication to their overall business initiatives and, if so, how the sector can better manage reputation amongst stakeholders through improved efficiencies; and

» develop an understanding of how a system that measures the benefit of strategic communication may influence the communications profession and enhance the reputation of the strategic communication function.

The following section shows why the questions and issues to be investigated are best suited to a qualitative approach to conduct this research.

4.3 Research Approach

This study builds upon the researcher's personal profile and professional development (as outlined in chapters one, appendix A and chapter two) and the literature review (outlined in chapter three), to proceed with a contextually-specific research investigation using an online survey questionnaire, through to product or systems development and organisational change activities.

In this study the researcher's task is to develop an online survey questionnaire to explore the roles of public relations offices in a sampling of Australian regional and metropolitan universities. This approach lends itself to a qualitative method of inquiry as the collection of data seeks insight rather than statistical analysis. Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned with understanding an individual's perceptions of the world (Baskerville & Myers 2004, pp. 329-335). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research was also considered appropriate to this study as it is more subjective than quantitative research, and uses very different methods of collecting information, mainly individual surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open-ended. Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from 'the bottom up,' by organising the collected data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information. This inductive process involves researchers working back and forth between the topics until they establish a comprehensive set of themes. It may also involve collaborating with the participants interactively, so that they have a chance to shape the themes or abstractions that emerge from the process. Researchers also use deductive thinking in that they build themes that are constantly being checked against the data. The inductive-deductive logic process means that the qualitative researcher uses complex reasoning skills throughout the process of research.

Casell and Symon (1994) state that qualitative research is said to have a number of characteristics, which include: a focus on interpretation rather than quantification; an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity; flexibility in the process of conducting research; an orientation towards process rather than outcome; a concern with context regarding behaviour and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience; and finally, an explicit recognition of the impact of the research process on the research situation.

Qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles (Ereaut 2011). It is used to inform business decisions, policy information, communication and research (Ereaut 2011).

Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as 'a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning'. By 'systematic' Shank means 'planned, ordered and public', following rules agreed upon by members of the qualitative research community. By 'empirical', he means that this type of inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. 'Inquiry into meaning' denotes researchers trying to understand how others make sense of their experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim that qualitative research involves an 'interpretive and naturalistic' approach.

Qualitative research will generate the primary data of this study by providing a bigger picture of the situation, and then, by utilising quantitative techniques to analyse the primary data, the researcher can more accurately evaluate the results of people's words and actions.

The research design is outlined in the next section and provides the overall strategy developed to effectively address the research problem.

4.4 Research Design

In order to conduct a rich, meaningful, qualitative study, the research plan considered the following five components to its formation:

1) Significance and goals

The research project is designed to significantly understand current public relations initiatives deployed by a sampling of Australian regional and metropolitan universities. In particular, the survey findings will assist to identify the value of strategic communication to overall business initiatives and how public relations practitioners currently measure the impact of their work.

2) Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study - the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs this research—is a key part of the design (Miles & Huberman 1994, Robson 2011). Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a conceptual framework as a visual or written product, one that 'explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied - the key factors, concepts, or variables - and the presumed relationships among them' (p. 18).

The conceptual framework informs the research design. A diagram of the research process appears in Figure 17.

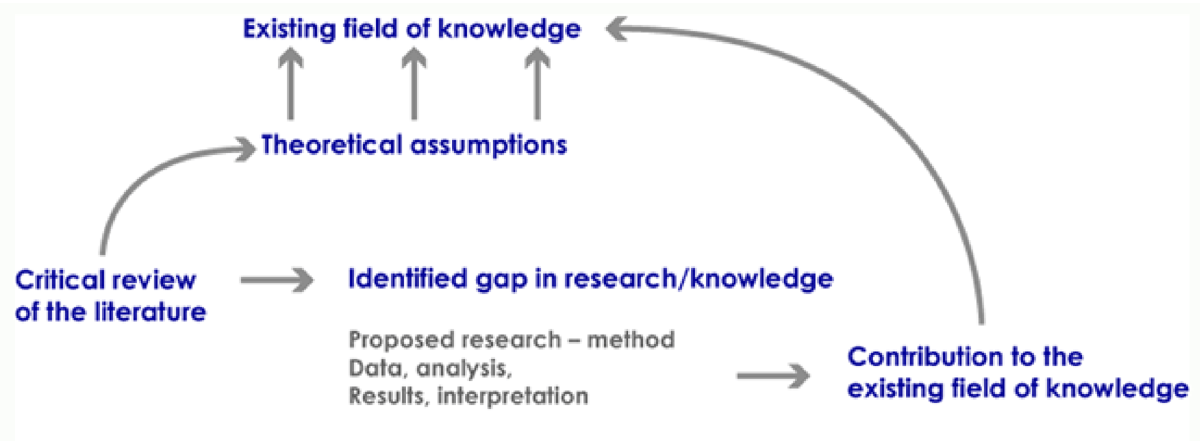


Figure 17: Research Process as reproduced from Monash University 2003

The conceptual framework assists the research design by refining existing knowledge (chapters one and two) and critically reviewing current literature (chapter three) to refine goals and develop realistic and relevant research questions, select appropriate methods, and identify potential validity threats to the conclusions. It is in this framework where the present research problem evolved and the study's relevance was re-affirmed.

3) Purpose of this research

The purpose of the study is to provide recommendations on how senior management in the higher education sector may better manage reputational issues by accurately measuring the benefits of strategic communication. The aim is to develop an understanding of how a system that measures the benefit of strategic communication might influence the communications profession and enhance the reputation of the strategic communication function.

4) Methodology

As previously stated, qualitative research was considered appropriate to this study because quantitative measures and statistical analyses do not fit the problem being investigated. The researcher has adapted the concept of methodological congruence advanced by Morse and Richards (2002) - that the purposes, questions, and methods of research are all interconnected and interrelated so that the study appears as a cohesive whole rather than as fragmented, isolated parts.

The survey questionnaire is built from a variety of question types including multiple choices, rating scales, ranking measure, matrix of choices, open-ended research questions, and comment fields. Systematic checking and pre-testing of the survey was performed to ensure interpretability, and confidence that the predetermined questions effectively addressed the research problem.

Before commencing this research, ethical clearance from the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Human Research Ethics Committee was obligatory; as it is policy for researchers undertaking projects involving human participants to obtain approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (see section 4.6.3 and appendix B).

Participants selected to undertake the on-line survey questionnaire will be drawn from the Universities Australia list of Directors of Public Relations and Communication members. A pilot sample of six regional and six metropolitan universities will be invited to participate in the research drawn from a cross-section of Australian states.

5) Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves the identification, examination and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data, and determines how these patterns and themes help answer the research questions. After administering the survey questionnaire and data is collected, the researcher analyses the findings of each of the research questions by way of a thematic interpretation, string analysis of data and ethnographic functions. Further explanation of the data analysis is provided in section 4.8 of this chapter.

Qualitative research often includes a variety of methodological approaches and the next section will examine why action research is also an important element to the research design.

4.5 Using Action Research as an Integer to Knowledge

Complementing the qualitative approach, a type of action research will primarily be the narrative driver that will assist to exemplify and illustrate the foundation needs of the qualitative approach, as 'Action research ... aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to further the goals of social science simultaneously. For that reason, there is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction' (O'Brien 1998 p. 2).

Each stage will be informed by the previous stage and outcomes will be considered and updated over the course of this study. Transfer of learning is feasible through 'participatory' action research undertaken to further inform the data sets.

Supporting this analogy, Cohen and Manion (1980, p. 209) described research design as, 'essentially an on the spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. The step by step process is constantly monitored (ideally, that is) over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanism (surveys, interviews and case studies for example) so that the enduring feedback may be translated into modifications'.

While the research design relies heavily on the qualitative methodological approach augmented by action research variables, the components of any action research method denote that ongoing evaluation and adjustment be made. In this instance, the Communication System measurement tool will be greatly influenced by the changing nature of the organisation communication needs and ongoing reputational demands of key stakeholder groups demanding transparency and interpretation of their environments.

Like all action research models, it is the intention of this study that senior executive and organisational communication practitioners, once aware of its conclusions, will continue to review, evaluate and improve upon their formal and informal communication practices (Warmington 1980, pp. 23-39). Likewise, Brown and McIntyre (1981, p. 245), who describe an action research model for school curriculum innovation, also emphasise the ongoing nature of the chosen method:

> 'Collection of data ... may then generate further hypotheses and modified principles, and so on as we move towards a greater understanding and improvement of practice. This implies a continuous process of research and the worth of the work is judged by the understanding of, and desirable change in, the practice that is achieved'.

In the action phase, the study identified the problem through planning, acting, observing and reflecting on professional practices through the 'core action research' stages. During the observation phase of the 'study action research' it described both the research and the procedure. The study then carried out an analysis and evaluation of the results of the actions, both content and process, in light of the literature review. During the reflection element of this thesis action, the study provided a reflective opportunity to occur, as did prepositional conclusions with proposals for areas of further research.

Action research needs to be planned in the same systematic way as any other type of research and the methods selected for gathering information depend on the nature of the information required. The study's approach mimicked elements of research proposed by the definition of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), who developed a concept for action research with a proposed spiral model comprising four steps: planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

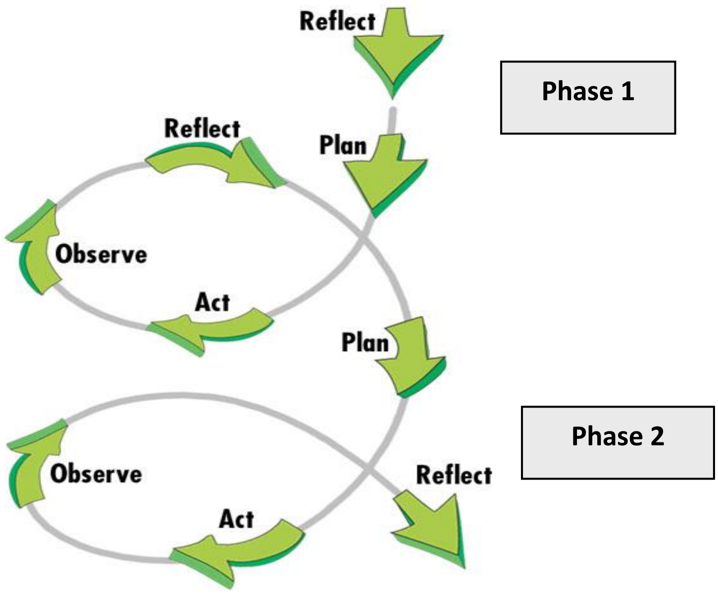


Figure 18: Carr and Kemmis's Action Research Model (1986)

Figure 18 shows the four steps in action, the movement from one critical phase to another, and the way in which progress may be made through the model. Faced with the problem, the action researcher will go through a series of phases (reflect, plan, action, observe) called the Action Research Cycle to systematically tackle the problem.

Perry and Zuber-Skerritt (1991) also developed a concept for action research.

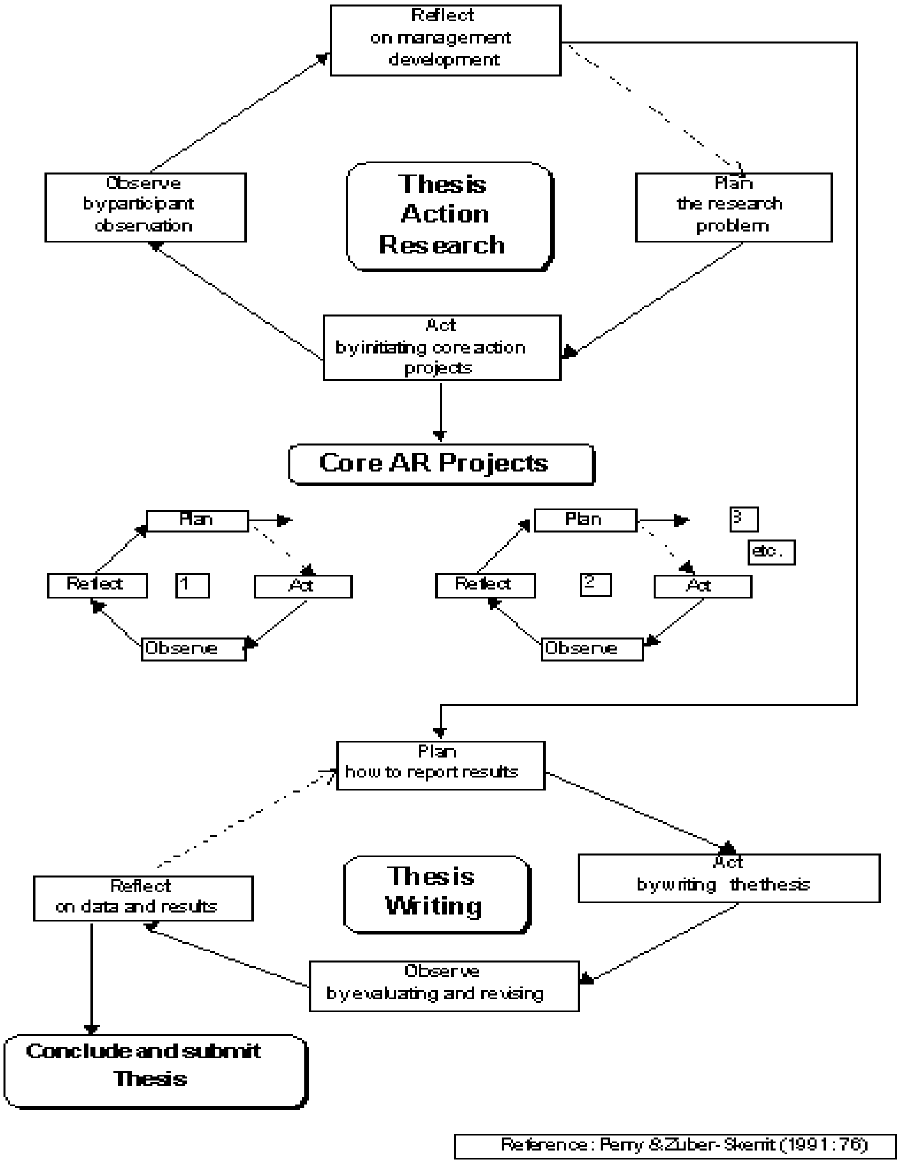


Figure 19: Initial Action Research Model Perry and Zuber-Skerritt (1991:76)

Although the study begins with a specific design for the research, it leaves open the possibility of changing or adapting the research methodology to suit the situation. The 'emergent' character of action research provides this flexibility as it allows questions to be asked of the results.

To give further emphasis for the appropriateness of action research to this research design, the following were considered:

1) The study is limited to the statements and evidence to be collected from a sampling of the Australian higher education sector. Establishing meaning is the key purpose behind the methods of data collection and analysis so qualitative approaches are more appropriate.

2) From a social perspective the study attempts to help university senior executives to understand the value of strategic communication and how this may more effectively be managed by placing a measureable value on work to increase organisation reputation.

3) Because the study is investigative and reflective in its approach there is a need to adopt flexible and open-ended methods of data collection, although there needs to be an overarching framework to guide the study, achieved by using an action research framework.

The methodology to be utilised in this study relates to the research objectives and this is outlined in the following section.

4.6 Detailed Methodology

A number of research objectives were undertaken as part of the methodological interpretations to help conceptualise and ascertain best praxis. These included:-

» To undertake a holistic analysis of Australian university corporate communication environments to determine current workplace practice;

» To draw upon existing data to understand the deficiencies of qualitative data in the higher education context under investigation; and

» To conduct a structured in-depth survey questionnaire based on the aforementioned to understand whether a system that measures the benefit of strategic communication may enhance the reputation of the strategic communication function.

This study postulates a sampling quota of Australian universities to ascertain views towards the development of a communication measurement system. The investigation is requisite to increase foundation knowledge in understanding the characteristics of existing needs of university corporate communication offices. Currently it appears that communication directors of Australian universities have limited knowledge of, or the expertise to develop, real-time analytics that assist in present and future evaluation of communication pedagogies.

This research will have a focus on qualitative and action research methods and include: analytic induction; content analysis; the sampling survey questionnaire; and textual analysis with possible reflection using historical method approaches. The processes and methodology informing the study, and the subsequent development of this study, are founded on the approaches, processes and actions associated with work-based learning and action research (Armsby 2000, Armsby 2012, Cherry 1999, Costley 2010, Dick 2002, Garnett 2009, Lester 2004, McNiff 2000, Williams 2004, Zuber-Skerritt 2002).

The survey researches a sample number of institutions in the Australian higher education sector and is limited to: a combination of predetermined questions where yes/no or multi-choice responses are requested; Likert scales which will indicate strength of agreement with a statement; and open questions where respondents answer with free text. The representative quota was applied to gain a good sample selection that was key to enabling a broad context of the population being investigated.

Prior to developing the in-depth survey, the researcher acquired an awareness of both internal and external factors that could possibly influence this research. The next section outlines the assessment technique used to organise current information which provided further assistance in formulating the research strategy.

4.6.1 SWOT Analysis

To assist in the formulation of the pre-qualification questionnaire, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was used to categorise known information into a logical order. A SWOT analysis is a classic strategic planning tool. Using the framework of strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats, it provides a simple way to assess how a strategy can best be implemented. The tool also assists the research plan in being realistic about what can be achieved, and where the study should focus. The SWOT Analysis in preparation for the research design is chronicled on the next page.

<table>
<tr><th>Strengths</th><th>Weaknesses</th></tr>
<tr><td>
» Australian Government recognises need to steadily increase tertiary student numbers to 2025

» Literature review provided evidence of the need for strategic communication measurement

» Knowledge of tertiary education stakeholders

» Understanding of qualitative research outcomes from internal and external tertiary education stakeholders

» Completion of internal and external strategic communication plans which show the need to interact with and listen to stakeholders

» Continued support from external companies to work in partnership in the development of a communication measurement system for commercial use

» Public relations professionals interested in database to measure the benefits of employing strategic communication initiatives
</td><td>
» Limited knowledge of beliefs and practices employed by public relations professionals

» Limited capacity to prove the effectiveness of strategic communication plans to enhance the higher education business objectives

» Limited capacity to prove the effectiveness of the System to measure higher education strategic communication effects on business objectives until intellectual property issues are actioned

» Ability to improve/modify the initial System to be more front-end user-friendly

» Educating university leaders to accept the outcomes of qualitative stakeholder research and the benefits of listening to stakeholder perceptions

» Increasing the awareness for strategic communication methods to be employed in universities
</td></tr>
<tr><th>Opportunities</th><th>Threats</th></tr>
<tr><td>
» For the System to be recognised as an instrument to accurately measure the benefits of strategic communication initiatives

» To deliver effective strategic communication initiatives which cause change in behaviours to help improve the business objectives for the higher education sector

» To raise the reputation of the higher education sector amongst stakeholders

» To educate public relations professionals so they become experts in their own domain using the System to measure efforts

» To increase the value of the public relations profession
</td><td>
» The university sector not identifying the value of or need for strategic communication plans

» University public relations professionals displaying little interest to advance the field of strategic communication measurement

» Not being able to simplify the database for commercial use

» Inability to produce the database resulting in a worsened perception of the public relations profession

» Inability to prove the benefits of accurately measuring strategic communication objectives
</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 20: SWOT Analysis for Research Design

To further explain the SWOT analysis, major points are listed as:

Strengths

- Literature review has confirmed the need to measure strategic communication efforts to show/prove the value of performance
- Australian Federal Government identified the importance of increasing the population's tertiary qualifications
- Continued support from CorProfit to produce a system to measure strategic communication

Weaknesses

- Limited knowledge of beliefs and practices employed by the public relations offices in Australian universities
- Limited capacity to prove the effectiveness of the System to measure higher education strategic communication effects on business objectives until intellectual property issues are actioned. Increasing awareness for strategic communication methods to be employed in universities

Opportunities

- To raise the reputation of the higher education sector amongst key stakeholder groups
- For the System to be recognised as an instrument to accurately measure the benefits of strategic communication initiatives
- To educate public relations professionals so they become experts in their own domain using the System

Threats

- The University sector not identifying the value or need for strategic communication plans
- University public relations professionals displaying little interest to advance the field of strategic communication measurement
- Inability to prove the benefits of accurately measuring strategic communication objectives

The pre-qualifying questionnaire was designed to target the various aspects identified in the SWOT analysis to provide meaningful and insightful evaluation to the qualitative research. The questionnaire was constructed to gain understanding about attitude and influences on decision-making, as the SWOT analysis and data sets from previous research assisted in making judgments about the relative performance and communication needs that reflect upon organisation's reputational image. This data was used to establish the pre-qualifying questionnaire which was deemed appropriate and suitable to help benchmark the communication determinants.

To further explain the research background, epistemological examples form part of this chapter to demonstrate how actions to date have also influenced the research plan.

4.6.2 EPISTEMOLOGY

The word epistemology comes from two Greek words: 'Episteme' meaning knowledge, understanding; and 'Logia', meaning Science, Study (Löfgren 2013, p. 2). In philosophy, epistemology is the study of knowledge, in general. An example of an epistemological question would be – 'How does a person get to know something?' If we look at a statement such as 'I know that people have walked on the moon', for this to be true knowledge:

» It must be possible to justify the claim.

» It must also be a fact, i.e. people must have indeed been to the moon.

» And, finally, the person must also actually believe that people have walked on the moon (Löfgren 2013, p. 6).

As a pre-cursor to this study, the researcher agrees that Löfgren's (2013) argument that epistemology theories and assumptions about knowledge creation aptly informed the contextual obligations of the research design. For researchers, epistemology is a key to understanding possibilities and conditions for creating new knowledge in a world we consider as always unfinished, and in which both researchers and ordinary people simultaneously find themselves in a reified and existential relation to the field of practice.

Justifying a belief is done by using evidence. Epistemology has a significant impact on the scientific endeavours of most scholars, given its importance for discussing the limits to, and possibilities of creating and reporting on, new knowledge (Löfgren 2013). Throughout the course of this study, the importance of measuring the value of communication activities was accentuated through discussions with workplace colleagues and peers who understand and support this research. Such beliefs influence the development of knowledge because they are considered to be the central values or theories that are functionally connected to most other beliefs and knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich 1997).

The epistemic beliefs that reinforced the nature and scope of this study emerged from feedback received following conference presentations. As a presenter at the 2010 National Public Relations Conference in Darwin; the 2012 Annual Higher Education Communication Officers' Conference in Melbourne; and the 2014 Public Relations Research Colloquium in Adelaide, the researcher provided an overview of the System to peer public relations professionals. Following the 2012 Annual Higher Education Communication Officers' Conference in Melbourne, seventeen universities inquired about piloting the System to measure the value of their strategic communication activities.

Endorsement and feedback from these presentations fortified the researcher's resolve and conviction in knowing that measuring the effectiveness of strategic communication initiatives was a common concern for many public relations professionals.

This chapter has explicated the methodological review to not only demonstrate understanding of this research, but also to show recognition of how this can be accomplished. An outline of the merits and weaknesses of the research methods and approaches have been shown so that the theoretical statements can be given with greater confidence and show the limitations more honestly.

As previously mentioned, it is a requirement that USQ human research ethics clearance must be obtained prior to commencing research involving human participants. The next section outlines this approval process.

4.6.3 Human Research Ethics Application

An overriding tenet to the research design and its methodology was the necessity for human research ethics clearance, as the methodological approach relied primarily on the participation, engagement and personal reflection of those to be surveyed.

The research involved developing a sampling survey questionnaire to look at the role of offices of public relations, and in particular strategic communications, within the Australian university environment. Participants selected to undertake an online survey questionnaire were drawn from the Universities Australia list of Directors of Public Relations and Communication members. A sampling of six regional and six metropolitan universities were chosen from various Australian states.

Human research ethics approval for research involving human participants must be obtained prior to commencing research. As per the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2012) research requires human ethics clearance if it includes the involvement of human beings through any of the following:

- taking part in surveys, interviews or focus groups
- undergoing psychological, physiological or medical testing or treatment
- being observed by researchers
- researchers having access to their personal documents or other materials
- the collection and use of their body organs, tissues or fluids (e.g. skin, blood, urine, saliva, hair, bones, tumour and other biopsy specimens) or their exhaled breath

- access to their information (in individually identifiable or re-identifiable form) as part of an existing published or unpublished source of database (National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2012).

Research ethical clearance under reference H12REA216 was granted on 4 January 2013 from the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Human Research Ethics Committee and, as part of the approval process, it was a requirement to obtain gatekeeper permission before inviting the directors of public relations and communication from Australian universities to participate in the research (appendix B).

Interpreting data is a complex task and the following section describes the means to be utilised when analysing the collection data. Identifying and refining important concepts is a key part of the iterative process of qualitative research.

4.7 Data Analysis

Nine out of the twelve universities approached through the human research ethics process agreed to participate in the research, and this represented 25 percent of the Australian university population. For a large online survey, conventionally, a response rate of 20 percent is considered a good response rate, while a 30 percent response rate is considered to be really good (Dierckx 2013). In every measurement, there are two components: the true measure of the variable, and error (Yount 2006). In all statistical analysis, the objective is to minimise error and maximise the true measure.

Samples for qualitative studies are generally much smaller than those used in quantitative studies (Mason 2013). Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003) provide reasons for this. There is a point of diminishing return to a qualitative sample - as the study goes on more data does not necessarily lead to more information. This is because one occurrence of a piece of data, or a code, is all that is necessary to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis framework (Mason 2013). Frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind a topic (Mason 2013). This is because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and not making generalised hypothesis statements (see also Crouch & McKenzie 2006). Finally, because qualitative research is very labour-intensive, analysing a large sample can be time-consuming and often simply impractical.

The option of selecting a large random sampling for this study was not the most effective way of developing an understanding of the complex issues relating to communication measurement. To obtain relevant data for the purpose of this study, it was recognised that some informants were more likely to provide insight and understanding representative of the whole population. An appropriate sample size for this qualitative study was one that adequately answered the research question and for this reason the small sampling study can be defended. A flexible research design was employed and an iterative, cyclical approach to sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation was used.

As previously mentioned, qualitative data analysis involves the identification, examination and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data, and determines how these patterns and themes help answer the research questions. After administering the survey questionnaire and collecting data, the study will analyse the findings of each of the research questions by way of thematic interpretation, string analysis of data and ethnographic functions.

Thematic interpretation involves pinpointing, examining and recording patterns within data (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman 1997). Coding is the primary process for developing themes within the raw data by recognising important moments in the data and encoding them prior to interpretation (Boyatzis 1998). The interpretation of these codes can include comparing theme frequencies, identifying theme co-occurrence, and graphically displaying relationships between different themes (Guest & MacQueen 2012). Most researchers consider thematic analysis to be a very useful method in capturing the intricacies of meaning within a data set (Guest 2012).

The string analysis of data involves the breaking down of codes into sub-codes (Weinstein 2005). Search strings will be achieved through the Survey Monkey online research tool utilised in this study.

Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, ethnographic research methods began to be widely employed by communication scholars. The purpose of ethnography is to describe and interpret the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group (Harris 1968). Agar (1980) also notes that ethnography is both a process and an outcome of the research. Ethnographic work in communication studies seeks to explain 'how' ordinary methods/practices/performances construct the ordinary actions used by ordinary people in the accomplishments of their identities (Agar 1980). This often gives the perception of trying to answer the 'why' and 'how come' questions of human communication (Rubin, Rubin & Piele 2005).

In the examination of data, the grounded theory method will be considered as an inductive approach. 'A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents' (Corbin & Strauss 2008, p. 23). As the data is systematically analysed in relation to the research questions, the basic idea of the grounded theory approach is to label variables, categories or concepts and their interrelationships to produce certain outcomes.

4.8 Conclusion

Qualitative research was considered the most efficient and effective research methodology for this project as it proposed to identify and analyse the principles and practices of the strategic uses of communication within a sampling of Australian universities. The results will expectantly provide knowledge and skills to determine if the demand to accurately measure the effectiveness of listening to stakeholder perceptions by applying communication strategies will help a university maximise positive opportunity for profile or goodwill, while minimising potential reputational risk.

As Richard Hackman (1992 p. 73) said, ‘The research question should drive the methodology ... we take as a given whatever methodology we are comfortable with or skilled in using and then adjust our research questions to fit’.

Classifying an approach as quantitative or qualitative, ethnographic, survey, action research or whatever, does not mean that once an approach has been selected the researcher may not move from the methods normally associated with that style (Hackman 1992). Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses and each is particularly suitable for a certain context. The approach adopted and the methods of data collection selected depend on the nature of the enquiry and the type of information required.

This investigation has a focus on qualitative and action research methods and includes: analytic induction; content analysis; a sampling survey questionnaire; and textual analysis, with possible reflection using historical method approaches.

The study is limited to a predetermined set of questions gleaned from discussions with several university corporate communication directors and given focus by way of a sample survey.

Mouton and Marais (1990 p. 44) state that the emphasis is on in-depth description of an individual, group, situation or organisation. An integrated approach of a qualitative sampling of Australian universities will provide intelligence into the development of a communication measurement tool – the System. It appears that, presently, Australian university communication directors have limited means of comparing and measuring their management and communication practices and organisational performance with other similar enterprises congruent with reputational demands of the workplace.

The research is undertaken to identify significant performance insights using qualitative methodologies to assist in the development of a key communication system contiguous to the better management of reputational issues by measuring the benefits of strategic communication. Research results will expectantly increase the ability for communication directors to evaluate and measure the relative effectiveness of current practices to better inform and allow them to improve their organisational communication performance and practice.

The next chapter will present the survey research and findings.

CHAPTER FIVE SURVEY RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As cited throughout the thesis, the problem to be addressed in this study is to understand how a communication measurement value may assist university senior executives in placing greater worth on areas where it matters most: its strategic communication to varied communities.

Surveys are one of the most frequently used methods of social research, and are utilised by the government, academic researchers in universities, campaign organisations, marketing researchers, opinion pollsters, and many similar groups. All surveys aim to describe or explain the characteristics or opinions of a general population through the use of a representative sample.

To restate, this survey was conducted with the aim of discovering current communication practices implemented by Australian universities and, in particular, how Australian universities measure the effectiveness of public relations. It has been shown that public relations has come of age, and with that has come a responsibility for universities to build understanding, credibility and trust with their publics. Learning the structure, environment and practices of university corporate communication departments will provide information to understand whether practitioners engage in typically journalistic activities at the technical level or if they have advanced to a more managerial role that sits closer to the top of the hierarchy of the university to influence decision-making and take responsibility for the public's orientation toward the university.

Questions will assess how senior executives in the sector value strategic communication, what techniques public relations offices utilise, how each office is resourced and the value placed upon their activities to the overall business environment. This understanding is essential before progressing with the future development of a system which measures the effectiveness of communication activities.

As with all data, analysis and interpretation was required to bring understanding to the responses. For this qualitative study, a systematic approach was undertaken. Data was initially analysed by repeatedly reviewing all respondents' answers to classify consistencies and differences. To bring meaning to data, themes and patterns were then identified and these were further organised into categories. The initial list of categories changed throughout the iterative process and connections were also made both within and between the categories. Understanding the limitations to the study and assessing the relative importance of the themes to the research question was important in giving credibility to the final analysis.

5.2 Survey Questionnaire

To review, the survey questionnaire sought to establish an understanding of the current strategic communication initiatives utilised by Australian regional and metropolitan universities. It was necessary to discover how the sector may better manage reputation amongst stakeholders through the System which would be both beneficial and relevant to industry needs. Was there a need for a communication measurement tool in the higher education sector? Would the measurement tool allow senior executives to take a leading role with their stakeholders if communication professionals could provide evidence to show the value of strategic communications?

As has been shown, in the higher education sector, measurement and benchmarking are critical to show continuous improvement. The survey identifies the practices and major issues facing public relations offices within Australian universities. The results provide evidenced-based research to ascertain if there is a need to further develop the System.

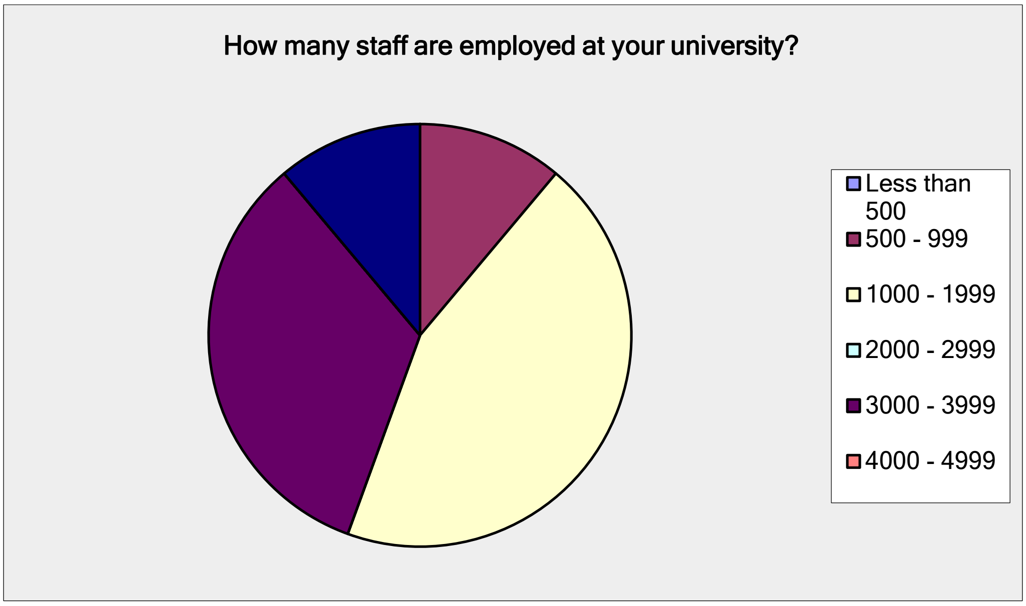
The study was designed to gather trending data, to provide insight into behaviours and responsibilities, to gauge the impact on the university's business objectives, to measure the impact and resourcing of - both staff and budget; and to gather topical data to address new or emerging issues that are relevant to the public relations profession. Secondary objectives include identifying key channels of communication which have proved most effective, and job satisfaction.

5.2.1 Questions and Responses

Participants selected to undertake this on-line survey questionnaire were drawn from the Universities Australia list of Directors of Public Relations and Communication members. A sampling of six regional and six metropolitan universities were chosen from various Australian States and permission was obtained from nine out of the twelve universities approached. This equated to a sampling of 25 percent of the entire representative population.

The survey research questions and responses are set out below, and at the end of this chapter, details of the survey breakdown and a summary of the research findings are provided.

Question 1 – How many staff are employed at your university?



Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 500	0.0 percent	0
500 - 999	11.1 percent	1
1000 - 1999	44.4 percent	4
2000 - 2999	0.0 percent	0
3000 - 3999	33.3 percent	3
4000 - 4999	0.0 percent	0
5000 - 5999	0.0 percent	0
6000 - 6999	0.0 percent	0
7000+	11.1 percent	1

Graph 1: How many staff are employed at your university?

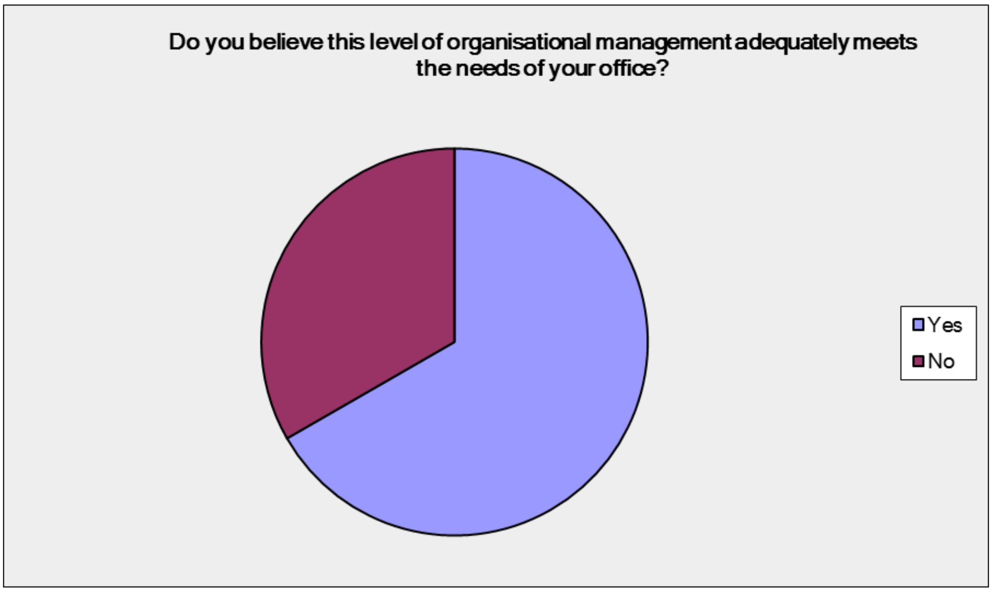
Question 2 - What is the job title for your current position?

1. Manager
2. Manager, Media and Public Relations
3. Marketing and Communications Director
4. Executive Director, Marketing & Communications
5. Strategic Communications and Media Advisor
6. Director, Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations
7. Director, Public Affairs
8. Director, Communications
9. Director, Corporate Communications

Question 3 - Looking at the organisational structure of your university, who do you directly report to?

1. Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor
2. Director, Office of Marketing and Communication
3. PVC International and Quality
4. Provost
5. Executive Director, Policy Planning and External Relations
6. Director, Sustainable Business and Management Improvement
7. Dual reporting lines - Operationally to the Vice-Chancellor; functionally to the Executive Director, Academic Services
8. The Provost
9. University Secretary

Question 4 – Do you believe this level of organisational management adequately meets the needs of your office?



Graph 2: Do you believe this level of organisational management adequately meets the needs of your office?

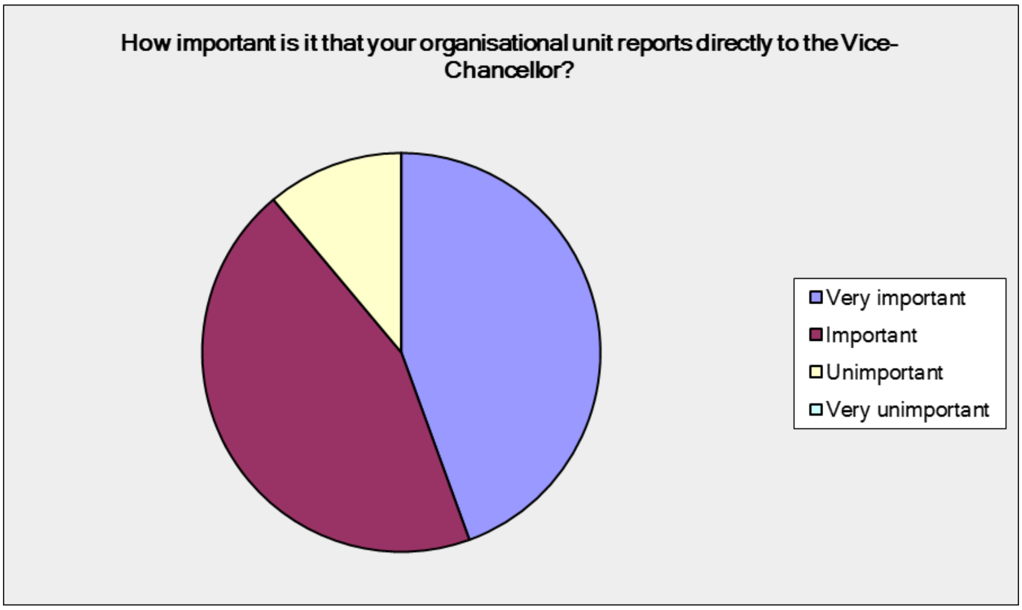
Yes 66.7 percent No 33.3 percent

Comments:

1. Depends as much on the person as the position
2. While the position considers aspects of risk management – Sustainable Business Management Improvement (SBMI) is largely policy-based providing an internal audit function to the University. Having corporate communications report to this level removes its functionality and responsibility from the Vice-Chancellor thus limiting its effectiveness and reporting ability to what is ordinarily the CEO. One of the risks of having a corporate communication office report to SBMI is that there is limited understanding of what corporate communication and public relations does.

3. The role should report directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

Question 5 – How important is it that your organisational unit reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor?



Graph 3: How important is it that your organisational unit directly reports to the Vice-Chancellor?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very important	44.4 percent	4
Important	44.4 percent	4
Unimportant	11.1 percent	1
Very unimportant	0.0 percent	0
Why?		7

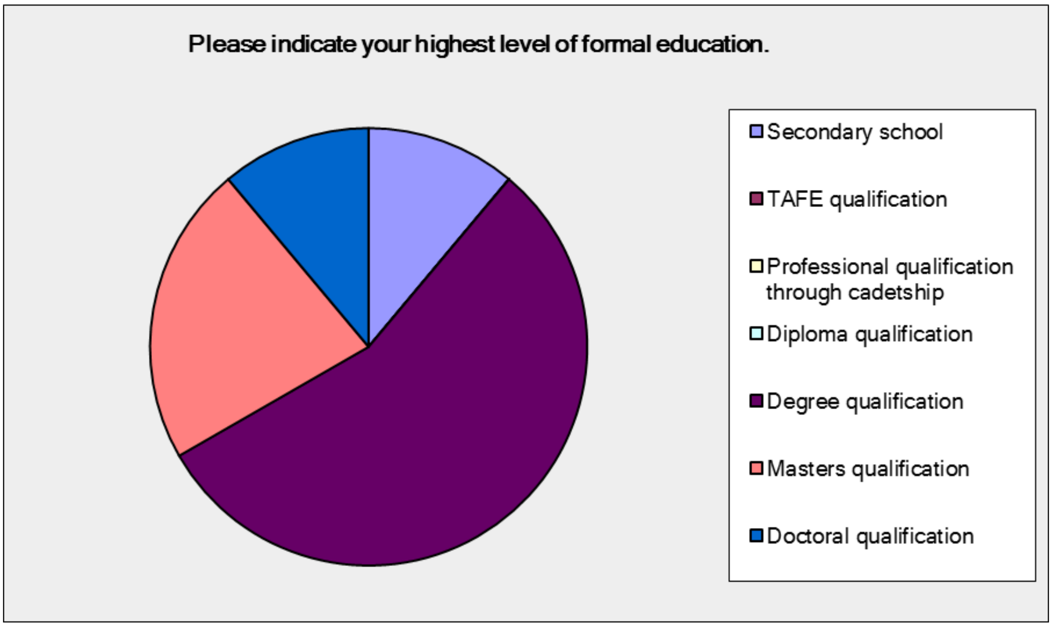
Comments:

1. A lot of our work is directly involved with the Vice-Chancellor, who has regular contact with myself and my staff.
2. I think it's important that there is at least a close link and close communications with the Office of the Vice-Chancellor if not a direct reporting relationship, to ensure a good flow of information back and forth.
3. Current reporting works OK because of the person. Still have direct access to VC when required.
4. I report indirectly to the Vice-Chancellor. It means he doesn't need to be involved in the operational side of my role such as approving leave etc. My immediate supervisor only asks that I keep him informed of my dealings with the VC and to discuss any broader strategic issues.
5. Apart from the business as usual functions of the office, reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor provides increased credibility and recognition of the importance of the office and what it can bring to senior management and to the organisational structure. Reporting to the VC would provide a conduit for information of a corporate nature which could impact on issues management functions and the ability to

be in touch with key decision makers across the University. In many instances corporate communications is the first port of call when an issue impacts and being removed from the power structure limits the functionality and expert advice which could be quickly provided. From a budgetary position reporting to the VC would also give a priority to the everyday activities of the office and bring increased support and recognition of its functions.

6. Because this unit and my role specifically manage the University's reputation and nothing is more important to an organisation than its reputation. Also communications underpins all internal and external activities at the University.
7. While it is not imperative that the Vice-Chancellor is 'line manager' for the role, it is imperative that the role/organisational unit has direct access (and a level of accountability) to the Vice-Chancellor, to ensure the unit is accurately reflecting his/her strategic aims in the work that it does.

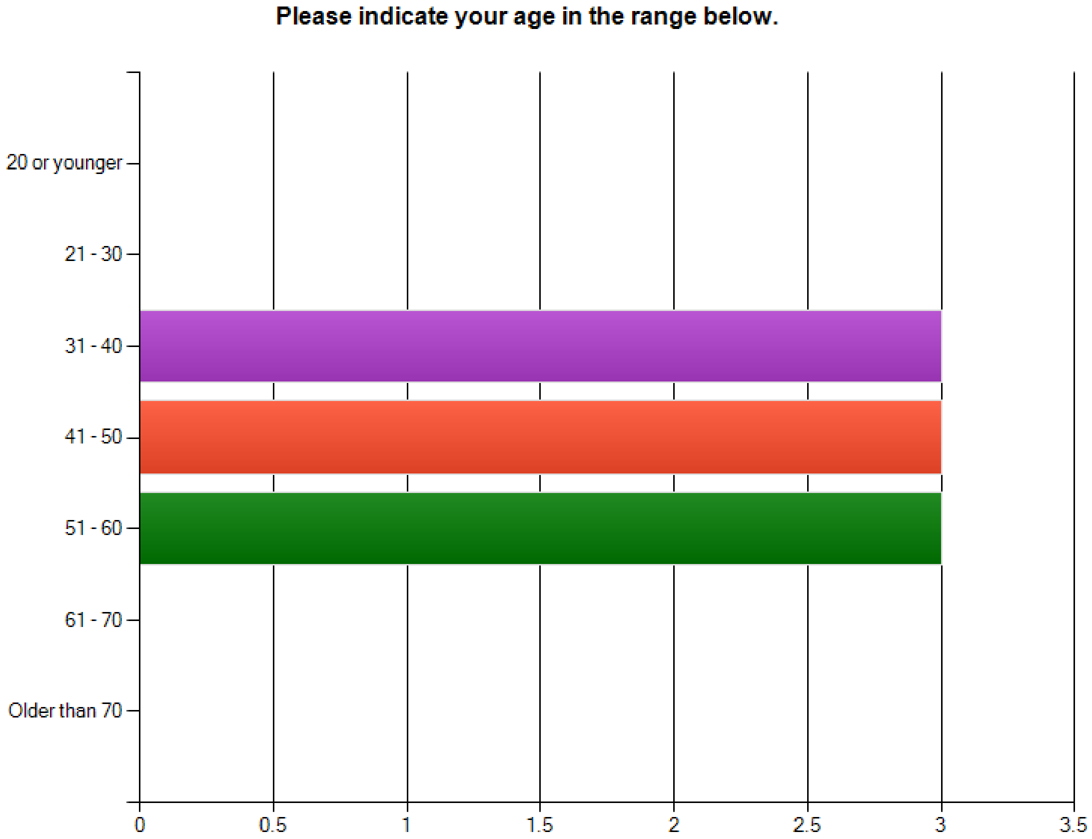
Question 6 – Please indicate your highest level of formal education



Graph 4: Please indicate your highest level of education

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Secondary school	11.1 percent	1
TAFE qualification	0.0 percent	0
Professional qualification through cadetship	0.0 percent	0
Diploma qualification	0.0 percent	0
Degree qualification	55.6 percent	5
Masters qualification	22.2 percent	2
Doctoral qualification	11.1 percent	1

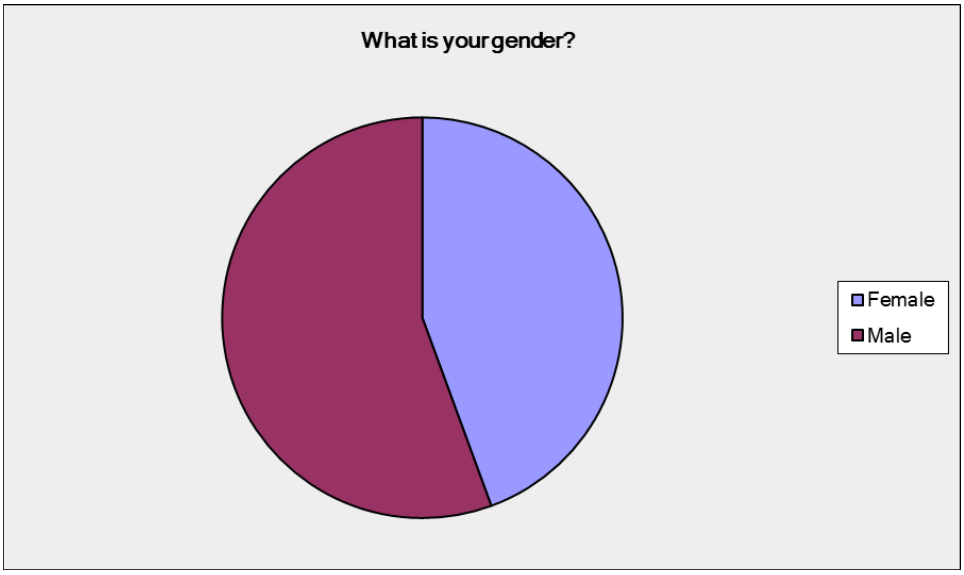
Question 7 – Please indicate your age in the range below



Graph 5: Age Demographic

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
20 or younger	0.0 percent	0
21 - 30	0.0 percent	0
31 - 40	33.3 percent	3
41 - 50	33.3 percent	3
51 - 60	33.3 percent	3
61 - 70	0.0 percent	0
Older than 70	0.0 percent	0

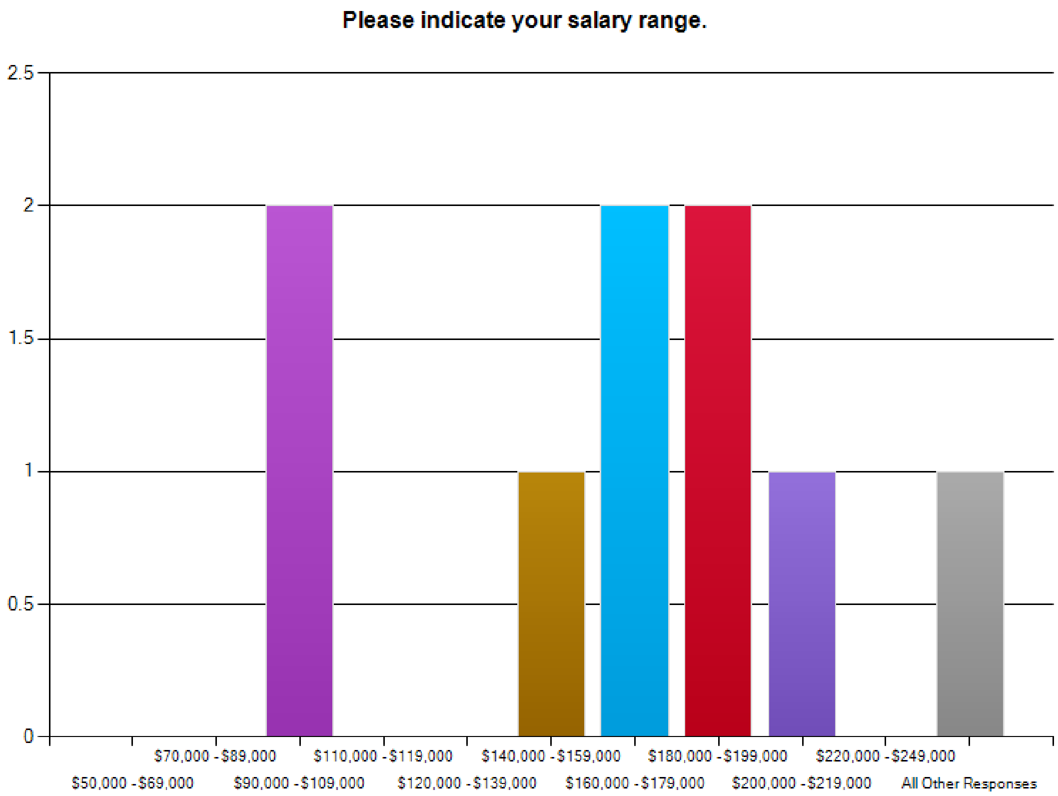
Question 8 – What is your gender?



Graph 6: Gender Demographic

Female 44.4 percent   Male 55.6 percent

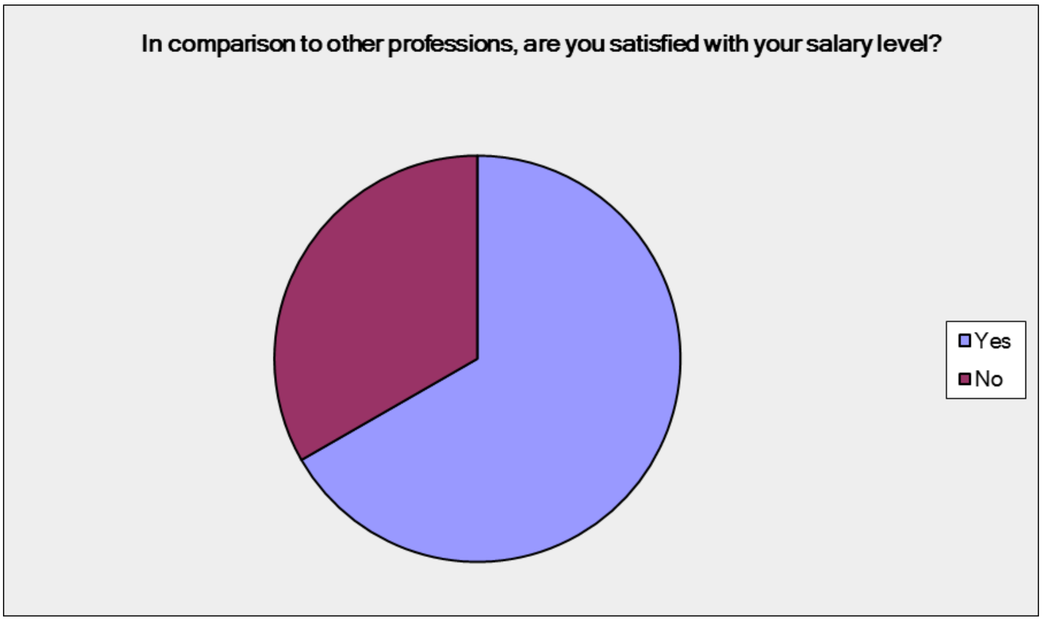
Question 9 – Please indicate your salary range?



Graph 7: Salary Range

Please indicate your salary range.		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
$50,000 - $69,000	0.0 percent	0
$70,000 - $89,000	0.0 percent	0
$90,000 - $109,000	22.2 percent	2
$110,000 - $119,000	0.0 percent	0
$120,000 - $139,000	0.0 percent	0
$140,000 - $159,000	11.1 percent	1
$160,000 - $179,000	22.2 percent	2
$180,000 - $199,000	22.2 percent	2
$200,000 - $219,000	11.1 percent	1
$220,000 - $249,000	0.0 percent	0
$250,000+	0.0 percent	0
Prefer not to respond	11.1 percent	1

Question 10 – In comparison to other professions, are you satisfied with your salary level?



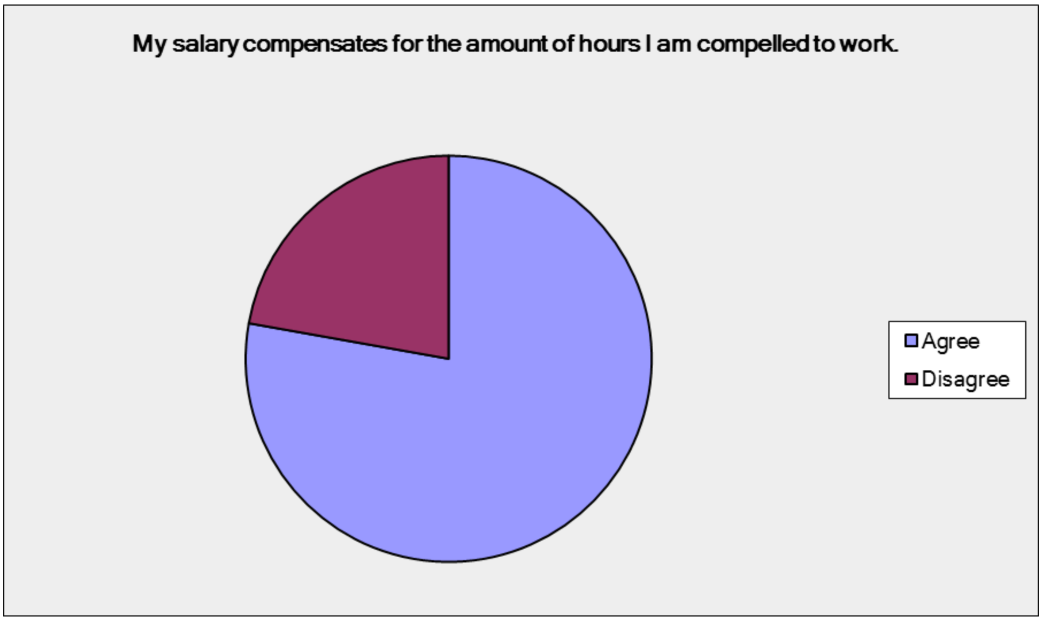
Graph 8: Salary Level Satisfaction

Yes 66.7 percent No 33.3 percent

Comments:

1. I work half time, so above ranges a bit meaningless
2. Over the past several years the role of the corporate communication office has shifted dramatically from a promotion and publicity function to a strategic communication purpose. Comparable positions in the public and private sector acknowledge the level of expertise and responsibility that comes with the position and provides remuneration accordingly. In relation to other positions across the University I feel that this position carries a salary level at the lower end of the scale.

Question 11 – My salary compensates for the amount of hours I am compelled to work



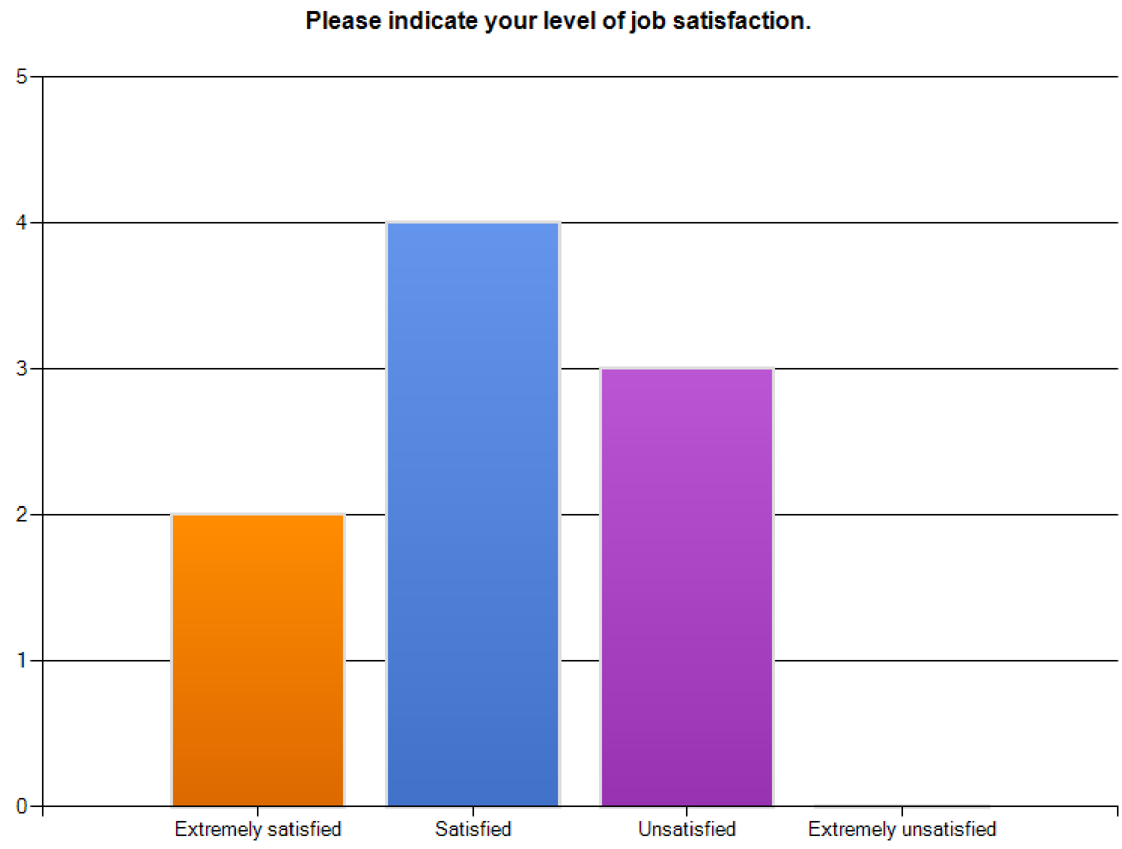
Graph 9: Salary compensation analysis

Agree	77.8 percent	7
Disagree	22.2 percent	2

Comments:

1. This role is more about the level of responsibility and strategic direction offered rather than hours worked
2. Currently work 70+ hours a week
3. Being on call 24/7 and also providing the level of advice expected as well as the everyday management functions of the position is one that needs to remunerate for the after-hours work.

Question 12 – Please indicate your level of job satisfaction

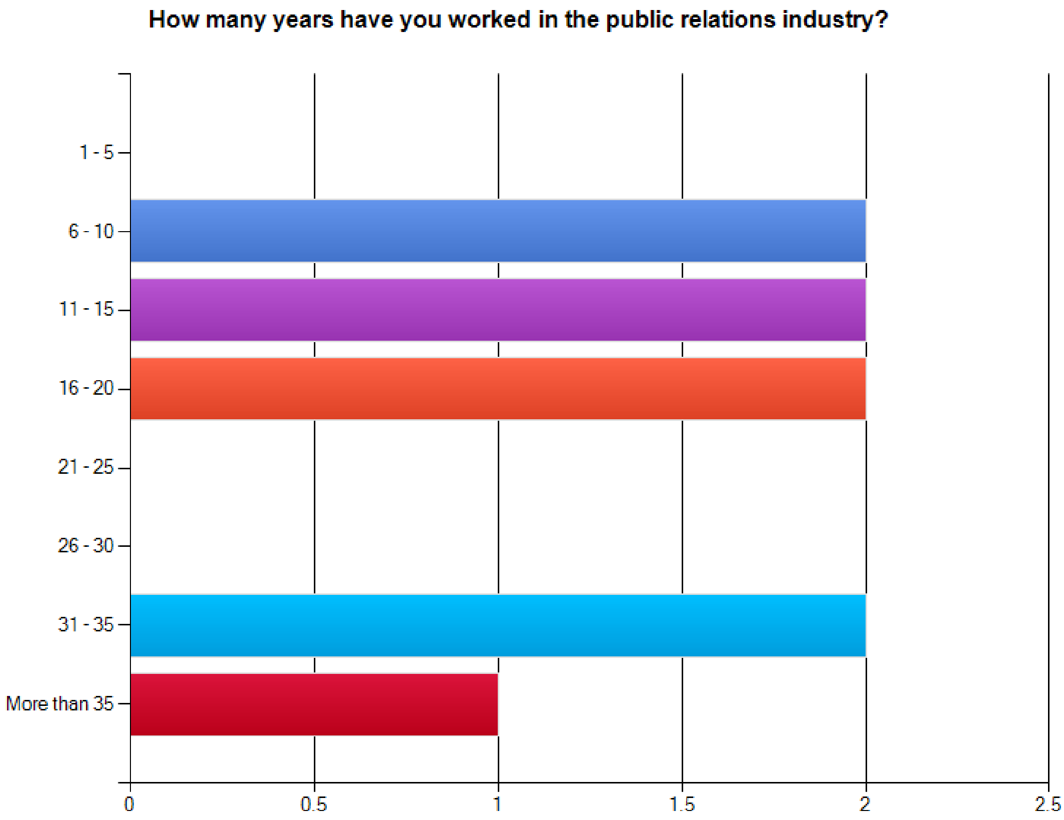


Graph 10: Job Satisfaction

Comments:

1. The position provides a high level of satisfaction however my qualification of satisfied is based around the level of budgetary support and overall recognition that is given to this office. Having to work and produce high levels of output with little or no budgetary support does not provide for job satisfaction or high levels of morale.

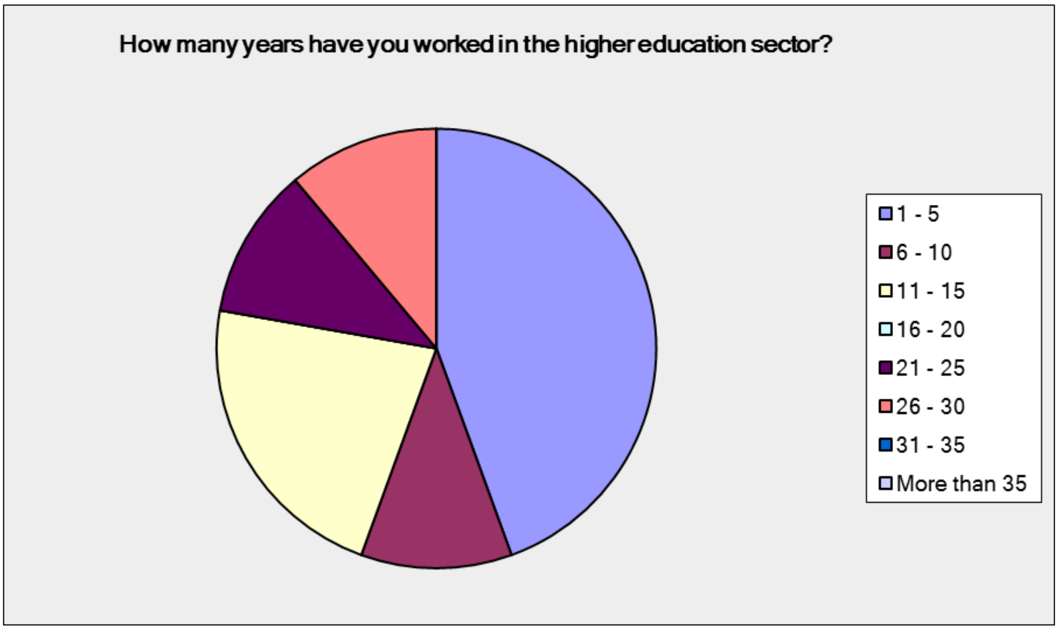
Question 13 – How many years have you worked in the public relations industry?



Graph 11: Years of Professional Experience

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 - 5	0.0 percent	0
6 - 10	22.2 percent	2
11 - 15	22.2 percent	2
16 - 20	22.2 percent	2
21 - 25	0.0 percent	0
26 - 30	0.0 percent	0
31 - 35	22.2 percent	2
More than 35	11.1 percent	1

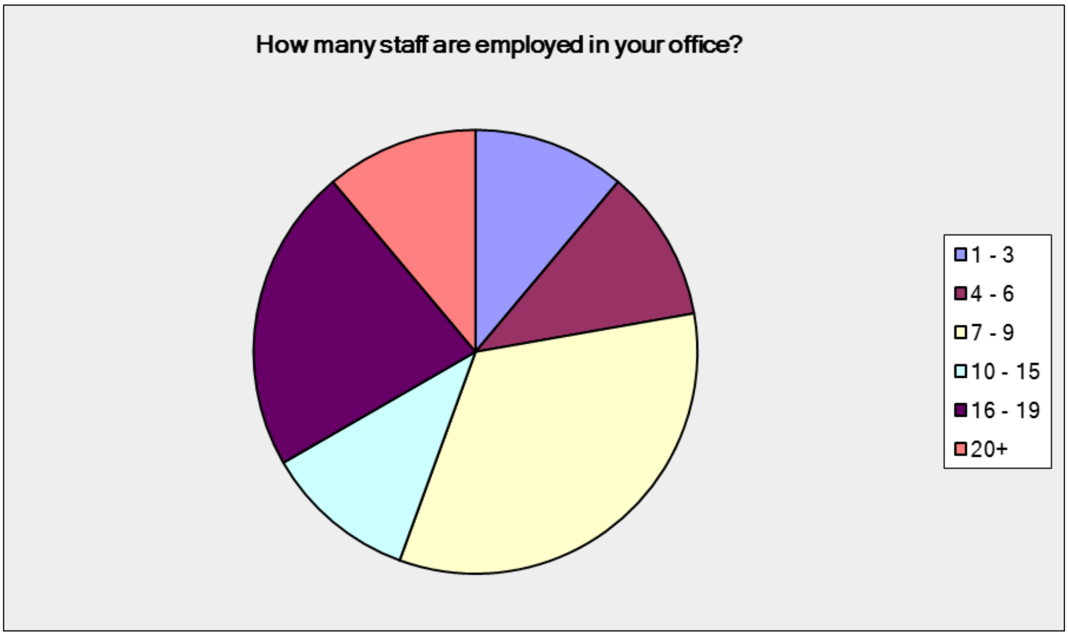
Question 14 – How many years have you worked in the higher education sector?



Graph 12: Years in Higher Education Sector

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 - 5	44.4 percent	4
6 - 10	11.1 percent	1
11 - 15	22.2 percent	2
16 - 20	0.0 percent	0
21 - 25	11.1 percent	1
26 - 30	11.1 percent	1
31 - 35	0.0 percent	0
More than 35	0.0 percent	0

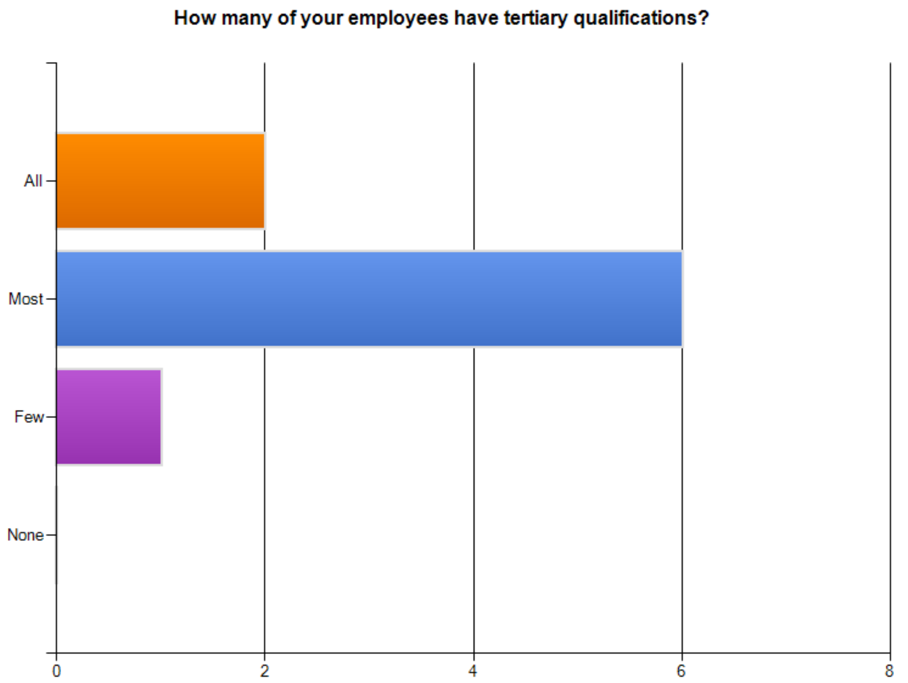
Question 15 – How many staff are employed in your office?



Graph 13: Number of office staff members

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 - 3	11.1 percent	1
4 - 6	11.1 percent	1
7 - 9	33.3 percent	3
10 - 15	11.1 percent	1
16 - 19	22.2 percent	2
20+	11.1 percent	1

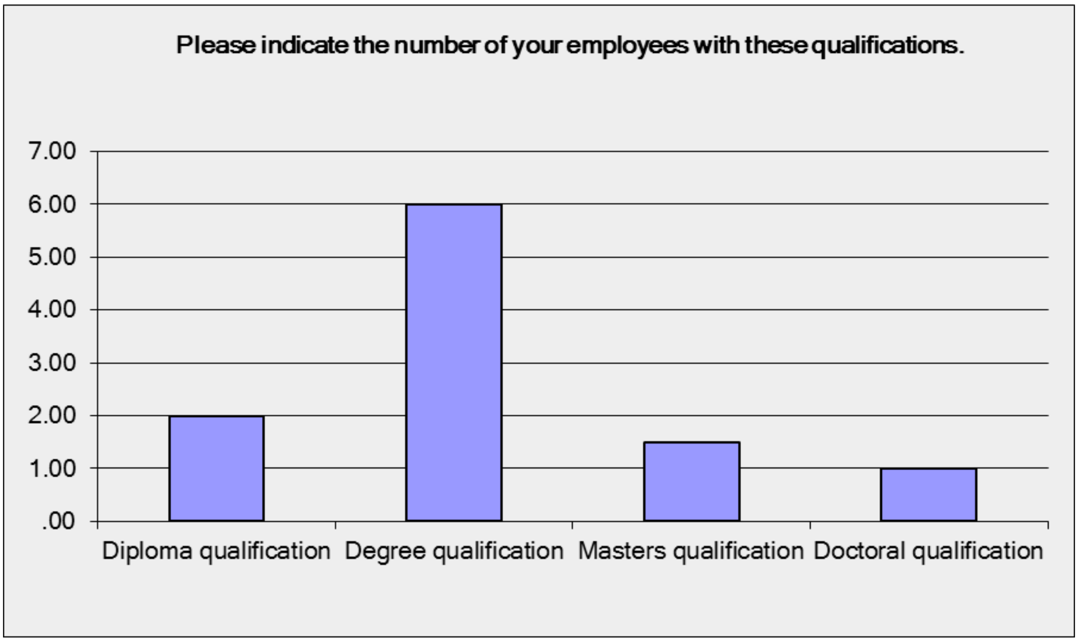
Question 16 – How many of your employees have tertiary qualifications?



Graph 14: Office Staff Qualifications

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
All	22.2 percent	2
Most	66.7 percent	6
Few	11.1 percent	1
None	0.0 percent	0

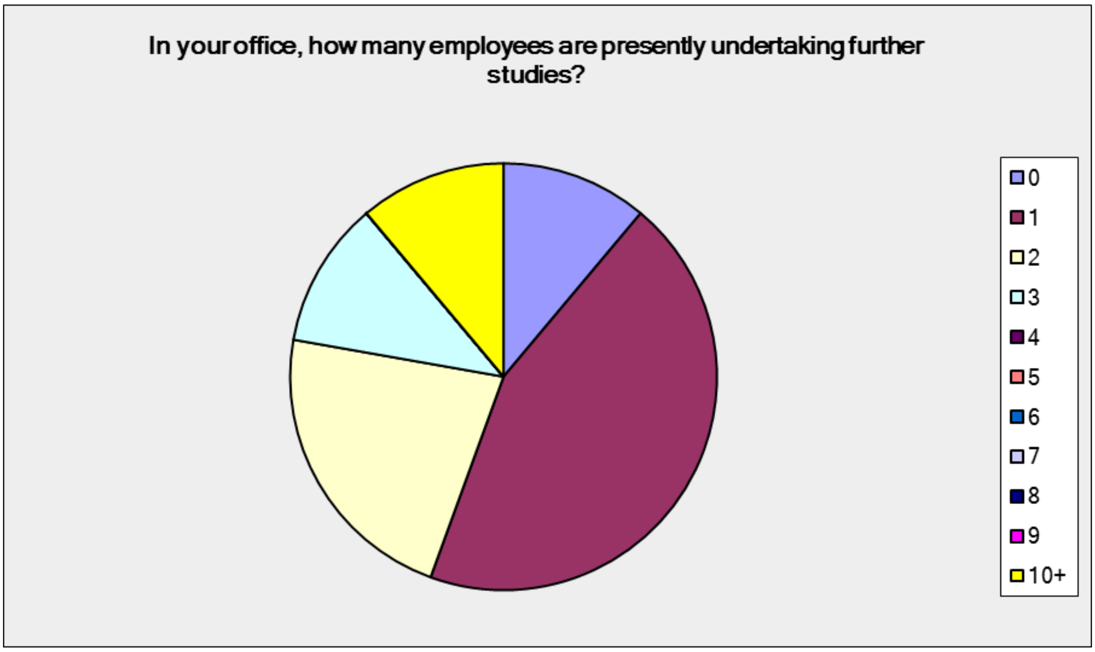
Question 17 – Please indicate the number of your employees with these qualifications



Graph 15: Number and level of tertiary qualifications

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Diploma qualification	2.00	8	4
Degree qualification	6.00	48	8
Masters qualification	1.50	3	2
Doctoral qualification	1.00	1	1

Question 18 – In your office, how many employees are presently undertaking further studies?



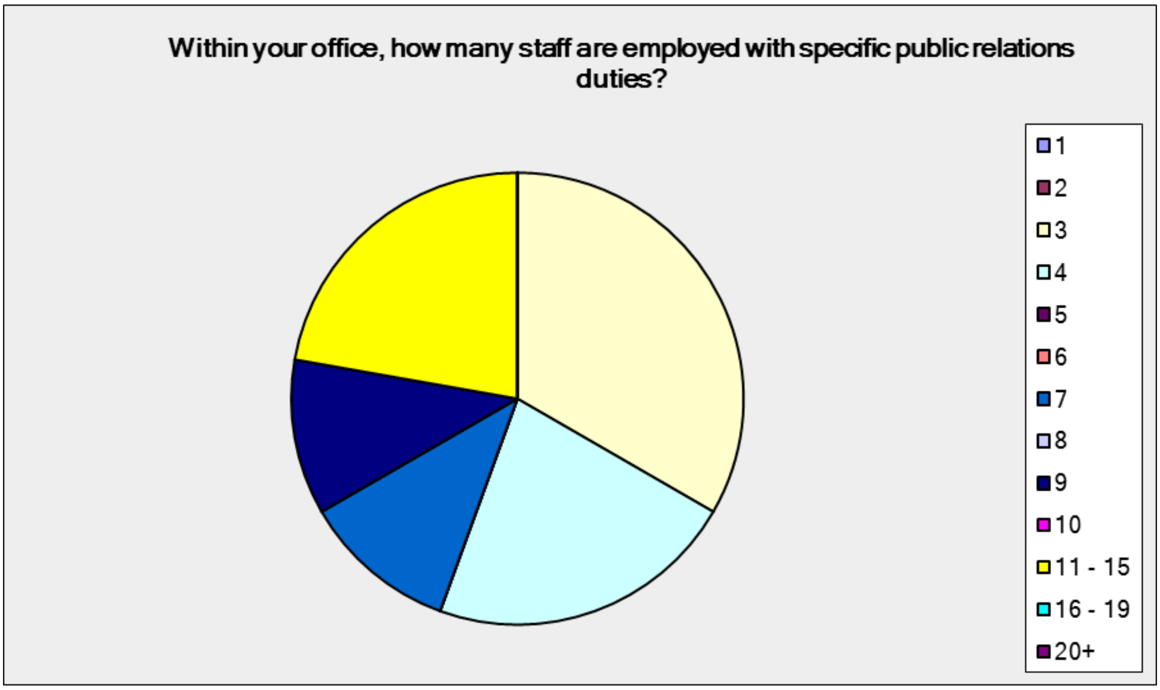
Graph 16: Number of staff undertaking further study

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0	11.1 percent	1
1	44.4 percent	4
2	22.2 percent	2
3	11.1 percent	1
4	0.0 percent	0
5	0.0 percent	0
6	0.0 percent	0
7	0.0 percent	0
8	0.0 percent	0
9	0.0 percent	0
10+	11.1 percent	1
Please comment giving the level of qualification they are working toward.		6

Comments:

1. Masters
2. Master of Professional Communication
3. Graduate Diploma
4. Professional Doctorate and Master qualification in on-line communication
5. It varies from technical qualifications (eg printing industry) to degree qualifications and professional qualifications (eg MBA)
6. MBA and Degree

Question 19 – Within your office, how many staff are employed with specific public relations duties?



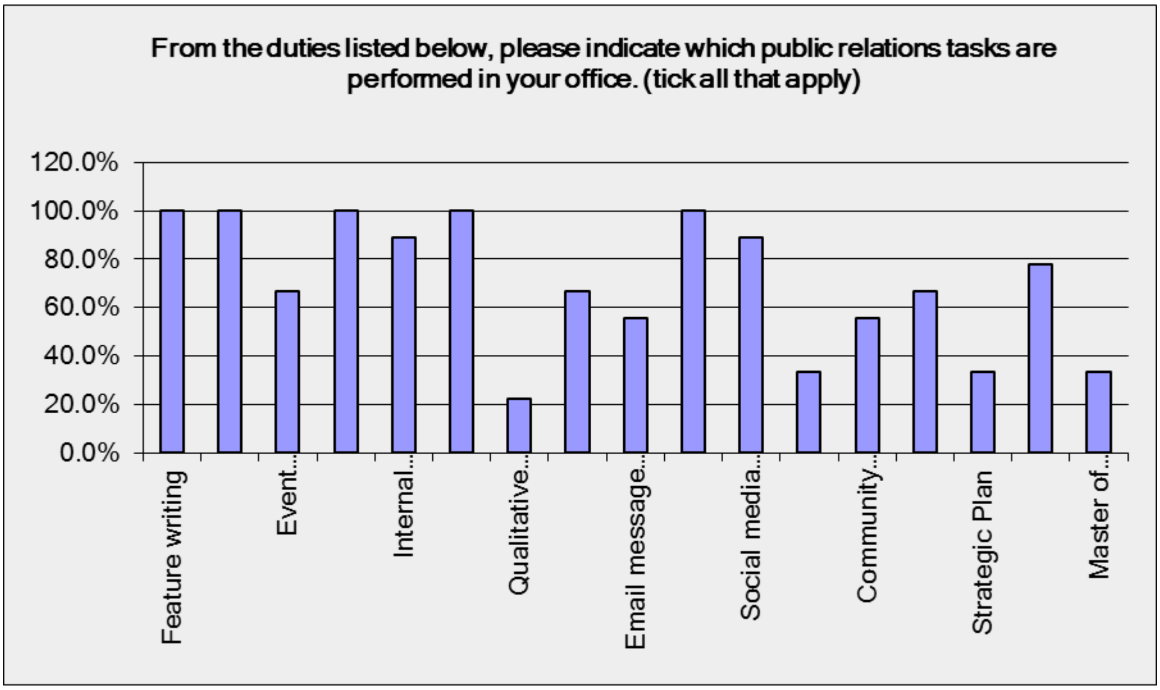
Graph 17: Number of staff working in public relations

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	0.0 percent	0
2	0.0 percent	0
3	33.3 percent	3
4	22.2 percent	2
5	0.0 percent	0
6	0.0 percent	0
7	11.1 percent	1
8	0.0 percent	0
9	11.1 percent	1
10	0.0 percent	0
11 - 15	22.2 percent	2
16 - 19	0.0 percent	0
20+	0.0 percent	0
Comment (if desired)		4

Comments:

1. Everyone pitches in and does public relations duties when we have events, etc.
2. I have two teams - a Media team, that takes care of publicity/media liaison as well as issues/crisis management; and an Events team that takes care of event organisation on behalf of the VC's office.
3. The public relations functions of the position largely are strategic based and put in place not only external communication programs but also internal communication plans of a high end nature.
4. Difficult to define 'public relations'; all employees have a communications function of some sort.

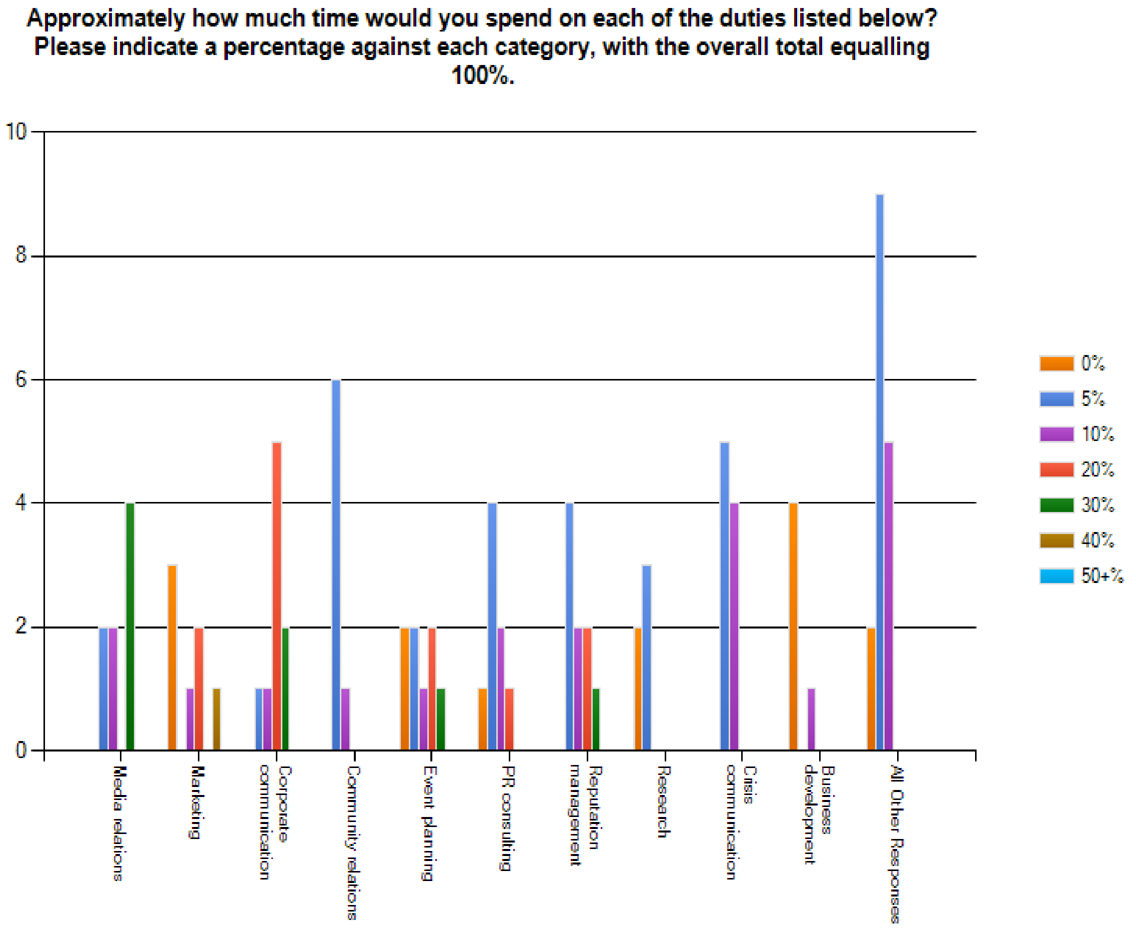
Question 20 – From the duties listed below, please indicate which public relations tasks are performed in your office (tick all that apply)



Graph 18: Public relations responsibilities of the office

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Feature writing	100.0 percent	9
Issues and crisis management	100.0 percent	9
Event organisation	66.7 percent	6
Strategic communication advice to Council and Senior Executive	100.0 percent	9
Internal communication	88.9 percent	8
External communication	100.0 percent	9
Qualitative research of stakeholders	22.2 percent	2
Speech writing	66.7 percent	6
Email message approval and control	55.6 percent	5
Media liaison and monitoring	100.0 percent	9
Social media monitoring and management	88.9 percent	8
Government relations	33.3 percent	3
Community engagement	55.6 percent	5
Annual Report	66.7 percent	6
Strategic Plan	33.3 percent	3
Other publications	77.8 percent	7
Master of ceremonies	33.3 percent	3
Other (please specify)		2

Question 21 – Approximately how much time would you spend on each of the duties listed below?



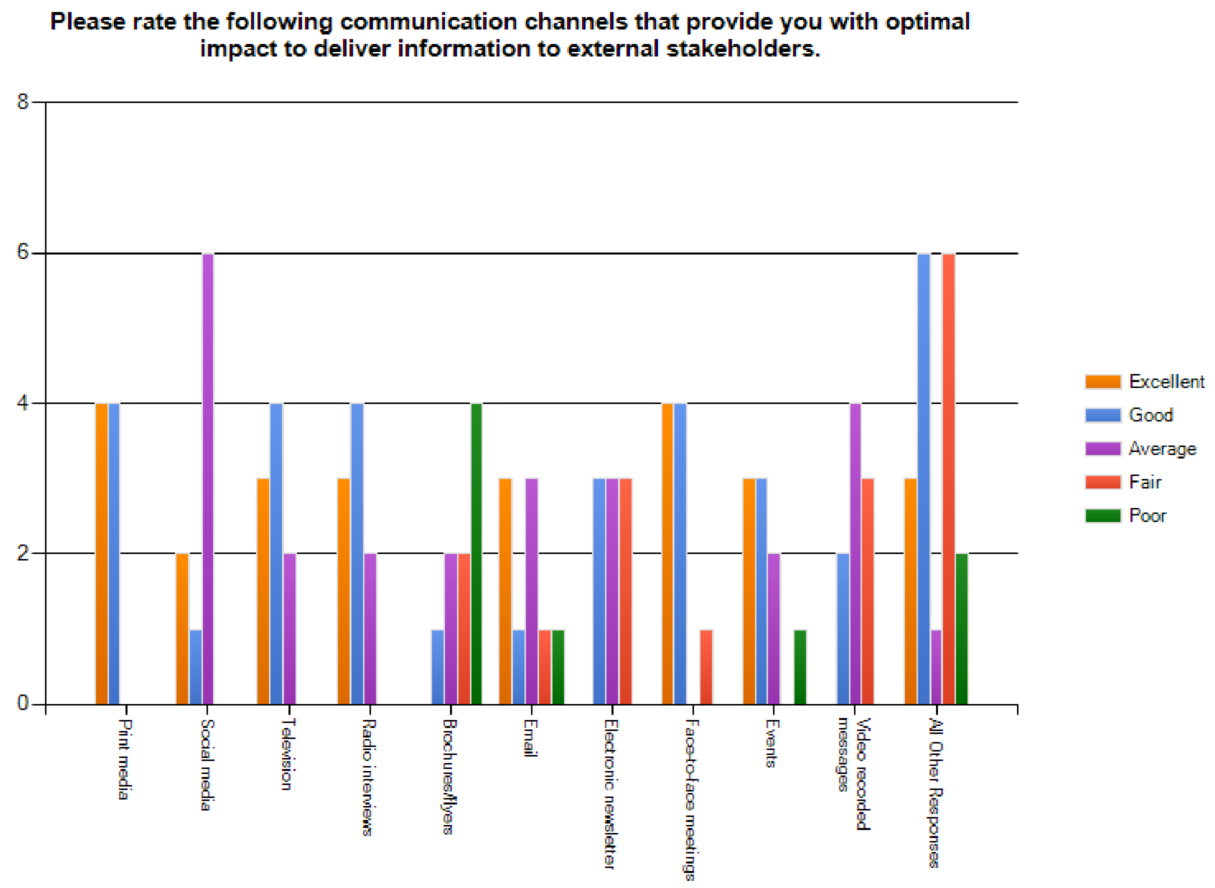
Graph 19: Percentage of time spent on public relations activities

Answer Options	0%	5%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50+%	Response Count
Media relations	0	2	2	0	4	0	0	8
Marketing	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	7
Corporate communication	0	1	1	5	2	0	0	9
Community relations	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	7
Event planning	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	8
PR consulting	1	4	2	1	0	0	0	8
Reputation management	0	4	2	2	1	0	0	9
Research	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5
Crisis communication	0	5	4	0	0	0	0	9
Business development	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Public Affairs/Government relations	1	4	3	0	0	0	0	8
Human resources	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	8
Other (please specify)								1

Comments:

This question is not clear - do you mean me personally? In this unit we have a media relations officer who would spend almost 100 percent of his time working on this. Branding is also part of my duties which is not a specific duty listed.

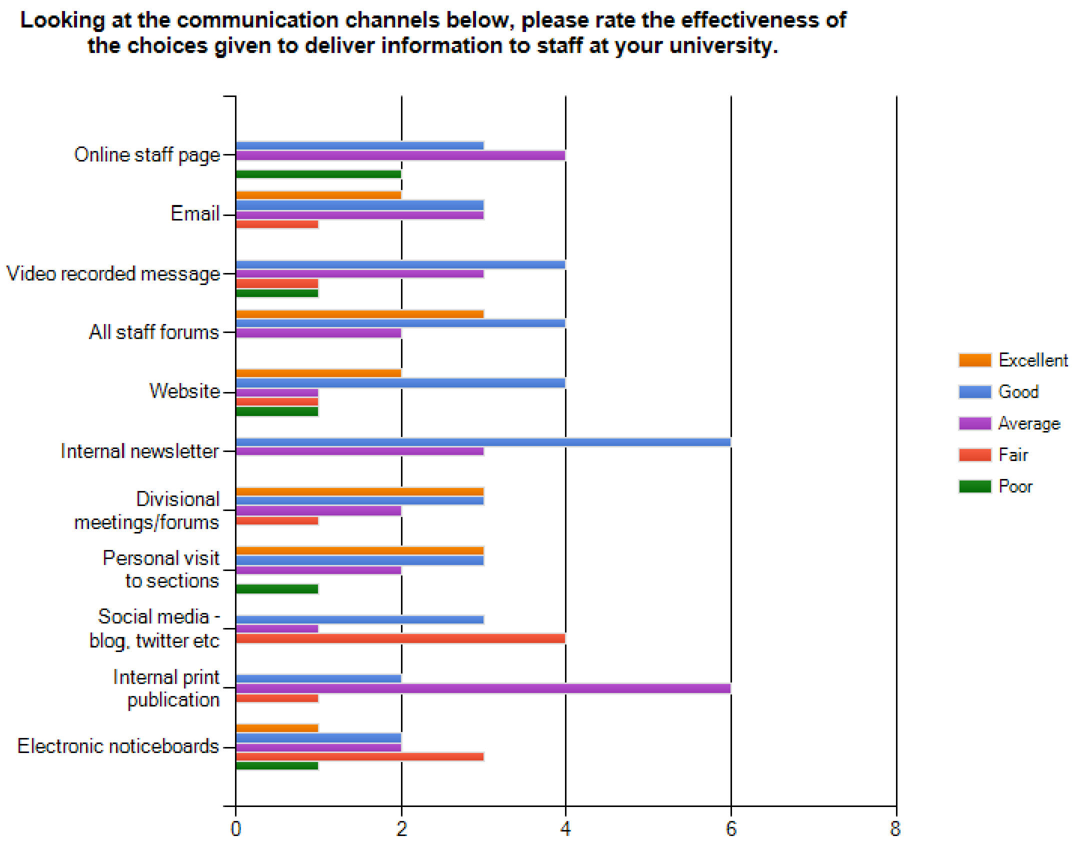
Question 22 – Please rate the following communication channels that provide you with optimal impact to deliver information to external stakeholders.



Graph 20: External communication channels

Answer Options	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor	Response Count
Print media	4	4	0	0	0	8
Social media	2	1	6	0	0	9
Television	3	4	2	0	0	9
Radio interviews	3	4	2	0	0	9
Brochures/flyers	0	1	2	2	4	9
Email	3	1	3	1	1	9
Electronic newsletter	0	3	3	3	0	9
Face-to-face meetings	4	4	0	1	0	9
Events	3	3	2	0	1	9
Video recorded messages	0	2	4	3	0	9
Website	3	3	0	2	1	9
Letters	0	3	1	4	1	9
Other (please specify)						0

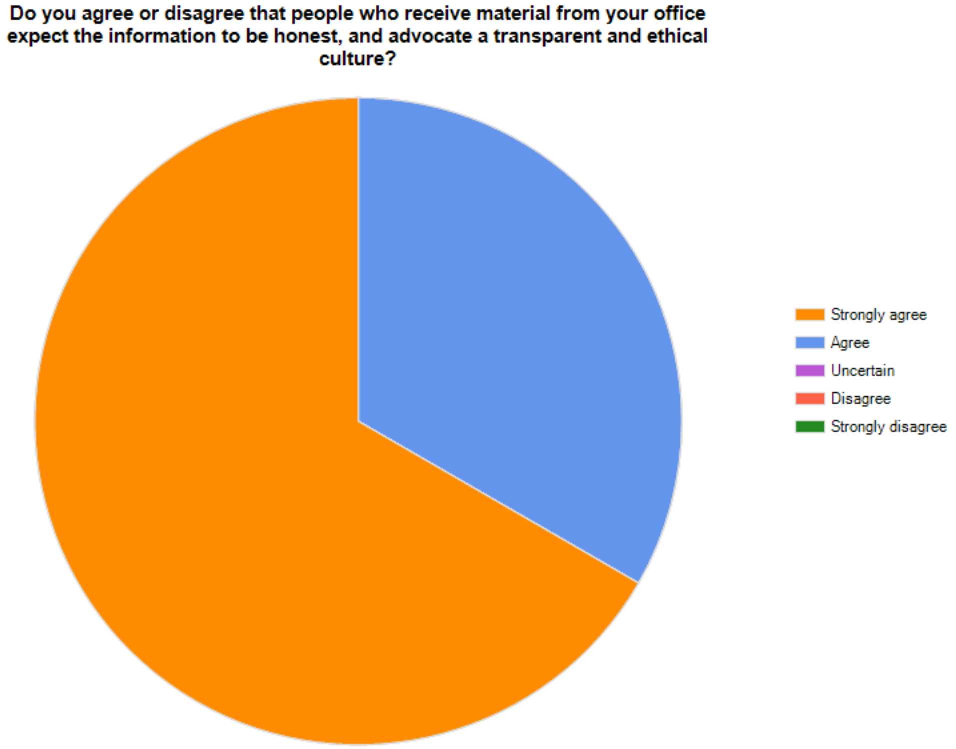
Question 23 – Looking at the communication channels below, please rate the effectiveness of the choices given to deliver information to staff at your university?



Graph 21: Most effective internal communication channel

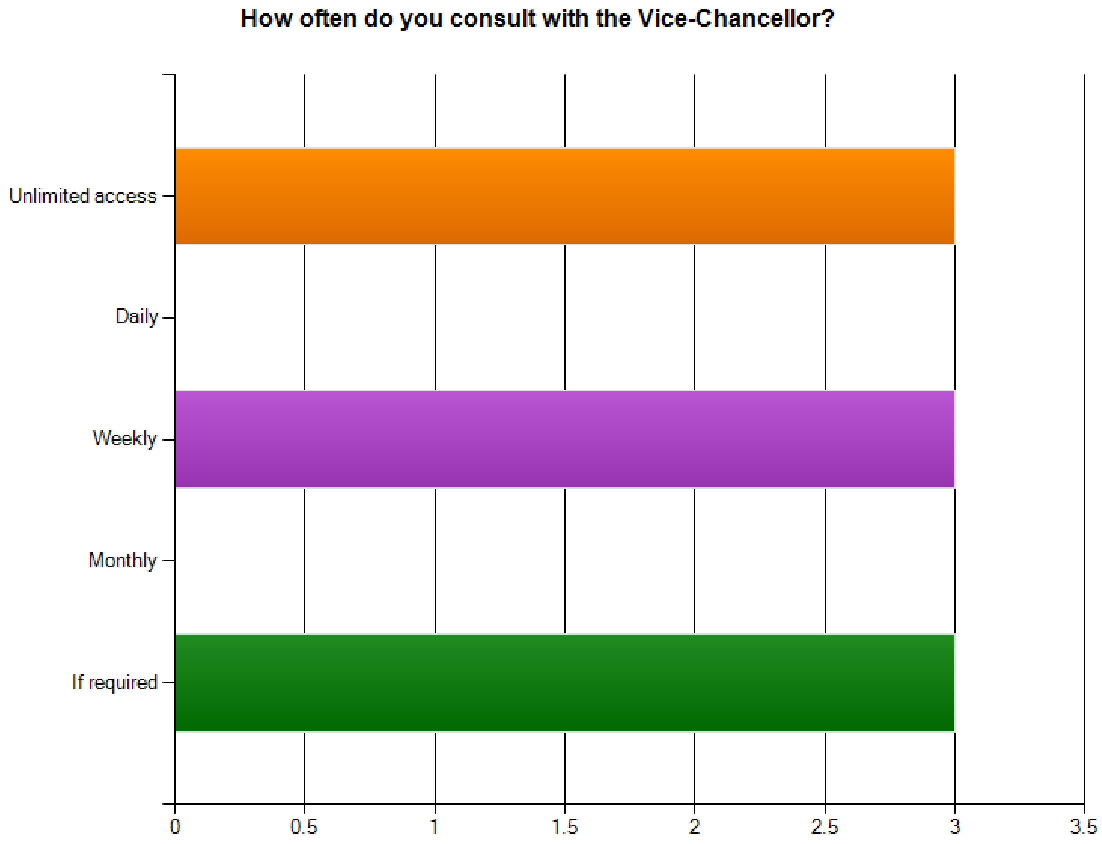
Answer Options	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor	Response Count
Online staff page	0	3	4	0	2	9
Email	2	3	3	1	0	9
Video recorded message	0	4	3	1	1	9
All staff forums	3	4	2	0	0	9
Website	2	4	1	1	1	9
Internal newsletter	0	6	3	0	0	9
Divisional meetings/forums	3	3	2	1	0	9
Personal visit to sections	3	3	2	0	1	9
Social media - blog, twitter etc	0	3	1	4	0	8
Internal print publication	0	2	6	1	0	9
Electronic noticeboards	1	2	2	3	1	9
Other (please specify)						0

Question 24 – Do you agree or disagree that people who receive material from your office expect the information to be honest, and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?



Graph 22: Behavioural assessment of material produced

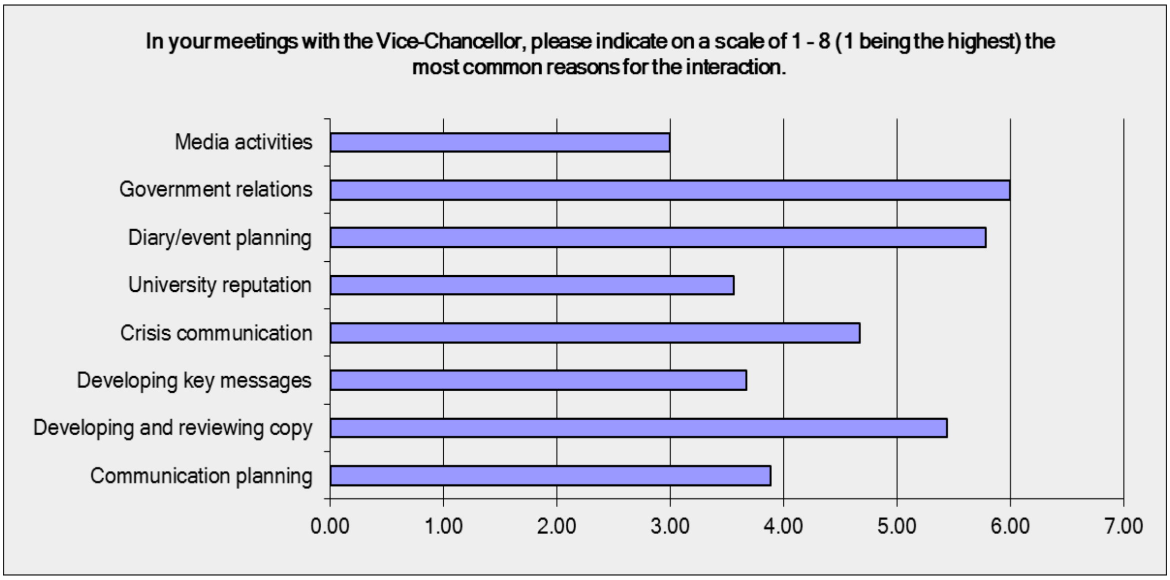
Question 25 – How often do you consult with the Vice-Chancellor?



Graph 23: Frequency of meetings with Vice-Chancellor

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Unlimited access	33.3 percent	3
Daily	0.0 percent	0
Weekly	33.3 percent	3
Monthly	0.0 percent	0
If required	33.3 percent	3

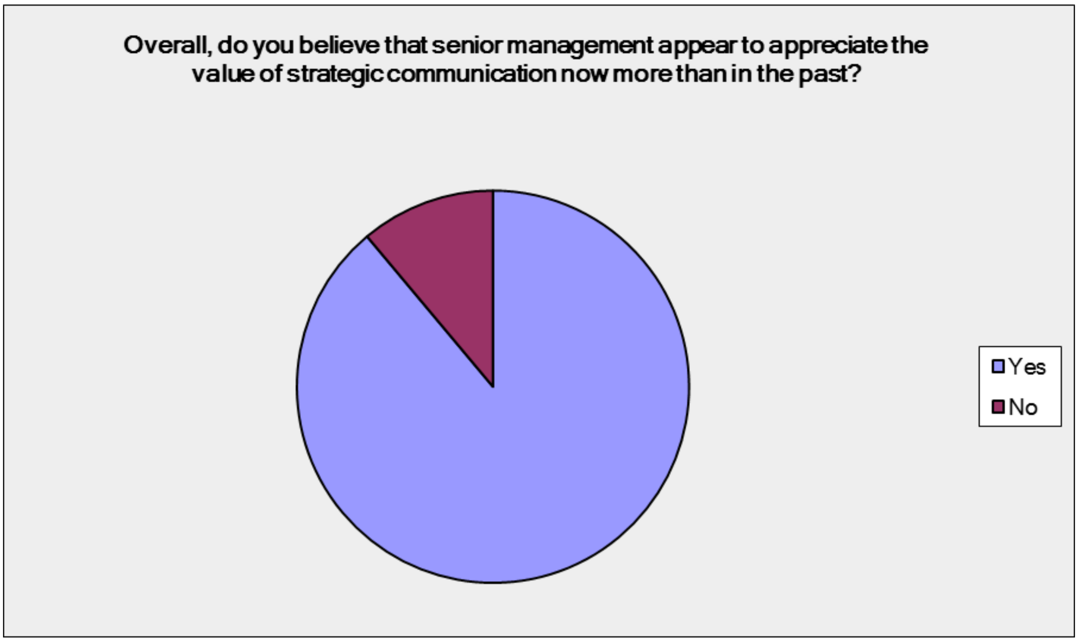
Question 26 – In your meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, please indicate on a scale of 1-8, the most common reasons for the interaction?



Graph 24: Purpose of meetings with Vice-Chancellor

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Rating Average	Response Count
Communication planning	2	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	3.89	9
Developing and reviewing copy	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	3	5.44	9
Developing key messages	1	1	3	1	1	2	0	0	3.67	9
Crisis communication	0	2	0	3	0	3	0	1	4.67	9
University reputation	3	1	1	0	2	0	2	0	3.56	9
Diary/event planning	2	0	0	0	0	1	4	2	5.78	9
Government relations	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	6.00	9
Media activities	1	4	1	2	0	0	1	0	3.00	9

Question 27 – Overall, do you believe that senior management appear to appreciate the value of strategic communication now more than in the past?



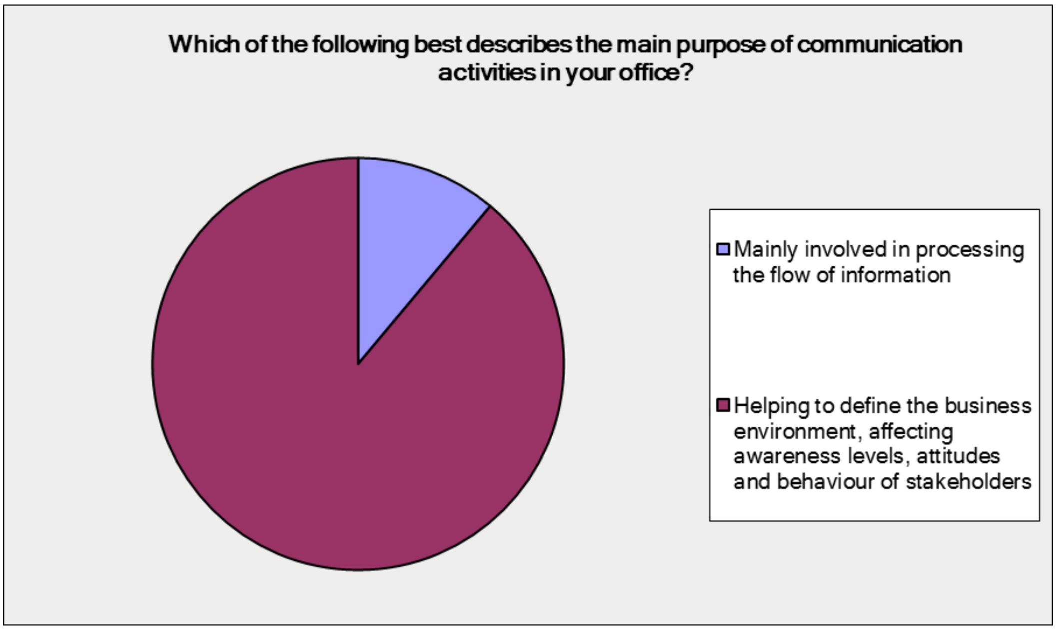
Graph 25: Senior management value of strategic communication

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.9 percent	8
No	11.1 percent	1
	Comment (if desired):	3

Comments:

1. They understand the importance of communications but do not understand (a) the need to "talk" in a language accessible to all staff/students (eg academic discourse is seen as appropriate) and (b) the attendant need to further and adequately resource the function - strategic communication plans are seen as something that can be rolled out within hours. Social media is also seen as an add-on that takes minutes per day, rather than a carefully planned and managed activity.
2. Certainly some aspects of senior management do value the role of strategic communication; however it is becoming increasingly difficult to embed the strategic communication needs within the everyday workplace. In many instances the role of communication is only offered value when there is an issue or a crisis that needs to be deflected or when senior management wish to profile themselves. The everyday activities of the office are seen to play more of a promotion and publicity role in many minds and educating management to the value of strategic indication is one of the challenges facing the communication office.
3. Yes, but there's still a long way to go.

Question 28 – Which of the following best describes the main purpose of communication activities in your office?



Graph 26: Focus and purpose of communication activities

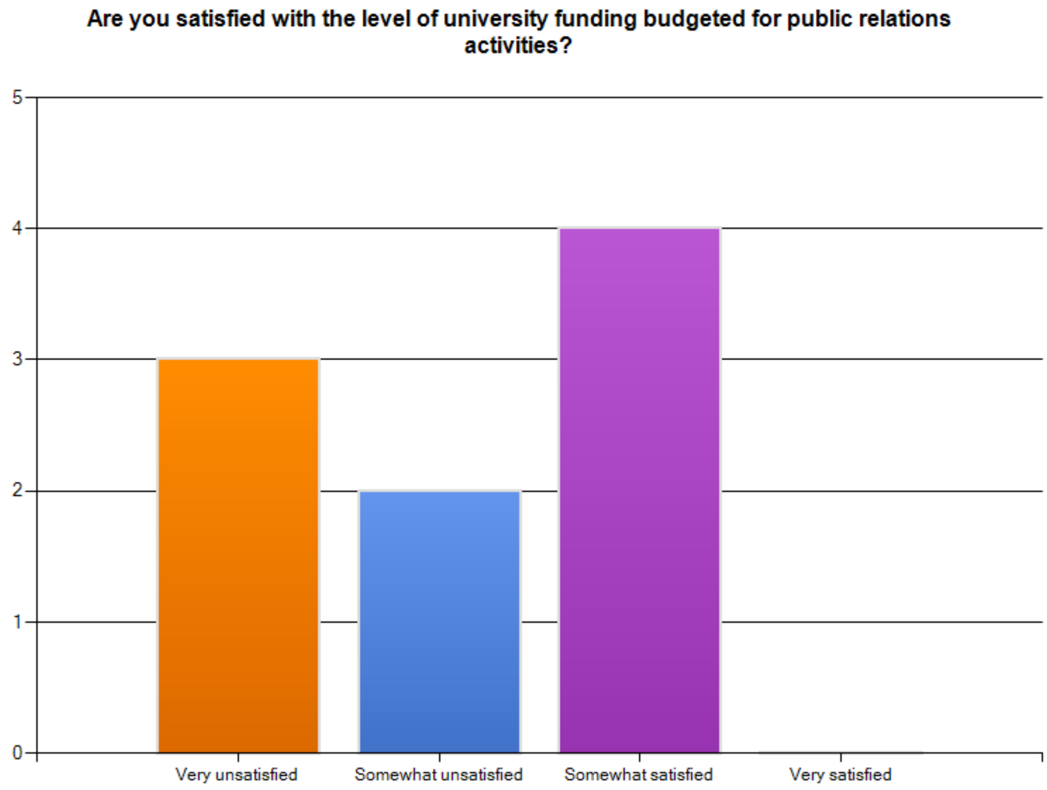
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Mainly involved in processing the flow of information	11.1 percent	1
Helping to define the business environment, affecting awareness levels, attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders	88.9 percent	8
Please comment on your response.		5

Comments:

1. The office of Marketing and Communication is responsible for communicating with a wide range of the University's stakeholders, including students, staff, government, industry and community. The wide range of communications, both internal and external, from this office I think, are helping to increase public awareness of the university and strengthening and protecting its reputation among its many stakeholders.
2. Helping to define the business environment, affecting awareness levels, attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders SHOULD be what we do. All too often this is subsumed by day-to-day activity. Additionally many staff in comms roles have come from either an administrative background (moved into role by default because they have produced an internal department newsletter) or from a journalism background. In both cases, an understanding of strategic communications (i.e. what is the impact beyond sending this press release) is lacking.

3. We have recently moved to a more pro-active approach to public relations with additional resources allocated. We have also moved the communications staff into a unit which indirectly reports to the VC.
4. Mostly the communication functions of the office tend to rely on media relations as this seems to be the more easily recognised and tested measure of performance. However in recent years strategic communication that impacts on the reputational awareness and activities of the University have become a priority and the issues management responsibilities are becoming uppermost in the minds of stakeholder groups.
5. While we want to be focusing more on the latter, the reality is we do more of the former on a daily basis.

Question 29 – Are you satisfied with the level of university funding budgeted for public relations activities?



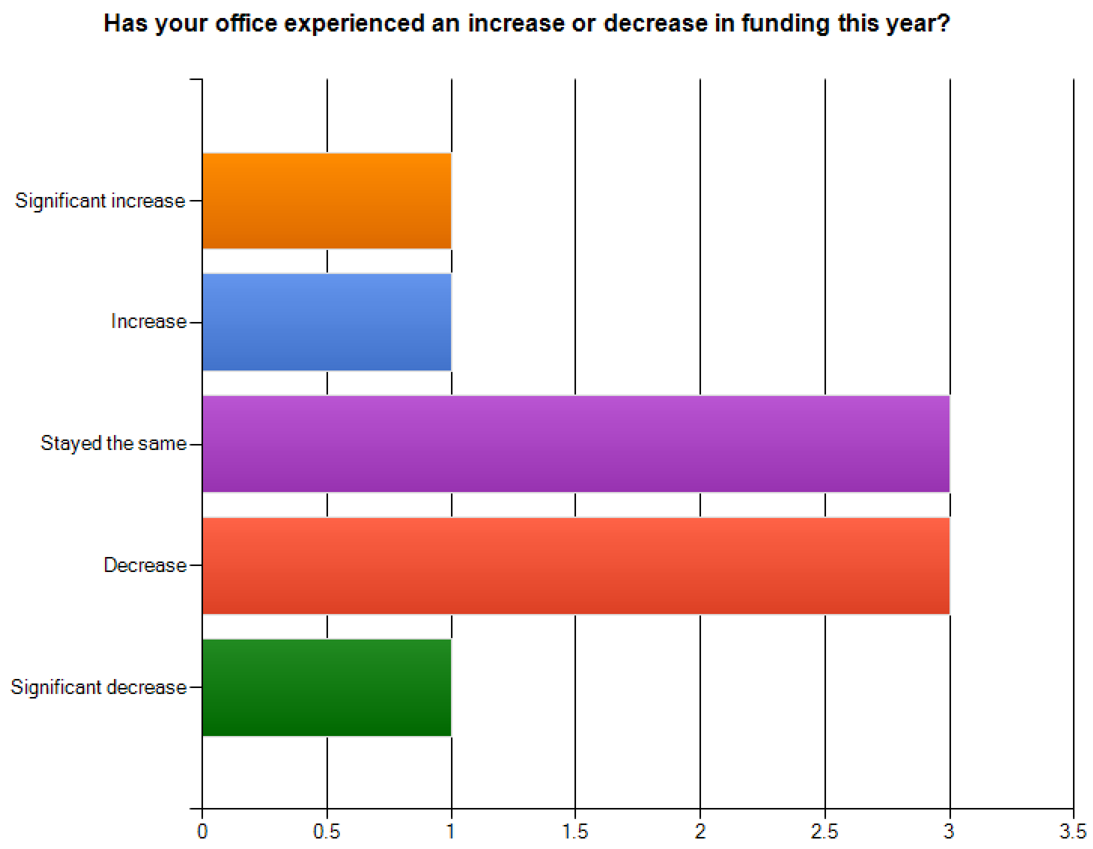
Graph 27: Level of satisfaction for public relations budget

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very unsatisfied	33.3 percent	3
Somewhat unsatisfied	22.2 percent	2
Somewhat satisfied	44.4 percent	4
Very satisfied	0.0 percent	0
Comment		2

Comments:

1. It is a constant battle to put forward requests for funding – because in many instances the University receives positive media coverage which is provided free of charge so unfortunately senior management see no need to fund the everyday activities of the office. Consequently external communication plans and internal communication programs largely go neither funded nor supported although there is a management desire for these to be a priority for the office.
2. It's a constant battle to do what we need to do with what we're allocated. The focus is on simply trying to maintain activities, rather than trying to keep trying for best practice.

Question 30 – Has your office experienced an increase or decrease in funding this year?



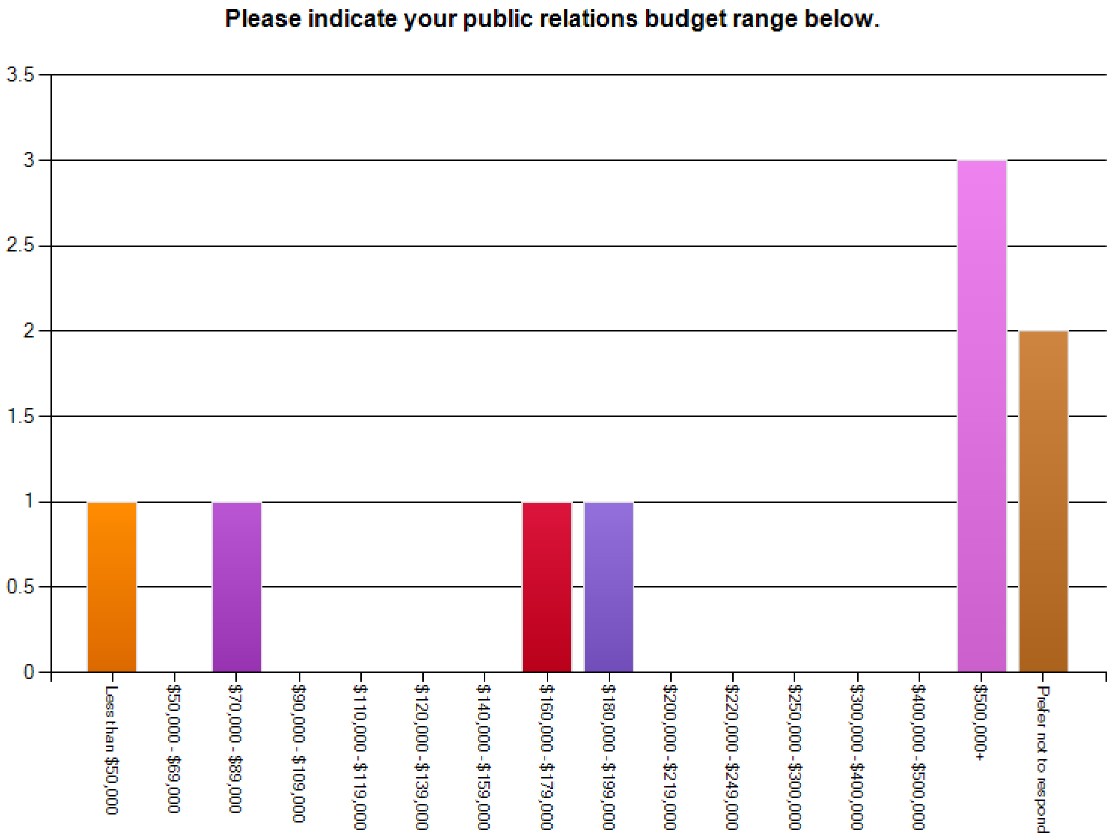
Graph 28: Funding budget comparison 2013-2014

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Significant increase	11.1 percent	1
Increase	11.1 percent	1
Stayed the same	33.3 percent	3
Decrease	33.3 percent	3
Significant decrease	11.1 percent	1

Comment:

1. When the office was initially established funding for projects came from the Vice-Chancellor's contingency funds however these have been significantly decreased in recent years. The non-support for the office is of a major concern to the extent that it is impacting significantly on the effectiveness and morale of staff.

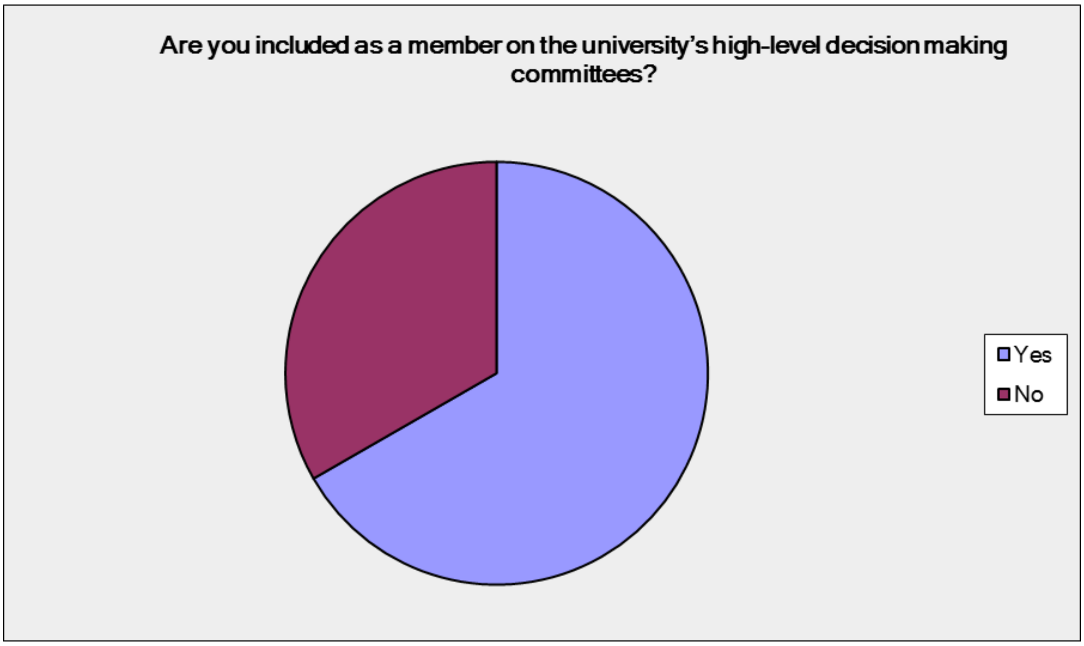
Question 31 – Please indicate your public relations budget range below.



Graph 29: Public relations budget ranges

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than $50,000	11.1 percent	1
$50,000 - $69,000	0.0 percent	0
$70,000 - $89,000	11.1 percent	1
$90,000 - $109,000	0.0 percent	0
$110,000 - $119,000	0.0 percent	0
$120,000 - $139,000	0.0 percent	0
$140,000 - $159,000	0.0 percent	0
$160,000 - $179,000	11.1 percent	1
$180,000 - $199,000	11.1 percent	1
$200,000 - $219,000	0.0 percent	0
$220,000 - $249,000	0.0 percent	0
$250,000 - $300,000	0.0 percent	0
$300,000 - $400,000	0.0 percent	0
$400,000 - $500,000	0.0 percent	0
$500,000+	33.3 percent	3
Prefer not to respond	22.2 percent	2

Question 32 – Are you included as a member on the university's high-level decision making committees?



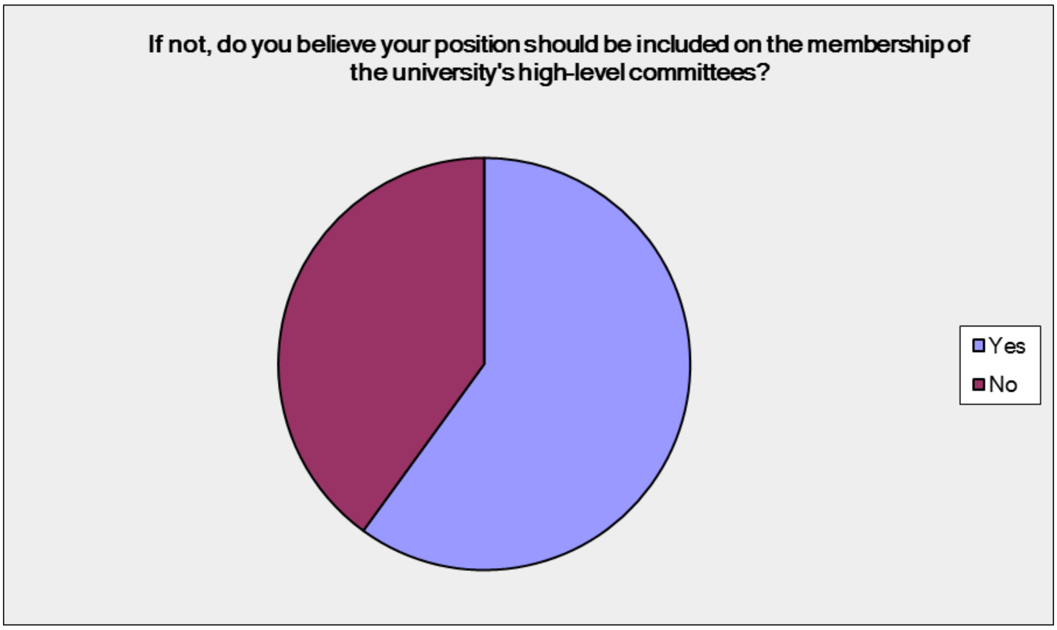
Graph 30: Committee membership

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	66.7 percent	6
No	33.3 percent	3
Comment (if desired)		2

Comments:

1. It is my consideration that the role of the office would be substantially increased if first-hand understanding of the issues was available. This can only be provided by the Director having first-hand knowledge of and involvement in the higher-level management decisions and discussions of the University. To provide the office with filtered information detracts from the effectiveness and professionalism that the office can provide.
2. I am in some of them, but not in others.

Question 33 – If not, do you believe your position should be included on the membership of the university's high-level committees?



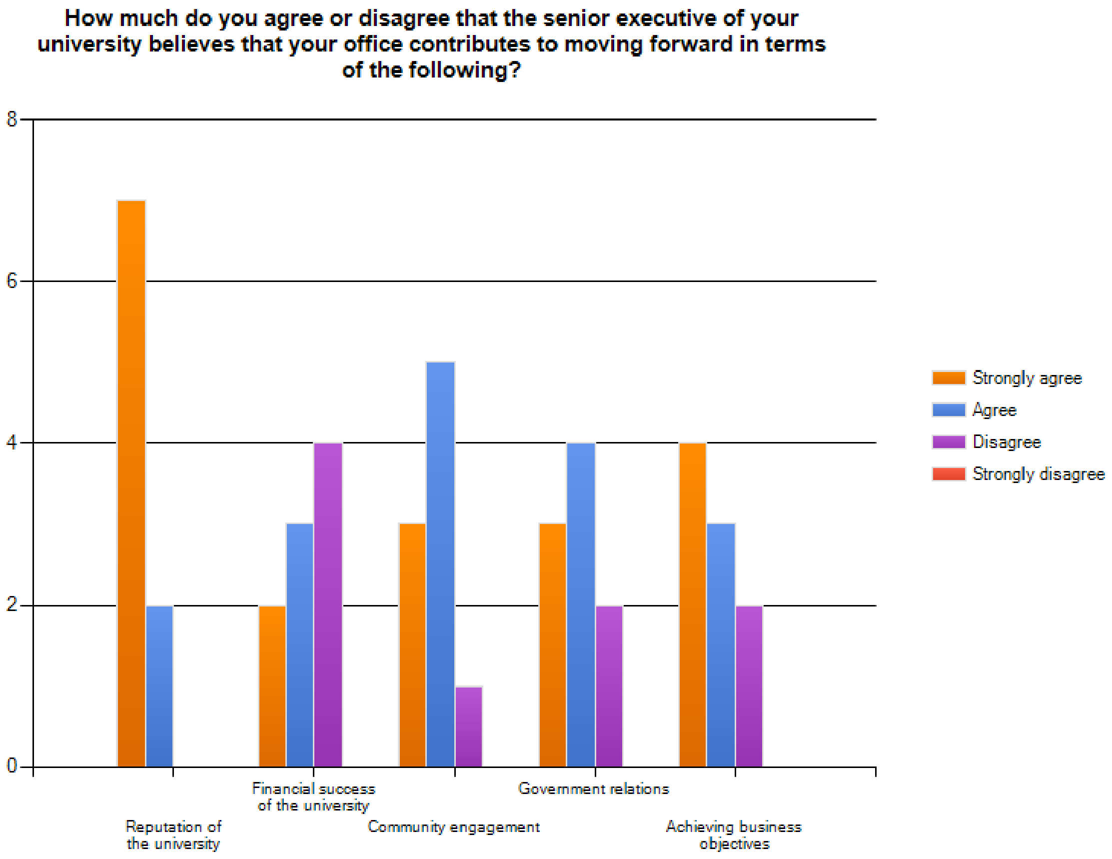
Graph 31: Involvement on high-level committees

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	60.0 percent	3
No	40.0 percent	2
Comment		2

Comments:

1. I think the important thing is that the views of the Media/Communications team are valued and listened to. We are not members of the Executive who make the big operational decisions on behalf of the University, however we are heavily involved and regularly consulted on issues management and the best way to communicate the decisions of the University, and our strategic input is highly valued in our organisation.
2. There would never be time to do any work.

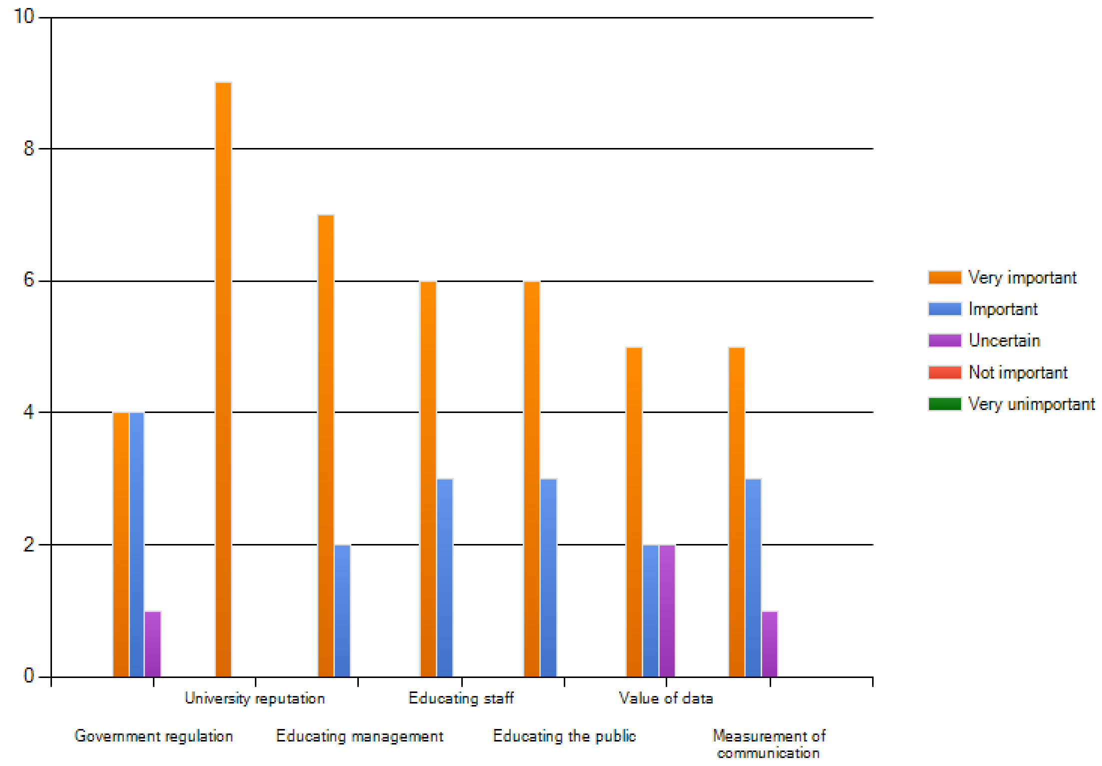
Question 34 – How much do you agree or disagree that the senior executive of your university believes that your office contributes to moving forward in terms of the following?



Graph 32: Office contribution to university strategies

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
Reputation of the university	7	2	0	0	1.22	9
Financial success of the university	2	3	4	0	2.22	9
Community engagement	3	5	1	0	1.78	9
Government relations	3	4	2	0	1.89	9
Achieving business objectives	4	3	2	0	1.78	9

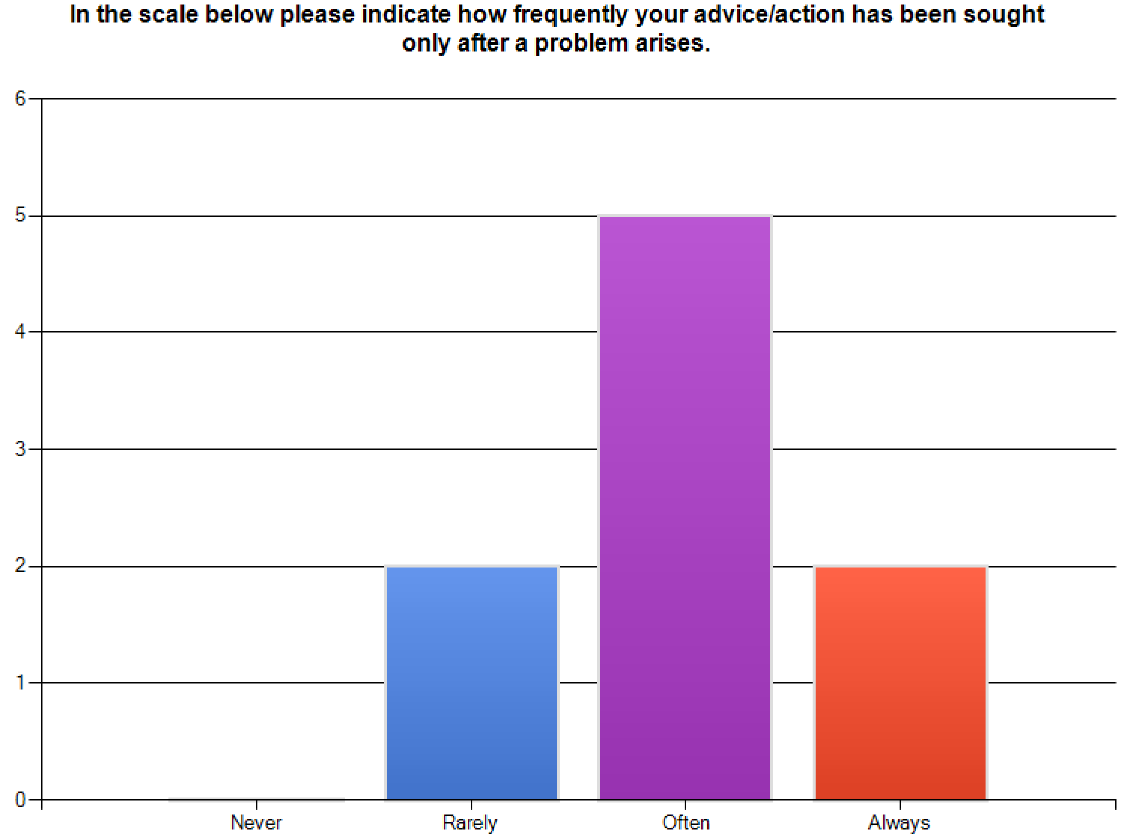
Question 35 – How important do you think each of the following issues are to the university and to your practice of public relations?



Graph 33: Public relations impact on university issues

Answer Options	Very important	Important	Uncertain	Not important	Very unimportant	Rating Average
Government regulation	4	4	1	0	0	1.67
University reputation	9	0	0	0	0	1.00
Educating management	7	2	0	0	0	1.22
Educating staff	6	3	0	0	0	1.33
Educating the public	6	3	0	0	0	1.33
Value of data	5	2	2	0	0	1.67
Measurement of communication	5	3	1	0	0	1.56

Question 36 – In the scale below please indicate how frequently your advice/action has been sought only after a problem arises?



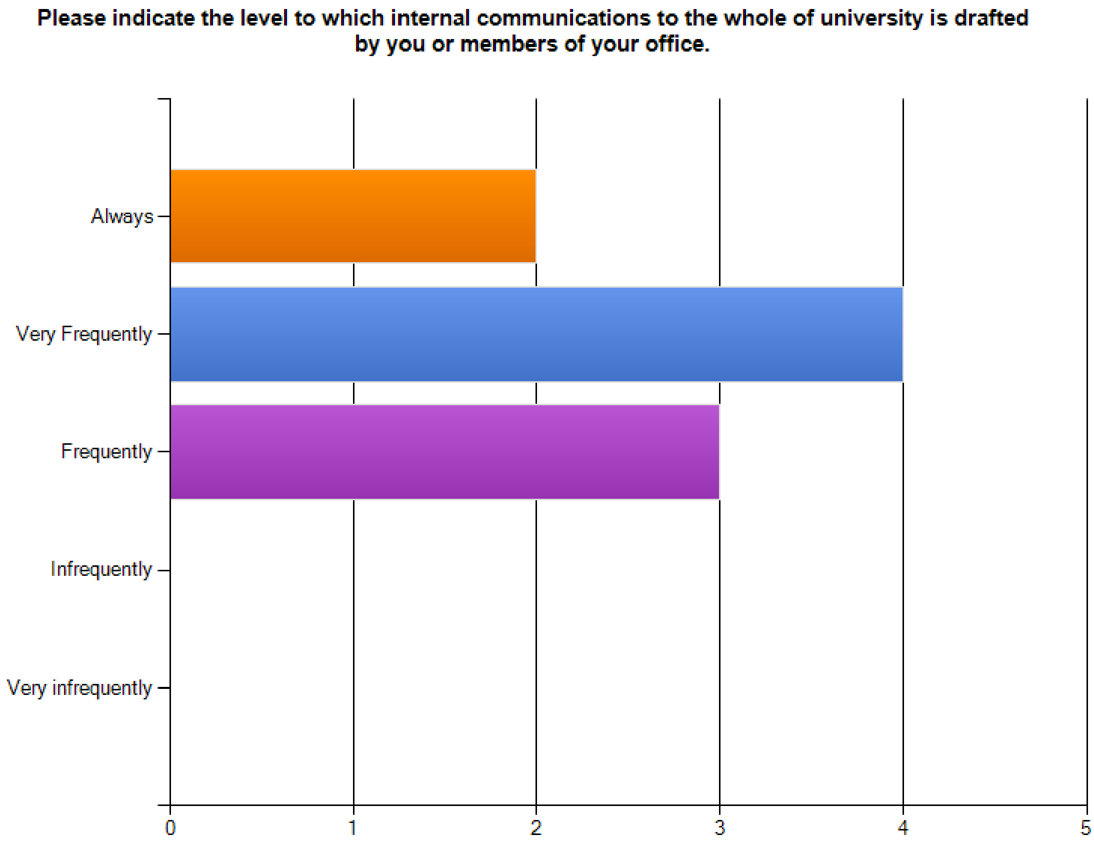
Graph 34: Crisis communication advice

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never	0.0 percent	0
Rarely	22.2 percent	2
Often	55.6 percent	5
Always	22.2 percent	2
Please comment on your response	4	4

Comments:

1. We have a crisis communications plan and are generally kept in the loop.
2. Generally consulted after the fact in 7 / 10 cases.
3. While the tide is slowly turning, I am often only alerted to an issue after it has escalated and reactive media is our only option. We are in a process of educating the Senior Executive of the benefits of engaging us early.
4. Crisis management by its nature is usually responsive rather than proactive.

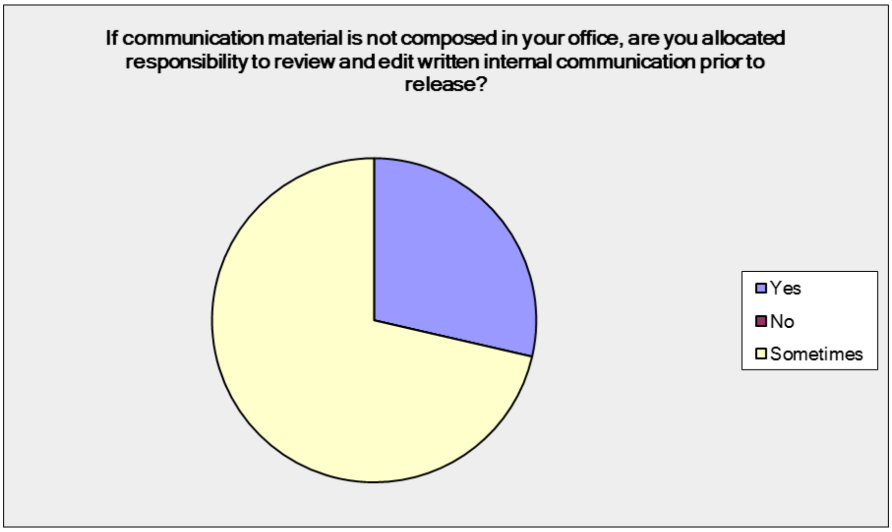
Question 37 – Please indicate the level to which internal communications to the whole of the university are drafted by you or members of your office.



Graph 35: Development of internal communication material

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	22.2 percent	2
Very Frequently	44.4 percent	4
Frequently	33.3 percent	3
Infrequently	0.0 percent	0
Very infrequently	0.0 percent	0

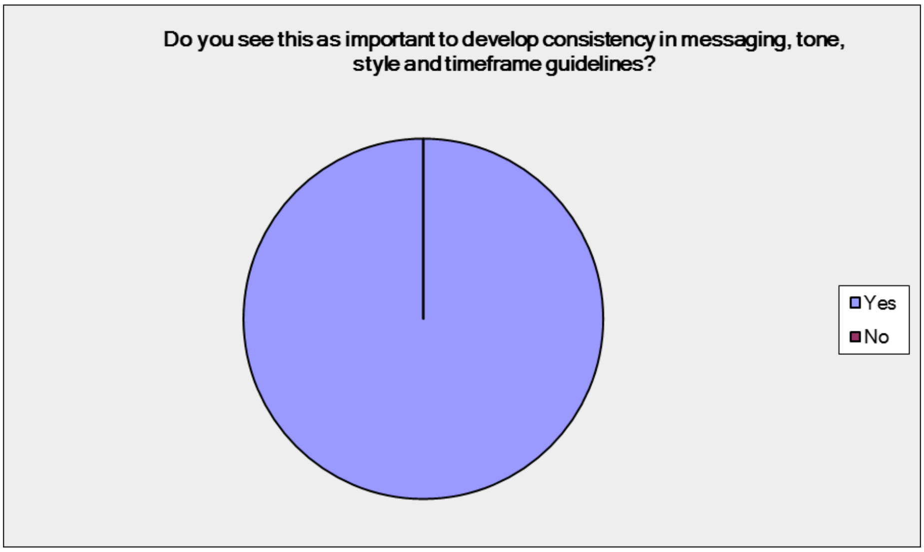
Question 38 – If communication material is not composed in your office, are you allocated responsibility to review and edit written internal communication prior to release?



Graph 36: Sanction of internal communication

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	28.6 percent	2
No	0.0 percent	0
Sometimes	71.4 percent	5

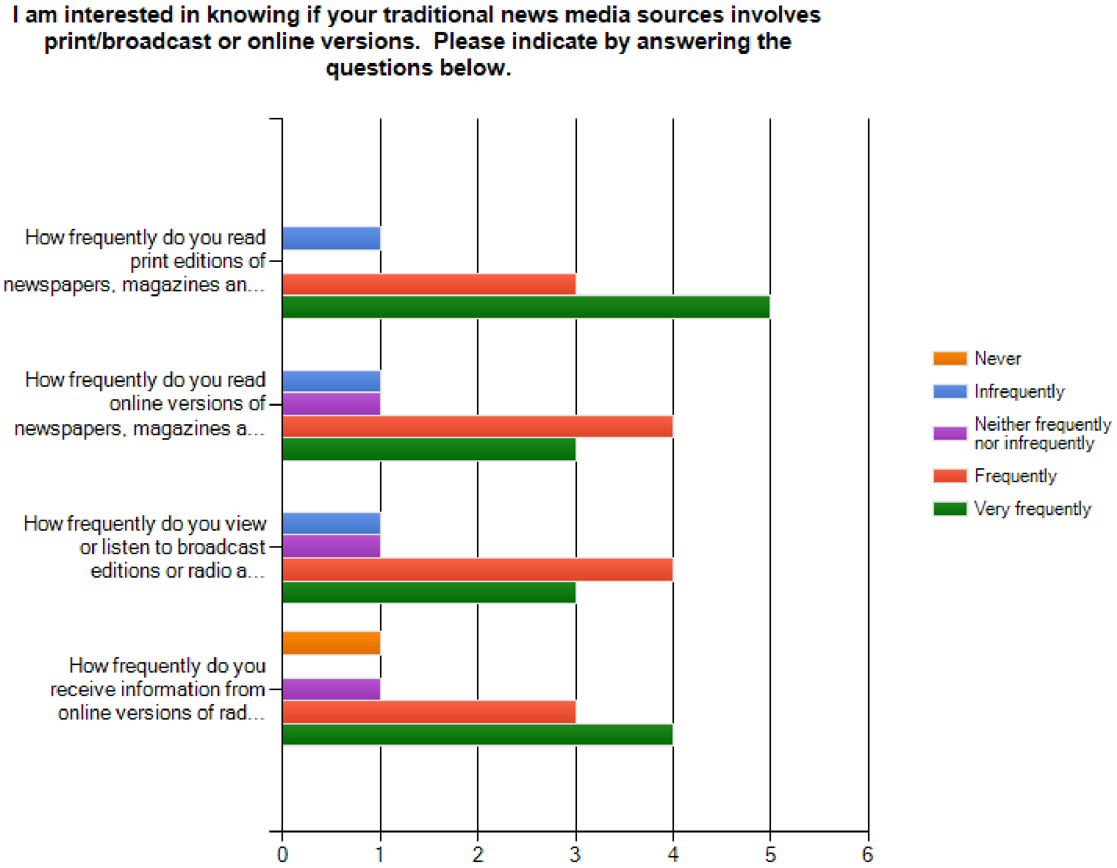
Question 39 – Do you see this as important to develop consistency in messaging, tone, style and timeframe guidelines?



Graph 37: Consistent communication messaging, tone and style

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0 percent	9
No	0.0 percent	0

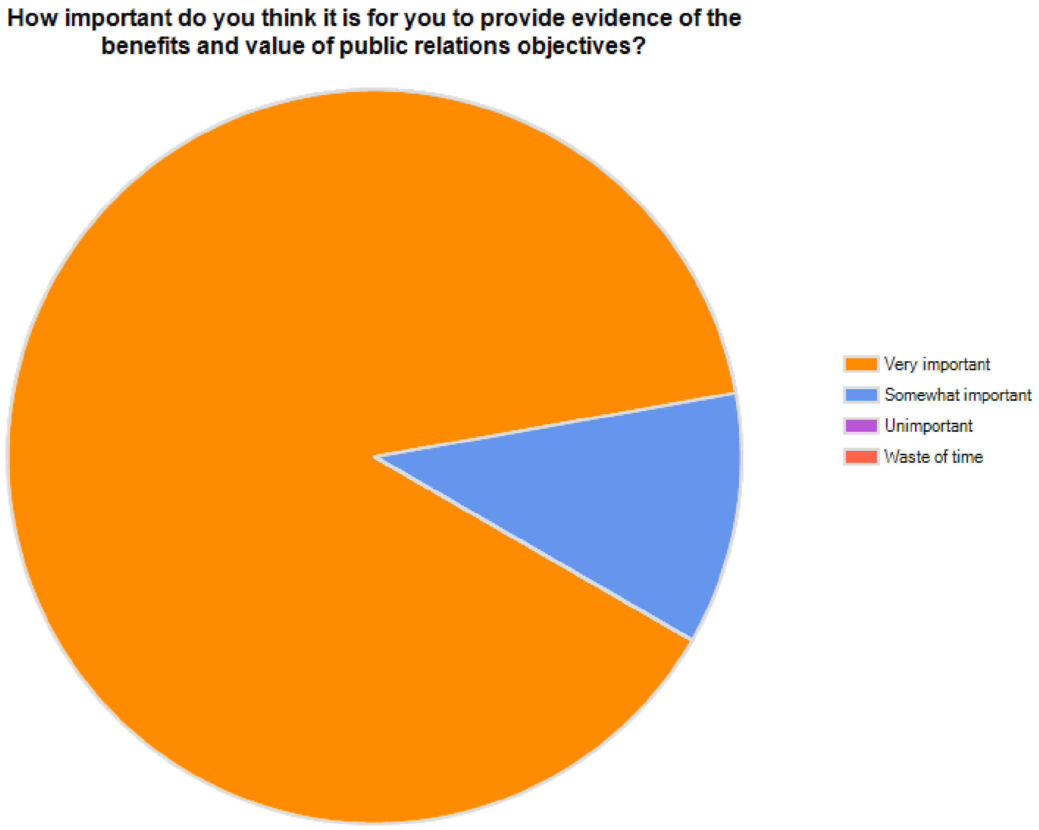
Question 40 – I am interested in knowing if your traditional news media sources involve print/broadcast or online versions.



Graph 38: News sources

Answer Options	Never	Infrequently	Neither frequently nor infrequently	Frequently	Very frequently	Rating Average
How frequently do you read print editions of newspapers, magazines and newsletters?	0	1	0	3	5	4.33
How frequently do you read online versions of newspapers, magazines and newsletters?	0	1	1	4	3	4.00
How frequently do you view or listen to broadcast editions of radio and television news?	0	1	1	4	3	4.00
How frequently do you receive information from online versions of radio and television news reports?	1	0	1	3	4	4.00

Question 41 – How important do you think it is for you to provide evidence of the benefits and value of public relations objectives?



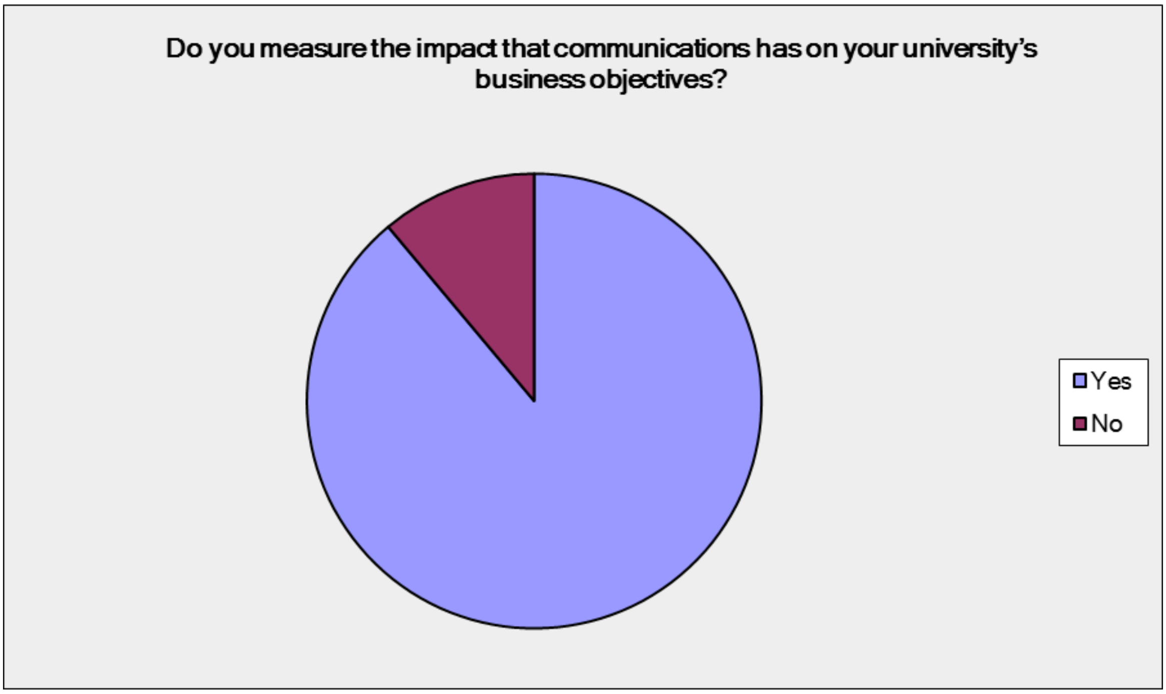
Graph 39: Importance of evidence in showing value of activities

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very important	88.9 percent	8
Somewhat important	11.1 percent	1
Unimportant	0.0 percent	0
Waste of time	0.0 percent	0
Why (please specify)	4	4

Comments:

1. I am confident our organisation already knows the benefits
2. Evidence-based measures would allow the office to be seen as a credible entity in that the organisational structure would effectively assist in achieving budgetary support and management outcomes.
3. Cost : benefit must be established
4. To justify expenditure and to keep improving so we can eventually reach best practice.

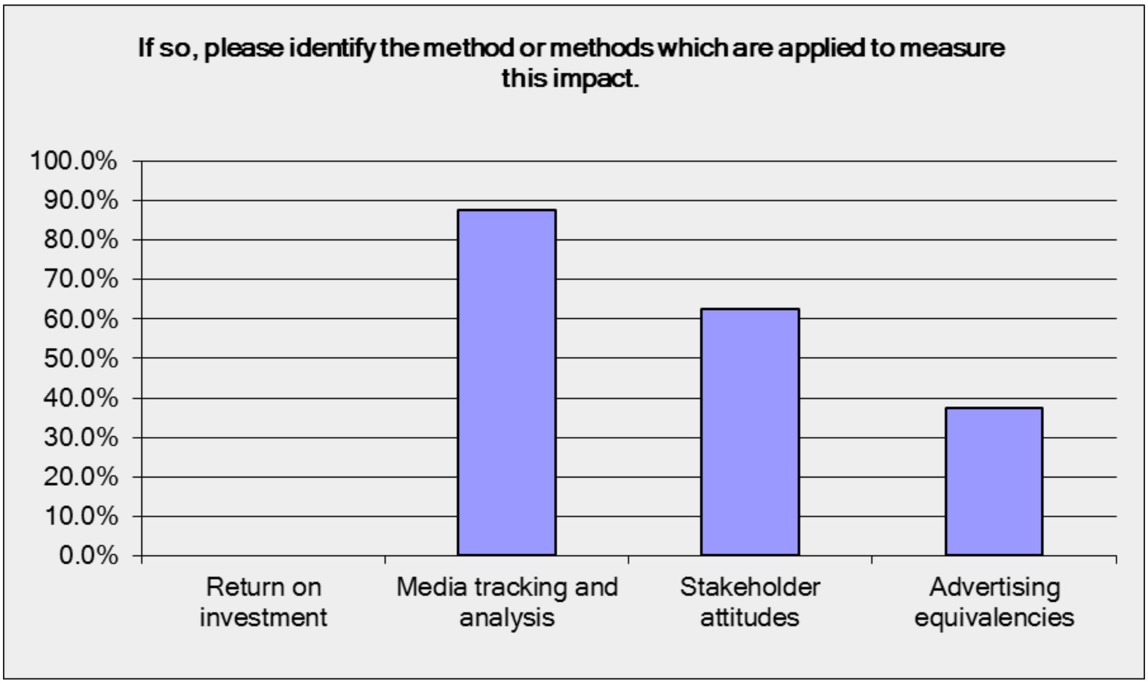
Question 42 – Do you measure the impact that communications has on your university's business objectives?



Graph 40: Do you measure the impact of communications?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.9 percent	8
No	11.1 percent	1

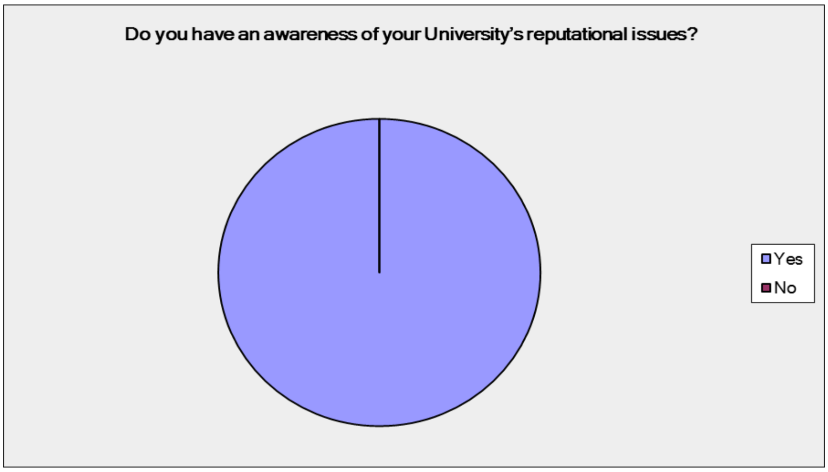
Question 43 – If so, please identify the method or methods which are applied to measure this impact?



Graph 41: Communication measurement methods

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Return on investment	0.0 percent	0
Media tracking and analysis	87.5 percent	7
Stakeholder attitudes	62.5 percent	5
Advertising equivalencies	37.5 percent	3

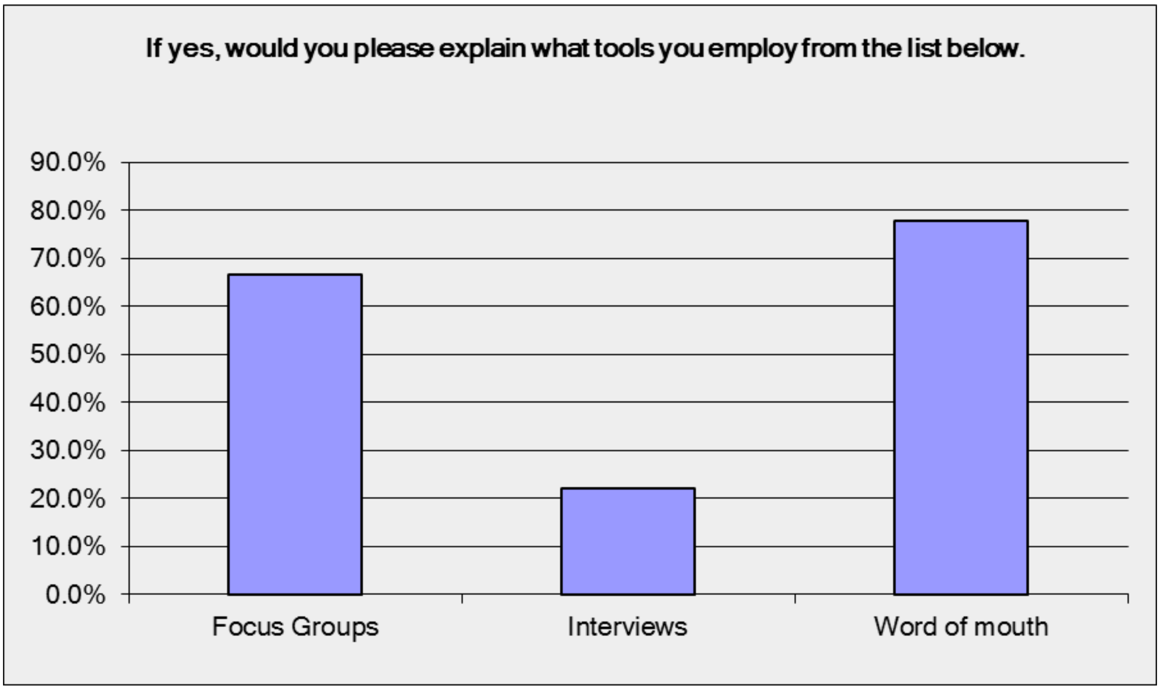
Question 44 – Do you have an awareness of your University's reputational issues?



Graph 42: Awareness of university reputational issues

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0 percent	9

Question 45 – If yes, would you please explain what tools you employ from the list below?



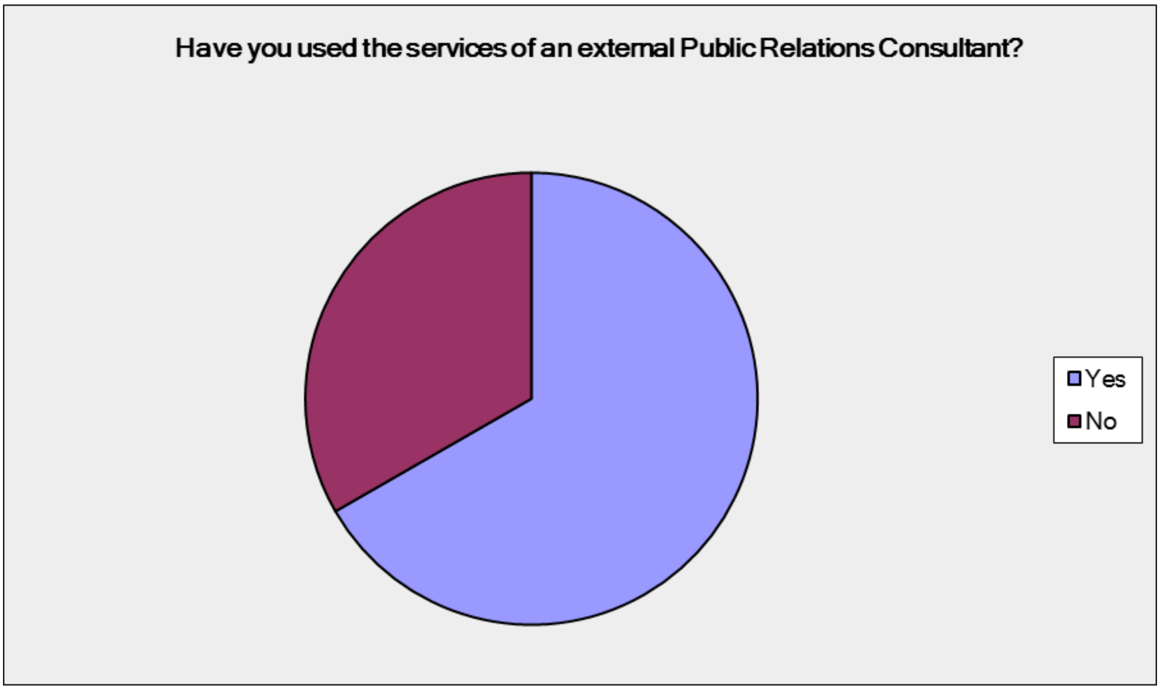
Graph 43: Methods used to gauge reputation

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Focus Groups	66.7 percent	6
Interviews	22.2 percent	2
Word of mouth	77.8 percent	7
Other (please specify)	1	1

Comment:

1. Media coverage and journalist enquiries; conversations with staff and students

Question 46 – Have you used the services of an external public relations consultant?



Graph 44: Use of external public relations consultants

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	66.7 percent	6
No	33.3 percent	3

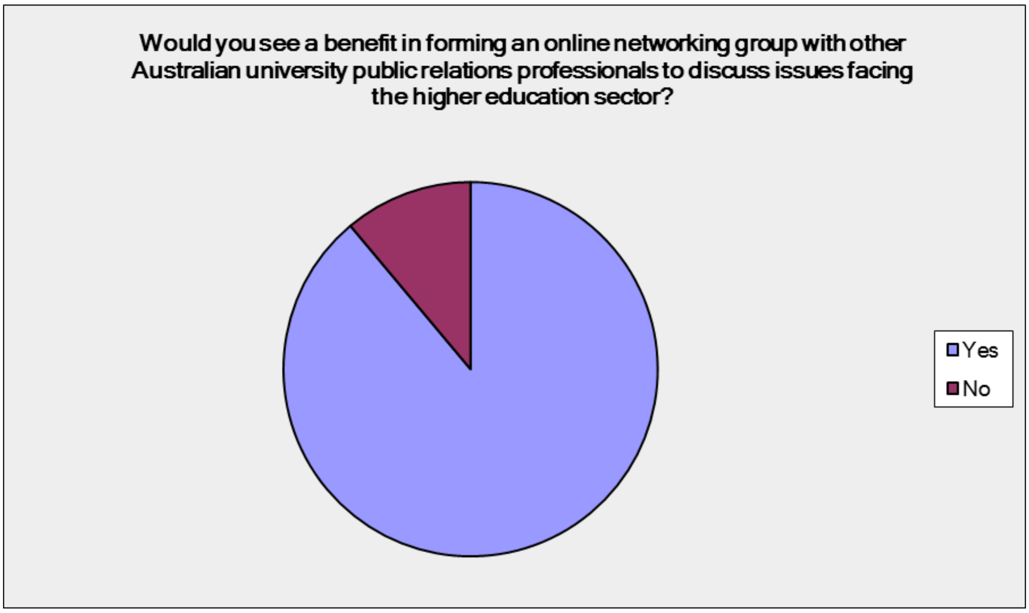
Question 47 – comments?

Comments:

1. Crisis management
2. Internal consultation in developing spec for new CMS.
3. Drafting communications plans for specific issues; some crisis communication assistance
4. We engaged a PR consultant for a major project to develop key messaging and a communication plan. It was disappointing as they did not value add and were dismissed prior to the projects launch.
5. Services provided range from general communication but also at times give high-level expert advice of a confidential nature. Generally the consulting services are given umbrella overview to the work being undertaken and assist with the production of annual report style publications.

6. Advancement of media coverage and public profile in specialist geographic areas.

Question 48 – Would you see a benefit in forming an online networking group with other Australian universities?



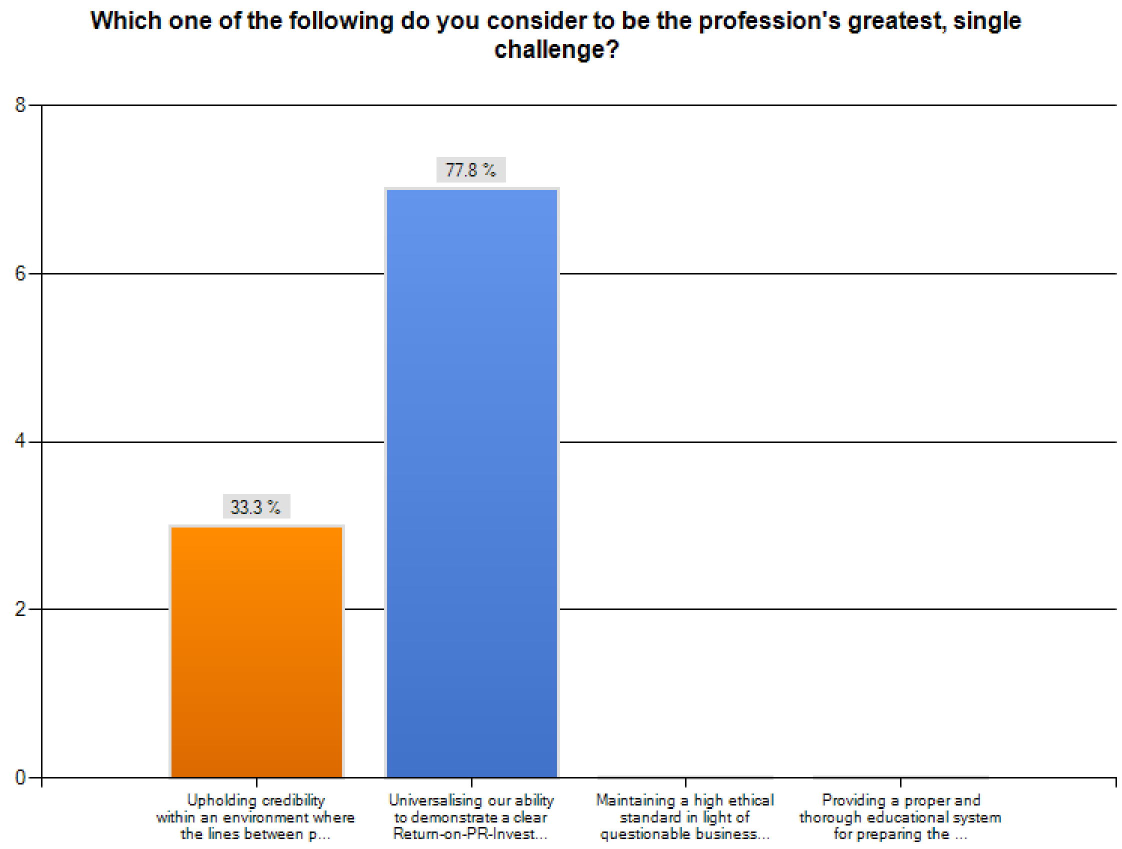
Graph 45: Australian universities public relations networking group

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.9 percent	8
No	11.1 percent	1
Please comment		7

Comments:

1. Maybe - this already exists to some extent via Linked In.
2. Maybe. There will be those who use it and those who don't.
3. Absolutely. Many of us are facing similar issues (reductions in staffing/ changes to curriculum/ faculty or school reductions and closures) - understanding how different organisations are dealing with the various communication challenges and developing best practice models would be invaluable.
4. I think it is important to learn from your peers and to have an outlet to seek assistance or discuss how a particular situation was handled. Case studies would be very useful.
5. As the University sector moves into more of the corporate sphere where issues and reputational impacts are of an increasing importance to be able to share ideas with colleagues within the sector is commendable. Benefits would allow colleagues to benchmark best practices and also provide insight into how issues may have impacted on universities and how they have been dealt with. A network would also provide a professional recognition to the work of the office.
6. The common issues in the higher education sector are of a very broad nature and most universities have a common understanding of those issues. The range of universities and their missions is such that most other issues are localised.
7. Because the sector - and, consequently, our job - has never been more challenging and we need to share information and advice to keep up.

Question 49 – Which one of the following do you consider to be the profession's greatest, single challenge?



Graph 46: Profession's greatest single challenge

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Upholding credibility within an environment where the lines between public relations, advertising and journalism are growing increasingly vague?	33.3 percent	3
Universalising our ability to demonstrate a clear Return-on-PR-Investment measurement, thereby proving the value of public relations?	77.8 percent	7
Maintaining a high ethical standard in light of questionable business tactics?	0.0 percent	0
Providing a proper and thorough educational system for preparing the new generation of public relations professionals on a level which is consistent with the legal and medical professions?	0.0 percent	0

Comments:

1. It is often quite hard (particularly within our limited budgets) to really provide management with an accurate analysis of our value as PR/media professionals, and to measure the value that our work brings to the University in terms of reputation-building and awareness.
2. Got to justify the budget expenditure.

3. It is so hard to quantify the value of Public Relations and often our value is underestimated.
4. As funding becomes an increasing challenge, it grows ever harder to prove our value to the business and the industry.

Question 50 - How can we improve the value of strategic communication and public relations within the university sector?

For your written comment

1. Difficult to comment - public relations is well thought of and our services/expertise valued in our organisation from the VC down. It is difficult to answer as Public Relations and our actual day to day functions vary significantly between Universities.
2. Closely align the strategies of the communications and PR offices with the broader strategies of the university. Ensure that the communications/PR office has a direct and close line to the decision-makers of the university, including, importantly, the VC's office. Strategic communication that is valued at the Executive level is really important to helping build the overall reputation and awareness of the university.
3. Ensure professionalism and central control, rather than having faculties running around doing their own thing.
4. Develop a network of professional membership, where we can draw on others experience and share our own to develop best practice models / test ideas and approaches - develop a standard set of metrics that we report against so there is consistency across the sector (and therefore a consistent expectation from senior management) - educate senior management to understand the resource - needs educate senior management to understand that what they don’t see in the media is sometimes more important than what appears (crisis management) - media training from an external party (LH Martin perhaps) for senior executives.
5. I believe greater collaboration is needed. Stronger networks across Universities and an ability to learn from others’ hurdles.
6. One of the prerequisites to strategic communication is the ability to effectively measure the likely impact of issues on the University. Such a measure would allow experts to put in place communication plans and procedures that would effectively mitigate reputation damage.
7. Remain true to the mission of the university.
8. By showing that communication is not an add-on or a `nice-to-have' but an essential and indispensable part of any organisation which values its stakeholders.
9. Better align communication and marketing functions of universities to ensure seamless messaging, look-and-feel and audience targeting across all public information. Fully integrate social media into traditional activities. Speak to target audiences 'where they live' (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc) in an authentic voice, and stay abreast of emerging channels in this fast-moving space.

Following are details of the survey breakdown and a brief summary of the research findings.

5.3 Survey Sections

The survey is presented in three sections:-

1 Structures, behaviours and responsibilities of the sampled Australian university public relations offices;

2 The relevance of public relations, specifically strategic communication, to the success of the overall objectives of the sampled universities; and

3 The importance of measuring communication activities.

Themes and patterns were identified and organised into categories following examination to classify consistencies and differences in the responses. Data was then analysed and is detailed in the next section with descriptive text and graphs to assist with readability and to emphasise important information. A detailed discussion of the research findings, the System overview, conclusion and recommendations is provided in chapter six.

5.4 Survey Analysis – Section One

This section gives an insight into the structures, behaviours and responsibilities of the sampled Australian university public relations offices. It was important to distinguish the purpose of each office in various university structures so greater meaning could be given to the research findings to discover whether there was a need to further develop the strategic communication measurement system. An analysis of the data collected for each survey question in Section 1 is outlined below.

A) Supervisor Name Titles

» In the sampling of Australian universities, with a variance of between 1000 to over 7000 employees, 22 percent of public relations offices include the name marketing in their department title.

Many people use the terms *public relations and marketing* interchangeably and the difference between these professions is not assisted when they are linked together under a department title of 'Marketing and Public Relations'. A review of Australian universities shows that courses in marketing are mainly through study in the Faculty of Business and courses in public relations are mainly offered through the Faculty of Arts. The truth is they are not the same thing.

Marketing involves selling the goods – the products are promoted. In public relations, the company is promoted – gauging public perception, managing and building the organisation's reputation and profile with the public (Kulkarni 2013).

The definition of marketing as approved by the Marketing Association of Australia and New Zealand states that – 'Marketing consists of activities that facilitate and expedite satisfying exchange relationships in a dynamic environment through the creation, distribution, promotion and pricing of products (goods, services and ideas)' (2013).

In the context of the study, the 2012 Public Relations Society of America definition of public relations was used:- 'Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics.'

According to Professor and researcher Cristian Guerrero-Castro (2011) professionals from various disciplines are working on strategic communication and it is not marketing, public relations, business, advertising, journalist, psychology, sociology or social communication but strategic communication that selects, leads, integrates, coordinates, activates and executes the resources of these disciplines (Guerrero-Castro, 2011). He says that strategic communication is the integration between strategy science and mass communication (Guerrero-Castro 2011).

b) Supervisor Titles

» Approximately 78 percent of people who head up the public relations offices in Australia universities are referred to as Directors or Executive Directors. There are marginally more males than females in these roles and the average age is 48 years.

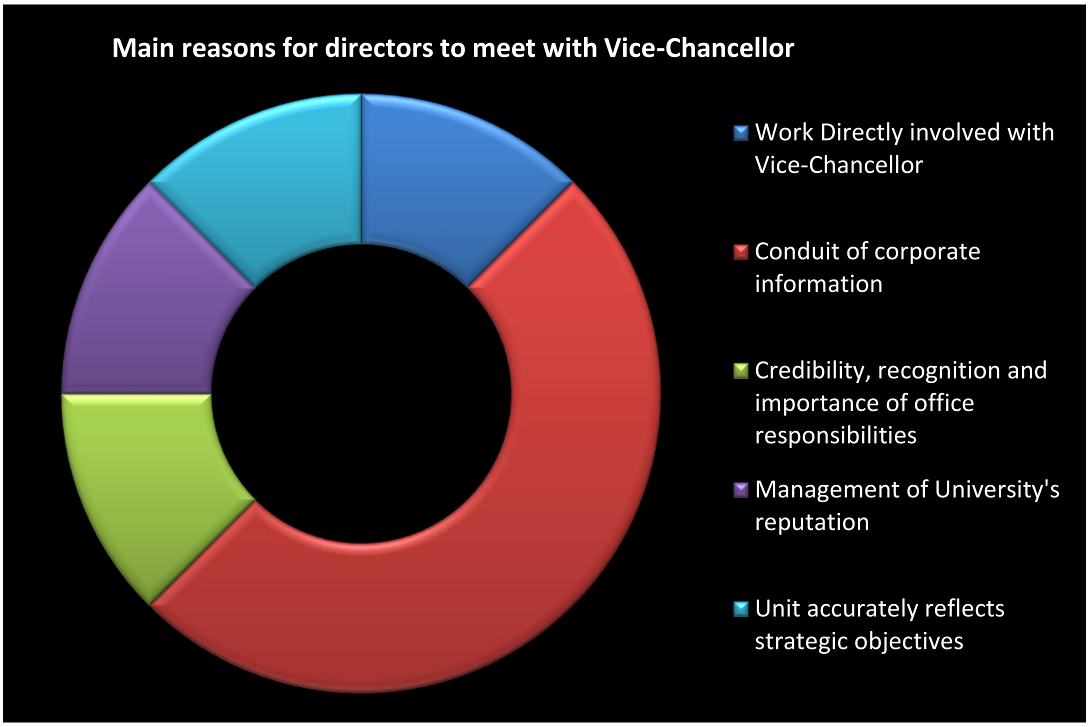
c) Average Supervisor Salary

» The average salary level of a person in charge of a public relations unit in Australian universities is $160,000 and 66.7 percent are satisfied with their salary level. Comments are noted that the public relations role has shifted dramatically over recent years from a promotion and publicity function to a strategic communication purpose. It was suggested that similar university positions show that public relations carries a salary level at the lower end of the executive scale.

As outcomes-based measures of communication have not been developed, even the most supportive senior executives will not see the demonstrated value that communications brings to the implementation strategy and will not recognise the critical role they must play in that effort (Argenti, 2005).

d) Reporting Lines

» Even though 67 percent of survey participants are happy with their current direct reporting lines, 88 percent believe it is important for their organisational unit to report directly to the Vice-Chancellor. 33.3 percent of public relations supervisors have unlimited access to their Vice-Chancellors, 33.33 percent on a weekly basis and 33.3 percent meet with their Vice-Chancellors as required. The main reasons for meeting with the Vice-Chancellor were to discuss media activities, university reputation, strategic communication planning and developing key messages.



Graph 47: Contact with Vice-Chancellor (Frequency of mention)

E) EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

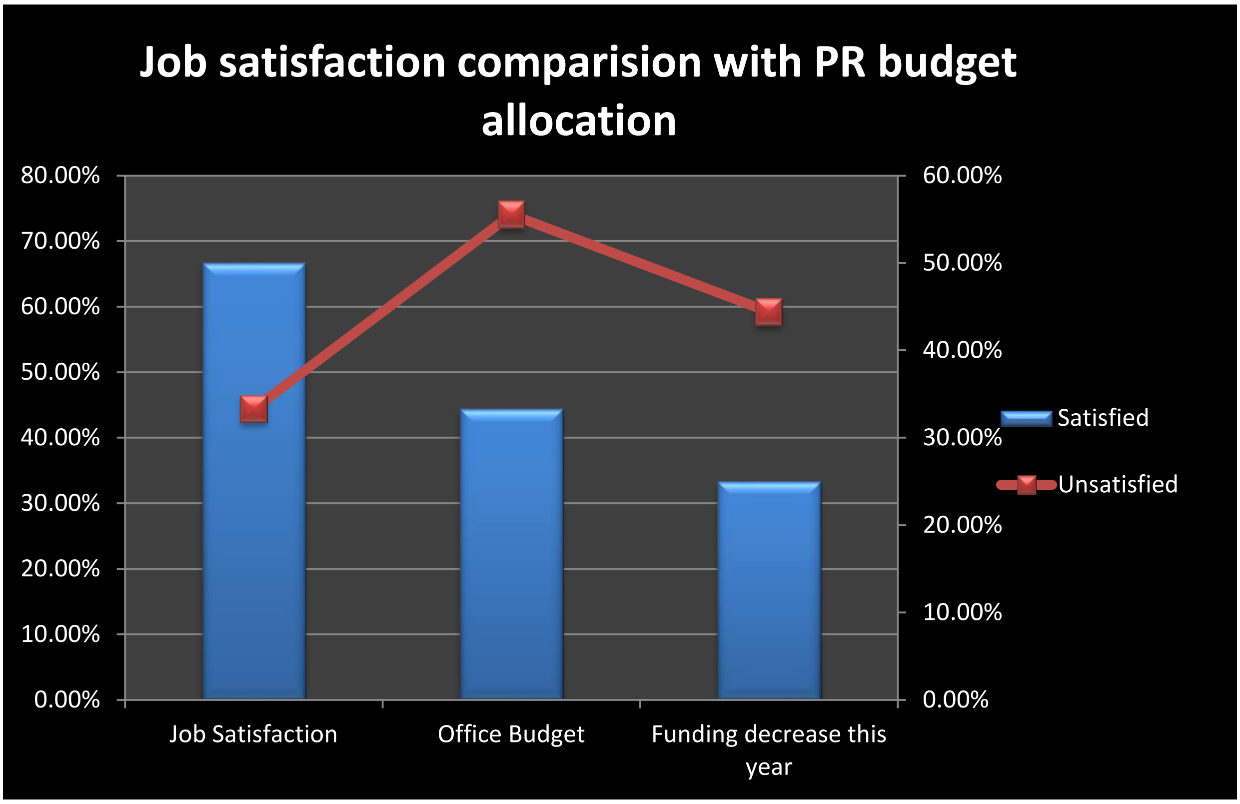
» 88.9 percent of leaders in Australian university public relations offices have tertiary qualifications and from these 33.3 percent have postgraduate qualifications. Similarly 88.9 percent of staff working in their units has tertiary qualifications and a total of 44.4 percent have postgraduate qualifications.

F) WORK EXPERIENCE

» The heads of offices have an average of 16 years working in the public relations profession, and 44 percent have less than five years working in the higher education sector.

G) JOB SATISFACTION

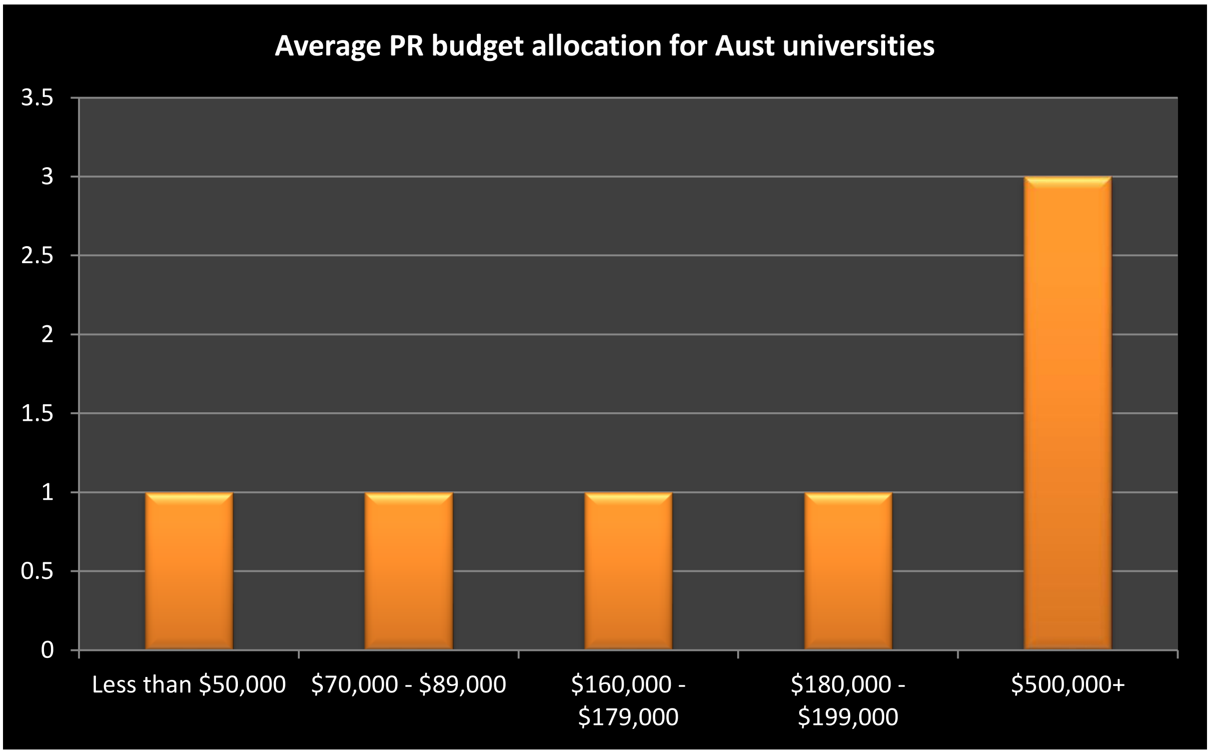
» It is a concern that 33.3 percent of supervisors in Australian university public relations offices are unsatisfied with their roles. A direct correlation may be assumed from looking at responses for the funded budget for public relations activities – 33.3 percent are very unsatisfied with budget allocation. 44.44 percent of respondents stated a decrease in funding this year. The graph below shows that directors who are unsatisfied in their roles are also unsatisfied with their office budgets.



Graph 48: Job satisfaction comparison with public relations budget allocation

H) Public Relations Budget Allocations

- The average public relations budget allocation for Australian universities is $280,700. Variances were between 11.11 percent of respondents with less than $50,000 and 33.33 percent over $500,000.



Graph 49: Public relations budget allocations for Australian universities

I) BEST EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- The best outcomes were achieved with external stakeholders through print media, with face-to-face meetings, television and radio, rated at 77.7 percent.

J) BEST INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- Internal communication recorded staff forums as being the best channel for staff information, with the website, staff newsletter, divisional meetings and personal visits equally rated as the second best channel. Interestingly, email was not the preferred communication channel for staff.

K) PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFFING

- On average public relations units employ nine staff members, with all responsible for feature-writing, issues and crisis management, strategic advice to Council and Senior Executive, external communication, and media liaison and monitoring. 88.9 percent have responsibilities for internal communication and social media monitoring; 66.7 percent for event organisation and speech writing; and 22 percent for qualitative research of stakeholders. Most time was spent on strategic communication initiatives, followed closely by media liaison. Least time was spent on marketing and government relations activities.

5.5 SURVEY ANALYSIS – SECTION TWO

Section two of the research findings reveals the importance of the public relations function, specifically strategic communication, to the overall objectives of the university. Questions were designed to deliver further understanding of the directors' roles and the influence they have on decision-making when considering stakeholder issues. It was significant to learn that measuring the value of communication returned as the biggest obstacle to proving the significance of strategic communication and, more importantly, the profession. An analysis of the data collected for each survey question in Section Two is outlined below.

A) The value of strategic communication

- Strategic communication is valued by senior management in 88.89 percent of responses. Comments indicate that we have come a long way, but still have further to go as it is increasingly difficult to embed the strategic communication needs within the everyday workplace. In many instances the role of communication is only offered value when there is an issue or a crisis that needs to be deflected, or when senior management wish to increase their profile. The everyday activities of the office are seen to play more of a promotion and publicity role in many minds, and educating management to the value of strategic communication is one of the challenges facing public relations.

It has been suggested that the most enduring companies are those that focus on the long-term communication strategy, have a strong set of values and are proactive rather than reactive in communicating (Collins and Porras 1997). Just as companies have long-term marketing and budgeting plans for their organisation as a whole, they also must have a master communication strategy (Collins and Porras 1997).

B) Committee involvement

- In 66.67 percent of instances, the public relations heads of office are included on the university's high-level decision-making committees. Comments demonstrate the importance of having first-hand knowledge and involvement in the higher-level management decisions and discussion of the University. Filtered information detracts from the effectiveness and professionalism that the office can provide. Membership would not be as one of the senior executive who have responsibility for the operational decisions on behalf of the university. However, a public relations presence should be valued for the best way to communicate the decisions and for the value of strategic output.

All too often, the strategic communications function is a dumping ground for tactical managers who are uncomfortable with the lack of quantitative skills needed for success in other functions. Effective communications professionals are those who speak the same language as senior executives and have a deep understanding of the business and its strategy (MIT Sloan Management Review 2005).

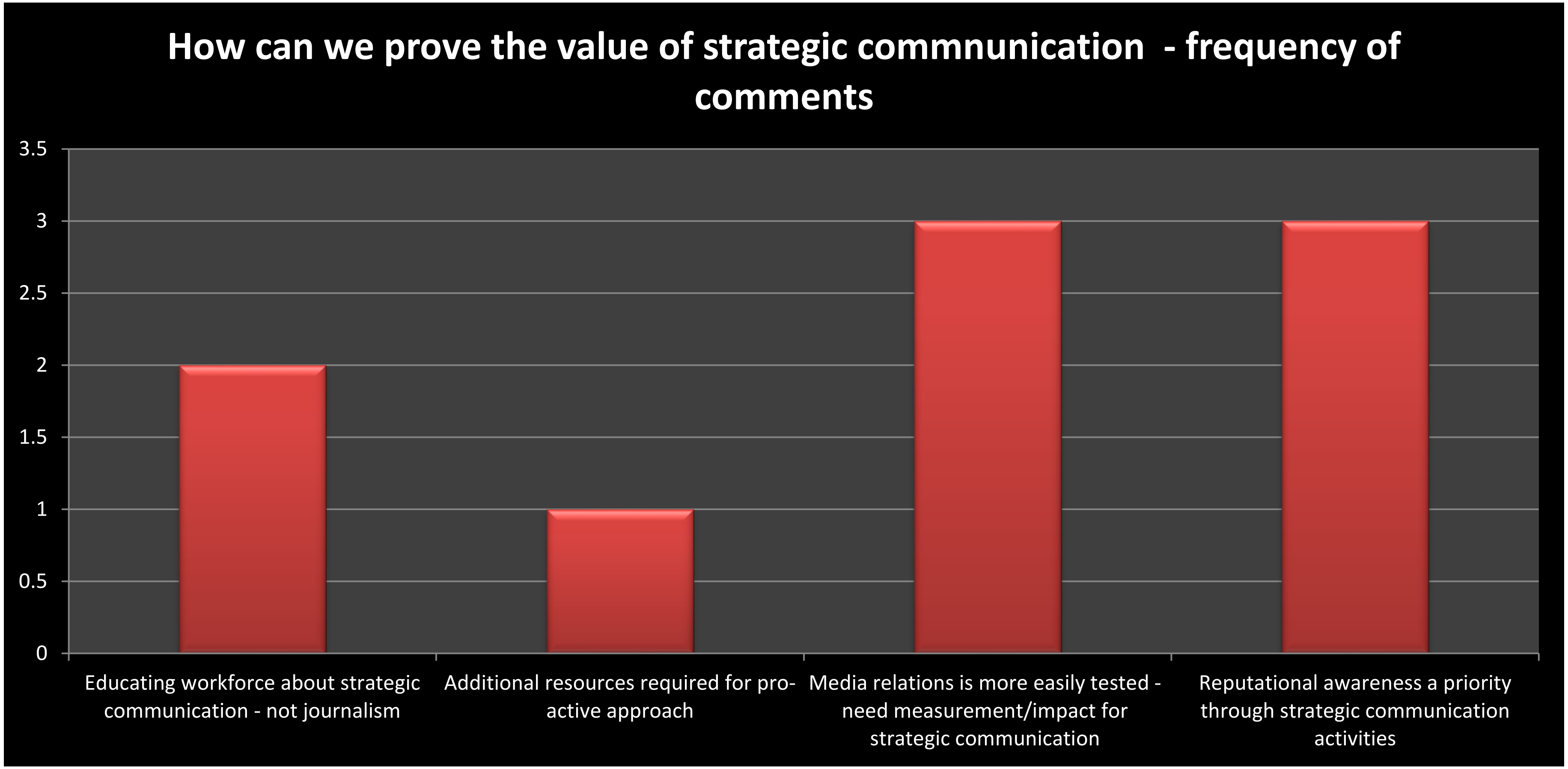
Companies that continue to take a relaxed approach to communication will find it increasingly difficult to compete. Although there will be a continuing need for tactical execution, the addition of an integrated, strategic focus will be critical to success. For communications professionals, this imperative will not be a threat but an opportunity to not only get a seat at the table, but to stay there (MIT Sloan Management Review 2005).

C) CRISIS MANAGEMENT ADVICE

- Public relations offices are contacted for advice only after an issue has escalated in 77.78 percent of cases. Often reactive media is the only option but educating senior executive of the benefits of engaging strategic communication advice early is becoming increasingly important to the university's reputation:- it's a matter of education.

D) MAIN PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

- Public relations supervisors in 88.89 percent of responses believe that the main purpose of their activities is to help define the business environment, affecting awareness levels, attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders.



Graph 50: Improving the value of strategic communication

E) PUBLIC RELATIONS VALUE TO UNIVERSITIES

» Directors and managers believe the value and practice of public relations is most important to universities for reputation, and educating management, staff and the public. Measuring the value of communication is mentioned as the biggest obstacle to proving the significance of strategic communication and, more importantly, the profession. Graph 50 shows frequency of mention.

5.6 Survey Analysis – Section Three

Section three of the research findings conveys the significance of measuring communication activities. Results reveal current public relations measurement tools, stakeholder research methods, challenges to the profession and ways in which we can improve current practice. An analysis of the data collected for each survey question in Section Three is outlined below.

A) Measuring public relations

» Collection data for this survey expressed that evidence-based measures to public relations objectives within Australian universities was important in proving credibility for the overall organisational structure. Effective measurement would assist in achieving budgetary support and management best practice outcomes.

Graph 51: Importance of measuring the value of public relations objectives

B) CURRENT MEASUREMENT PRACTICES

» Current practices used in Australian universities to measure public relations impact are sectioned by 87.5 percent using media and tracking analysis; 62.5 percent measure stakeholder attitudes; and 37.5 percent use advertising equivalencies.

C) UNDERSTANDING REPUTATIONAL ISSUES

» Public relations directors are aware of their university's reputational issues through 77.78 percent word of mouth; 66.67 percent through qualitative research (focus groups); and 22.22 percent through interviews.

D) PUBLIC RELATIONS CONSULTANCY

» 66.67 percent of public relations directors have utilised the services of consultants for crisis management; drafting communication plans; high-level expert advice of a confidential nature; and to advance media coverage and public profile in specialist geographic areas.

E) PEER SUPPORT

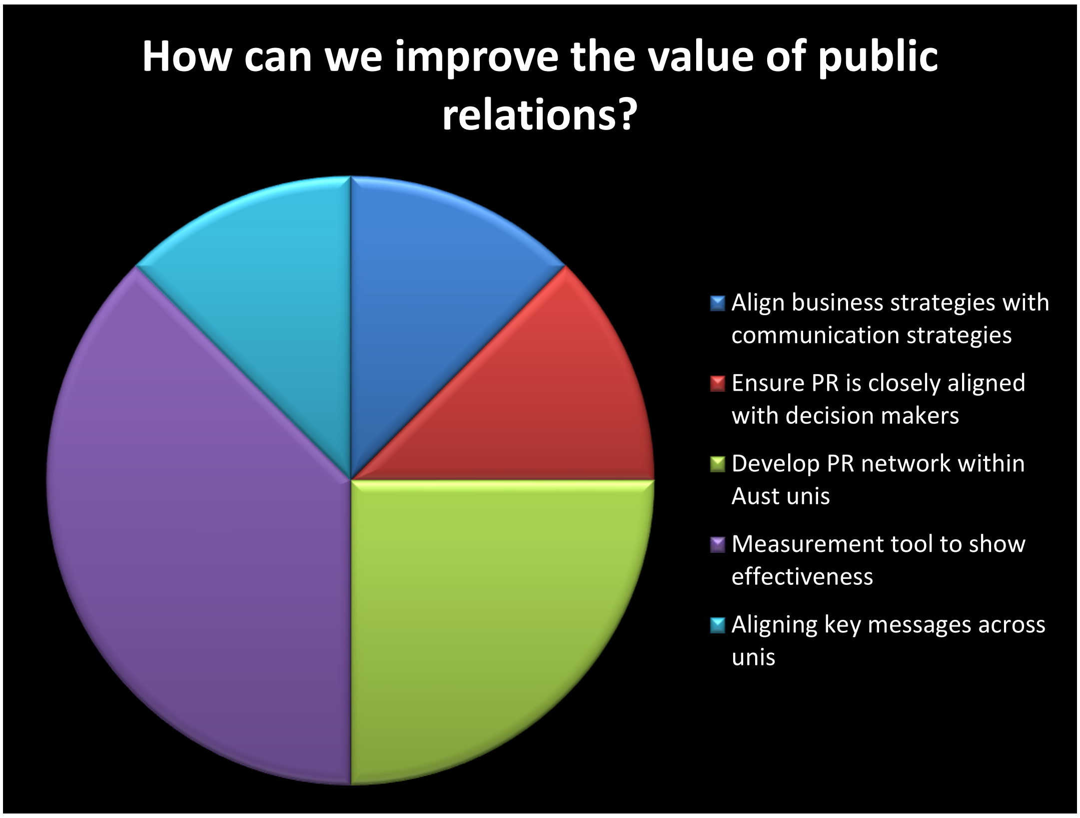
» There was strong espousal to suggestion that a public relations networking group be formed within the Australian university sector (88.89 percent) to discuss similar issues, case studies, corporate issues and reputational impacts, common issues and peer support.

F) CHALLENGES FOR THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION

» The greatest challenge to the public relations profession in the Australian university sector was identified as being able to demonstrate a clear return-on-investment measurement, thereby proving the value of public relations. 33.33 percent noted the importance of upholding credibility where the lines between public relations, advertising and journalism are growing increasingly vague.

G) How we can improve?

» For Australian universities to improve the value of public relations, respondents reported it was most important to develop a measurement tool to show the effectiveness of public relations activities.



Graph 52: How can we improve the value of public relations

5.7 Summary

In section one it was shown that there is an acknowledgment and acceptance amongst the Vice-Chancellors of Australian universities to separating the functions of communication and marketing professionals. It appears there is a growing appreciation of how public relations has changed over the years from a promotional and publicity function to one which is able to provide strategic benefit to the overall business objectives of a university but respondents identified there is still much room for improvement.

Most respondents indicated the importance for their organisational unit to report directly to the Vice-Chancellor as information, functionality and effectiveness is restricted when reporting line managers have limited understanding of the strategic communication role. Membership on the university's high-level decision-making committees should not be as one of the senior executive who has responsibility for the operational decisions on behalf of the university, but it was reported that public relations presence on these committees should be valued as the best way to communicate the committee decisions and for the value of strategic outcomes.

It is a concern that a third of communication directors reported being unsatisfied with their roles. A direct correlation can be assumed from looking at responses for the funded budget for public relations activities – a third of respondents reported being very unsatisfied with budget allocation. Variances of budget allocations range from less than $50,000 through to a third of respondents receiving more than $500,000.

The survey shows that the best outcomes for external communication were achieved through print media, face-to-face meetings, television and radio, and the best outcomes for internal communication were achieved through staff forums, the website, newsletters and personal visits.

In section two of the survey, it was shown that strategic communication is valued by senior management, but it is questioned what the definition of strategic communication means to all respondents. Educating leaders about the value of strategic communication was said to be one of the challenges facing public relations professionals.

Most respondents believed that the main purpose of their activities was to help define the business environment, affecting awareness levels, attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders. With the knowledge of evidence-based research, an understanding was formed of the roles, responsibilities and issues facing the corporate communication offices in a sampling of Australian universities.

Section three of the survey questioned the significance of measuring communication activities.

It was expressed by 90 percent of respondents that evidence-based measures to public relations objectives was important to proving credibility in the overall university organisational structure. It was proposed that an effective measurement tool would assist in achieving budgetary support, and for management to attain best practice outcomes. It was shown that the most used communication measurements were media tracking analysis, stakeholder attitudes and advertising equivalencies.

It was indicated that respondents were mainly aware of their university's reputational issues through word-of-mouth. Qualitative stakeholder research (focus groups) was conducted in just over half of the universities sampled.

It was shown that the greatest challenge to the public relations profession in the Australian university sector was being able to demonstrate a clear return-on-investment measurement, thereby proving the value of public relations. For Australian universities to improve the value of public relations, respondents advised it was most important to develop a measurement tool to show the effectiveness of public relations activities.

The following chapter will deliver an overview of the System. A discussion, drawing together the research questions with the findings of this research and existing knowledge, will be provided prior to outlining the research limitations, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX: THE SYSTEM OVERVIEW, LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 THE SYSTEM OVERVIEW AND LIMITATIONS

A communication gap in an organisation may suggest that the goals and objectives that are set by management are either not communicated to stakeholders or if communicated they have not been understood properly. Communication gaps result in confusion amongst stakeholders, unclear motives, misaligned priorities and indecisive actions. Understanding stakeholder perceptions and then developing strategic communication actions to respond to issues results in corrective steps to rectify problems. The dilemma is how to measure the value of planned strategic communication initiatives to close the communication gap between an organisation and its stakeholders.

As outcomes-based measures of communication develop, even the most reluctant senior executives will see the demonstrated value that communications brings to the implementation of strategy and will recognise the critical role they must play in that effort.
The problem addressed in this study is to understand how a communication measurement model may deliver a quantitative performance indicator which enables senior university executives to place a value on reputation management through using an issues management tool to highlight stakeholder perceptions.

The System was piloted and trialled during and following the USQ stakeholder research conducted in 2009. It delivered the achievable outcomes required by providing the Vice-Chancellor with a one page report that highlighted areas of importance, where priority focus was needed and what actions were attributed to each stakeholder issue. Periodic reports were produced which showed measureable improvement after employing actions in response to stakeholder issues. The System met with favourable comments from the former Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor. Trialling the System in Australian universities was not possible because of 'Trade Secret' restrictions and intellectual property constraints. This is noted as a limitation to the study.

Any future development, expansion, enhancement and modification of the system is dependent on individual university communication practitioners engaging at the technical level in typically journalistic activities, or at higher senior leadership functions whereby they might influence decision making choices in relation to the reputational needs of their university.

This research set out as its perimeters the discovery of current communication practices among a sampling of Australian universities; the responsibilities and related issues of communication offices; the communication measurement tools utilised and if reputation measurement was needed in the sector; and how a communication measurement system may offer a solution to some of these dilemmas.

Findings from this study identified the value that public relations brought to the overall business initiatives undertaken by universities, the practical concerns facing communication directors, and how public relations professionals currently measured the impact of their work.

Through this investigation, the thesis determined how the System as developed contributes new knowledge and assists in the resolution of issues by measuring the value of strategic communication. This research evidences that Australian universities engage with their stakeholders to increase or uphold reputation, but there is no common measurement tool to show the value of strategic communication initiatives in responding to stakeholder perceptions. The System incorporates a risk measurement scale and this research indicates that the measureable component of the System is an effective way to assess and quantify stakeholder issues in a format that enables senior executive to show value for money when applying strategic communication initiatives.

The System produces a one-page report for senior executives that shows a university's emerging issues amongst their stakeholder groups and what is urgent in order to prioritise actions in response to stakeholder perceptions. The risk matrix not only provides universities with a tool to identify issues of stakeholder concern but also distinguishes areas of opportunities for universities to purposefully engage with their stakeholders. The risk scale delivers a platform measurement of stakeholder perceptions prior to communication action and updates the level of risk and priority once communication action has been implemented.

The following screen shots display an overview of the System. Each illustration is supported by a detailed explanation and the demonstration begins with the back-end communication professional's view of the database. The back-end pages are the working document for the operational administrator. It is necessary to include these scaffolding pages to show how the one page report for senior executives is produced.

As the System was piloted by USQ during the course of this study, information displayed in the screen shots contains confidential information. Some slides have been purposely blurred to protect the responses obtained through USQ qualitative research.

The first slide, Figure 21, depicts the back-end working view of the System. This page will only be seen by the communication professional, but it is important to present the mechanisms behind the System to give the reader an understanding of how the individual scaffolding screens operate to produce the one-page measureable report for senior executives.

Without the opportunity to demonstrate the System in practical terms, the information displayed in Figure 21 has been divided into five sections. Following a detailed explanation of each section, a visual presentation via a vimeo link is provided. This will allow the reader to more easily understand areas in the holistic screen shot below.

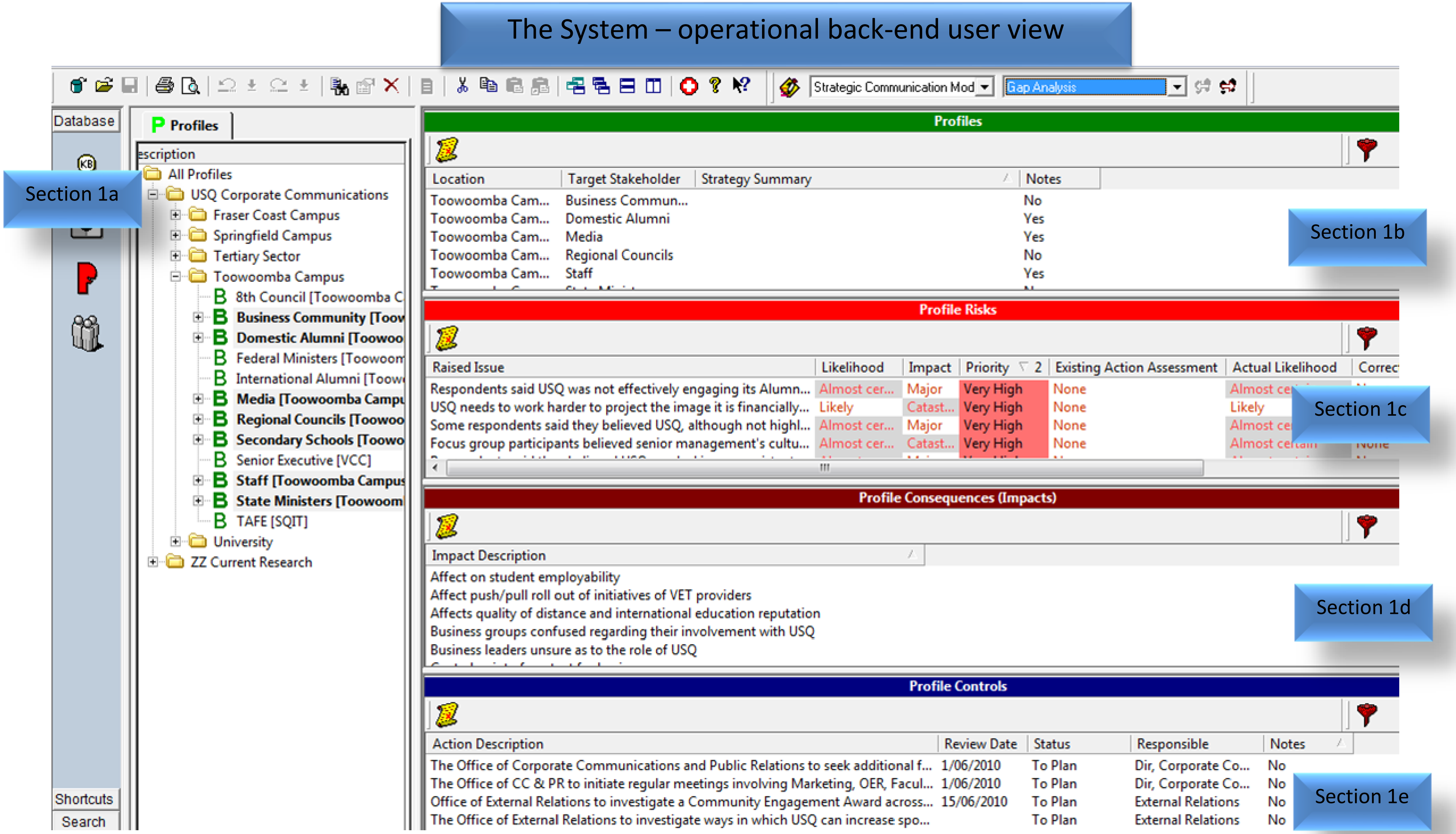


Figure 21: Slide One, the System – operational back-end user view

6.1.1 Major Stakeholder Categories – Slide 1a

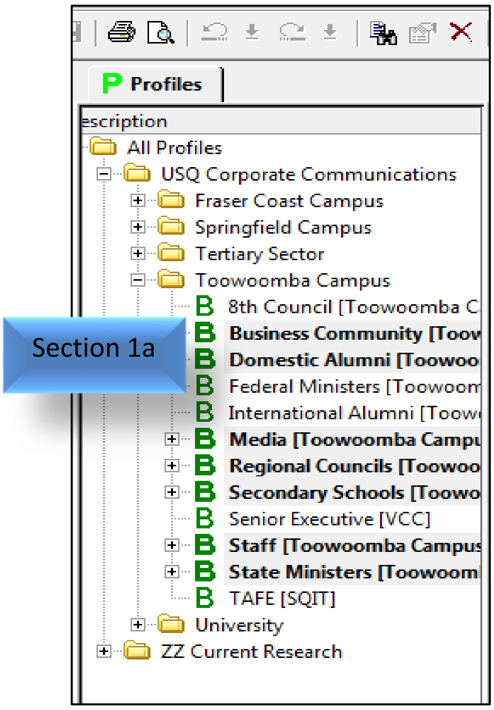


Figure 22: Section 1a

As previously mentioned, to capture perceptions held by USQ's key stakeholder groups, a qualitative stakeholder research program was undertaken to guide the development of the University's overarching internal and external communication strategies. Slide 1a above shows the list of stakeholder categories - Fraser Coast Campus, Springfield Campus, Tertiary Sector, Toowoomba Campus and University.

Under each of the major stakeholder categories, key groups were identified and the System segments the layers with a drop down box individualising the various stakeholders' groups, with **B** indicating the base stakeholder groups for the Toowoomba campus.

In this sample database, there are five different areas of risk focus. Creating a new database is very similar to creating a new file in any Microsoft Office product. For example, the University of Southern Queensland has four campuses and there will be different stakeholder issues for each campus. There could be a new database set up for each campus. Under each of these folders, various stakeholder groups can be added, so sub-categories can be created under each database heading. A tree effect has been created – University of Southern Queensland Toowoomba Campus, then stakeholder groups can be added. This database structure is created using location, but a database can also be created under specific functions performed, USQ departments/sections or projects. The structure could look something like this.

6.1.2 Explanation of Section 1B of Slide One

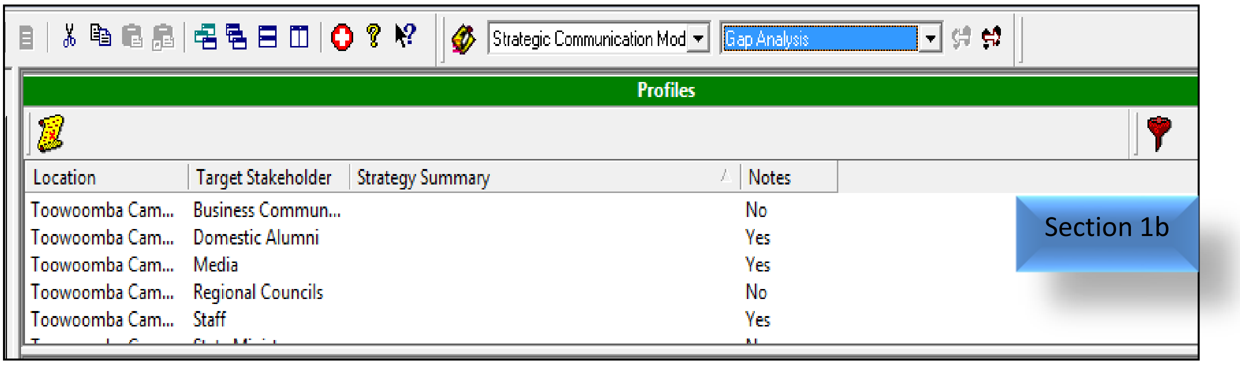


Figure 23: Section 1b

Opening an existing database simply entails clicking on the name within the area of existing data sources. The profile section of Section 1b, Figure 23 above, outlines the stakeholder group under the main category of Toowoomba Campus. The database will be displayed on the desktop with an icon. Double clicking on the icon will bring up the user information. This database has been created with sub-categories; allowing any stakeholder risks that might come from qualitative research to be added.

A "Notes" field appears and in this area of the System, the administrator can include notes relative to the various respondents who were approached and participated in the research. Information is automatically generated from the original data inputted in section 1a, so there is no need for duplication in the entering of data. The objective to include this section into the System was mainly for historical data, so future follow-up research to benchmark improvements or risks of stakeholder perceptions could be located easily. The focus group outline of questions asked of the various stakeholder groups can be inputted and re-visited for future research, thus providing a further benchmark for improvement.

6.1.3 Explanation of Section 1c of Slide One

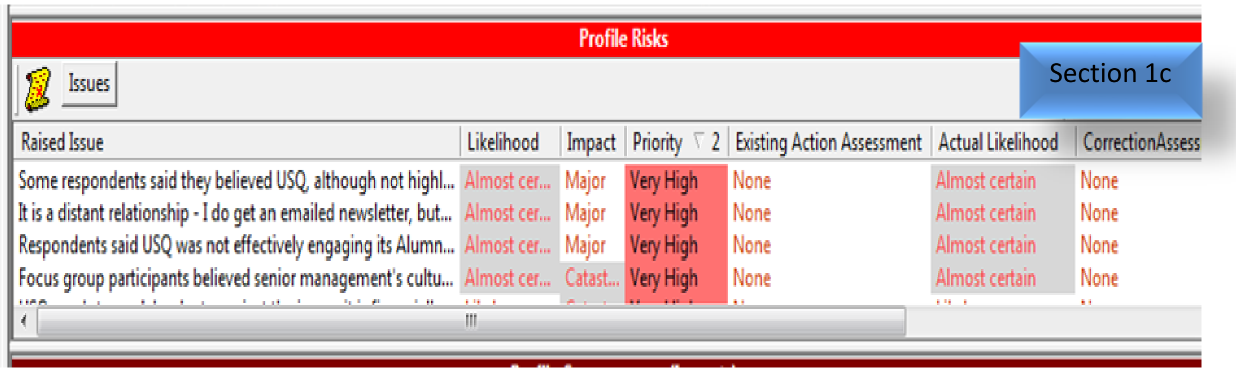


Figure 24: Section 1c

The Profile Risks shown in Section 1c have been purposely blurred. This section outlines stakeholder perceptions gained from information received during focus group qualitative research.

The initial aspect of strategic communication is one that is relatively easy to identify – what is the focus of the stakeholder research. Once context has been established, and qualitative research conducted, the subsequent progression is to identify any risks and what consequences may result should these risks occur. One singular identified risk may have many significances with varying degrees of severity requiring an array of communication controls to be implemented to help prevent the identified risk from occurring (preventative controls) or to lessen the impact should the event occur (corrective controls). Active controls that are inherent in the system may need to be added to mitigate the risks as part of any assessment practices. This will provide corrective action to fix the problem or preventative action to limit or stop the issue from occurring.

The next stage is to assess the risk of each stakeholder identified issue via a knowledge base of current practice, existing controls and recommended future communication actions.

Assessing the risks and consequences of each stakeholder issue is where the System highlights issues requiring immediate attention. The System has two areas for risk assessment - the inherent likelihood and inherent consequence. Initially these are subjectively determined by the communication professional as a starting point but which are later more accurately recorded via the System's investigative properties. Each field is accompanied by a drop down box with tab keys for the user to select. The consequent result of inputting this data is automatically calculated in the System.

There are two different types of controls; preventative controls to lower the likelihood of the risk occurring and corrective controls to mitigate the severity of the impact should the risk occur. The level of risk will have dropped only if the controls are effective or as effective as possible. In the System, this residual calculation is actually done for the user, but it is good to understand the basic risk management methodology.

The preventative control is inputted when knowing what the organisation or university is already currently doing to prevent the risk from happening. It may be that stakeholders are unaware of what the university is already doing as a preventative measure - thus an information gap is shown. It may also be that the university is unaware of any stakeholder concern and therefore actions need to be identified in response to the inherent risk. Communication controls are entered into the System to inform stakeholders of what actions are needed.

The next area of the System determines the measureable gap between identifying the stakeholder concern without controls, and then inputting the communication actions in response to the issue to re-evaluate the measureable risk. A "Select Parent" box appears. "Parent" is a programming term indicating the hierarchy. In this instance, the Control will be the "Child". Each action is assigned to a user (or guest) to ensure this control is in place and working effectively. This field type is a keyword list which means many names can be added for the User to select from. Once the User assesses the controls, the System will then calculate the residual risk rating for each stakeholder issue. The Residual rating is the rating of the risk with controls attached.

The System automatically calculates the residual values. The Inherent rating that may have been High moves progressively to Low as more mitigating controls are added. Should the controls be less than effective, the risk will remain high.

Using the industry accepted and standard AS/NZA 4360 Risk Assessment criteria, the communication professional will determine how likely the risk is to occur, the severity of the impact if the risk occurred and what existing controls exist to prevent the risk or lessen its impact. How the communication professional responds to and influences the likelihood and consequence of impact is determined by the System using sophisticated analytics and diagnostic tools that is out of scope to this study.

This basic understanding of strategic communication and the associated risks of stakeholder issues can be done within a communication template but to manage risks effectively, the System software tool will help store and assess data. It is best described as a three dimensional software program:-

> The front end where the Database Window is positioned – this is where the data is entered and all assessing and reporting is done
>
> The back end – all assessment calculations are done in the background out of sight of the User
>
> The Knowledgebase – where the data is stored logically, to be used again.

The System is Windows based, so if the User already works with Microsoft Office products, uses Windows Explorer or Outlook, it will be instantly familiar.

The Database Window – here the main menu is where most of the work is done. The organisation's structure is built here. Risks, consequences and controls are added to the structure and the assessments and all other relevant data are all completed in this area.

For example, if a stakeholder states that a university doesn't have enough practical component in its courses, the communication professional has to make a subjective evaluation on the risk of this issue by entering the likelihood and the impact. This is done by considering the consequences to the university, as in this example it may decrease graduate employability if stakeholders believe this to be true. Assessing an action in response to this perception may include communicating by feature stories showing university nursing students working in hospitals during their course or education students teaching in classrooms as part of their studies. Once a communication action is applied to an issue, the likelihood and therefore the consequences to the university are lessened. It is worth repeating that reputation itself cannot be strictly-speaking 'managed' because it is determined by the stakeholder. Whether a stakeholder perception is founded on facts is irrelevant, it shows a gap in understanding between the university and its stakeholders, and this can be improved through the university strategically communicating its messages more clearly.

6.1.4 Explanation of Section 1d of Slide One

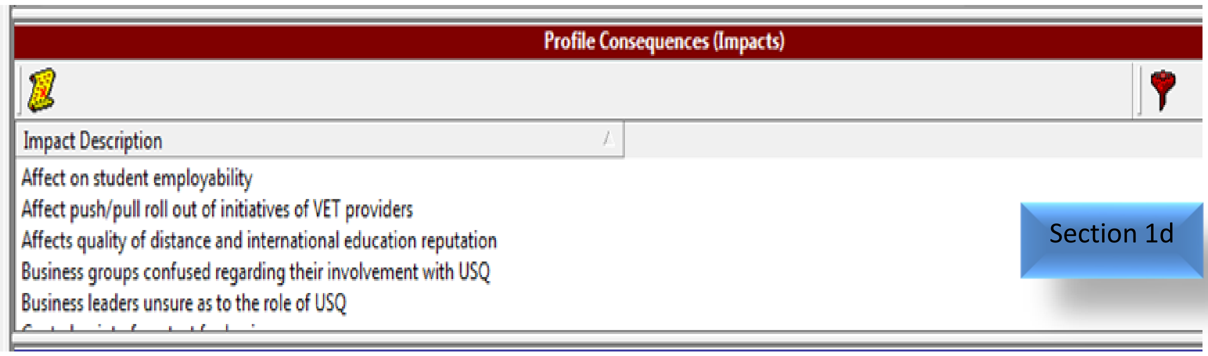


Figure 25: Section 1d

The profile consequences shown in Section 1d, Figure 25 above, have been purposely blurred. For the impact of stakeholder perceptions to be understood, a list of consequences need to be examined. This area of the System stores possible outcomes of a perception if no communication action is activated.

Reverting back to the previous example of a stakeholder believing that the university does not have enough practical component in their courses, the consequences of this belief could deter graduate employers, which would impact on students wanting to enrol in university. The consequences of this perception gaining credence in the community could be reputationally-damaging, which would impact the university financially.

Outlining the consequences of perceived issues is important in the subjective evaluation of likelihood and impact. Understanding the consequences places the communication professional in a position to more accurately draw conclusions, which the System automatically updates using the risk measurement scale.

6.1.5 Explanation of Section 1e of Slide One

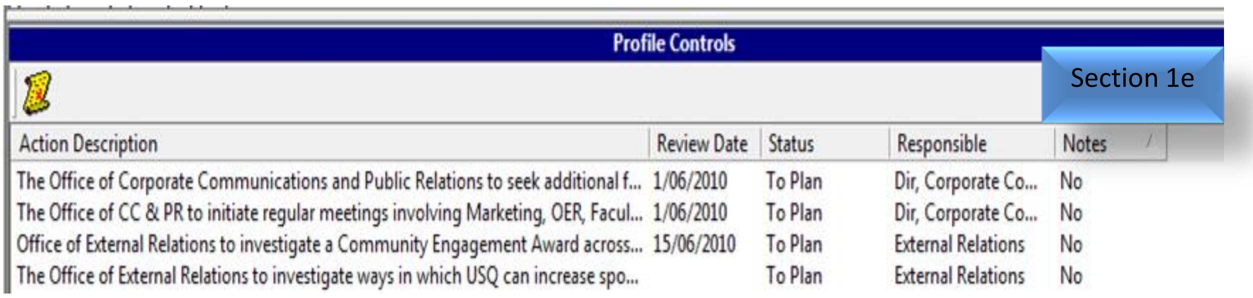


Figure 26: Section 1e

The profile controls shown in Section 1e, Figure 26 above, have been purposely blurred. Communication action descriptions are inputted into the System after determining the risk or opportunities of stakeholder perceptions. The administrator identifies the university personnel responsible for actioning an issue and a review date is linked to the issue.

Again, reverting to the previous example used in this section about the lack of practical components in university courses, a strategic communication action may be given to the Director of Corporate Communication to produce feature articles for media placement, quoting nursing students and hospital administrators who benefit from practicum placements during their studies. The review date identified against this action is automatically filed in the System and a reminder is sent to the communication professional and the Director of Corporate Communication through Microsoft Outlook. If approved by the communication professional, the status is updated through the Microsoft Outlook form and automatically updated in the System without duplication of data entry.

The next slide shows the Microsoft outlook form which is the front-end user screen. This form is automatically generated through information recorded in the back-end data.

6.1.6 The System – Front-End Form View

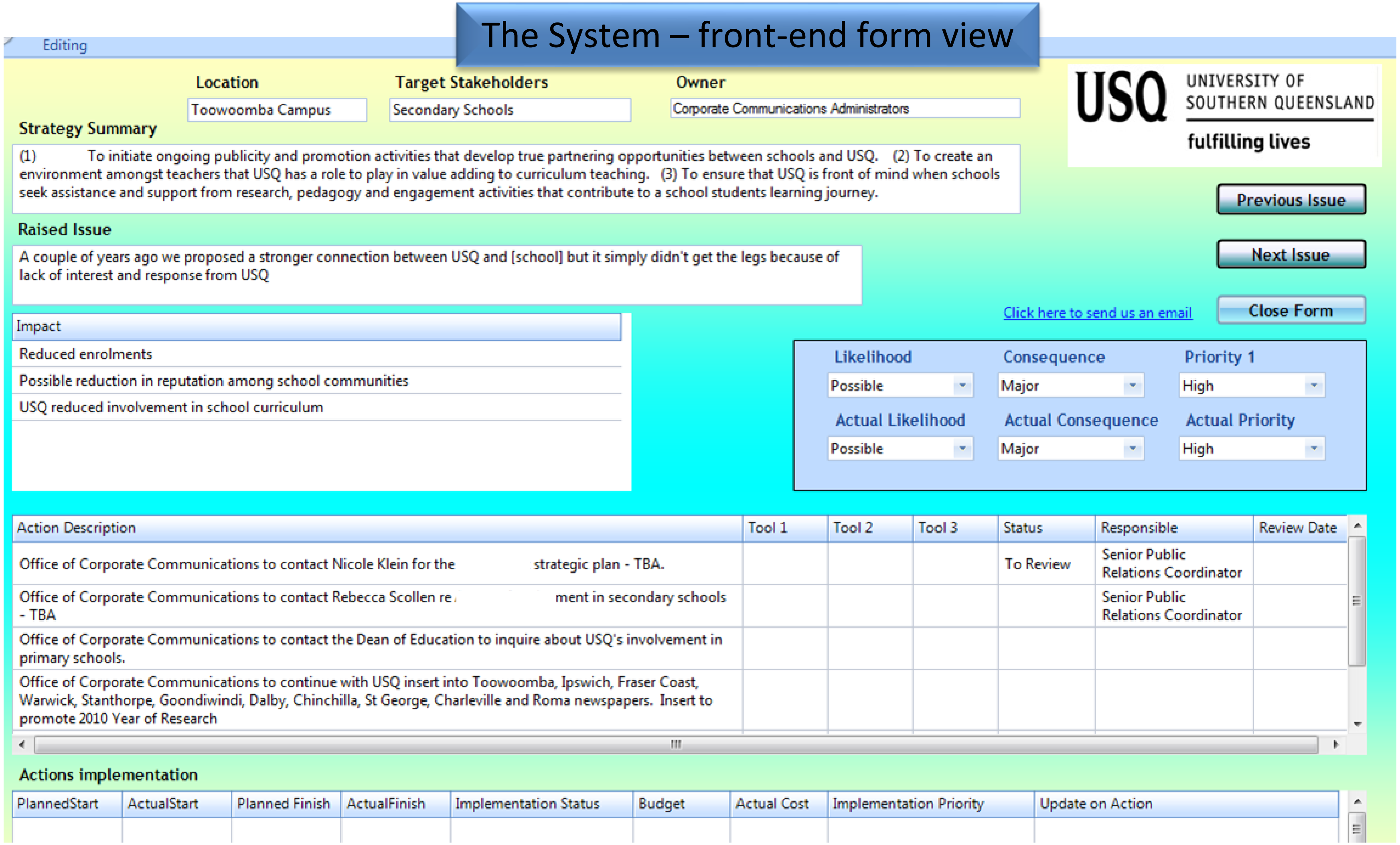


Figure 27: The System – front-end form view

The System is compatible with Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook. From the data inputted into the back-end user area of the System, a form can be instantly generated about a particular issue, sent via email for an action update, and returned to the communication professional. Information once approved is automatically updated in the System – without the need for further data entry.

Documents such as Annual Reports and Strategic Plans can be stored in the System via hyperlinks. Focus group structures, their feedback and responses can be typed or copied directly into the System from Microsoft Office products. Users can generate and send emails directly from within the System, via Microsoft Outlook. Any (guest) user who receives an email can access data directly in the System by double clicking the hyperlink in the email. A link will open an instance allowing the (guest) user to update information. Once received by the sender (author), the information can be approved and it is automatically updated in the System.

The front-end form view is what the responsible officer for actioning a stakeholder-perceived issue sees via Microsoft outlook. It shows the stakeholder category, the stakeholder group within the category, the strategy summary and the issue raised by the University's stakeholder.

For the responsible action officer, three drop-down action tool bars are supplied for ease of use. The three drop-down tool boxes contain many identified communication action tools such as – meetings, events, key message control, media, staff forum, publications, etc. There is also a measuring scale that indicates the issue priority. Once the responsible actioner inputs the data and, if necessary, an updated review date, this scale automatically changes to indicate actual priority. The back-end System is automatically updated with this information once returned and accepted by the communication professional.

The next slide shows the report generated from the System for the University Senior Executives.

6.1.7 THE SYSTEM – VICE-CHANCELLOR ONE PAGE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION REPORT

USQ Strategic Communication Plan

2012 Strategic Communication Database

The System – The One Page Strategic Communication Report

Location	Notes
Toowoomba Campus	No

Profile Risk										Profile Consequence (Impact)	Profile Control					
Raised Issue	Likelihood	Impact	Priority	Existing Action Assessment	Actual Likelihood	CorrectionAssessment	Actual Impact	Actual Priority	Responsible	Impact Description	Action Description	Tool 1	Tool 2	Tool 3	Status	Im ati Pr
Respondents said they believed the University was reducing practical components of its courses which had the potential to impact student employability and in-turn impact the University's reputation	Unlikely	Catastrophic	High	None	Unlikely	None	Catastrophic	High			The Office of Corporate Communications and Public Relations to seek funding for one page articles to showcase practical components in USQ's courses	Meeting			In Progress	2. pri
											Greater publicity on work integrated learning activities	Media Release	Feature Article	Audiovisual Communication Method	In Progress	2. pri
											Faculties to provide updated information on current program practices	Committee Meeting	Media Release	Speaker	In Progress	2. pri
										Difficult to gain professional accreditation of programs						
										Difficult to get student graduate placements						
										Impact on student employability						
										Lowers USQ's reputation and profile among community stakeholders						
										Reduced credibility for USQ courses						
										Reduced enrolments						
They are very silent in the community. They don't seem to get involved and have chosen not to get involved	Possible	Moderate	Tolerable	None	Possible	None	Moderate	Tolerable			The Office of External Relations to investigate ways in which USQ can increase sponsorship into major community events	Meeting	Letter	Speaker	To Plan	2. pri
											The ED of Human Resources to investigate a model which allows for staff to have time release to volunteer into the community. This would provide an accurate measure for identifying staff/community engagement	Committee Meeting			In Progress	1. pri
										Missed business, government and networking opportunities						
										Missed engagement and development of policy						
										USQ not seen as a community citizen by not supporting larger community events						

Figure 28: The System – the one page strategic communication report

The System provides a variety of reports for Users to view data. These reports are designed to give the User the ability to quickly and easily generate reports needed to convey information to different sources. The System provides profile reports, bar graphs, spread reports, comparative reports, as well as reports that will view both qualitative and quantitative assessments: in fact just about all report types a User should need are available in the System. Reports are generated through information stored in each database, without having to duplicate the inputting of data. Reports can be printed in A3 or A4 document sizes.

The System also allows searches to be conducted for multiple text across the databases. This is useful to determine if one stakeholder group identifies similar issues to other stakeholder groups. Actions to similar issues may already have been identified and completed for another stakeholder group and this can then be found and utilised to gauge the success of repeating the solution.

This slide (Figure 28) has been purposely blurred to protect confidential information. The screen print shown is an example of one report that can be generated.

This report shows the stakeholder-raised issue, the likelihood of the issue escalating and the impact on the university if this eventuated. The System provides a priority level, and then, when a communication action is undertaken, it shows how the stakeholder-raised issue is re-evaluated by the System to show a measurable value of the communication action.

These reports provide senior management with knowledge of priority areas from emerging stakeholder issues. Reputational risk is an expectation of management through stakeholder engagement and the System provides an accountable report for the work universities are undertaking to protect interests in the emerging world of instant communication.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE ANALYTIC MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

This study undertook a comprehensive audit of the structures, behaviours, responsibilities, issues and more importantly, how communication directors measure the value of their work in a sampling of Australian university public relations offices. It was found that public relations has matured over recent years from practising propaganda to engaging and listening to stakeholder perceptions to influence decision-making. Australian universities have come a long way but there is still room for improvement. Strategic communication is practised more often in Australian universities where the departments of public relations and marketing are separated. The blurring of these two professions has manifested with the more deregulated, competitive and discerning higher education market. These changes are, in turn, associated with a major shift in the functioning of universities. Unlike areas such as marketing where effectiveness can be measured by showing higher student applications and enrolments, the field of public relations is unable to demonstrate the value for investment when delivering the initiatives of strategic communication. As revealed in this study, measurement is the single most important challenge facing Australian university public relations departments.

While it has been demonstrated there is a need to show value for public relations initiatives, I disagree with the perceived general consensus that all university functions should be performed for wealth creation. Universities have become increasingly distracted by economic imperatives, markets, and auditing, thereby diminishing their capacity to promote a just and sustainable society and environment (Postle & Garlick 2014). Boyer's view of the university connotes an ethical perspective – their actions, as publicly-funded institutions, must contribute to the public good rather than to individual or institutional benefit (Boyer 1996).

This study supports the views of Marginson and Considine who describe these trends in terms of the development of 'enterprise universities':

> All Australian universities are now enterprise universities. The enterprise university joins a mixed public-private economy to a quasi-business culture and to academic traditions partly reconstituted, partly republican, and partly broken. This is not so much a genuine private business culture as a public sector variant in which certain conditions and techniques of business (such as competition, scarcity, marketing, goals defined in money terms) have

> been grafted on to existing bureaucracies now opened up to external pressures …. In their political economy, enterprise universities sit somewhere between the public academic institutions they were and the private companies that some imagine them to be already (Marginson & Considine 2008 p. 28).

The System shows the value of strategically communicating with key stakeholders but it does not demonstrate wealth creation in monetary terms. The benefit of using the System to engage with staff and external audiences provides knowledge and understanding to maximise a university's reputation and to minimise risks. The value of the System measurement is in showing the gap between knowing stakeholder perceptions and doing nothing, versus knowing stakeholder perceptions and engaging to form powerful partnerships with universal values.

In summary, the System:

- assesses the likelihood of the stakeholder perception;
- shows the severity of the outcome prior to communication action;
- then determines an action and input this data into the program, with an automated update of risk provided.

This measureable scale highlights priorities for management and delivers a scientific measure to strategic communication initiatives which addresses stakeholder perceptions.

It enables the communication professional to enter results of stakeholder qualitative research and, by using the recognised risk assessment scale; a measure shows the severity of the issue if no action is taken. See figure 28, page 242. The likelihood and impact of stakeholder perceptions is subjective, as the user needs to enter this into the System.

The System then automatically assesses the likelihood of the stakeholder perception; the severity of the outcome prior to communication action; and then determines an action and inputs this data into the program, with an automated update of risk provided.

This measureable scale highlights priorities for management and delivers a scientific measure to strategic communication initiatives which addresses stakeholder perceptions.

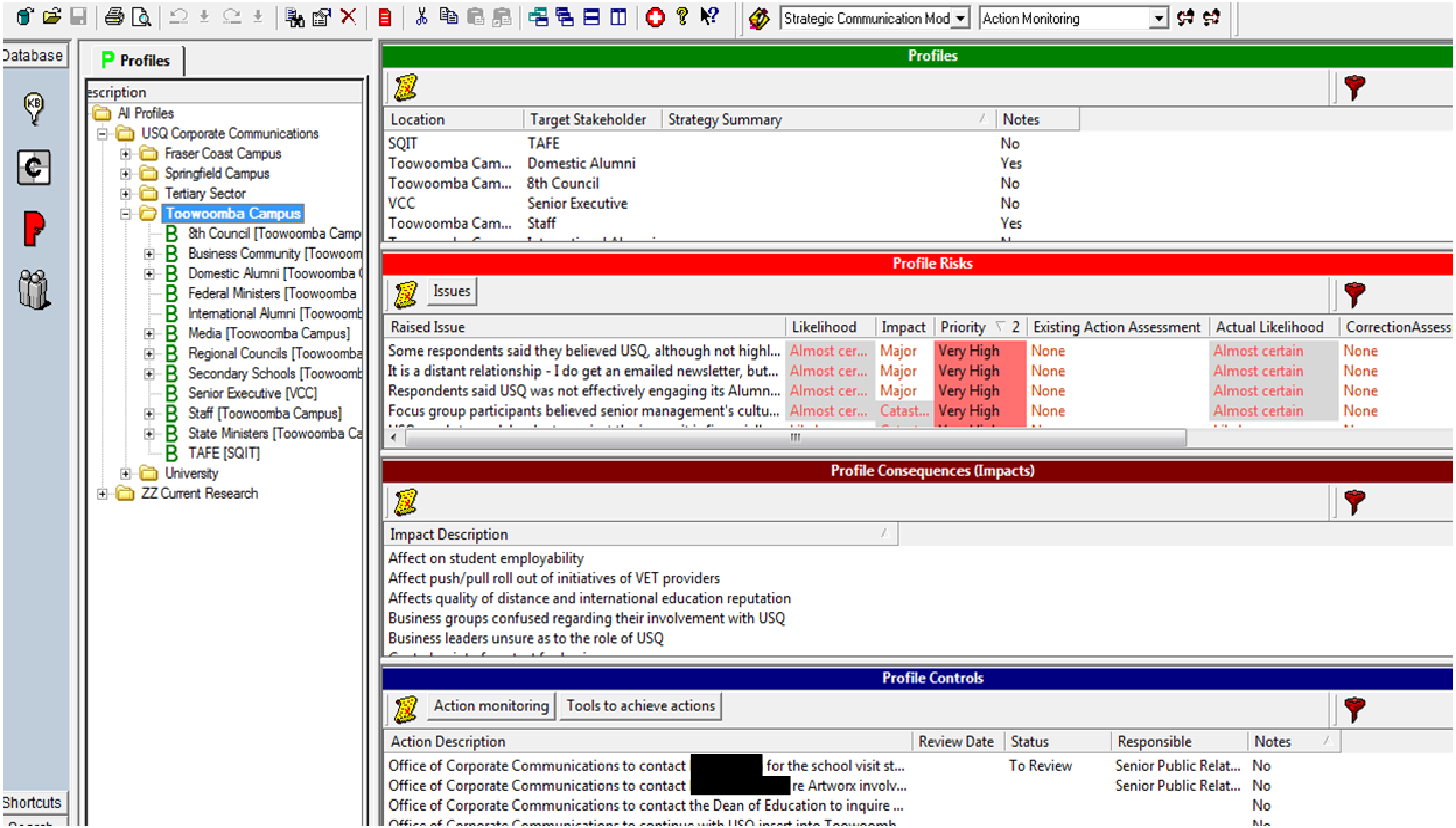
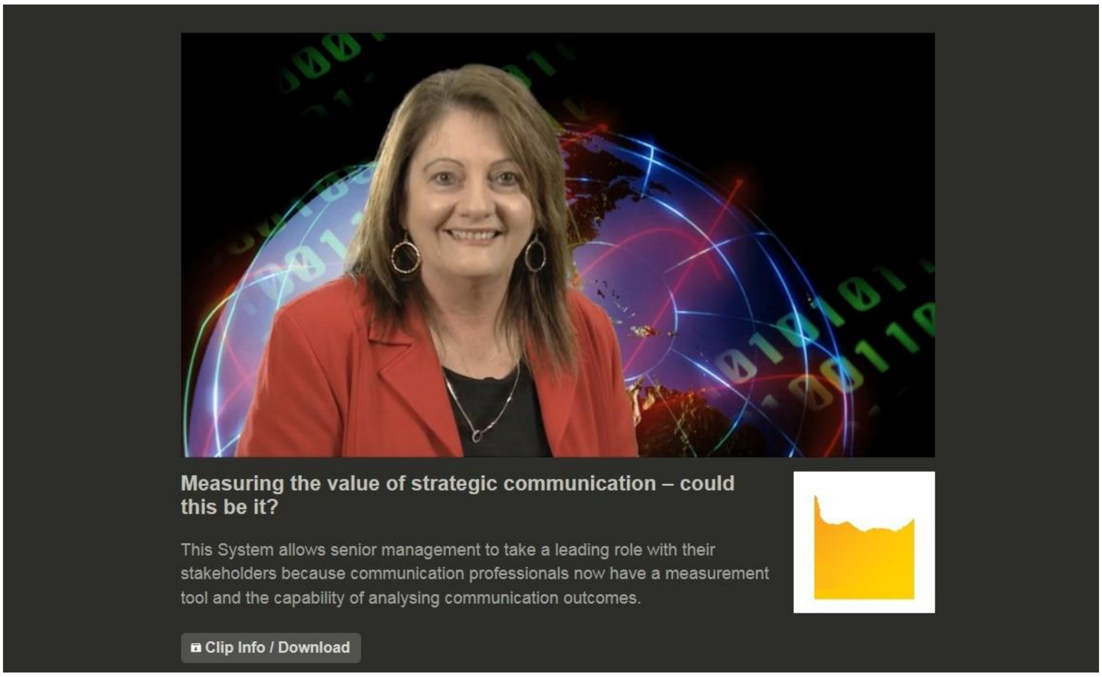


Figure 29: The System measurement scale

6.3 Vimeo Presentation of the System

A visual presentation is available by following the Vimeo presentation of the System from the following link.

http://vimeo.com/user10756933/review/69061293/6eb04a77bc



6.4 Interview with KnowRisk Senior Consultant

To support and validate the System's outcomes, participant observation from interviews and discussions held with senior management of CorProfit and with Hana Vano, KnowRisk Senior Consultant and System Developer appears in Appendix C.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

There are two noteworthy limitations of this study.

Firstly, the relatively small sampling may have a potential impact on the findings, but it was felt that the process of selecting a large random sampling for this study was not the most effective way of developing an understanding of the complex issues relating to communication measurement. To obtain relevant data for the purpose of this study, it was recognised that some informants were more likely to provide insight and understanding representative of the whole population. An appropriate sample size for this qualitative study was one that adequately answered the research questions and for this reason the small sampling study can be defended. A flexible research design was applied using an iterative, cyclical approach to sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation. For this reason, the findings cannot be generalised to the broader community based on this study alone. However, the degree to which this reduces the quality of the findings for the Australian higher education sector is a matter for debate.

I worked with nine sampling Australian universities to better understand their operations and the value each of these universities placed on measuring communication objectives.

A second limitation surfaced during the course of this study: it was originally intended to pilot the System in a number of Australian universities. This empirical analysis was not conducted due to legal restrictions placed on the System through the examination of intellectual property ownership. Specifically, the System would not be protected by any intellectual property rules such as copyright, patent or trademark, trade secrets or contract if the work entered the public domain. To explain further, the next section provides an account of how intellectual property rules and processes affected the System pilot study to improve the System design.

6.5.1 Intellectual Property

Expert advice pertaining to intellectual property was received during the course of this study and as such the opportunity to trial the System in other universities was denied. This action would have affected the protection of intellectual property as a pilot study would place the System in the public domain. This created a second limitation to the study as professional opinion as to the validity or success of the System was repudiated. A future pilot will overcome this limitation once issues of intellectual property are determined. An explanation of how the issue of intellectual property surfaced is outlined below.

In June 2012, I co-presented at the 2nd Annual National Higher Education Communication Officers' Conference in Melbourne. The conference presentation, 'Planning and Evaluation Tools for Issues Management' defined the need to prove or accurately measure the effectiveness of listening to stakeholder perceptions. During the presentation, a broad outline of this doctoral research was provided and interest in the research was expressed from 17 university conference attendees. Participants from Hong Kong to New Zealand inquired about piloting the System.

On returning to USQ, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Jan Thomas advised that this doctoral research required examination from the Office of External Relations and the Acting University of Southern Queensland (USQ) lawyer. As a doctoral student, and also a professional staff employee, examination of this doctoral research was performed before the University's decision was made in the doctoral student's favour to own the intellectual property of this study. It was advised that the copyright and intellectual property for the System belonged to the student, and as a doctoral student the invention was safeguarded. According to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (2006) 'Intellectual property refers to creations of the mind: inventions, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names, images, and designs used in commerce'.

Copyright is rapidly emerging as a major intellectual property challenge for all leading industrialised economies, and the same challenges are arising in the higher education sector. As the overarching body of Australian universities, a major area of responsibility for Universities Australia is the monitoring of government legislation and policies with implications for the ownership and use of copyright materials by staff and students in universities. The Universities Australia publication

‘Ownership of Intellectual Property in Universities: Policy and Good Practice Guide’ was republished in 2002 to assist universities in developing clear policies on the ownership of intellectual property generated by them (Universities Australia 2013). It states, ‘A university cannot claim rights to the intellectual property created by students who are not employed by the university unless the student assigns the intellectual property in writing to the university’ (Universities Australia 2013).

The publication ‘Ownership of Intellectual Property in Universities: Policy and Good Practice Guide’ was created to assist universities, but each university addresses intellectual property uniquely, with distinctive arrangements impacting upon the methods in which student-created intellectual property may be acquired or regulated. The enforceability of different aspects of a university’s intellectual property regime varies from institution to institution. To properly assess the intellectual property rights within each institution, it is necessary to seek advice about the university’s intellectual property policy framework and statutory regime. It may also be necessary to peruse the latest Enterprise Bargaining Agreement which applies to the individual, as it may also prescribe rights and obligations pertaining to intellectual property.

According to the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), the capacity for universities to exploit staff and student-created intellectual property is incrementally emerging across Australian universities (NTEU Intellectual Property, 2013). For instance, the University of Technology Sydney’s *Intellectual Property Policy 2009* states that the university does not assert ownership in ‘creative or scholarly works created or developed by a staff member while employed at the University’ (UTS 2013). In comparison to this position, the *Central Queensland University IP Principles 2010* reserves the right of the university not to assign ownership of scholarly books and journal articles to staff where there is a potential or actual commercial benefit (CQU 2013).

The University of Southern Queensland Intellectual Property Policy 1996 states that:-

> … to a disclosure of Intellectual Property, the University makes no decision by the end of a twelve (12) month period from the disclosure date or in the case of a provisional patent from the date of filing; or decides at any time prior to the relevant period the University does not wish to protect or commercially exploit the reported intellectual property, then the originator(s) is (are) free to protect or commercially exploit in any manner they choose. Where the University approves termination of patent protection, the intellectual property rights will be offered to the originator(s) (University of Southern Queensland Intellectual Property Policy 1996).

Also, in relation to intellectual property, it is interesting to look at the case study of University of Western Australia (UWA) versus Dr Bruce Gray. The dispute arose because Dr Gray's research resulted in inventions with potential commercial value. This Federal Court decision has the potential to impact directly on ownership of intellectual property generated in universities. In April 2008, the Federal Court found that Dr Gray's duties as an employed researcher of UWA did not include a 'duty to invent', resulting in Dr Gray owning certain inventions created in the course of research he carried out while employed by UWA (Clayton Utz, 2010). The general position at common law is that the employer will have no automatic rights over the inventions of an employee without an express or implied term in the contract of employment (Clayton Utz 2010).

The case of UWA v Gray, highlights that the legal entitlement to any particular invention depends upon the actual conditions of employment, and in particular upon the clarity of duties set out in contracts of employment.

It would seem that the only secure way for universities to acquire property rights from its staff in respect of intellectual property developed in the course of their work is by express provision in the contracts of employment. Even then, this case demonstrates the transaction costs of administering and enforcing such provisions and the uncertainty surrounding the scope and application raise real questions as to their utility. I believe this education should commence at the undergraduate and postgraduate student levels, with the inclusion of intellectual property tuition that is tailored to particular needs of students in different disciplines.

In July 2012 I suspended my inquiries into Intellectual Property to concentrate on furthering my research so I could better understand whether the Australian university sector would utilise a System to measure strategic communication. During this time it was understood that it was critical not to demonstrate, sell or discuss the System in public, as this may have damaged any chance to protect the interest.

USQ's Office of Commercialisation organised a meeting with a Patent Attorney from Fisher, Adams Kelly in April 2013. It was advised to place copyright on all documents as patent approval is not normally given for Software inventions. Software that is merely a procedure for solving a given type of mathematical problem is not patentable, and similarly, mathematical algorithms and abstract intellectual concepts on their own are not patentable. The patent attorney opined that the System would be best protected through the Intellectual Property area known as 'Trade Secret'. A trade secret is both a type of intellectual property and a strategy for protecting intellectual property.

6.6 Discussion and Recommendations

This doctoral thesis describes a study undertaken by the author who has significant knowledge of and background in public relations, performing as the Associate Director of the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) in Australia. This research has contributed new knowledge to the challenging question of strategic communication measurement and following a brief overview to restate the problem, the majority of this chapter is devoted to the discussion and summary of the research results.

The impact on higher education from the economic, social, political and educational changes associated with globalisation, post-Fordist development and the rise of the information age is well documented (Drucker 1994, Limerick et al. 1998, Marginson

& Considine 2000). In business terms, however, these changes manifest in a more deregulated, competitive and discerning higher education market, in modified student behaviours, and in revised requirements for learning and teaching. These changes are, in turn, associated with a major shift in the functioning of universities.

The market for university education has changed radically. Environmental factors of high employment rates, increased demand for vocational education and training sparked in part by a commodities boom, rising university costs for students, and an oversupply of government-funded higher education places contributed to a softening of demand for higher education. Universities are now compelled to take action to address the challenges and attempt to exploit the opportunities that the changing higher education operating environment affords - moving towards becoming enterprise universities. However, for USQ, the enhanced business orientation that this movement implies has to co-exist with the institution's continuing obligations as a regional university to engage meaningfully and productively with its communities and to provide educational opportunities for a diverse student constituency.

To position itself and more effectively address these competing agendas – prospering as a sustainable, efficient, business enterprise while fulfilling its social and community obligations - USQ undertook what was called the *Realising our Potential* (RoP) initiative. This initiative was undertaken in 2007 and 2008 to address the core challenges of tighter budgets and increased competition for students, and one of the projects within the RoP initiative centred on re-examining the University's academic program portfolio.

In 2008, the number of degree programs reduced from 353 to 93, a 74 percent reduction, and the number of courses reduced from 1592 to approximately 751, a 53 percent reduction, leaving a suite of strong and defensible programs (Lovegrove 2008). Significant rationalisation and re-profiling of academic staff was also undertaken to match the programs on offer, although the changes were clearly more evident in some areas of the University than in others (AUQA 2009). The aim of achieving a 'new level' of quality student courses was viewed with concern by several USQ stakeholder groups, and negative coverage in the local, state and national media began to surface from November 2008.

At the beginning of 2009, the University's senior executive tasked the Corporate Communication and Public Relations Office to conduct extensive qualitative research to understand the perceptions of stakeholders and to determine stakeholder-specific issues that had the potential to impact stakeholders' engagement of USQ following the RoP initiative. The research findings provided trending data of the key issues and concerns of staff and external stakeholder groups.

It was demonstrated to the senior committee of the University, the Vice-Chancellor's Committee, how USQ stakeholder groups impact on the University's reputation, but determining the value of implementing the internal and external strategic communication plans to University senior executives proved difficult. The qualitative research was questioned and an accurate measure of the effectiveness of resourcing the execution of the plans was debated. Communication-measureable equations to show return-on-investment did not provide the value evidence required by the University leaders to fund the recommended communication initiatives to address identified stakeholder issues. It was shown that media tracking and analysis (the monitoring of a university's coverage by the press on various media channels such as television, cable, internet and radio [Weeks 2011]) and advertising equivalencies (the calculation of space or time used for publicity or news content by comparing it to the cost of that same space or time if purchased as advertising [Rawlins, 2010]), could not provide a numeric measure which satisfied members of the Committee for the resourcing requested to apply the communication strategies in response to stakeholder perceptions (USQ VCC 2009).

Senior university executives are accountable for their decisions when dealing with public money but how do communication professionals provide a quantitative measure, showing profit maximisation, when the area of expertise is defining and responding to subjective stakeholder perceptions? The USQ RoP case study signalled interesting opportunities and directions to investigate an appropriate measure and value in incorporating community opinion in decision-making and identifying future strategic directions.

As a result of this case study, I reflected on a concept of utilising a recognised risk-management scale to measure the impact of various stakeholder perceptions of the University. I believed this would show a measureable gap between not incorporating stakeholder opinion in decision-making and the value of listening to stakeholder perceptions and implementing communication initiatives to identify with strategic directions. The gap between these two ranges, as indicated by a risk scale, shows the value of actioning strategic communication initiatives and the risk to the University of doing nothing. In 2010, I partnered with the Sydney risk-management company, Cor-Profit, to guide the modification of a risk-management system to show a quantifiable measure of strategic communication initiatives.

The future development and modification of the System is dependent on knowing whether university communication practitioners engage in typically journalistic activities at the technical level, or whether they have a leadership role that sits closer to the top of the hierarchy to influence decision-making and take responsibility for the public's orientation toward the university. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study was to understand if the System would benefit university senior executives in placing a value on public relations activities.

This research set out to discover current communication practices in a sampling of Australian universities: the responsibilities and related issues of communication offices; the communication measurement tools utilised and if this was an issue in the sector; and how a measurement System may offer solutions to some of these dilemmas.

The conceptual framework, the theoretical structure of principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry, has been used to structure this study to provide a means of comparing communication practices and organisational performance of Australian university communication directors with other similar enterprises congruent with reputational demands of the workplace.

Once data was collected, the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey, was employed to analyse the findings of each of the research questions by way of a thematic interpretation, string analysis of data and ethnographic functions. The survey tool allowed the researcher to view a summary of the data; browse individual responses; create and export graphs; construct filters to expose trends and compare specific data views and segments; view and categorise open-ended responses, and to download the results in multiple formats.

Findings of the survey identified the value of public relations to the overall business initiatives in universities, the practical concerns facing communication directors, and how public relations professionals currently measure the impact of their work. This research was limited to a sample of communication supervisors from Australian universities that employed a variance of between 1000 to over 7000 staff members. The samples returned were marginally more male respondents (55.6 percent) than female (44.4 percent), with an average age of 48 years. Eighty-nine percent of communication supervisors have tertiary qualifications and of these 33.3 percent have postgraduate qualifications. Similarly, 89 percent of staff working in their units have tertiary qualifications with a total of 44.4 percent having postgraduate qualifications. The heads of offices have an average of 16 years working in the public relations profession, and 44 percent have less than five years working in the higher education sector.

In the following section, I will provide a discussion in relation to the research questions, the findings of the research and existing commentary and knowledge in relation to communication strategies, alignment and measurement. On completion of the discussion and recommendations, the conclusion will conceptualise the end of this chapter.

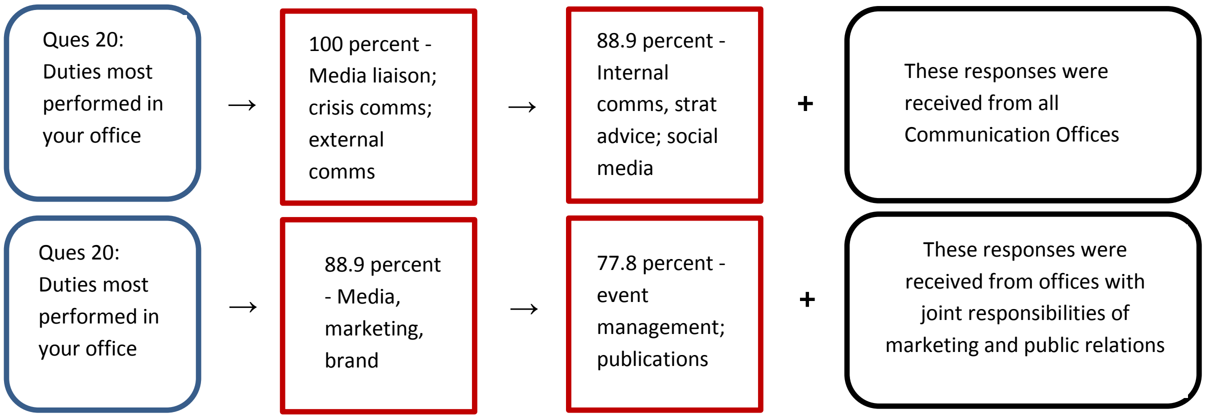
The research findings are discussed in three sections – (a) Roles and responsibilities of corporate communication offices; (b) The value of strategic communication to overall business initiatives and how the sector can better manage reputation among stakeholders; and (c) The necessity for a communication measurement tool in the higher education sector.

6.6.1 Section one - Roles and responsibilities of corporate communication offices

The first survey field was established to understand the current strategic communication practices deployed by Australian universities. This was important to know, as public relations professionals from similar enterprises have moved toward an emphasis on building and maintaining organisations' internal and external relationships and on becoming skilled, active counsellors at the executive level decision-making table. However, as mentioned previously in this study, the definitions of public relations are debated, and this is largely due to the diversity and accountabilities that practitioners undertake in their day-to-day work roles. This was further evidenced in the results of this research.

It was defined through this research that Vice-Chancellors understand the importance of public relations, but a number of sampled universities continue to integrate the marketing and public relations areas under one department in their organisational structure. Results from this survey show that the roles and responsibilities of the corporate communication offices appear to be uniquely different when these professions are incorporated into the same department. When the marketing and public relations offices are combined, a greater emphasis is placed on public relations media activities.

All respondents answered that they are accountable for the public relations duties of external communication, media liaison, crisis management, feature writing and strategic advice to council and senior executive offices but those in combined marketing and public relations professions reported that 40 percent of their time was spent on marketing and brand activities, 30 percent on media relations and 20 percent on event management.



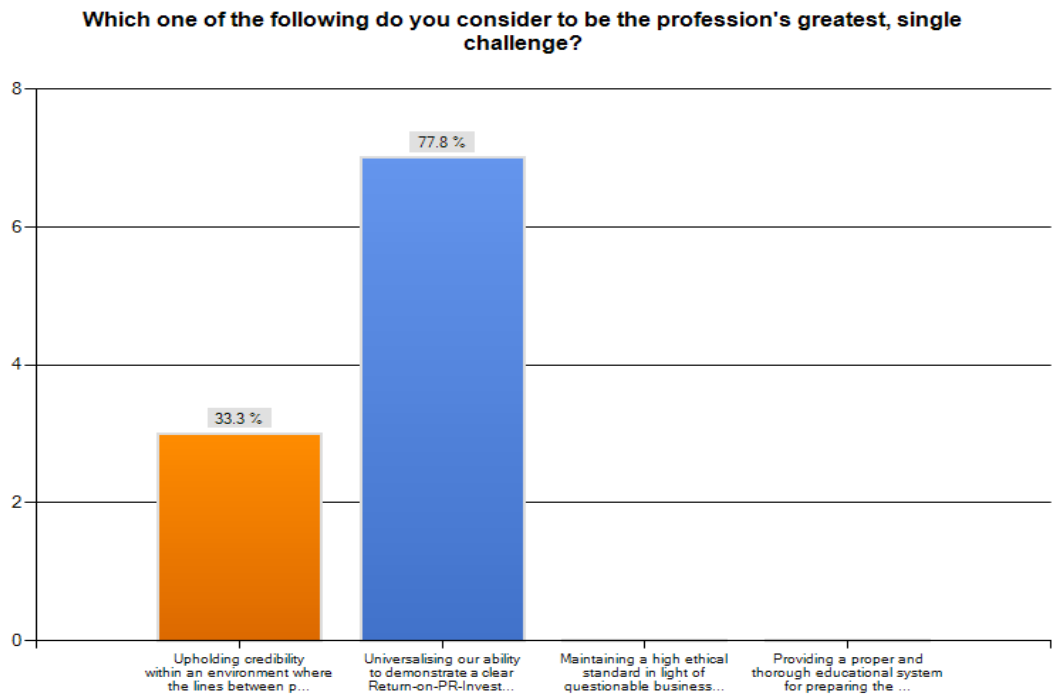
Graph 53: Comparing office responsibilities when public relations and marketing are combined

It is evidenced through this study that the more advanced public relations role of strategic communication is practiced to a greater extent when the two professions of public relations and marketing are detached.

Many people use the terms public relations and marketing interchangeably, and the difference between the professions is not assisted when they are linked together under a department title of 'Marketing and Public Relations' or 'Marketing and Communications'. The terms, marketing (the traditional domain of brand management) and public relations (the traditional domain of reputation management), are frequently confused and often used inaccurately (Armanto, 2013). One can sense from the data some growing confusion as to the future roles of marketing and public relations in the current university climate.

Marketing deals primarily with product awareness and promotion and works to sell a product rather than the organisation. The four P's is one way - probably the best-known way - of defining the marketing mix, and was first expressed in 1960 by E J McCarthy. McCarthy states that marketers work on the four P's: products, price, place and promotion (McCarthy 1981). The primary focus of marketing is advertising which makes it more direct and more aggressive than public relations. In universities, marketing involves selling the goods where the educational programs or products are promoted, although marketing professionals are increasingly interested in incorporating publicity as a tool within the marketing mix – a tool that has normally been controlled by public relations.

Public relations professionals are concerned with university marketing practices, questioning whether they meet the university's social responsibility, and 33 percent of respondents in this survey revealed that one of the greatest challenges to the public relations industry is upholding credibility within an environment where the lines between public relations, marketing, advertising and journalism are growing increasingly vague. There is no prospect of repairing the reputation of public relations, communicating the value of what we do, and delivering on that promise until there is a clear definition that we can all stand behind. When Australian universities combine the two professions, it is assumed that public relations is about media coverage. The problem is that this model is how public relations has been sold for decades. The truth is without relationships, achieving anything is difficult in the current tertiary fiscal environment. The profession of public relations has matured and as an industry we need to quantify the value that it delivers and until that occurs, the public relations industry will continue to be misunderstood, undervalued and viewed with scepticism by the only people that matter – our stakeholders.



Graph 54: Blurring of professional boundaries

Question 49: Upholding credibility within an environment where the lines between public relations, marketing, advertising and journalism are growing increasingly vague?	33.3 percent

Literature research further indicates that the traditional marketing mix approach can prove very restrictive (Gummesson 1987) in strategy development, particularly as it appears unsuited to the modern dynamic environment of public relations (O'Malley and Patterson 1998).

In public relations, a university is promoted by gauging public perception, and managing and building the university's reputation and profile with the public (Kulkarni 2013). In 2014, the definition of public relations as adopted by the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) is: 'Public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation (or individual) and its (or their) publics. It's the key to effective communication in all sectors of business, government, academic and not-for-profit' (PRIA 2014).

Today, public relations encompasses strategic communication, building stakeholder engagement, stakeholder research, media, and staff relations, and is pivotal for building and developing the right image of a university in the public domain which itself includes printed and broadcast media and the internet. Essentially, it is one thing to have an exciting and promising product on the market, but information about the product must be conveyed in an appropriate manner to reach the required audience. Brokering the right message to stakeholders is critical. Public relations and marketing can work alongside each other, but we need to commence by developing a common language and understanding of the two very different roles and responsibilities of marketing and public relations.

The skills that public relations professionals held in the past have changed with the way we now communicate, and this was evidenced with a more proactive approach undertaken by one university recently which resulted in the allocation of additional resources and the realignment of the public relations unit to report directly to the Vice-Chancellor. I welcomed that 89 percent of respondents reported that the main purpose of communication activities in their offices was centred on helping to define the business environment, affecting awareness levels, attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders to strengthen and protect the university's reputation.

Sha (2011) defined 12 categories of public relations work that include: account/client management; strategic planning; public relations program planning; project management; media relations; social media relations; stakeholder relations; issues management; crisis management; internal relations and employee communications; special events, conferences and meetings; and community relations. The public relations role has shifted dramatically over recent years from a promotion and publicity function to a strategic communication purpose and this is supported in the direct comments given in the survey below. Comments on question 28 (p. 189) of the survey which asked directors, 'Which of the following best describes the main purpose of communication activities in your office' include:

> *Respondent 1*
> Helping to define the business environment, affecting awareness levels, attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders SHOULD be what we do. All too often this is subsumed by day-to-day activity. Additionally many staff in communication roles have come from either an administrative background (moved into role by default because they have produced an internal department newsletter) or from a journalism background. In both cases, an understanding of strategic communications (i.e. what is the impact beyond sending this press release) is lacking.
>
> *Respondent 2*
> We have recently moved to a more pro-active approach to public relations with additional resources allocated. We have also moved the communications staff into a unit which indirectly reports to the Vice Chancellor.
>
> Mostly the communication functions of the office tend to rely on media relations as this seems to be the more easily recognised and tested measure of performance. However in recent years strategic communication that impacts on the reputational awareness and activities of the University have become a priority and the issues management responsibilities are becoming uppermost in the minds of stakeholder groups.
>
> *Respondent 3*
> While we want to be focusing more on the latter, the reality is we do more of the former on a daily basis.

A solid public relations mindset is not enough though. In today's world, immediacy and transparency are two terms that should be of high importance to Vice-Chancellors. Universities must be willing to speak up about the necessity of setting a good example with their public relations strategy because misinformation can be spread so easily. Having good relationships with media and stakeholders, and knowledge of community perceptions, assists universities when dealing with crisis situations which undoubtedly minimises reputational damage.

Australian universities need to analyse emerging issues and interpret challenges and opportunities, internally and externally, to anticipate influences shaping the operating environment. A weak or absent communication strategy to many 'live' issues makes no sense if it is divorced from the long-term strategic communication of the university's business.

Communication directors responding to this research believed that the professionalism and effectiveness of the role of corporate communication offices in Australian universities would be improved if first-hand understanding of issues was available.

> *Respondent 1*
> Apart from the business as usual functions of the office reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor provides increased credibility and recognition of the importance of the office and what it can bring to senior management and to the organisational structure. Reporting to the VC would provide a conduit for information of a corporate nature which could impact on issues management functions and the ability to be in touch with key decision makers across the University. In many instances corporate communications is the first port of call when an issue impacts and being removed from the power structure limits the functionality and expert advice which could be quickly provided. From a budgetary position reporting to the VC would also give priority to the everyday activities of the office and bring increased support and recognition of its functions.

> *Respondent 2*
> It is my consideration that the role of the office would be substantially increased if first-hand understanding of the issues was available. These can only be provided by the Director having first-hand knowledge and involvement in the higher level management decisions and discussions of the University. To provide the office with filtered information detracts from the effectiveness and professionalism that the office can provide.

Respondent 3
Closely align the strategies of the communication and public relations offices with the broader strategies of the university. Ensure that the communications/PR office has a direct and close line to the decision makers of the university, including importantly, the VC's office. Strategic communication that is valued at the Executive level is really important to helping build the overall reputation and awareness of the university.

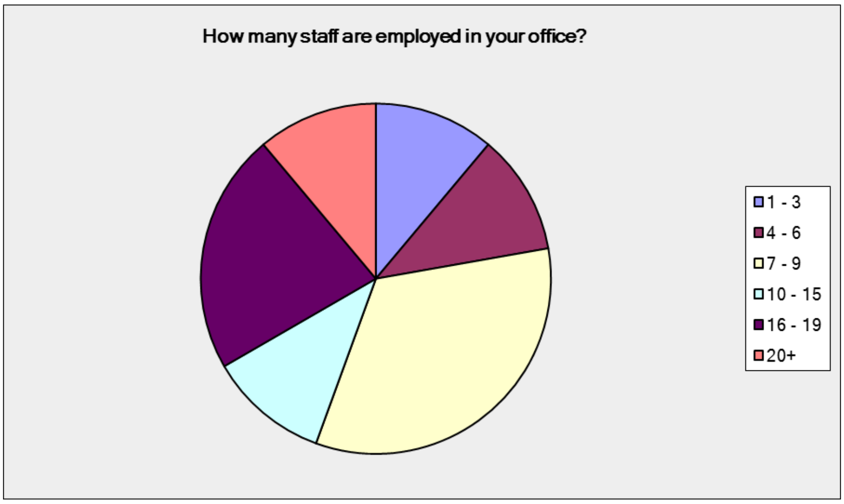
Respondent 4
I think the important thing is that the views of the Media/Communications team are valued and listened to. We are not members of the Executive who make the big operational decisions on behalf of the University, however we are heavily involved and regularly consulted on issues management and the best way to communicate the decisions of the University, and our strategic input is highly valued in our organisation.

Even though directors believed their strategic input was highly valued, it was revealed in this study that this could be enhanced by having first-hand knowledge and involvement as an observer on the higher level management committees. Committee decisions and discussions which provide opportunities for strategic communication activities were often missed or received through filtered information channels. Respondents believed this detracted from the effectiveness and professionalism that the office can provide.

It was evidenced in this study and I agree with Murray and White (2004) who summarised that many CEOs recognised that they under-invested in public relations, but all recognised that public relations, today, was “mission critical’. The practice, they believed, would be more valued when public relations advice is offered by practitioners who have the background, knowledge and standing that will enable them to contribute to decision-making at the highest levels (Murray and White 2004 p. 24).

Of all the areas of public relations, issues or crisis management have changed the most fundamentally in recent years. With the advent of the digital age and the creation of the citizen journalist, threats to a university’s reputation, whether real or perceived, have the potential to go worldwide at a phenomenal speed. Information is immediate and, once broadcast, irreversible. Just as dangerously, the digital era has enabled lobby and pressure groups to put forward their grievances more quickly, and to magnify these more significantly. When a crisis occurs, corporate communication directors need to respond quickly and confidently to limit damage. If handled well, a crisis can actually be an opportunity to improve a university's reputation if good relationships have been developed with media and trusting stakeholders. Often what doesn't appear in the media is more important than what appears. Unfortunately, the directors of corporate communication advised in this study that they are only consulted after a problem arises in 80 percent of cases.

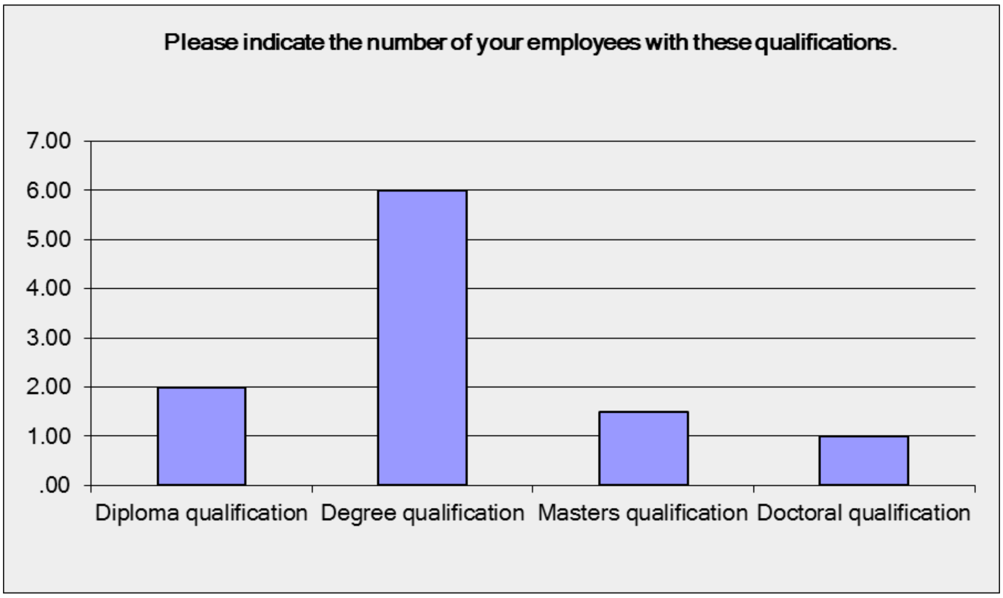
To further understand the composition and activities of Australian university public relations units, in-depth questions were designed to discover whether staffing levels had any impact on the strategic communication activities of the office.



Graph 55: Higher level work performed indicative of staff education levels

It was revealed that the number of staff employed was not a determining factor with offices strategically engaging with stakeholders. The more significant indicator was found in the level of tertiary qualifications held by members within the office.

Data from this study shows that the higher-level strategic communication activities are performed more often in offices that employ staff who have, or are studying for, postgraduate qualifications.



Graph 56: Level of office staff qualifications

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Diploma qualification	2.00	8	4
Degree qualification	6.00	48	8
Masters qualification	1.50	3	2
Doctoral qualification	1.00	1	1

Public relations has come of age, and with that has come a critical need for broadly-based education that is relevant and connected to the practice (PRSA 1999). A report of the Public Relations Society of America 1999 Commission on public relations Education states that:-

> This growth, evolution and maturation of public relations is sure to continue. Elements are in place for impressive incremental growth and change in the next century: the spread of democratic institutions around the world; the growing importance of communicating with internal as well as external publics; the veritable explosion of one-to-one communication and the technology to implement it; and the steady advance of the public relations body of knowledge, especially analysis of public awareness and change in attitudes and behaviour (PRSA 1999 p.1).

The future is bright for the public relations profession. Public relations professionals have moved toward an emphasis on building and maintaining relationships and on becoming skilled, active counsellors at the university's decision making table. Not only are the directors of communication and public relations offices skilled communicators but leaders who help their university to build and maintain relations with strategic stakeholders. Findings from this research have shown, and I agree, that excellent public relations education will be the foundation for preparing new professionals for this responsibility (PRSA 1999).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that that marketing and public relations, although associated, should not be amalgamated into one department if research and strategic communication practices are a high accountability for the office. It is important to articulate the differences between these two roles, as the findings indicate there is increased importance being placed on the advice afforded to university executive by communication directors, and this move evidences the distinctly separate roles of public relations and marketing. It's time once and for all that public relations and marketing divisions separate in Australian universities to position relationships between a university and its community and pursue a clearly-defined strategic communication model which is based on listening to stakeholder perceptions.

6.6.2 SECTION TWO - THE VALUE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION TO OVERALL BUSINESS INITIATIVES

The second section of research questions for this study were designed to establish whether the senior executive appreciate the value of strategic communication to their overall business initiatives and, if so, how the sector can better manage reputation amongst stakeholders through improved systems and efficiencies. I wanted to learn if there was a need to measure the value and alignment of strategic communication in Australian universities.

This study reveals that strategic communication is valued by senior university management in 89 percent of responses, but in contrast to this data, it was discovered that less than 25 percent of communication directors engage in stakeholder qualitative research. A strategic communication plan is developed and implemented through knowing stakeholder perceptions, and this can only be accomplished through stakeholder qualitative research. Without the methodology of knowing stakeholder perceptions, and a measureable to indicate strategic communication results, communication is largely defined by Vice-Chancellors. This results in incomplete communication leadership, because pro-active communication enables a university to build the foundations for positive reputation management during normal operations as well as during a crisis situation.

This is highly important because without a structured methodology where communication and strategy work, we fail to develop strategic communication, we only communicate. Strategy is the science of conceiving, activating, deciding, planning, executing, using and guiding the media at a particular time, place and space to achieve and/or maintain the set goals in a particular scenario (Cristian Guerrero-Castro 2011).

Thematic interpretation of collected data shows that this disparity - between valuing strategic communication and conducting stakeholder qualitative research - may be a result of inadequate budget resourcing. The average salary level of a public relations director in Australian universities is $160,000, and 66.7 percent are satisfied with their salary level. It was suggested that public relations carries a salary level at the lower end of the executive scale compared to similar university positions. It is a concern though that 33.3 percent of directors are unsatisfied with their roles. A correlation may be assumed from looking at responses for the funded budget for public relations activities: 33.3 percent are very unsatisfied with budget allocation with 45 percent of respondents stating a decrease in funding this year. It is suggested from this data that stakeholder qualitative research is only undertaken in 25 percent of the sampling due to limited office budgets.

It is interesting to note several comments from the sample:

> *Respondent 1*
> It is a constant battle to put forward requests for funding – because in many instances the University receives positive media coverage which is provided

> free of charge, so unfortunately senior management see no need to fund the everyday activities of the office. Consequently external communication plans and internal communication programs largely go neither funded nor supported, although there is a management desire for these to be a priority for the office.
>
> *Respondent 2*
> It's a constant battle to do what we need to do with what we're allocated. The focus is on simply trying to maintain activities, rather than trying to keep trying for best practice.
>
> *Respondent 3*
> The non-support for the office is of a major concern to the extent that it is impacting significantly on the effectiveness and morale of staff.
>
> *Respondent 4*
> It is often quite hard (particularly within our limited budgets) to really provide management with an accurate analysis of our value as PR/media professionals, and to measure the value that our work brings to the University in terms of reputation building and awareness.
>
> *Respondent 5*
> It is so hard to quantify the value of public relations and often our value is underestimated.
>
> *Respondent 6*
> As funding becomes an increasing challenge, it grows ever harder to prove our value to the business and the industry.

The most enduring companies are those that focus on the long-term communication strategy, have a strong set of values and are proactive rather than reactive in communicating (Collins and Porras 1997). Through data collected in this study, I agree with Argenti, Howell and Beck (2005), and with Pace and Faules (1989), and further claim that for university leaders to be effective within their institutions and communities, communication methodology must contain four dimensions - strategic, operational, tactical and measureable.

RECOMMENDATION

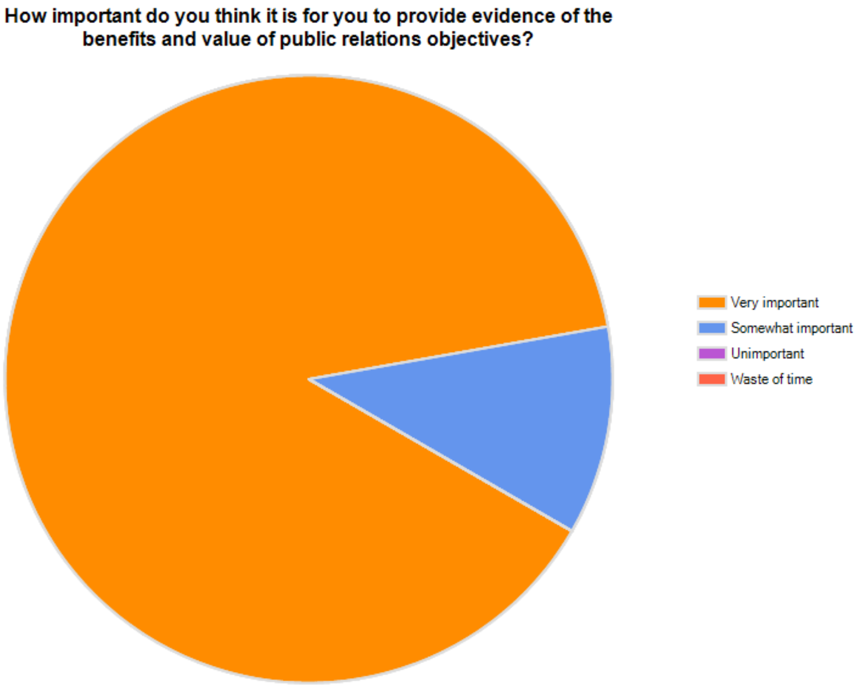
Just as companies have long-term marketing and budgeting plans for their organisation as a whole, they also must have a master communication strategy (Collins & Porras 1997). Argenti, Howell and Beck state, 'Companies that continue to take a tactical, short-term approach to communicating with key constituencies will find it increasingly difficult to compete. Developing an integrated, strategic approach to communications will be critical to success. As Pace and Faules (1989) imply, 'leadership and communication are intimately intertwined'.

6.6.3 SECTION THREE – NECESSITY OF AN ANALYTIC MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

The final research question for this study was to determine whether there was a need for a communication measurement tool in the higher education sector.

From all forms of this research inquiry, it appears the need to place a value on public relations activities has been there for a long time. As the world has suffered in economic turmoil, more prominence has been paid to government funding of universities large and small. The value of everything has been under scrutiny and so now, more than ever the importance of attributing a proper value on public relations seems essential. Public relations is not about column metrics, it – like anything else – is about showing value for money.

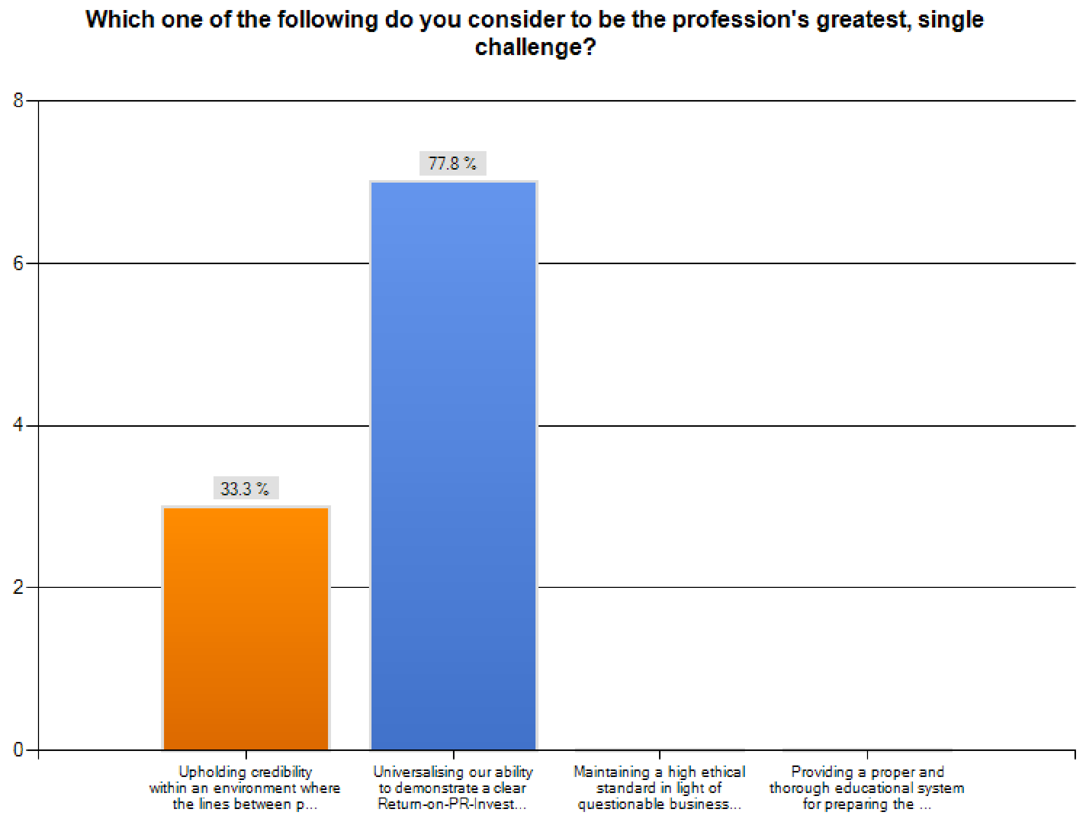
My survey findings show there is a need to measure and analyse data in a range of areas such as stakeholder engagement and evidencing the impact that a strategic communications campaign has on a university. The fact that marketing departments are able to produce a quantitative measure to show results (through student applications, student enrolments, the number of dollars produced through enrolment, completion rates and graduation figures) and the fact that public relations activities are relative and not simply absolute in nature, may signify a reason for disparity when choices are made for funding allocations and the distribution of resources. This study shows that while the position of corporate communication director provided a high level of satisfaction, having to work and produce high-level outcomes with little or no budgetary support, does not provide for job satisfaction or high levels of staff morale. Salary ranges were at the lower end of the executive scale, and many were dissatisfied with the level of budgetary support and overall recognition given to the office. It may be assumed that expenditure on public relations activities must demonstrate a measureable return on investment.



Graph 57: Effective measurement rated most important issue

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very important	88.9 percent	8
Somewhat important	11.1 percent	1
Unimportant	0.0 percent	0
Waste of time	0.0 percent	0
Why (please specify)	4	4

The research findings further determined that corporate communication directors rated our ability to demonstrate a clear return-on-investment (ROI), thereby proving the value of public relations as the greatest single challenge facing the practice of public relations in Australian universities.



Graph 58: Demonstrating value rated the greatest single challenge

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Upholding credibility within an environment where the lines between public relations, advertising and journalism are growing increasingly vague?	33.3 percent	3
Universalising our ability to demonstrate a clear Return-on-PR-Investment measurement, thereby proving the value of public relations?	77.8 percent	7
Maintaining a high ethical standard in light of questionable business tactics?	0.0 percent	0
Providing a proper and thorough educational system for preparing the new generation of public relations professionals on a level which is consistent with the legal and medical professions?	0.0 percent	0

My data supports the view of Kevin Wale, Chairman and Managing Director of Vauxhall who says, 'Relative to marketing expenditure, public relations finds it tougher to get a fair share of money. Better measurement would make it easier for resource allocation' (Wale', 2004 p.6). To explain Wale's view: the goal of marketing is sales, so the success of their efforts can be measured in profits; the goal of public relations is to build positive impressions of the university, so public perception is the measurement tool in public relations.

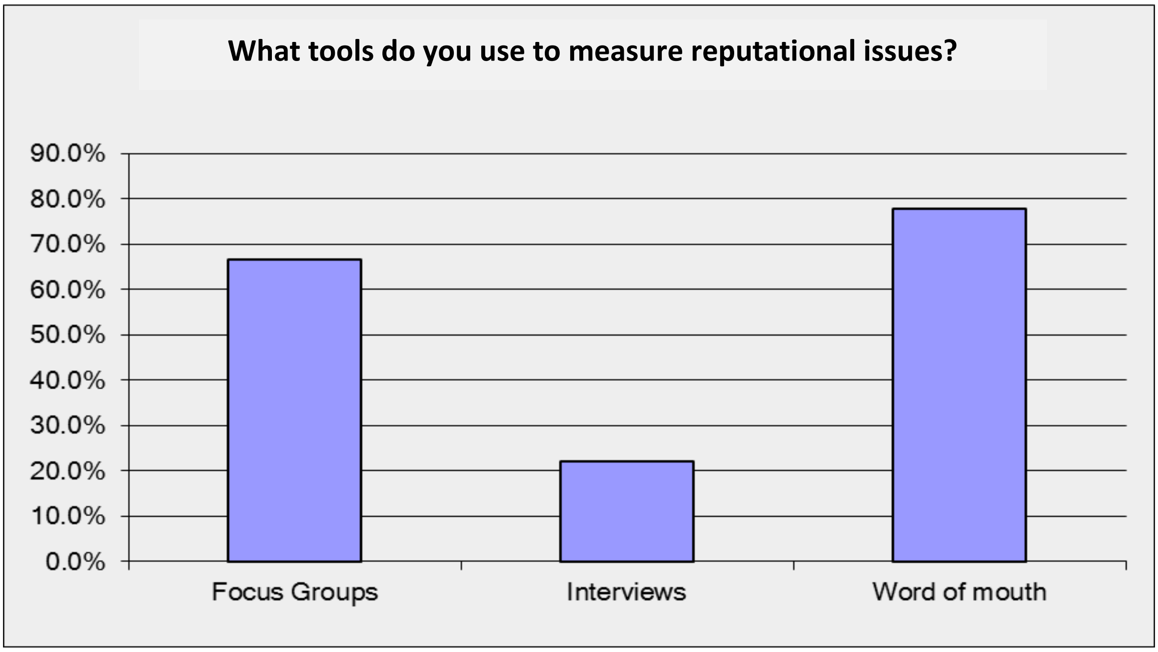
In a report summarising a series of interviews, conducted in mid-2004, with 14 chief executive officers and chairmen from major United Kingdom and international organisations, Kevin Murray and Jon White from Chime Communications (claimed to be Britain's leading independent communication company) sought to determine CEO perspectives on the value of public relations to their overall business and organisational performance (Murray and White 2004 p. 3). The report revealed that as an industry, companies 'under-invest massively in public relations'. Many CEOs interviewed in their study believed sufficiently in public relations that they did not have to measure it, but if there was a measurement it would enable them to allocate more funding to public relations. 'Until its worth can be proved, public relations spend will be cut in tough times along with any other discretionary spend' (Murray and White 2004 p. 6).

The findings of this doctoral study found that 45 percent of the corporate communication directors in the Australian higher education sector had experienced a decrease in their office budget funding over the past year. In the higher education sector's tightening fiscal environment, funding for public relations activities will be adversely scrutinised until a communication measurement is found to show its value to the university Vice-Chancellors.

My study further supports the work of Professor Paul Argenti who says that advertising value equivalencies and media tracking and analysis have failed to accurately reflect the value of strategic communication (Argenti 2005).

The majority of survey respondents in this study identified that all too often the real value of the public relations professionals' work is vastly under-counted. It was further articulated that the effect of our advice, service and content is under-represented in year-end reviews, and opportunities to assess the impact of public relations activities versus other expenditures go under-recognised. Public relations specialists must now take the next step: business leaders are seen by far as the primary targets in advocacy for public relations and communications (Global Alliance 2012).

Public relations professionals are under more and more pressure to measure the results of their work. Findings from this study show that providing evidence of the benefits and value of public relations objectives is highly important to justify expenditure and to reach professional best practice. Media tracking and analysis, stakeholder attitudes and advertising equivalencies remain the most popular indicators utilised to measure the impact of public relations activities in Australian universities, and this method is not a quantifiable measure for university leaders to prove the 'cost versus benefit' equations that are required to substantiate spending public money.



Graph 59: Current practices fail to measure reputational issues

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Return on investment	0.0 percent	0
Media tracking and analysis	87.5 percent	7
Stakeholder attitudes	62.5 percent	5
Advertising equivalencies	37.5 percent	3

Results from this study evidences that there is a need to further develop the System for piloting in the Australian university sector.

Another significant issue emerged from this survey that is beyond the scope of the study but is relevant to best practice and should be considered. It was identified that there is a problem with terminology when discussing public relations and strategic communication. When we talk about public relations, people think of media, and it has been demonstrated that most directors are more comfortable talking about strategic communication. Strategic communication is the role that facilitates relationships with all stakeholders, both inside and outside the university. Communication professionals discussed reputation management and how communication strategies make a meaningful contribution towards the development of good practice principles in terms of reputation risk-management in this study. So, in context, identifying with the role of strategic communication was seen as an expert field of public relations, in a similar relationship to that of a surgeon to a general practitioner. Perhaps there is an issue here for the professional body.

From the principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry during this study, it has been shown that measurement tools have failed to accurately reflect the value of strategic communication. This research has determined that there is a need to demonstrate the value of work undertaken by Australian university corporate communication offices. Through developing a more strategic public relations focus, universities will be able to take a leading communication role with their internal and external stakeholders because they will have knowledge of the perceptions of each stakeholder group.

Recommendation

It was evidenced in this research that placing an acceptable measure on public relations objectives within Australian universities was the most important issue in proving credibility in the overall organisational structure. Effective measurement will assist in achieving budgetary support to attain best practice outcomes. This study has shown that the impact of public relations work, like that of other professions, needs to identify a value of measurement, not on output, but actual outcomes, and the value of our service must be expressible in the precise terminology of our core business. As elements of public relations activity move from a central focus consumed with only media relations into the more definable area of strategic communication, measurement needs have changed from demonstrating outputs to outcomes. In times of organisational crisis where communication management is vital to uphold a university's reputation, some potential measurement models have been suggested, but no consensus has been made on an acceptable standard. The race is on among industry players and academics to define the measurement model for the information age. Developing a measureable value for strategic communication acknowledges a higher understanding of the profession, because we will have the capability of analysing our communication outcomes.

6.7 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the current strategic communication initiatives deployed by Australian regional and metropolitan universities to understand if a system that measures strategic communication actions was necessary for Vice-Chancellors' to appreciate the value of public relations to their overall business initiatives. Primary and secondary sources were used in this study. For the primary data, a survey was conducted to gain understanding or opinions of a general population through the use of a representative sample. As with all data, analysis and interpretation was required to bring understanding to the responses.

The System's measuring indicator for communication appeared of strategic importance, but it was also fundamental to examine secondary resources derived from various publications, including books and journals, to explore the System's relevance to the sector in a bid to understand if the concept reached beyond exemplars suggested in current literature.

A number of key issues and themes emerged during the study. Based on the results of the survey, there is a growing appreciation of how public relations has changed over the years, from a promotional and publicity function to one which is able to provide strategic benefit to the overall business objectives of a university, but there is still room for improvement. As universities are working in a more complex, transparent and difficult operating environment, the counsel of excellent communication directors is valued in seeking solutions to communication and reputational challenges. Inclusion on high-level committees, either as members or observers, would assist communication directors to contribute further to organisational strategy, as filtered information impacts on functionality and effectiveness.

It is understood that Vice-Chancellors are generally quite clear about the roles and responsibilities of public relations professionals, but activities vary considerably when the roles of marketing and communication professionals are linked into one university department. When the two professions are combined into one area the directors are more concerned with media and promotion rather than with the strategic communication initiatives of their peers who work independently from the marketing area to define the business environment. As indicated from several survey responses in this study, similarly universities are guilty of blurring the terms of reputation and brand. In marketing, we create a university brand; in public relations we earn a reputation (Armanto 2013).

Vice-Chancellors are more commonly recognisant of issues management responsibilities, with an acute understanding of how strategic communication impacts on the reputational awareness and activities of the University. Respondents agree that public relations in itself cannot create a university's reputation, but the role of communication directors is to ensure that Vice-Chancellors communicate effectively with staff and external stakeholders, both by coaching management into a better communications performance and by helping to articulate messages that matter.

Respondents are quite clear that there is no single formula for measuring the real value of public relations. The most common communication measurement tools are media tracking analysis, stakeholder attitudes and advertising equivalencies and literature research dictates these are not precise measurements to demonstrate value and return-on-investment. Strategic communication is undervalued, and resourcing for initiatives often refused in the weakening higher education fiscal environment as entrepreneurism, and a stronger business orientation for universities is encouraged. It was determined that an effective strategic communication measurement would assist in achieving budgetary support and management for best practice outcomes. Measuring the value of public relations was declared the greatest challenge to the profession in the Australian university sector.

Appendix

Appendix A Learning Portfolio

Appendix B USQ Human Research Ethics Approval and Permission Letter

Appendix C Participant observation from interviews and discussions held with senior management of CorProfit and with Hana Vano, KnowRisk Senior Consultant and System Developer

APPENDIX A – Learning Portfolio

Appendix A outlines the Author's learning portfolio in four sections:

» Learning from Life Experiences;
» Professional Career;
» Formal Education; and
» Critical Incidences.

This is a compilation of experiential learning evidence, an overview of professional practice background, and formal education to enable the reader to gain an understanding of the Author's life experiences, work experience, and training experience.

The first section, Learning from Life Experiences, is a summary of factual and contextual information demonstrating how relevant life experiences, subsequent reflection and learning have contributed to increased knowledge.

LEARNING FROM LIFE EXPERIENCES

'Perhaps even more central to adult learning than elaborating established meaning schemes is the process of reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what we have learned is justified under present circumstances. This is a crucial learning process egregiously ignored by learning theorists' (Mezirow 1990, p. 5). Ultimately, we are all responsible for our own transfer of learning to advance personal behaviours.

My parents received very little formal education and, as station managers in South West Queensland in the 1950s, they vowed to provide a better life for their children. I was born in St George, Queensland, in 1961 – the second child to Don and Jeannette Williams. When my older brother approached primary school age, the family relocated to Toowoomba, so he could begin his schooling. Moving from a very remote rural area to the city was daunting as my parents had lived their whole lives in the country. Transferring their knowledge and skill sets to support a young family in the city was initially challenging.

My father bought a taxi licence, worked long hours and became quite successful before purchasing a service station, then later a large grocery store, used car yards and a car wrecking yard.

I attended primary and secondary state schools, studying academic subjects for my high school junior certificate. My academic history was of a high standard but because of societal and family expectations, I left school in grade ten to enrol in a full-time commercial secretarial course at Training and Further Education (TAFE). On completion of this course, I worked in a dental surgery and became the practice head nurse for four dentists. I assisted new graduate dental practitioners chair-side and later commenced work chair-side for an oral surgeon. I then married and later left the world of adult employment to become a mother.

As a stay-at-home mum, I volunteered on committees for Childbirth Education, Nursing Mothers and later pre-school and school Parent and Citizen Committees. I opened a playgroup centre which is still operational today and worked with the then University College of Southern Queensland (UCSQ) lecturers to develop a six week short course of parenting lectures. During this time, I completed a TAFE course in creative writing and joined a writers' club.

In 1988, I became involved in Little Athletics which was the beginning of a fifteen year association, volunteering on committees for the local centre, Darling Downs, South West Queensland and State in public relations roles. I assisted in the development of the Glenys Nunn Athletic Oval in Toowoomba which now hosts major athletic events. Vidal (2008) concedes that we have learned activities and tasks in our everyday life by doing them.

During this stage of life, I was diagnosed with a health condition - rheumatoid arthritis. Married with three small children and only in my late twenties, I researched the disease to develop knowledge and understanding of auto-immune disorders. I struggled to accept my situation and, after suffering bone damage for three years, a successful on-going treatment was eventually found.

A second family health issue occurred when my eldest son suffered an unexpected seizure and was diagnosed with epilepsy. I listened to experts and read widely to educate myself so that I was well-informed to communicate openly and honestly with family members, teachers and others so they could understand the condition.

Through my early life, increased knowledge was gained through observing, reflecting, questioning, analysing, managing, and learning to accept the responsibility to make decisions for myself and others. I learned by doing, by making mistakes, and by working through situations. Through confronting health issues, I further learned to focus on the adversity of others: learn, understand and empathise, but look for a solution and move forward. I also learned that it is not possible to control every aspect of life.

Early Career

As mentioned briefly in the learning portfolio outline above, my working life commenced following the completion of TAFE studies. I was employed initially as a receptionist by the Margaret Street Dental Group and moved into chair-side dental nursing when a position became available. I worked in the practice for five years before becoming the practice head dental nurse for four dentists. This position assisted the new dental surgeon graduates and holiday relief dental surgeons. During this early stage of my career, I supervised staff, met with dental providers to order equipment, and conducted minor dental procedures unaided. I implemented new surgery procedures and established patient relationships which sometimes required sensitive communication skills. I then worked for two years with an oral surgeon before I married and left adult employment to begin a family.

Volunteer Positions

The next stage of my career was consumed with being a mother and the impact of motherhood on the outlook of life can never be overrated. To nurture my desire for learning and to keep mentally stimulated while being a mother with young children, I became involved on committees for Childbirth Education, Nursing Mothers and later pre-school and school Parent and Citizen Committees. I opened a playgroup centre and worked with the Faculty of Education lecturers at the University College of Southern Queensland (UCSQ) to develop a series of six week short courses for parents. These voluntary positions were rewarding as I liaised with new mothers and developed close friendships. I enjoyed being in a position of leadership to progress initiatives with like-minded people.

The Parents and Citizens committee positions I held with the Toowoomba East State Pre-school and the Toowoomba East State School required me to develop initiatives and write reports, which I presented to both committees. I struggled with delivering these reports initially, but over time acquired more proficient presentation skills. I also assisted in the tuckshop, classroom and with sports coaching. My organisational and presentation skills were enhanced and I learned about the role of Queensland Government and in particular, education, in the operation and funding for state schools.

I completed a creative writing course through TAFE and joined a writing group. Members wrote stories each week and these were critiqued by other colleagues. On a rotational monthly basis each member gave a book review and, upon reflection-in-action, my love of writing began during this period.

In 1988, I became involved with Queensland Little Athletics which was the beginning of a fifteen year association, working on committees for the local centre, Darling Downs, South West Queensland and State in public relations roles. I was the Public Relations Officer for the committee which identified an opportunity to develop an athletic oval in Toowoomba. Through public meetings and meetings with Council, the committee rallied support from the Toowoomba City Council (now Toowoomba Regional Council) for land in O'Quinn Street Toowoomba. When successful in attaining this rock-filled land, the committee began to plan and develop an athletic centre and clubhouse for athletes of all ages to train and compete. As this was a non-profit entity, I was responsible for writing applications to various government and non-government funding bodies for financial assistance. I was also responsible for designing and writing the annual year book, producing a monthly newsletter for parents, and keeping accurate records of athletes' performances. The complex is now called the Glenys Nunn Athletic Oval and hosts major athletic events for the region's Little Athletic Centres, primary and high schools and attracts economic benefits to the city of Toowoomba. I was presented with a Life Membership of the Toowoomba Central Little Athletics Centre in 2000 for dedication to and involvement in the development of athletics and, in 2002, Queensland Little Athletics recognised my service with a Merit Award.

Working voluntarily as a member for various committees and for Queensland Little Athletics was rewarding both personally and professionally. Reflection-in-action assisted to identify skills acquired during this period by looking back on activities performed through engaging with the community and listening to alternative suggestions before making final decisions. As the proposed athletic facility was situated in a residential area, public meetings were held and media articles were published to advise the public about the proposed development of the facility. Strategies were formed to engage people by building knowledge and understanding. The public consultation was genuine, and consideration to community needs empowered people to be partners in the process. The athletic facility resulted in a positive outcome for the families living in the community and increased tourism by attracting people from outside our region to utilise the amenities.

University of Southern Queensland

On completion of a six month TAFE Microsoft Office course I returned to paid employment in 1993, as a casual administration assistant for USQ Human Resources. After working for three weeks, I was offered a position in the Vice-Chancellor's Office responsible for administration and reception duties. The major tasks performed in this position involved the maintenance of the mail register and associated systems, researching background information on issues, meeting and function organisation, and liaison with faculties, sections and external organisations.

In 1995, my reporting lines changed with added responsibilities. I commenced work with the Vice-Chancellor's Senior Executive Officer to assist with media inquiries. For the next two years, I also became the Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor's Committee responsible for compiling agendas and associated papers, and minuting the fortnightly meeting which included confidential items for discussion. I aided the introduction of a Central Records Facility and electronic mail registering system and provided relief for the Administration Officer responsible for the financial operations in the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

In 1996 with the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor whose key performance indicator (KPI) was to increase USQ's external community engagement, my position changed from administration to the University's Planning and Functions Officer. The key responsibility of this role was to promote a positive public image of the University through the organisation of functions and events for the Vice-Chancellor in his position as Chief Executive Officer of the University. I initiated, planned, organised and coordinated internal and external events and functions involving the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Senior Executive. In this position I developed and implemented administrative systems to support various initiatives and acted in the position of Executive and Personal Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor when required.

The responsibilities of this role expanded and, in 2000, I was appointed as the USQ Corporate Functions and Protocol Officer. Accountabilities included providing advice to University staff, across all levels, for functions, visits and events involving high-profile, national and international visitors, based on analytical assessment and evaluation, judgement and the management of sensitivities relating to personnel of the University and external bodies. I was the first point of contact for State and Federal Government Departments, Queensland Protocol Department, Embassies, Consulates, International Agencies and international visitors, and provided direction on correct University procedures and policy.

To ensure a professional image of the University was portrayed to external stakeholders, I identified the need to formalise event processes to assist University staff across the campuses in organising events. I wrote and implemented the University Protocol Policy which provided guidelines and approval processes for a tiered level of events from Government Ministerial visits to business lunches. To further improve processes, I then developed the USQ Events Calendar on Share-point to assist with the planning of events so multiple functions were not scheduled at the University on the same day. I administered this site and approved entries across all campuses to be viewed on the calendar.

I initiated and wrote the Risk Management Plan for Events so liability for negligence would not be passed on to staff responsible for the organisation of an event. This process was embedded into all areas of USQ's event planning to protect staff and the University if an unforeseeable risk eventuated during the course of an event. To augment the new procedures, I conducted training sessions for staff through the University's staff training and development program.

I undertook the development of these procedures to improve efficiencies and to increase staff knowledge of organisational event management. I learned how to write policy documents and develop improved systems. On reflection, my presentation skills were amateurish. I thought I needed to be authoritative on the subject matter but the real me seems to go over much better than the one who feigned being the expert on event management.

My delivery of staff training and presentation skills was a learning experience during this period, and one that with reflection-on-action provided an opportunity to improve my performance to communicate information and ideas in a more effective way. Public speaking skills do not come naturally to me but through training and practice I have improved and am now able to conduct a presentation that is interesting and holds the attention of an audience.

To provide context to the responsibilities of the position of USQ's Corporate Functions and Protocol Officer, I have outlined below two major events I coordinated. Following these examples, I will reflect on these experiences to critically self-reflect and evaluate learning outcomes.

The State Funeral for RM Williams was held at the USQ Clive Berghofer Centre in November 2003. I worked with the Director of the Premier's Protocol Office to meet with family members at Burstow's Funeral Chapel to discuss the formalities and arrangements for the funeral. Once family wishes were known, I worked with Queensland Protocol to organise and coordinate all levels of USQ's involvement. The funeral was attended by over 1300 people and was televised nationally. The Acting Prime Minister, Hon. John Anderson, Premier of Queensland, Hon. Peter

Beattie and State Ministers joined family and friends for the iconic bushman's farewell. At the end of the service, a symbolic riderless horse was led into the centre, and the casket - bearing RM's saddle blanket, riding whip and favourite Akubra - was carried outside. There, it was placed on an antique Williams' cart that was drawn by a single horse. The cart was joined in procession to the private family service by four mounted police and more than 30 outriders from local trail-riding clubs, each carrying an Australian flag.

My role in the organisation of the State Funeral was as the point of contact for USQ. This required close liaison with the family, Premier's Protocol Office, Federal police, and local, state and national media to ensure the University Vice-Chancellor and staff were aware of happenings. I coordinated staff across all levels of the University to contribute with the logistics of multiple undertakings such as: accessing and installing a media satellite; fencing off an area for the horses; preparing the stage and auditorium seating; organising audio equipment and television screens; providing advice and detailed campus maps to police and VIPs; risk management with health and safety procedures controlled; reserved vehicular parking areas – all in all the set-up, clean-up and event shut-down.

The second event selected to demonstrate performance in this role was a complex project. USQ celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2007 and I was tasked to research, plan and organise a dinner to acknowledge the University's Founders. The formal gala dinner was the first event scheduled to celebrate USQ's 40th Anniversary in February 2007. The aim of the event was to recognise and pay respect to the Founders of the University. People from all walks of life who contributed to the development of the institution more than forty years ago were to be honoured. I was given a budget with limits to a venue capacity of 300 dignitaries.

There were very few historical records dating back 40 years to assist with formulating a guest list, largely due to a fire in the USQ Administration building during the 1970s which destroyed many early documents. The task of compiling an invitation list, limited to 300 guests, was the biggest challenge.

I interviewed retired staff members and members of the original Darling Downs University Establishment Committee and their families to create an initial draft guest list. Further research was then required to determine addresses of other Founders and, if deceased, to find immediate family members. While gathering this information, I simultaneously formed and led a working party of external contractors to assist with the operational side of the evening. Entertainment during the evening required stage management expertise to support three student pen portraits telling the story of USQ's history, musical ensembles, a renowned past student who performed a melody of songs, a guest speaker and professional sound and lighting experts.

Video interviews were conducted with several Founders and these now form part of the University's archives. My research uncovered historical information which had been, at the time, lost to USQ, but the list was deficient in delivering complete knowledge due to the complexity of the task. Further research is needed to achieve a more comprehensive and accurate register of the University Founders.

In both these examples, complex planning and organisation skills were required to lead a team of internal and external staff, including students. Moving the learning from the 'informal and incidental' as described by Marsick and Watkins (2001), to a higher structured approach involving both intervention and critical reflection enabled me to recognise that my work was driven by the effective and timely delivery of projects. I undervalued the merit of developing a conceptual framework and project scope around the foundations created by the USQ Strategic Plan goal of community engagement. A conceptual framework would have provided a logical sequence to consider the relationships between a number of enterprise elements typically present in a large corporate entity and, as such, would have provided a useful model for future projects of this nature.

In my current position as the Associate Director, I report to the Director of the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations and am responsible for defining the communication procedures and plans for all major corporate communication strategies, maintaining and improving reputational awareness and corporate image, and coordinating and bringing together internal stakeholders through change management activities. To accomplish this, I research, develop and initiate high level communication projects and manage public relations projects. Qualitative research through focus groups of internal and external stakeholders provides an insight into stakeholder group perceptions of USQ, and as a communication professional I work closely with key internal and external stakeholders to scope process improvement initiatives and define public relations strategies and actions to implement across the University's core business units.

In association with the Director of the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations, I organise and facilitate focus groups. I summarise findings and work jointly with the Director to formulate USQ's internal and external strategic communication plans. These documents outline issues and communication responses. I have implemented a series of communication tools and tactics in response to the issues raised by the University's stakeholders. Some of these include providing senior management with key messages about perceived stakeholder issues, and conducting television studio interviews with senior executive as an avenue of providing information to staff. As a direct result of focus group research conducted with staff, the UR USQ staff forums have also commenced on a regular basis. UR USQ staff forums is a platform where all members of the University are invited to hear the Vice-Chancellor talk about objectives/issues facing the University, and staff are encouraged to ask questions either through a confidential email channel or openly from the floor. The presentation is streamed live to all campuses and is videoed and sent via email to all staff following the address.

In response to focus group feedback, a variety of measures are also being concentrated on for our external audience. The media officers are producing stories on events, staff profiles, University initiatives, business activities, research accomplishments, and our learning and teaching areas as part of USQ's communication responses. Another new initiative I am responsible for is the Toowoomba Chronicle column*, From the Vice-Chancellor's Desk*. The aim of this regular column is to increase the Vice-Chancellor's profile, to maintain community engagement and create stronger media relationships. I write the articles that give an overview of public events at USQ and inform audiences about happenings at USQ.

I have also researched, developed and initiated communication projects for graduation ceremonies, Honorary Award recipients, Human Resources, the School of Law, Digital Futures, the Office of Research, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Engineering and Surveying. With the Director of Corporate Communication and Public Relations, I have worked to develop relationships with media at the Toowoomba Chronicle, Fraser Coast Chronicle, Queensland Times, and our regional newspapers, The Australian Higher Education Supplement, Campus Review and the Financial Review to have USQ featured more regularly.

As part of my position, I am required to research and write the Vice-Chancellor's graduation speeches and Honorary Award recipient citations. With USQ conducting 12 graduation ceremonies per year, this activity is ongoing. I also regularly draft correspondence for the Vice-Chancellor for both internal and external mediums.

I have responsibility for chairing an Annual Report review meeting with all internal stakeholders to ascertain ways to improve USQ's Annual Report and possibly reformat the publications – for the 2010, 2011 and 2012 editions. The Annual Report will now become a year-long project. Committee approval processes and dates will become part of the procedure in managing the timeframes.

The position delivers advice that has a critical and strategic impact on the University's reputation, in addition to providing comprehensive guidance to executive management in the absence of the Director. I work with executive managers and am a key reference point for leadership on matters involving communication and public relations at USQ.

Through my work experiences I have gained knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Project management;
- Research;
- Facilitation;
- Leadership skills;
- Assuming responsibility
- Informed decision making;
- Advanced communication skills;
- Conceptualising values;
- Recognising own abilities and limitations;
- Self-reliance; and
- Resilience.

Much of my experiential learning detailed in this section led me to formalise my qualifications through tertiary study. In section 2.3, I detail my formal educational qualifications and link it with my overall career and personal development. These three elements – experiential learning, career and personal development, and formal education - form the basis of my learning portfolio. At the end of this section I will then outline the critical incidences experienced during my role in the Office of Corporate Communication which guided me to undertake this doctoral study.

FORMAL EDUCATION

Systems of schooling which involve institutionalised teaching and learning in relation to a curriculum is known as formal education as opposed to Learning through Life Experiences and Experiential Learning, or learning on the job. The primary focus of this section is to provide a summary of my formal educational qualifications.

I successfully completed academic subjects for my Junior Certificate (English, German, Advanced Mathematics, Science and Home Economics) but for societal and family reasons I left school in 1975 at the end of Grade 10 and enrolled in a 12 month full-time Office Training Course at TAFE. I was offered and accepted the position of Commercial Course Captain by Mr Bernie O'Kane, the Campus Director.

Married with a young family, I returned to study in 1991 to successfully complete the USQ Access and Equity Course with a cumulative GPA of 6.0. The Course provides students who did not complete grade 12 with an entry pathway into university. On completion of this course, I enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Primary), but in January 1992 on the day I received my acceptance letter to USQ, my husband's place of employment announced it was in receivership. For financial reasons, I deferred my university study to return to the workforce.

To increase my employment opportunities, I returned to TAFE in 1993 to study a Certificate of Commercial and Office Fundamentals and was then employed by the University of Southern Queensland as an administration assistant.

I completed several short development courses through my workplace such as Indispensable Secretary and Administration Officer, Writing Effectively and Interpersonal Communication Skills which were acknowledged with a Certificate of VETEC accreditation. I also completed an intensive course on Event Project Management which was conducted by the University of Sydney.

In 2001, I enrolled in the Certificate of Public Relations and after completing two units of study I was transferred into the Graduate Diploma of Professional Communication before completing a Master of Public Relations (MPubRel) in 2008. The aim of the post-graduate degree as espoused by USQ is to produce graduates employable to:-

» demonstrate an informed and rational understanding of salient contemporary issues in corporate communication;

- pursue a scholarly and informed study, to a publishable standard, of the relevance of corporate communication to aspects of organisational communication including strategic planning, risk management and management behaviour;
- employ public relations communication theory to design and implement field research in a range of contemporary issues and problems in all aspects of corporate communication;
- select and apply appropriate and professionally sound communication principles into the design and practice of corporate communication; and
- provide best practices in planning and organisation to corporate public relations (USQ Programs and Courses 2014).

During my postgraduate studies, I developed an insight into how theory can be applied to improve communication practice. The course covered aspects of the management of strategic communication and I developed a strong belief that communication practice needed to evolve away from a media-savvy tactical focus on press, publicity and information provision to a business-savvy focus on relationship management and organisational positioning. I became an advocate to the growing demand that universities could better manage their stakeholder relationships through innovative strategic communication.

While studying the Master of Public Relations I learned to question, think and concentrate more on the facets of the public relations profession and, during this time, I formed an affinity for strategic communication and the benefits of effective community engagement.

I graduated from the Master of Public Relations with a 6.6 GPA and was invited to become a Member of the Golden Key International Honour Society. Golden Key is the world's premier collegiate honour society, recognising outstanding academic achievement and connecting high-achieving individuals locally, regionally and globally. Membership into the Society applies to the top 15 percent of college and university sophomores, as well as top-performing students in all fields of study, based solely on academic achievements. The question of finding a definable strategic communication measurement though was still sought.

In April 2011 I completed additional study in an advanced Black Belt Program in Internal Communication through Melcrum Pty Ltd, the world-leading professional development program for internal communicators. I further grasped key concepts, tools and techniques to understand stakeholders' needs and what it takes to develop and execute a strategic internal communication plan.

One of the University's stated staff goals is to attract and retain employees who exemplify USQ's values and provide them with opportunities to succeed personally, professionally and organisationally (USQ Human Resources 2014). Through this goal it is recognised that our people are our greatest asset and the future success of USQ is dependent on attracting and retaining people who support its aims and aspirations (USQ Human Resources 2014). In 2011, data showed that women were under-represented at senior levels within the University so, to address this issue, the University introduced a Future Leaders Program which was designed for women in leadership roles.

In July 2011, I participated in the inaugural Future Leaders Program for Women at USQ. The program was offered to twelve women and tailored over a five month period to meet personal and corporate leadership needs. The program aimed to meet key development priorities for women to gain valuable exposure and experience to progress a unique leadership journey at USQ. The key objectives of the Program were to:-

- Assist women to extend their skills, knowledge and self-confidence to become more proactive in seeking opportunities for advancement;
- Support women in identifying personal goals and developing plans/pathways to achieve them;
- Broaden knowledge and understanding of USQ, including the University's structure, decision making practices, policies and organisational culture;
- Enhance the ability to access and develop strong networks for collaboration across the university; and
- Provide a supportive environment for women to explore issues and share experiences in the workplace.

There have been numerous dimensions to my learnings and professional development. I have grown and changed as a person through life experiences, experiential learning and formal education. I am no longer afraid to fail; it's one of the key experiences to learning and growing knowledge. To summarise:

- I will listen to others, but in areas where I have some understanding, I am more likely to access my prior knowledge;
- I am more responsive to finding meaningful solutions to challenges;
- The need to produce forces me to act;
- I have increased self-confidence and self-reliance because I have knowledge of my strengths and weaknesses;
- I am motivated to be active not passive;
- My conceptions of knowledge have changed which in turn has implications for cognitive development;
- The most enjoyable working environment is learning to work on tasks with other people of different backgrounds, attitudes and expertise; and
- I learn so much more by observing others.

Two critical incidences generated significant and powerful learning experiences and demonstrate the reason for undertaking this doctoral study. The experiences defined my professional career in terms of intrinsic skills, traits and opportunities' and making decisions at key learning stages has formed my pathway in the public relations field of organisational strategic communication measurement.

As mentioned, on completion of the Master of Public Relations in 2008, Vice-Chancellor Professor Bill Lovegrove invited me to fill a position in the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations. I accepted the secondment position of Corporate Communication Project Officer in February 2009 and then applied, and was successful, in attaining the permanent position of Senior Public Relations Coordinator in December 2009, and in 2014 became the Associate Director (Corporate Communication and Public Relations).

My awareness of and curiosity for strategic communication measurement was formed during my Masters study and accelerated while working in the Office of Corporate Communication and Public Relations. To provide context to the reason for this study, I focus more comprehensively on the Case Study mentioned in Chapter One which kindled my interest in finding some sort of measurement which would show the value for my chosen profession in strategic communication.

Teaching and learning are interdependent processes. While writing this portfolio a deeper understanding and appreciation was gained of key influencers who were critical in providing opportunities and learning experiences. As stated by the ancient Chinese philosopher, Confucius '*tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand*' (Wikipedia 2011).

Experiential Learning through Professional Career

Training for the workplace continues to be designed and delivered almost exclusively to meet organisational needs. However, experiential learning/training which develops knowledge and skills through hands-on experience creates an opportunity for valuable and memorable personal learning. According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning is a process in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Specht and Sandlin (1991) explain that experiential learning focuses on 'doing' in addition to the 'hearing' and 'seeing' that occur in traditional learning.

APPENDIX B – USQ Human Research Ethics Approval and Permission Letter

USQ
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Ethics Committee Support Officer
PHONE (07) 4631 2690 | FAX (07) 4631 1995
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Friday, 4 January 2013

Mrs Judy Halter
USQ Corporate Communications

CC Professor Glen Postle, Supervisor

Dear Judy

The Chair of the USQ Fast Track Human Research Ethics Committee (FTHREC) recently reviewed your responses to the FTHREC's conditions placed upon the ethical approval for the below project. Your proposal now meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and full ethics approval has been granted.

Project Title	Strategic Communication Issues System
Approval no.	H12REA216
Expiry date	31 March 2013
FTHREC Decision	**Approved**

The standard conditions of this approval are:
- (a) conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC
- (b) advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project
- (c) make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes
- (d) provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval
- (e) provide a 'final report' when the project is complete
- (f) advise in writing if the project has been discontinued.

For (c) to (e) forms are available on the USQ ethics website: http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethicsbio/human

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement (2007)* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your project. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

for
Leah Baldwin
Ethics Committee Support Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees

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OFFICE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Ms Judy Halter
Senior Public Relations Coordinator
University of Southern Queensland
PHONE +61 7 4631 2092
EMAIL judy.halter@usq.edu.au

Dear [blank]

Re: Permission to survey Director of Corporate Communication and Public Relations

I am writing to ask permission to conduct research at our university for a study entitled *Strategic Communication Issues System*, which has been given ethical clearance under reference H12REA216.

I am conducting this research, from the University of Southern Queensland, as part of my Doctorate of Professional Studies. The study has been approved by the University of Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee and, as part of that approval process, it is a requirement to obtain gatekeeper permission to invite the [blank], to participate in an online survey questionnaire.

While the value of a university's stakeholder perceptions is becoming increasingly respected, how to measure such perceptions has been a concern for many who work in the area of strategic communications in higher education. I have developed the Strategic Communication Issues System at the University of Southern Queensland and preliminary work indicates that these perceptions can be measured quantitatively and such measures might provide an effective way for senior university executives to prove the value of strategic communication. The purpose of this research is to refine the measurement of stakeholder perceptions in order to gain a better understanding of how the application of communication strategies might help a university maximise its profile in the community through transparent and open communication, while minimising potential reputational risk.

The overall goal is to develop an understanding of how a Strategic Issues Communications System, that measures the benefit of strategic communication, may influence and enhance the work of the communication profession. Preliminary work indicates that the measureable component of the Strategic Communication Issues System is an effective way of showing senior university executives the value of strategic communication.

If approval is granted, a letter of invitation and consent form will be sent to the [Blank], to participate in the online survey questionnaire. It is estimated the survey will take an estimated 30 minutes to complete.

If the University of Southern Queensland is willing to be involved, would you please sign the form below that acknowledges you have read the explanatory statement, you understand the nature of the study being conducted, and you give permission for the research to be conducted at your university.
Thank you in anticipation

Yours sincerely

Judy Halter
Senior Public Relations Coordinator

Name _______________________________ Title_________________________________,
having been fully informed as to the nature of the research to be conducted in Strategic Communication Issues System, give permission for the study to be conducted. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at anytime.
Signature ___________________________Date ________________________________

APPENDIX C Participant observation from interviews and discussions held with senior management of CorProfit and with Hana Vano, KnowRisk Senior Consultant and System Developer.

Note: Participant Observation is an acknowledged research methodology used mostly for qualitative research. In this instance it involves a range of well-defined, though variable methods: informal interviews, direct observation, participation with management, collective discussions, analyses of personal documents produced and results from activities undertaken off or online.

The research method has allowed the author to obtain more detailed and accurate information under study.

Question one:

Please give me a brief summary of the industry accepted and standard AS/NZA 4360 Risk Assessment criteria.

Standards Australia moved away from being prescriptive, as they found that some were treating the risk criteria in the AS/NZA 4360 as 'the bible'. The Standard leaves it to the industry to determine what the most appropriate Risk Criteria is. It is evidenced from actual use in the field. KnowRisk – The System is a tool that brings out this Risk Criteria and how industry can apply it in the Risk Process.

Well proven Risk Criteria is supported as a forerunner from the insurance industry. The insurance industry was a strong voice in the publishing of AS/NZA 4360 Standard. We at CorProfit have built on this to measure how effective Risk Management is. Unlike traditional risk management where individual risk categories are separately managed in risk 'silos', Risk Management (RM) enables firms to manage a wide array of risks in an integrated, holistic fashion. Proponents argue that RM benefits firms by decreasing volatility, reducing external capital costs, increasing capital efficiency, and creating synergies between different risk management activities. More generally, RM is said to promote increased risk management awareness that translates into better operational and strategic decision-making.

Risk Management concerns measuring bigger risks from smaller risks and likewise how to focus on the most significant areas of concern, whether set at strategic or operations levels. This is achieved by defining Risk Management criteria that distinguish the level of risk to the company (definitions of the terms used would be given elsewhere). These Criteria include the following:

- Likelihood of the risk, which reflects the chance of a risk occurring;
- Consequence, defines the actual impact that would occur;
- Risk rating or risk score is the exposure that is calculated when combining the likelihood and consequence; and

- Effectiveness of controls, the residual level of risk that the company will be exposed to is in proportion to the level of uncontrolled or inherent risk and effectiveness of controls to reduce the risk.

Each of the above criteria has a range of values that may be expressed in either subjective values or quantitative amounts. They are applied in the Risk Process to measure risks and when a list of risks is analyzed in a context such as communications, the risks can be compared and ranked relative to each other. The objective is to measure the extent to which specific firms have implemented risk management programs and, then, to assess the value implications of these programs.

Question two:

The owners and executive of KnowRisk are well qualified people in the area of risk management. Can you give me a brief summary of their feedback to the communication measurement model?

The Communication Measurement model as proposed in this study has been carefully thought through and has additional value as it is a derivative of the AS/NZA 4360 Risk Process. The design of the communication measurement model is original and can be applied to any organisation or industry. The purpose of managing communication risks can follow as a natural part of day-to-day work of communication around the university, while at a risk framework level the communication risks can be shown together with other risk types. Senior management will have a consistent way to see which risk types have the potential to derail meeting corporate and research objectives.

While the individual advantages of different risk management activities are clear, there are disadvantages to the traditional "silo" approach to risk management. Managing each risk class in a separate silo creates inefficiencies due to lack of coordination between the various risk management departments. By integrating decision making across all risk areas, organisations are able to avoid duplication of risk management activities. This provides them with a more objective basis for resource allocation, thus improving efficiency.

While individual risk management activities may reduce volatility by reducing the probability of losses, there are potential interdependencies between risks across activities that might go unnoticed in the traditional risk management model. The System provides a structure that combines all risk management activities into one integrated framework that facilitates the identification of such interdependencies. Thus, while individual risk management activities can reduce volatility the proposed System reduces volatility by preventing aggregation of risk across different sources. A further source of value arises due to improved information about the firm's risk profile. Outsiders are more likely to have difficulty in assessing the strength and risk profile of organisations that are highly financially and operationally complex. The proposed System enables organisations to better inform outsiders of their risk profile and also serves as a signal of their commitment to risk management. By improving risk management disclosure, the proposed System is likely to reduce the expected costs of regulatory scrutiny and external capital.

What executive management and directors need to consider when evaluating the best way to implement risk management is essentially process, integration, culture and infrastructure. The proposed System helps define such issues by application, operating standards and functions as well as risk profiles that vary in complexity across organisations.

Like any other worthwhile business activity, the proposed System develops a process with a clear purpose, reliable inputs, well-designed activities and value-added outputs. The risk management process typically includes such activities as the identification, sourcing, measurement, evaluation, mitigation and monitoring of risk.

A well-articulated process view of risk management provides a benchmark for organisations to help them formulate strategies, tactics and processes that are responsive to individual needs.

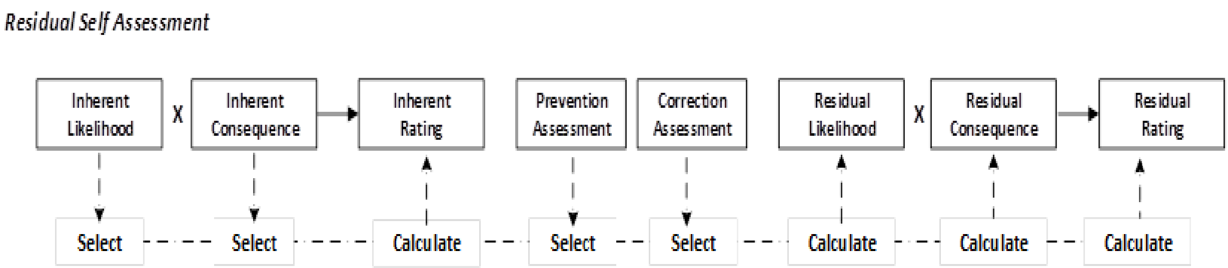
Question three:

How does the System automatically calculate the residual risk rating for each stakeholder issue?

There are many formulae employed by KnowRisk to calculate reference fields with similar fields calculated in different ways depending on the state in which the data is mined at the time the calculation is performed.

The inherent functionality of the process on which the proposed System is based allows Likelihood and Consequence values to be assessed (from the tables of each, i.e. from the criteria) without considering controls (even if they exist) to determine the worst-case levels of risk, and then associates the appropriate controls to mitigate the risks and consequences.

The user self-selects how effective the existing Controls might be, after which the residual levels of risk are calculated from assessing the effectiveness of the controls. Shown in this diagram.



Some might say it is difficult to assess Inherent Risk since there are always controls in place. But what if the controls failed – these will give an Inherent Risk.

The backend of the proposed System is fundamental to the KnowRisk product that also allows users to ignore the Inherent Risk, and examine the Existing Controls and assess how effective they are. Based on this the Residual Likelihood and Residual Consequence can be set manually. KnowRisk calculates the Inherent values (in the opposite way to the Residual mode, even if there are not visible.

When users are sufficiently familiar with using the Risk Process, they can expand the calculations and the inbuilt functionality of KnowRisk is integral to any continued support.

Question four:

We know that positive feedback on the communication measurement model has been received from the researcher's conference presentations and the KnowRisk presentation conducted in Sydney to the international members of the KnowRisk organisation. Have you been approached from universities or organisations to demonstrate the System? If so, what was their feedback?

To date our work provides some initial evidence on the value-relevance of the System for corporate entities. One of the major challenges facing us is how to identify organisations that engage in risk management. Although some detailed study and anecdotal feedback has been used to distinguish risk management users and non-users we find risk management usage to be positively related to firm size, diversification, and institutional ownership.

Our findings with respect to several other variables are also of interest. The positive relation between risk management and the proposed System reflects market expectations of greater growth opportunities that exist outside Australia. Our analysis provides a starting point for additional research into the proposed System.

While discussions are confidential with our client it can be said that the assessment process identifies and prioritises a company's risks, providing quality inputs to decision makers for the purpose of formulating effective risk responses including information about the current state of capabilities around managing the priority risks. Effectively applied using business strategy as a context, risk assessment considers such attributes as impact, likelihood, velocity and persistence. Our discussions with others have shown that once priority risks are identified, the proposed System can trace issues to their root causes. If management understands the drivers of risk, it is easier to design risk metrics and proactive risk responses at the source.

Because not all risks are quantifiable, increasing transparency by developing quantitative and qualitative risk measures is a necessity. For many organisations with whom discussions have been held measurement methodologies may be simple and basic, e.g., risk rating or scoring and tracking key variables relating to an identified exposure. More complex methodologies for companies are needed with more advanced capabilities that might include a risk-adjusted performance measurement – something that the proposed System provides.

Based on discussions organisations have shown that there is a need to better determine identified risks, their drivers or root causes and their susceptibility to measurement. Depending on the risk response selected, management identifies any gaps in risk management capabilities and improves those capabilities as necessary to implement the risk response. Organisations are suggesting that over time, the effectiveness of risk mitigation activities need to be monitored.

What is apparent is that the proposed System models, provides risk analytics and other functionality to make it possible to aggregate information about risks using common data elements to support the creation of a risk management dashboard or scorecard for use by risk owners, unit managers and executive management.

Management is asking for dashboard and scorecard reporting and the proposed System is flexible enough to enable the design of reports to address specific needs, including reporting to the board of directors. Examples of dashboard reporting, which often features "heat maps" or "traffic light" indicators, are provided in proposed System.

Anecdotal feedback has suggested that the purpose of the risk management process varies from company to company, e.g., reduce risk or performance variability to an acceptable level, prevent unwanted surprises, facilitate taking more risk in the pursuit of value creation opportunities, etc. Regardless of purpose, the good news is that the proposed System provides management with a risk management process that is readily available so that organisations can adopt a process view that best fits their circumstances.

Question five:

From your discussions with other KnowRisk users what would you consider to be among their top ten reputation risks impacting on organisations today?

In a university context, some of the top risks are:

Description
Breach of site security to promote social or political causes that are divisive or result in damage to property and or injury to staff, students or the public
Student information can be accessed and used for personal gain.
Students react adversely to complaint handling processes
Sudden departure of key staff and the lack of planning for replacement of staff (leading to loss of research funding)
The forecast of the trend of the market demand for education courses is too high or there is not enough enrolment to make it viable
Unauthorised security breach in IT system that should have been avoided, compromising e.g. examinations and enrolments
Freezers lose power (e.g. someone disconnects the power without knowing) and longer term research material is destroyed.
Fraudulent activity e.g. purchasing staff buy items in a company they have interests in and on-sell to the university and make a secret profit (subsequently get found out)

Description
Whistle blower says research funds not properly utilized for the purposes intended and
Poor definition of corporate objectives that results in a misalignment of the university strategic plan from market trends and results in losing students to the competition

There are of course other risks that sheet back to a university being given adverse coverage in the media.

Question six:

Any other comments you would like to make about the system?

KnowRisk stands out uniquely for having a very well thought through Knowledge Base module, which the proposed System leverages to great effect.

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