

World Communication Forum-Davos, Switzerland

2015 - Shaping the World Communication Agenda

Why 'upstream integration' is a *sine qua non* for
Strategic Business Communicators

Studio 103, Palmyra Junction
9 Palmyra Road, Claremont
7708

Tel: + 27 21 671 4522/ 4865
Fax: + 086 520 8133
email: solly@donvalley.co.za; info@donvalley.co.za;
jessica@donvalley.co.za
website: www.donvalley.co.za



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First, a bit of theory

Zaremba's Systems Theory

“Organisations are made of interdependent units that should function interdependently in order to achieve maximum potential. Being a **system**, each organisation would have **subsystems** – including different departments and service providers – all linked vertically and horizontally in order to enable information to flow.

The more permeable the boundaries are between subsystems, the easier the flow of information and, eventually, the more prepared the whole system would be in times of crisis.

When subsystems function as **silos**, information permeability is constrained, resulting in **closed systems** and **entropy**, rendering the whole system vulnerable in times of crisis.

Zaremba A.J. (2010). Crisis Communication – Theory and Practice, M.E. Sharpe, New York

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Then, the Problem

Generic

Many corporate/ crisis/ issues/ stakeholder communication managers get set-up to fail because they are either not senior enough in their organisations - and therefore do not enjoy sufficient access to top decision-makers - or because their organisations are structured in impenetrable silos.

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Who occupies our world?

Who forms consultancies and gets employed?

- Bored housewives/ retrenched men
- Frustrated ex-models
- Idle-looking employees
- The pretty girls in the candidate list line-up
- Ex Personal Assistants (PAs)
- In South Africa, nouveaux entrepreneurs with hands in a diversity of cookie jars
- Qualified and / Experienced Professionals

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Who occupies our world?

How far removed are you from decision-making?

- How far removed are you from decision-making levels of your corporation?
- If you own your business or sit at executive management level, how do you relate to communicators positioned below you?
- Are you a Runner, a Specialist Delegator or a Chess Player?
- Is your company/organisation structured in impenetrable silos? What about its entire value-chain?
- Do you get informed BEFORE or AFTER strategic moves are made?
- Do you involve middle-level communicators BEFORE or AFTER strategic moves have been made?
- If after, how soon following key decisions do you usually get informed about them; how soon do you involve middle-management communicators?
- Do you find yourself too often on the back-foot in dealing with issues?
- Do you have privileged access to your CEO/MD?

Who occupies our world?

What kind of business communicator are you?

Communicator Type	Description
The Runner	He/she is often junior, either by experience or designation. The Runner takes instructions and execute them with very little input expected from him/her.
The Specialist Delegator	He/she functions as a bridge between the business and an external agency and makes very little input into strategy. He/she relies heavily on the external agency for ideas which he/she, in turn, relays back into the business – often pretending to be the originator of such ideas.
The Chess Player	The Chess Player is a strategic thinker who understands strategy, participates in strategic decision-making, has an eye on the micro and macro-environments and uses research and existing data to inform strategic moves. The Chess Player also enjoys the ear of the business.

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For the sake of our profession we need to build effective communicators

Be the Business Communicator you look up to

- Understand your organisation and its strategic intent
- Understand the world it operates in (Micro and Macro environments): the sector, the ever evolving stakeholder environment; relevant issues (community, environmental, human rights, etc.), the world of activists, etc.
- Be curious: read newspapers; know current affairs
- Cease all opportunities for continued education and self-improvement
- Develop a strategic far-sight
- Be visible; knock on doors; be proactive; propose solutions

THANK YOU!

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