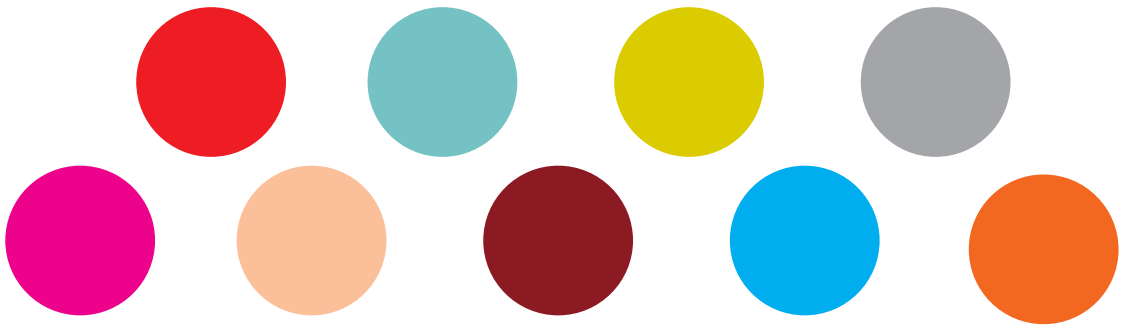


Public Relations

A MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVE

Danny Moss
Barbara DeSanto



Public Relations

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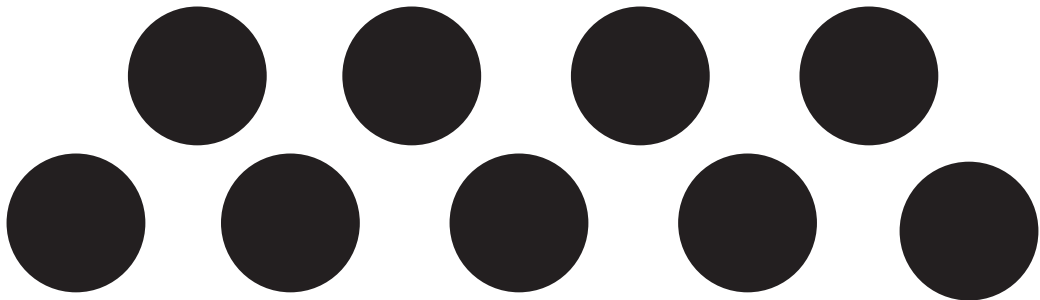
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Thousand Oaks, California 91320

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Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011929935

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-7619-4856-8
ISBN 978-0-7619-4857-5 (pbk)

Typeset by C&M Digital (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed by MPG Books Group, Bodmin, Cornwall
Printed on paper from sustainable resources



Dedications

DANNY MOSS

This book is dedicated, like all my works, to the memory of my much loved and now sadly missed golden retriever Angus, who was a wonderfully uncritical listener to my ideas and plans for this book. I also have to thank my wife Eunice for putting up with many lonely hours while I was locked away typing the manuscript.

Finally, both Barbara and I want to thank our commissioning editor Delia Martinez Alfonso for her patience and support for this much delayed book, during the writing of which she has managed to give birth to two children!

BARBARA DESANTO

This book is dedicated to all of my graduate students from Oklahoma State University, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and Maryville University, St Louis. Thank you for all of your challenges and inspiration. To my co-author and colleague, Dr Danny Moss, thank you for being a superb colleague through the years. To my husband, Dr Robert John DeSanto, APR, Fellow PRSA, and Rosie Hoover, Frederick the Great, and Winky, thank all of you for strategically knowing how to bring joy to my life.

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Introduction

In writing this book, we did not set out to produce another introductory public relations textbook – there are far too many excellent textbooks of this nature already available to readers, whether they are students or practitioners. Rather, the aim of this book was to explore the managerial dimension of public relations and communication practice. All too often the term ‘management’ or ‘managerial’ is used within the communication/public relations field without sufficient thought or clarity as to what it means. We also sought to develop a framework that will enable both students and practitioners to identify and make sense of the key elements in managing any particular aspect of communication/public relations practice, and to improve the management of communication/public relations departments. The starting point in thinking about this textbook was a recognition that, despite the claim that public relations should be treated as a managerial function and should have a seat at the senior management table in many organisations, much of the writing about communication/public relations shows little recognition of how thinking about management and managerial practice has evolved in recent years. An examination of the bibliography in many contemporary communication/public relations textbooks reveals few references to contemporary managerial texts, and all too often references to management based on rather dated sources. Thus, we wanted not only to write a textbook that would re-examine how managerial practice could be applied to the communication/public relations field, but also to ensure that we drew on contemporary thinking about management and managerial practice.

In Part One of the book, we sought to examine the core of managerial framework that we believe could be applied to most areas of communication/public relations practice. Establishing a managerial framework for the communication/public relations function also led us to consider other important dimensions of the management function that might apply equally to communication/public relations domain, namely managerial skills and competencies and how they might manifest themselves in terms of communication practice and leadership as applied to the communication function. The final important area we considered in Part One of the book was that of strategy and planning for communication/public relations. Here again a review of the existing literature suggested some confusion, or at least ambiguity, in the use of the terms ‘strategy’ and ‘planning’ in this context.

Having established our managerial framework and considered how some of the dimensions of management might apply to communication/public relations in Part One, in the remaining chapters of the book we examine a number of specialist areas

of public relations practice, in each case examining not only the issues and considerations surrounding that area of practice, but also drawing on the common managerial framework to explore the management of communication practice in that particular field. In Part Three, we also examine some of the professional considerations that impinge upon the management of communication/public relations departments, notably ethical and legal considerations.

The writing of this book has involved bringing together a number of experts in specific areas of communication/public relations practice, each of whom added their specific insights and knowledge of these specialist areas. In each case, however, we have asked these experts also to examine their subject area through the lens of our managerial framework and to consider the managerial implications for practice in their area. Here we have assembled a team of contributors from both the academic and professional worlds, which we believe provides the appropriate mix of academic and professional perspectives on the subject.

CHAPTER GUIDE AND CONTRIBUTORS

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the rest of the book, examining the current operating environment in which public relations practitioners work, and environmental forces which shape the working environment and the challenges that contemporary organisations face. Chapter 2 sets our underlying managerial framework, which informs much of the discussion of managerial practice in the communication/public relations context in the rest of the book. Here we also explore the development of managerial thinking and managerial theory over the years and set this in context with the way management has been discussed in the public relations literature. In Chapter 3 we explore the area of practitioner competencies, attributes and skills, relating these to both the managerial and technical work that practitioners perform. Chapter 4 examines the concept of leadership and its application to the communication/public relations field and considers the key attributes of leaders and their role in the communication/public relations context. Chapter 5, which concludes Part One, focuses on the concepts of strategy and planning and explores the development of thinking about these concepts from a managerial and communication/public relations perspective.

Part Two draws on the managerial framework advanced in Part One, and begins to explore a number of communication/public relations functions or contexts from a managerial perspective. Chapter 6 looks at the area of corporate branding and corporate reputation management and explores the way in which corporate brands are developed, sustained and defended, and the managerial process involved in developing and sustaining corporate brand/reputation. Chapter 7 looks at the area of government relations and public affairs, and examines the specialist area of communication practice and the important role it plays in managing the interface between organisations and businesses and government and government bodies. Chapter 8 looks

specifically at government communication – at how government departments develop their own communication programmes and manage the communication process with citizens and businesses and other bodies. Chapter 9 focuses on consumer and business-to-business communication and explores the way in which organisations and businesses manage the communication process with key customer and business partners. Chapter 10 looks at the specialist area of financial communication and financial public relations, the most regulated and perhaps the most controversial areas of communication. Chapter 11 shifts the focus away from business communication to the not-for-profit sector, and looks at the important role played by communication/public relations for charities and voluntary bodies as well as in fundraising and other areas. Chapter 12 looks at the important area of internal or employee communication and the important role that communication plays in achieving organisational missions and goals. Chapter 13 is concerned with the world of agency/consultancy work; it examines the way in which public relations agencies/consultancies interact with clients and client organisations and explores the process of managing consultancy operations. Chapter 14 focuses on the increasingly important area of the internet and the impact of Web 2.0 communication, exploring how the increasing prevalence of the internet has changed the business communication model that many organisations rely upon and the way individuals obtain information, supply information and interact in an e-commerce-based trading environment. Chapter 15 focuses on the area of issues management, exploring the way in which organisations monitor, analyse and attempt to manage the impact of issues of public policy and business on their operations.

In Part Three we look at three specialist areas impinging on the work of other functions. In Chapter 16 we examine the ethical dimension of communication/public relations management, exploring the ethical and moral dilemmas that practitioners face, the importance of professionalisation of the practice and how these influences affect the role of practitioners in their day-to-day operations. Chapter 17 examines the increasing emphasis given to corporate social responsibility within the corporate sector and explores the ways in which organisations are attempting to respond to the changing social environment and the changing expectations of corporate behaviour in countries around the world. Chapter 18 examines the legal dimension of public relations/mediation practice, examining the legal constraints on and considerations that must affect both organisational behaviour and communication/public relations practice. Chapter 19 turns the focus to the international/global arena and explores the key considerations that any organisation wishing to expand its organisational operations internationally/globally needs to take into account.

Frameworks and Contexts

1

This opening part of the book comprises five chapters that define the disciplinary boundaries and scope of the subject matters that this book focuses on. More specifically, in this opening part we examine and set out the core managerial framework that we have developed, drawing on management and public relations theory, to inform our understanding of the managerial responsibilities and management processes as applied in the communication/public relations context. Here we also explore the management skills and competencies required of practitioners working at a managerial level within the public relations functional area, and conclude by examining the concept and process of strategy-making and planning in the communication/public relations context.

Public Relations Journey into Management: Building Bridges between Public Relations and other Managerial Functions

1

Barbara DeSanto

Key Themes

- Reviewing the main categories of public relations literature to understand why and how public relations history has internally and externally contributed to the definition of what the profession is today
- Understanding the implications of public relations history in the profession's quest to be recognized at the managerial level
- Considering eight challenges facing public relations professionals as they move into and work in management positions at different organizational levels

INTRODUCTION

Through the Looking Glass: Turning an Inward Focus into Outward Relationships

When Grunig and Hunt (1984) described public relations as 'the management of communication between an organization and its publics' (p. 6), their intention was

undoubtedly one of seeking to position public relations as a mainstream ‘managerial’ function within organizations, to be treated on a par with the other more traditional organizational functions such as human resource management, finance, production, and marketing. While perhaps recognizing that such a claim for equal status in the functional hierarchy within organizations might prove controversial, it is highly unlikely that Grunig and Hunt would have forecast the degree of debate and controversy that has gradually emerged around the use of the term ‘management’ to describe the function and practice of public relations. Indeed, public relations scholars perhaps saw little reason to view the use of the term ‘management’ *per se* as at all controversial; yet as we will show later, by the time that Grunig and Hunt’s book was published, a long-running debate was already well under way among management scholars about the nature of management and managerial work. It is not, however, our intention to challenge the basic premise contained in Grunig and Hunt’s definition or any of the many other definitions of public relations, namely, that public relations should be treated as a ‘managerial function’ as opposed to a largely communication oriented, technical function. Moreover, we acknowledge and support the arguments that for public relations to be fully effective in a managerial role, practitioners need to have access to and influence among the senior management team within organizations. However, as a number of academic and professional commentators have pointed out, such access and influence has to be earned, and here we argue that this demands that practitioners demonstrate the necessary skills and business acumen to deserve their place at the ‘top table’ within organizations. What we intend to do within this book is to examine in more depth what the ‘management’ of public relations involves, what management practices and processes are involved, and what skills and competences those aspiring to be communication/public relations ‘managers’ need to possess or develop.

The Excellence Concept

Perhaps the single most influential piece of extended research that has been conducted into public relations practice over the past two decades has been the so-called Excellence Study conducted by James and Larissa Grunig and their co-researchers, which set out to address the fundamental question of ‘How, why, and to what extent does communication affect the achievement of organizational objectives?’ (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 1992: 2). In articulating some 14 principles of ‘excellent’ public relations, the research team emphasized the importance of having public relations recognized as a distinctive ‘management function’ in its own right, and argued that senior practitioners should have access to and participate in the strategic decision-making process within their respective organizations. However, it clear that in advancing their theoretical framework, the excellence team was concerned almost exclusively with the most senior levels of management and with the ability of public relations to function effectively at that level by contributing to strategy and policy making within organizations. While acknowledging the importance of such senior level involvement for public relations, as many studies have shown, such involvement remains far from the ‘norm’ found in most organizations where public

relations is often still treated as a largely functionary and tactical function. Moreover, we also believe that this emphasis on public relations involvement at the ‘strategic decision-making level’ within organizations tends to overlook the need to also examine public relations ‘management’ as manifested at the operational/departmental levels. In fact, if we are to develop a comprehensive theory of communication/public relations management there is a need to explain and understand both the strategic and operational dimensions of management as manifest in different levels of public relations practice. Indeed, management scholars (e.g. Hales, 1986, 1999; Mintzberg, 1994; Stewart, 1976, 1982) have acknowledged that much management time is spent on what is often quite ‘messy’, largely tactical and operational activities, rather than dealing with the more rarefied levels of policy and strategy formulation. This distinction between tactical and strategic management work is something again which we intend to clarify, examining how these terms apply in the context of public relations work.

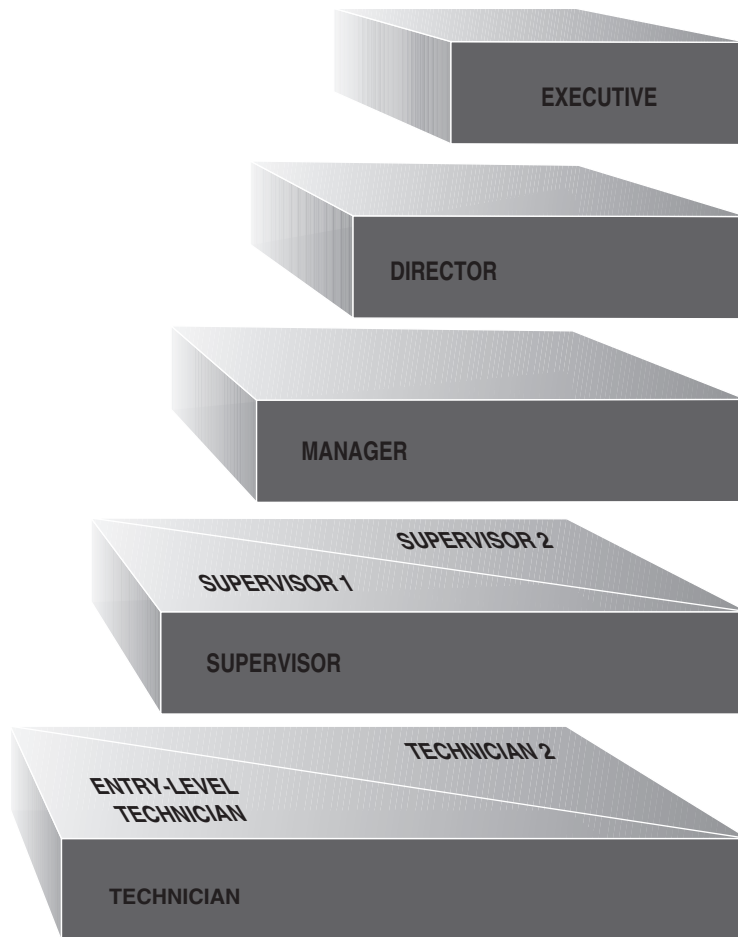
The Public Relations Society of America’s Manager Description

An interesting perspective on the application of the management concept in the public relations context can be seen in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) *Professional Career Guide* (1993) (see Figure 1.1), which describes the interpretation of the various career levels in public relations work. Here, the term ‘manager’ is identified as the middle level of the five career levels, which like Grunig et al.’s excellence model, suggests that some time and experience in the practice are needed before it is possible for practitioners to assume managerial responsibility. The PRSA’s description of managerial work provides a useful reference point in developing our explication of managerial work and managerial responsibilities at different levels within organizations, and in particular, how they apply in public relations work.

The *Career Guide*’s description of a public relations manager focuses on skills and knowledge needed to be a manager, including responsibility for ‘planning, organizing, directing, and motivating staff, budgeting, problem-solving and problem identification. Managers must be able to ‘sell’ programs, both inside the department and in other areas of the organization. They often conduct meetings and make presentations or speeches, analyze situations and develop plans of action’ (PRSA, 1993: 4).

Thus, in developing our perspective of the manager’s role and managerial work in the communication/public relations context, we have drawn on both the existing academic and professional literature to help formulate what we believe is a more comprehensive and effective framework for examining the work of practitioners operating at different levels within organizations and therefore, by implication, having different levels of responsibility in terms of both tactical/operational and more strategic managerial tasks and challenges.

Here, the PRSA *Professional Career Guide* provides a useful basis for examining the types of tasks typically performed as a combination of strategic and tactical, representative of both the levels below and above the managerial level (see Figure 1.2).



Note: In 1993 the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) developed a career progression structure for practitioners. Each step was defined by roles and responsibilities. The emphasis in this book is on the manager/director levels.

FIGURE 1.1 The PRSA Five Levels of Career Practice

Source: Public Relations Professional Career Guide © 1993 by The PRSA Foundation.

In this book we attempt to provide insights into how public relations practitioners can address such managerial challenges, which will enhance not only the individual practitioner's status, but also the status of the profession. Armed with this knowledge, we believe practitioners will be better equipped to manage the communication/public relations function more effectively while also demonstrating a general level of managerial competence comparable to that of managerial-level staff from other functions within the organization.

MANAGER**GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Responsible for departmental operations and for constituency and issue trend analysis. Necessary skills include planning, organizing, leading, evaluating, problem solving and consulting.

TITLES AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS:**Manager of Internal Communications**

The person in this position manages all “mass” communications with employees. The function often includes periodical publications, newsletters, magazines, video programs, speeches and specialized materials designed to communicate with employees.

Manager of Member Relations

This title is used in membership organizations such as associations and societies, where members are a special constituency and are as important as customers or shareholders in other types of organizations. The function usually includes responsibility for newsletters, magazines, issues papers, the organization’s annual report, audiovisual presentations, and (sometimes) special materials related to the organization’s annual membership conference.

Manager of Investor Relations

Manages activities related to communicating the company’s financial matters to investors, stock brokers and financial analysts.

Manager of Marketing Communications

Manages the preparation of marketing-related communications materials, public relations and promotions. In consumer product organizations marketing activities may dominate the public relations function, and corporate public relations may serve primarily in the area of investor relations.

Community Relations Manager

Manages public relations activities related to the locations where the organization has a major presence. This includes the city where the organization is headquartered as well as locations regional/district offices, distribution and manufacturing facilities. In corporations, this function generally includes liaison with local news media, the management of the company’s corporate contributions program, and planning and conducting major special events.

Manager of Research

Responsible for managing all activities related to the gathering of information needed in

management decision-making, as well as in the production of publications, audiovisual presentations and speeches.

Manager of Audiovisual Communications

Manages all activities and personnel involved in planning and producing videotape and multimedia presentations intended to convey specific messages to a precisely/defined constituency.

Issues Manager

Manages the function responsible for gathering information on political, economic and social trends that may affect the future of the organization and its products. The function may be staffed, or services may be provided by outside sources.

OTHER TITLES:

Typical titles in public relations and advertising agencies;

Director of Public Relations
Director of Account Services

In management consulting firms:

Director of Communication Services
Director of Media Relations



FIGURE 1.2 PRSA Descriptions of Managerial Responsibilities

Source: Public Relations Professional Career Guide © 1993 by The PRSA Foundation.

Developing an Identity and Finding an Organizational Home: Learning from the Past

Things often make more sense when we understand what has preceded the position/situation we find ourselves in right now. So it is with public relations. Only when we fully appreciate how public relations itself has come to be understood, including how professionals and academics think about it as a concept, function, or discipline, is it possible to carry out a meaningful examination of what it means to manage in the public relations context and what the challenges are that public relations managers face. This section looks back at the last four decades of public relations research by academics and professionals to identify the main perceptions of public relations as a starting point to use in moving into the managerial ranks.

By the time that Grunig and Hunt's (1984) book was published, public relations had begun to emerge from journalism and communication studies curricula as an academic discipline in its own right. By the latter quarter of twentieth century, public relations had become established as a full-fledged, stand-alone major course of study in colleges and universities, beginning in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by rapid curriculum growth in many parts of Europe in the late 1980s and 1990s. Now, in the twenty-first century, academic programs of study in public relations can be found in countries around the world. Such rapid growth in the number and sophistication of academic and professional training programs in public relations can be seen as an indicator of the growing recognition afforded to public relations as an established 'management-level' discipline within the business world, albeit that such recognition may vary from sector to sector, between organizations, as well as varying across cultures and contexts around the world.

The establishment of formal academic programs in public relations has generated a plethora of academic research focusing on public relations from a variety of perspectives, including the ongoing development and maturing of the profession and practice as it earned its way into different management levels. Perspectives ranged from the effects of gender on managerial or technical roles (e.g., Toth & Grunig, 1993; Creedon, 1991; Choi & Hon, 2002), through the development of the four-step process at different levels of management (e.g., Cutlip & Center, 1971) and the boundary-spanning capabilities of public relations practitioners (e.g. Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Jackson & Center, 1975), to the concept of relationship management as a function of public relations (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Grunig & Repper, 1992).

A FRAMEWORK FOR REVIEWING THE PUBLIC RELATIONS LITERATURE

Understanding what research has been completed in the public relations field provides a useful framework within which to develop this book on public relations management. Pavlik (1987) produced one of the first assessments of what research had been done and what research directions might be useful, and *Public Relations Review*,

one of the leading public relations academic journals devotes one of its issues to an annual index of research articles and publications in the field. I have developed a framework for categorizing the public relations literature into a number of core thematic areas which, although used primarily as a teaching aid, also serves as a useful way of framing the literature.

I reviewed a wide range of sources along with other indices covering more than 30 years of public relations research, dividing the identified material into four broad thematic categories (see Figure 1.3): (1) public relations as a concept or idea; (2) public relations as a function; (3) public relations as a process; and (4) public relations as a role. These four distinct but related areas are important because each contributes to building an overall perspective of what public relations is and what it should and can do. Moreover, arguably each of these thematic areas also contribute to building an understanding of the ‘messy’ work of public relations *management*, where functions, departments, and managers overlap in their work.

The outer four areas of the model represent four interrelated areas of research that, when viewed together, reveal something of the contested nature of our understanding

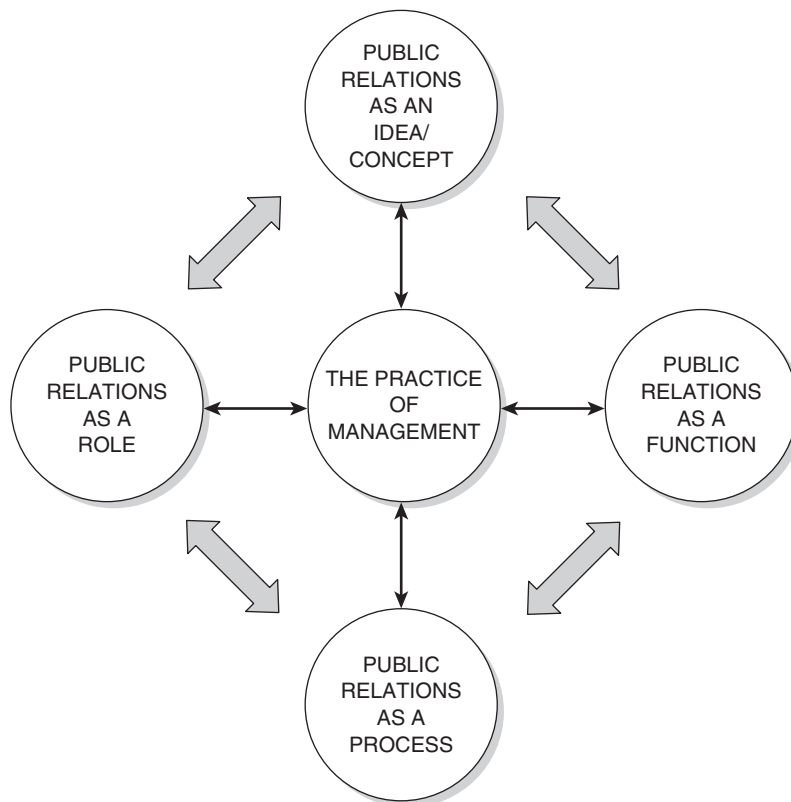


FIGURE 1.3 The Four Categories of Public Relations Research

of public relations as a discipline, as a form of professional practice, and as a set of work-related roles that practitioners perform. Here I have pointed to the strong self-reflecting inward focus of much of this research, with little attention paid to exploring the external context and/or environment outside of the public relations field itself. The concept of ‘management’ in the public relations context has admittedly been discussed in some depth, particularly within the roles literature, but often without drawing comparisons with how management is understood in other functional disciplines, most notably within the mainstream management literature.

For the purposes of this book, we have placed the concept and practice of management at the center of this model to focus attention on understanding what might constitute the tasks and responsibilities of those practitioners occupying ‘managerial level’ roles within organizations; this may also help to highlight where and how practitioners can make substantial contributions to the achievement of broader organizational objectives at all levels of management, not just at the most senior level. Public relations practitioners who begin to think beyond their own functional area and link their communication objectives to the business/organizational objectives of other managers are then in a position to demonstrate the impact that communication/public relations can and should have in organizations. In short, they can participate in the conversation where strategy is developed and implemented.

Category 1: Public Relations as a Concept/Idea

The first of these categories or areas contains literature concerned with public relations as a ‘concept or idea’, and here researchers have sought to uncover a single universal definition of public relations. In essence, agreeing on one definition has the potential benefit of facilitating clearer recognition of what public relations is and stands for. In the 1940s, American practitioner and PRSA founding member Rex Harlow (Cutlip, Center, and Broom, 1985) undertook the monumental task of gathering together all of the definitions of public relations he could find. From the nearly 500 definitions that he catalogued, he worked with the fledgling PRSA to create one ‘official’ definition that he hoped would be sufficiently broad yet sufficiently definitive to be universally recognized and accepted. The resulting definition (see Figure 1.4), while comprehensive, was not terribly memorable or useful as a shorthand way of explaining public relations to a wider audience. And, of course, while the PRSA and other professional bodies may have similar official definitions, this has not stopped academics and professionals from continuing to devise new definitions, which may add to the lack of clarity about what the term ‘public relations’ stands for. Of course, the challenge of identifying one universal definition is made all the more difficult by the realization that public relations practice and people’s understanding of it may well vary in different environmental or organizational contexts, as well as over time and in different cultures, all of which suggests there may be a need to at least adapt how public relations is defined.

OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON PUBLIC RELATIONS

(Formally adopted by PRSA Assembly, November, 1982)

Public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony.

Public relations serves a wide variety of institutions in society such as businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospitals, schools, colleges and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders, and other institutions, and with society at large.

The managements of institutions need to understand the attitudes and values of their publics in order to achieve institutional goals. The goals themselves are shaped by the external environment. The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management and as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action.

As a management function, public relations encompasses the following:

- Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
- Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action, and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization'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 organization's aims. These may include marketing, financial, fundraising, employee, community or government relations, and other programs.
- Planning and implementing the organization'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.
- Examples of the knowledge that may be required in the professional practice of public relations include communication arts, psychology, social psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and the principles of management and ethics. Technical knowledge and skills are required for opinion research, public-issues analysis, media relations, direct mail, institutional advertising, publications, film/video productions, special events, speeches, and presentations.

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 organization and between the organization and the external environment.

FIGURE 1.4 PRSA Statement of Public Relations

Source: Formally adopted by PRSA Assembly, November 6, 1982 http://www.prsa.org/official_statementonpublicrelations.

On the other hand, scholars such as Hutton (1999) have warned that unless public relations finds a way to develop one recognizable identity, it will continue to be relegated to the more technical ranks of practice charged with carrying out the decisions largely taken by others.

While the idea of finding one universally acceptable definition of public relations may prove an impossible challenge, what seems a more logical and achievable goal is

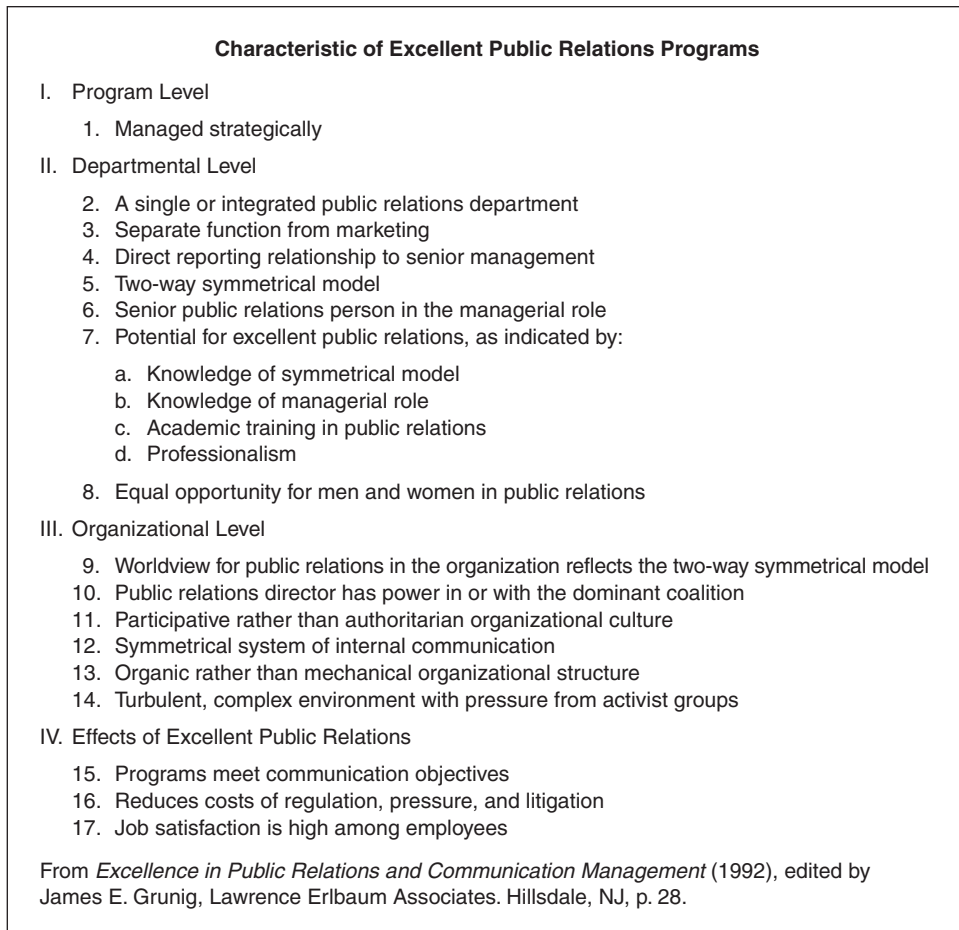


FIGURE 1.5 Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier's Characteristics of Excellent Organizations

to move toward the idea of identifying some more or less common core characteristics of public relations practice and the associated professional skills required of practitioners. For example, Guth and Marsh (2003) propose that the elements of 'management function', 'two-way communication', 'planned activity', 'research-based social science', and 'socially responsible' behavior form the core elements of any definition of public relations (p. 7). Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and Agee (2003) identify the key words to defining public relations as including: 'deliberate, planned, performance, public interest, two-way communication, and management function.' (p. 5). Clearly these examples show that while the context and environment can greatly vary, the concept displays consistent elements and values. Similarly, as we have already pointed to earlier, one of the key outcomes of the 'excellence study' was the identification of a set of key characteristics of excellent communication and public relations practice, as shown in Figure 1.5 (Grunig, 1992; Grunig et al., 1992).

Category 2: Public Relations as a Function

The second category of literature focuses on the idea of public relations as a function that relates to the purpose for which public relations exists. Here the literature looks at what public relations should or can contribute to the organization's overall goals and objectives and in what specific and general ways. Examples include public relations as the conscience of the organization (social responsibility and reputation management), the organizational mouthpiece (media relations), the environmental scanner (issues management or environmental interpreter), or, one of the most often cited, the boundary spanner. Grunig et al. (1992) maintained that the level at which these functions are performed affects whether the practitioner is thought of as a 'manager' or a 'technician', although their focus was limited to identifying the truly excellent organizations and the senior executives in them. Nevertheless, the logic here is that the location of the function within the organizational hierarchy is likely to reflect the dominant coalition's perceptions of public relations which, in turn, will have a significant influence on how far practitioners are able to enact a predominantly managerial rather than technical role. In addition to its relationship with the dominant coalition, public relations must also define its position and contribution in relation to other mainstream organizational functions and levels, such as marketing, human resources, legal, and finance.

Interestingly, 'crisis management' is the one of the areas that appears fairly well defined as the responsibility of the public relations function. One plausible explanation for this link between public relations and crisis management is the often very strong media component present in crisis situations. This harkens back to public relations roots as a 'journalist-in-residence' function (Grunig & Hunt, 1984: 22), when organizations attracted journalists into becoming advocates for them because of their well-developed understanding of the media and how to use it for organizational objectives. Even in crisis situations, however, the level at which the function is carried out depends on the organization's understanding of the public relations function. At one extreme public relations might operate simply as a 'mouthpiece' for disseminating the company line supplied by dominant coalition members, while at the other extreme public relations practitioners may play an active part in helping to construct strategically important messages that might impact significantly on the organization's short- and long-term objectives. Crisis management also provides an interesting insight into how fluid yet crucial the functional level of public relations can be. During a crisis, public relations is often sought out by dominant coalition members for ideas and input, yet once the crisis declines in intensity, public relations may often be relegated to fulfilling a much more routine role within the organization until the next crisis flares up. Figure 1.6 shows typical titles and responsibilities the PRSA has identified as functions of public relations managers.

Category 3: Public Relations as a Process


The third category/area of literature concerns the view of public relations as a 'process'. This area has attracted significant research interest over the years as scholars have attempted to map, explain and conceptualize the public relations process. Here,

MANAGER

TYPICAL TITLES:

Issues Manager

Manager of Audiovisual Communications
 Manager of Community Relations
 Manager of Corporate Communications
 Manager of Internal Communications
 Manager of Investor Relations
 Manager of Marketing Communications
 Manager of Media Relations
 Manager of Member Relations
 Manager of Public Relations/Public Information
 Manager of Publications
 Manager of Research



USUAL RESPONSIBILITIES AT THIS LEVEL:

Using advanced skills to provide constituency and issue trend analysis; departmental management including planning, organizing, budgeting, leading, controlling, evaluating and problem solving,

SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE TYPICALLY REQUIRED AT THIS LEVEL:

For each item, rank your competency on a scale from 1–10 where 1 = Poor, 5 = Average and 10 = Outstanding

- Managing research projects
- Managing internal communications
- Managing media relations
- Managing external communications
- Developing strategies for actions
- Writing objectives
- Reviewing proposals and plans
- Analyzing proposed budgets
- Selling public relations programs to internal/external clients
- Presenting to groups
- Managing speakers bureaus
- Conducting staff conferences
- Giving media interviews
- Interviewing, selecting personnel
- Training staff members
- Coordinating the writing of public relations plans
- Measuring results
- Directing contributions programs
- Supporting marketing with public relations activities
- Selecting, preparing spokespersons
- Supporting fundraising with public relations activities

FIGURE 1.6 The Public Relations Professional Career Guide Description of Managerial Titles Knowledge and Skills

Source: Public Relations Professional Career Guide © 1993 by The PRSA Foundation.

for example, perhaps the best-recognized model of the public relations process is the ubiquitous four-step process model, consisting of research, planning, communication, and evaluation, pioneered by Cutlip and Center (1971) in the fourth edition of their

classic textbook, *Effective Public Relations*. Indeed, the four-step process has spawned a plethora of models describing the sequence of actions to achieve communication/public relations objectives. One possible suggestion for the wealth of literature in this area is that is perhaps the easiest or most visible area to study because researchers can, in effect, observe the sequence of actions as they unfold, producing results that can be relatively straightforward. Indeed, the majority of public relations textbooks tend to adopt a 'process perspective' in examining the field and tend to portray the process as essentially a 'linear one' in which activities and actions follow in a logical sequential way, which of course is not always the case in reality. Moreover, the examination of 'process' generally tends to be rather superficial and inward-looking rather than seeking to explore where and how public relations might interlink with other managerial functions and processes that contribute to the realization of organizational objectives.

Finally, a common theme in the public relations literature is the exhortation that that practitioners should be involved in the strategic management process within organizations (part of the dominant coalition) and should contribute to such decisions. In reality, as we have suggested earlier, public relations tends to be omitted from the top policy-making/decision-making work of the dominant coalition and is often only called in to help implement and communicate strategic decisions developed at a higher level in the absence of any public relations input (White & Dozier, 1992). The implementation of strategic decisions made without public relations input simply reinforces the tactical emphasis found in much of the process of public relations work. Moreover, if one examines the management literature, little if any reference can be found to a role for public relations, particularly in the context of any discussion of strategic decision-making (e.g., Mintzberg, 1994; Johnson & Scholes, 1993). This mutual lack of acknowledgement on the part of public relations and management scholars reflects the difficulty in practice of integrating public relations into the mainstream management processes in the majority of organizations.

Category 4: Public Relations as a Role

The final major category of literature identified in this model centers around the concept of public relations as a 'role' enacted within an organizational setting. The emergence of practitioner roles theory has provided the basis for explaining the recurring patterns of behavior adopted by practitioners in response to the situations they face and, importantly, the expectations of others as to how they should conduct themselves in their jobs. Research into practitioner role enactment is particularly relevant to our examination of the managerial dimensions of public relations work as it has provided the basis for identifying the managerial and technical profiles and specific responsibilities of practitioners working within different organizational structures. Although we will examine the application of roles theory to public relations in greater depth in Chapter 2, where it will be used to inform and underpin our own model of public relations management, here it may be useful to briefly outline the principal practitioner role typologies advanced by Glen Broom (Broom, 1982, Broom & Smith, 1979) and subsequently by David Dozier (Dozier,

TABLE 1.1 The Traditional Four- and Two-Role Typology Models

Four-Role Public Relations Typology	Two-Role Public Relations Typology
Expert Prescriber	
Problem-solving Facilitator	Manager
Communication Facilitator	
Communication Technician	Communication Technician

1984; Broom & Dozier, 1986, Dozier & Broom, 1995). The two dominant roles frameworks that have emerged from roles research, Broom and Smith's four-role typology and Dozier's manager–technician dual typology, are outlined in Table 1.1.

As will be examined further in Chapter 2, Broom and Smith's four-role typology and, more particularly, Dozier's (1984) manager–technician role dichotomy have provided a quite robust framework for broadly explaining practitioner work patterns within the industry. However, these role typologies are acknowledged to be simplifications of the range of activities that practitioners may perform in the course of their jobs and as such are open to a variety of criticisms, not the least being the way in which they conceptualize the essential components of managerial work in the public relations context – a weakness we will explore further in Chapter 2.

Despite such criticisms, roles research has provided some valuable insights into a range of influences on the way practitioners perform their jobs as well as into the status and influence of public relations within organizations. Here, in particular, roles researchers (e.g. Broom & Dozier, 1995; Toth, Serini, Wright, & Emig, 1998; Cline, Toth, Turk, Walters, Johnson, & Smith 1986; Choi & Hon, 2002) have established a strong link between role enactment and gender, arguing that women have traditionally been under-represented within managerial ranks and paid less than their male counterparts for performing similar work. One further comment worth making at this stage is that the vast majority of practitioner roles studies have been conducted among samples of practitioners themselves, rather than gathering data about how other functions and, in particular, how senior management see the role performed by practitioners. Only a few studies, such as Wright (1995) and Hon (1998), have attempted gather this 'outside-in' perspective, which can provide a valuable reality check on how the function is really perceived by powerful elites and others within the organizational setting.

CHALLENGES FACING PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGERS

This brief overview and classification of key areas of public relations literature helps to highlight some key challenges that we believe public relations practitioners and academics have to address if they are, first, to develop a better appreciation of the managerial dimensions of the work practitioners perform, and second, to

secure both externally and internally the recognition and respect for the public relations function. Here we have identified eight key challenges that public relations faces in gaining wider recognition as a mainstream organizational function working alongside other organizational functions, rather than operating in isolation. Each challenge represents an opportunity for professionals and academics to explore public relations as a management function. Considering these eight challenges individually and collectively provides insights into why current thinking about the management function in the communication/public relations context often remains poorly developed and, in many senses, ambiguous. It also suggests areas in which progress needs to be made if public relations is to be recognized widely as a serious and important management function. The eight challenges identified are:

1. The ongoing challenge of defining public relations.
2. Organizational and social ignorance of the value of public relations efforts to organizational efforts.
3. The lack of a formally recognized managerial-level function for public relations within the organization.
4. The overlap and/or encroachment of other managerial functions on public relations functions and roles.
5. The size of the public relations function/presence in most organizations.
6. The breadth and variety of public relations practitioner roles.
7. The varied background of public relations practitioners.
8. The lack of general managerial/business education for public relations technicians and managers.

Challenge #1: Defining public relations

As mentioned earlier, how public relations is defined continues to be a problem for both practitioners and academics. Despite a veritable explosion of academic and professional textbooks and publications devoted to the subject, there has been, if anything, even more controversy over how the boundaries of the discipline or function should be defined. The growth of concern over ethics and corporate social responsibility, the emergence of debates about terminological distinctions such as ‘corporate communications’ or ‘public affairs’ and ‘public relations’, and the increasing use of controversial terms such as ‘spin’ and ‘propaganda’ have all added to the confusion. Naturally, the lack of consensus merely adds to the difficulty in establishing a clear understanding of what the term ‘public relations’ comprises and, hence, what needs to be managed. Ironically, a common theme found in many of the often-cited definitions of public relations is the notion of a function that is primarily concerned with the ‘the management of communication between organizations and their publics or stakeholders’. However, while many of the definitions make reference to the idea of public relations having responsibility for ‘managing’ communication and relationships

with organizational stakeholders, there is little elaboration of what such management processes involve, and equally, at what level within organizations this ‘managerial function’ occurs.

Challenge #2: Organizational and social ignorance of the value of public relations to organizational and societal efforts

Partly because of the lack of a widely accepted and understood definition of public relations, and partly because of the very diverse nature of public relations practice itself, understanding what value public relations can add to social causes, organizational objectives, or corporate outputs is also often confused, and at worst, completely misunderstood. Indeed, public relations has been seen as a form of propaganda, designed to mislead people for the greed of some organizational entity or to persuade people to behave in ways they might otherwise resist. The profession’s failure to devise ways to communicate effectively what public relations is and what it can achieve has allowed commentators outside the profession to fill the vacuum and propagate the image of public relations as a manipulative force, working to obscure or cover up government blunders or corporate malfeasance, or engage in rather frivolous publicity stunts. Public relations receives very little recognition for its role in promoting important social change such as reductions in smoking and poor dietary practice, partly at least because much of this work is low visibility, taking place through the media or other third-party entities or venues. Clearly, in so far as the value of public relations continues to be misunderstood, it makes it all the more difficult for practitioners to gain recognition as performing a significant managerial function.

Challenge #3: The lack of a commonly recognized place for public relations within the organizational structure

A frequently cited complaint from practitioners is that public relations often does not have the appropriate access and reporting relationship it deserves and needs within organizations to be fully effective. Again such complaints can be traced at least in part to the lack of clear understanding of what public relations is and how it contributes to organizational goals. The authors’ earlier research (e.g. DeSanto & Moss, 2004) found a range of reporting relationships and locations for the public relations function within organizations, in some cases reporting to marketing or even finance directors. Where public relations is positioned as subordinate to other managerial functions, it is impossible for public relations practitioners to be recognized as having equal status to other managers. As a consequence, public relations is unlikely to be working to its full potential as a contributor at the managerial level.

Challenge #4: The overlap and/or encroachment of other managerial functions on public relations

Linked to the previous challenge, because public relations is considered a subordinate function with a limited scope for operation, there is always the danger of other *organizational* functions, such as human resource management or marketing, encroaching into what might traditionally be recognized as

the domain of public relations. This is particularly the case with marketing that has tended to annex the publicity element of public relations as a part of the marketing communications and has increasingly sought to annex other elements of public relations work, particularly those concerned with stakeholder relationship-building activities. The emergence of concepts such as 'Marketing-PR' (Harris, 1993) typify this attempt by marketers to encroach into traditional public relations territory. The consequence of such encroachment is to often to diminish the standing of public relations and hence handicap its ability to realize fully the managerial potential of its role.

Challenge #5: The size of the public relations function in most organizations

The size of the department matters, because the more senior practitioners in small public relations departments with relatively few employees tend to find themselves stretched to serve the range of issues, from day-to-day activities to long-term efforts, that may confront them, the more difficult it becomes to free themselves to concentrate on those issues that may enable them to make a more significant contribution at the managerial level. Also, because there has been a noticeable trend toward 'downsizing' the number of staff employed in in-house communication/public relations departments over the past 15 years, it has been increasingly the case that in-house teams are often hard pressed simply to cope with all the routine communication work, let alone have time contemplate how they might make a more strategic contribution to their organizations. However, even in the face of such downsizing, the most talented practitioners have continued to participate as members of the senior management team (dominant coalition) within organizations. Here the key to retaining such a 'seat at the top table' is undoubtedly the practitioner's comprehension of the business and industry, and his/her ability to contribute effectively to business decision-making. Here the obvious challenge for practitioners is to maintain their understanding of business developments and issues as well as how communication affects the business perspective, not simply keep up with and address issues from a communication perspective.

Challenge #6: The breadth and variety of public relations practitioner roles

Linked to the previous issue of department size and recognition of the public relations in an organization is a further challenge for practitioners aspiring to operate at the managerial level, namely the breadth and variety of roles that practitioners may have to perform on a regular basis. The ability of public relations practitioners to turn their hand to a wide variety of problems and challenges is recognized as one of their strengths; but equally, in becoming generalists, practitioners may struggle to gain the depth of understanding of some aspect of management necessary to play a full working part in the eyes of the dominant coalition. In effect, practitioners may have to wear 'many hats', not all of which may fit comfortably on the head of someone wishing to operate at the most senior management level within the organization. Communication is part of all areas, whereas other managers

tend to operate in relatively specific, well-defined areas (human resources, marketing, operations); this presence in all organizational areas poses the special challenge for public relations managers to develop a wide and varied understanding of all organizational functions.

Challenge #7: The varied background of public relations practitioners

A further related challenge for those practitioners wishing to be accepted as members of the senior managerial team in organizations and wishing to develop their managerial competence lies in the varied background of most practitioners. In the main, practitioners have traditionally tended to enter the public relations profession from a journalistic background or from a variety of other fields, and rarely from a mainstream managerial background. While the lack of a mainstream management background need not prove an insurmountable barrier to practitioners participating in the work of the senior management team, clearly where practitioners lack such previous experience they are going to have to work at bridging any gaps in their knowledge, particularly in terms of their understanding not only of the relevant industry and business issues affecting their organizations, but also the key operational issues that determine the success of the business. While many practitioners have bridged this knowledge gap and assumed influential positions within their organization's senior management team, others continue to emphasize their media and publication production knowledge and skills and then bemoan their lack of inclusion at the most senior management levels.

Challenge #8: The lack of general managerial/business training/education for public relations practitioners

The fact that most practitioners typically have entered the public relations profession from journalism partly explains the lack of business knowledge and acumen shown by many practitioners. However, with the growth of public relations education both in the US and in the UK, and increasingly in other parts of the world, there are a growing number of well-qualified young practitioners entering the field each year. The problem with many of these educational programs, however, is that they tend to have been designed to develop the basic knowledge and skills required for entry-level jobs, often excluding anything other than a superficial examination of management theory and practice. This is particularly true of many of the public relations programs offered at US institutions, which have historically tended to be located in journalism or speech communication schools, rather than in business schools. The challenge here is to bring about some change in the balance of the curriculum offered to public relations students, exposing them to a greater degree of relevant management theory in addition to mainstream communication and public relations theories, and thereby helping those graduating to be better prepared to assume more managerial-level positions.

Viewed collectively as well as individually, these eight challenges help explain to a large degree why it has often proved difficult for public relations to be accepted as a

mainstream ‘management’ function within organizations, and hence, why it is that senior practitioners have often struggled to gain acceptance as members of the dominant coalition within organizations. In the course of this book we will examine how such challenges impact on the way communication/public relations practitioners perform their roles within organizations, are viewed by other managerial and senior-level functions within their organizations, and also how, in some cases, practitioners have effectively addressed these challenges and, as a result, are able to perform a mainstream managerial role within their organizations. Our aim is that by helping public relations managers gain an awareness of the importance of understanding and drawing on relevant management theories and principles in performing their roles, they will be better able to earn the recognition and respect of their managerial counterparts within other areas of their organizations. This recognition, in turn, will enhance the understanding of the value of public relations in accomplishing organizational objectives.

SUMMARY

To summarize, this book’s purpose is to demonstrate that the management of communication/public relations takes place at all levels within organizations, not just at the most senior strategic levels. Hence, our theories and examples will blend both the strategic and the operational elements of management practice. Through our new framework, described in the next chapter, we intend to set out an explanatory framework that will provide a platform for holistically explicating communication management as a function, process, and role at all organizational levels, as well as providing a basis for understanding how and why management practices in the communication/public relations context may differ between organizations and cultures.



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A Managerial Perspective of Public Relations: Locating the Function and Analysing the Environmental and Organisational Context

2

Danny Moss

Key Themes

- Understanding the application of the concept of management in the communication/public relations context
- Understanding the nature and practice of management
- A framework for understanding the management process in the communication/public relations context: C-MACIE
- The importance of external and internal context analysis
- Introduction to the key tools for conducting external and internal context and stakeholder analysis
- Understanding the process of management choices in terms of key communication policy and operational decisions
- Implementing communication policies and programmes
- Evaluating communication programmes and outcomes

A COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

As was outlined in the introduction, in writing this book we set out to develop an effective framework for understanding the concept and process of management as applied to organisational communication/public relations departments or functions. As we have already acknowledged, there is still considerable confusion over the terminology used in the organisational communications field, with a healthy debate continuing about how to distinguish between terms such as ‘public relations’, ‘corporate communication(s)’, ‘organisational communication’, ‘public affairs’, ‘strategic communications’, etc. In recent years, a number of strong schools of thought have emerged, perhaps most notably those calling for a reinterpretation of how the concept of corporate communications and public relations, in particular, should be understood (Cornelissen, 2004; van Riel, 1995; Schultz, Hatch, & Larsen, 2000). Rather than becoming embroiled in this ongoing debate about functional definitions and terminology, for the purposes of this book we have chosen to refer to all external and internal communications undertaken on behalf of an organisation as *organisational communications*, and we use the term *communication management* to refer to the application of management principles and practices in the organisational communications context. However, where appropriate, the distinctions are drawn between specialist areas of communication practice, or specialist sub-functions such as public affairs or issues management, in order to identify particular characteristics and process associated with specialist areas of organisational communications that may have particular implications or pose particular challenges for communications management processes.

Definitions

One of the main reasons why we are interested in the application of managerial concepts to the area of organisational communication is that among the numerous definitions of public relations and corporate communication (see Chapter 1) there is a strong emphasis on the positioning of public relations as essentially a function that sits within the management domain. We can see this emphasis in the following well-known definitions of public relations. According to Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2000: 6), ‘Public relations is the *management* function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends’ (emphasis added). For Grunig and Hunt (1984: 6), ‘Public relations is the *management* of communication between an organisation and its publics’ (emphasis added).

A similar managerial emphasis can be found in definitions of corporate communication(s): ‘Corporate communications is a *management* function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups.’ (Cornelissen, 2008: 5).

However, it is one thing to describe the communication/public relations function as a *managerial* function, but what is often not questioned sufficiently is how far the term ‘management’ is universally understood, particularly within the communications

field. While superficially, at least, there may be a more or less common understanding of what the term ‘management’ means, if one probes below the surface there appears to be little depth of understanding of what constitutes the core elements of management, or of managerial processes, particularly among communication scholars and professionals. Indeed, even amongst management scholars a healthy debate continues about how the concept and practice of management should be understood (see Hales, 1986, 2001).

Thus in order to advance an effective framework for understanding the nature and practice of ‘communications management’ in organisations – the management of all forms of internal and externally-directed communications on behalf of an organisation – it is first necessary to clarify our fundamental understanding of the term ‘management’ before going on to examine how it can be applied in the organisational communications context.

The Origins of the Concept of Management and the Manager’s Role

The origins of the term ‘management’ can be traced to the Latin word *manus* (hand) and also to the French terms *ménage* (to handle or direct) and *ménager* (to use carefully, to husband). Thus, managers are, by definition, those people within organisations who hold and exercise responsibility for certain resources and/or other people within an organisation that need to be directed towards the achievement of specified goals. This largely directive view of management is reflected in work of classical management theorists such as Fayol (1949) who identified the key elements of management as comprising *planning*, *organising*, *coordinating*, *commanding* and *controlling* activities within an organisation. Similarly, Gulick and Urwick (1937) advanced the acronym ‘POSDCORB’ to represent what they suggested to be the primary elements of managerial responsibility: *planning*, *organising*, *staffing*, *directing*, *coordinating*, *reporting* and *budgeting*.

While popular at the time, this type of ‘classical’ perspective of management has come under strong criticism from management scholars on a number of grounds:

1. It represents an inward-looking, largely *administrative* view of management which reflects an early emphasis on the drive for efficiency through the ‘control’ of the workforce and the effective utilisation of resources.
2. It portrays management as largely ‘the passive informational control of subordinates’ – a view that has been replaced by a more ‘participative view’ of management with a emphasis on motivating employees through empowerment, co-determination and team working (see Mintzberg, 1994).
3. It places too much emphasis on the internal role of management, and fails to recognise that managers tend to spend as much time dealing with a wide range of *external* stakeholders as they do dealing with internal audiences.
4. However, perhaps the strongest criticisms of the classical perspective of management have focused on the argument that it fails to reflect accurately what it is that managers actually do (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973; Stewart, 1983).

While it is perhaps easy to label the classical perspective of management as a somewhat outdated and essentially reductionist view of management (Mintzberg, 1973; Stewart, 1983), more recent reinterpretations of research into managerial work have questioned whether the classical model of management can be so readily dismissed, suggesting that it might, in fact, still broadly encapsulate many of the *core tasks and responsibilities* performed by managers (Hales, 1986).

What Do Managers Actually Do?

Research over the past three or more decades has focused on uncovering the main work activities of managers (Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973, 1990; Stewart, 1967, 1982, 1988). Here, for example, Kotter suggested that ‘agenda setting’, ‘network building’ and ‘task execution’ are among the most important elements of the manager and, in particular, senior manager roles. In his earlier work, Mintzberg (1973) identified a set of ten related management work roles which he suggested can be grouped into three broad categories – *interpersonal*, *informational* and *decisional* roles (see Figure 2.1). These ten roles, Mintzberg argued at that time, *broadly* described the main areas of management activity and responsibility in organisations. Reflecting critically on this earlier work, Mintzberg (2009) acknowledged that his list of manager work roles, ‘while not without merit, was often criticised by practising managers as essentially too abstract and lifeless’. Mintzberg argued that the difficulty with attempting to generalise about managerial roles and work is that so much managerial work is context-specific – to a specific organisation, function and situation. However, notwithstanding this criticism, Mintzberg has argued that some level of abstraction and generalisation is possible about what distinguishes managerial work.

‘Indeed in an organization a good deal of what we generally accept as intrinsically “managerial” corresponds to specialised functions in the organization: managers brief subordinates, but their organizations have formal information systems; managers serve as figureheads at ceremonial events despite the presence of public relations specialists; managers have long been described as planners and controllers, while near them can be found planning departments. A good part of the work of managing involves doing what specialists do, but in ways that make use of the manager’s special contacts, status and information’ (Mintzberg, 2009: 43).

Reviewing the accumulated literature and documentation on managerial work, Mintzberg (2009) advanced a further general model intended to capture the essence of what managing involves. Here he argued that the manager has an *inward* responsibility for the unit, department or function, ensuring it does what it supposed to do by overseeing, directing, encouraging and controlling the actions of others. The manager relies on information to drive other people to take action. The manager also has an *outward*-facing responsibility for the unit/function’s actions in

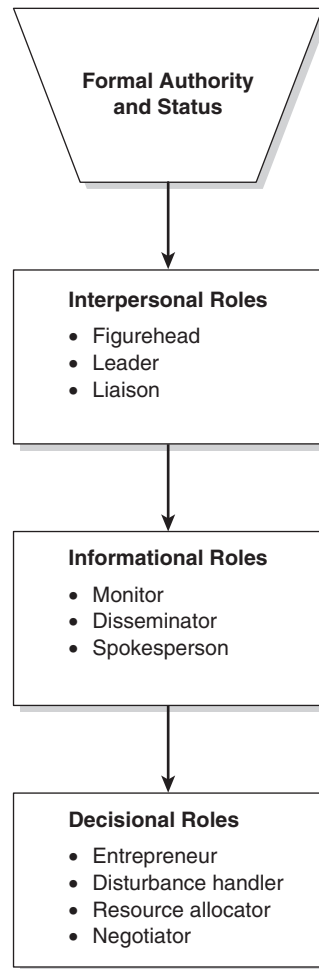


FIGURE 2.1 Mintzberg's (1973) Ten Manager Work Roles, p. 59. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

relation to the rest of the organisation, or to the relevant stakeholders in the external environment – customers, suppliers, local community, etc. In short, Mintzberg suggested that managerial work takes place *on three planes* – from the conceptual to the concrete; with information transmitted through people; and then translated into action directly (2009: 49). This revised model of managing is shown in Figure 2.2. The model suggests that two core roles are performed on each of the three planes. On the *information plane*, managers *communicate* all around the unit and *control* the actions of others inside the unit. On the *people plane*, they *lead* (inside the unit) and *link* the unit to the outside world. Finally, on the *action plane*, managers *do* (take and direct actions) and *deal* with the outside world. For the individual manager two further roles strongly influence how they perform their overall function – the *framing* and *scheduling* of the work. Framing refers to managers' approach to or perception of

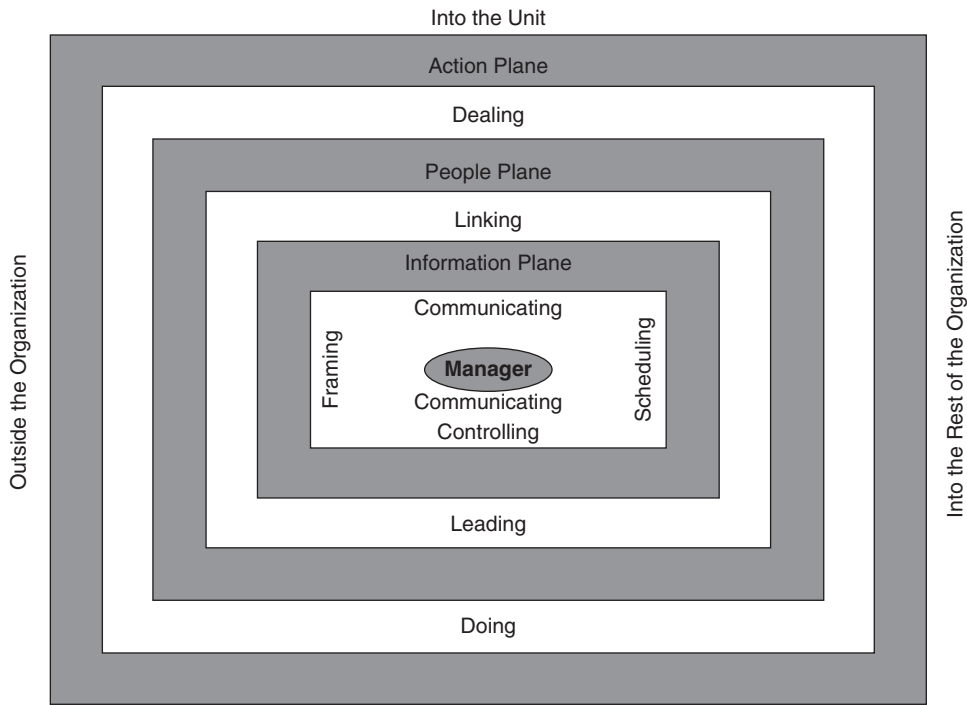


FIGURE 2.2 Mintzberg's (2009) Revised Model of Managing

the job (part of their world-view), and scheduling refers to how they organise their time and that of the rest of the unit to achieve their own and the unit's goals.

In a study published just over ten years after Mintzberg's original model of the manager role appeared, Hales (1986) produced a comprehensive review of some three decades of management research into the nature of managerial work. Hales pointed to the lack of common foci and methodology adopted within the various studies of managerial work which made it very difficult to identify any broad consensus about what might constitute the common elements of managerial work. Hales found that some studies had examined the substantive content of managerial work (what managers do), while others had examined the distribution of managerial time between work elements (how managers work), managerial interactions with others at work (who managers work with), or the informal elements of managerial work (what else do managers do). Moreover, Hales (1986: 93) suggested that there had been a shift in emphasis away from a static analytical approach providing a snapshot-view of managerial work 'towards ... attempts to capture the fluidity of managerial work in its different guises'.

Drawing on this body of evidence, Hales (1986, 2001) concluded that managers appear to perform both *specialist/technical* as well as *general/administrative work*, and the pattern of work will tend to vary, perhaps quite markedly, in different

organisational settings and contexts. The latter conclusion may be of particular significance when considering the *manager's role in the organisational communications context*. Notwithstanding such variations and fluidity in managerial work patterns, Hales (2001:50) identified what research has suggested are a number of more or less common activities that most managers perform to a greater or lesser degree:

1. Acting as a figurehead and leader for an organisational unit.
2. Networking: the formation and maintenance of contacts.
3. Monitoring and disseminating information.
4. Allocating resources to different work activities.
5. Directing and monitoring the work of subordinates.
6. Problem-solving and handling disturbances to work flows.
7. Negotiating with a broad constituency.
8. Innovating processes and products.
9. Planning and scheduling work.
10. Technical work relating to the manager's professional or functional specialism.

Of course, any attempt to prescribe what might be termed as a broad 'generic' set of managerial activities is always likely to attract criticisms from one quarter or another, as it is unlikely that any one set of activities can hope to adequately explain managerial work in all settings and contexts. Nevertheless, the set of broadly 'common' managerial activities outlined in the above list do seem to capture what appears to be the recurring pattern of activities reported in much of the research into the work of managers, which can be seen to focus around the following core areas:

- Day-to-day people management;
- Management of routine information;
- Day-to-day monitoring and maintenance of work processes;
- Non-managerial activities, such as conducting or assisting with technical work.

In short, as Hales (2001: 51) has observed, managers appear to 'share a common and probably inescapable preoccupation with routine day-to-day maintenance of work processes and people for whom they are responsible'. Here arguably some strong parallels can be drawn between these 'common' elements of managerial work and the 'classical principles' of management identified by early management scholars such as Fayol. However, such inferences need to be treated with a degree of caution since more recent research suggests that aspects of planning, coordinating and commanding-type activities have undergone a number of subtle as well as not so subtle changes over the years in response to changing environmental and organisational conditions.

Managerial Behaviour

Turning to managerial behaviour (how managers do what they do), as has already been suggested, managerial work emerges as essentially 'technical, tactical, reactive and

frenetic' in nature (Hales, 1986: 96). Indeed, even senior managers appear to have little time for planning and abstract strategy formulation being subject to constant interruption and engaging in frequent face-to-face meetings. Stewart (1983: 96), one of the leading scholars in the field of management research, captures something of the hectic nature of the typical manager's working day, describing a manager as someone who:

lives in a whirl of activity, in which attention must be switched every few minutes from one subject, problem, and person to another; of an uncertain world where relevant information includes gossip and speculation.... It is a picture not of a manager who sits quietly controlling but who is dependent on many people, other than subordinates, with whom reciprocating relationships should be created; who need to learn how to trade, bargain and compromise.

What this picture of frenetic, fragmentary managerial activity suggests is that the notion of the manager as a strategist, planner and thinker is something of a 'myth' (Mintzberg, 1975), with managers finding themselves constantly diverted from their 'real' work by interruptions and capricious interpersonal contact. However, this apparently rather unstructured and *ad hoc* pattern of managerial work may be somewhat misleading because it may not distinguish clearly between what managers are observed or reported to 'do' (their *behaviour and activities*), and what managers are charged or seek to 'achieve' (their *tasks, responsibilities and functions*). This distinction between managerial 'work' as a set of *actual behaviours* and as a set of *desired* (either by managers or others) *outcomes* may at least in part help to explain why some managerial behaviour may not always seem, in practice or by design, instrumental to the achievement of specific functional responsibilities or intended organisational outcomes. On the other hand, as Brewer and Tomlinson (1964) and others have suggested, this somewhat erratic, verbal and apparently non-decisional character of much managerial work might be consistent with the manager's need to cope with increasing complex and rapidly changing environments through the rapid accumulation and analysis of information and the delegation of decisions. These observations about the characteristics of managerial work can be seen to apply equally to the work of managers operating across the range of organisational functions including communication/public relations.

Managerial Interaction and Communication

Interestingly, studies of managerial behaviour have identified managerial *interaction and communication* as key elements of what managers do and how they perform their roles. Indeed, studies of managerial behaviour have revealed that managers tend to spend 60–80% of their time communicating with others, imparting and receiving information predominantly through face-to-face interaction (Horne & Lupton, 1965; Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973). Here evidence suggests that managers spend much of their time engaged in *lateral* interaction and communication with

other managers of the same status, whereas the degree of *vertical* communication appears to vary considerably among managerial positions within organisations. A good deal of managerial interaction also appears to involve managers responding to requests of others rather than initiating action themselves (Kotter, 1982). Managers also seem to spend a good deal of their time interacting and communicating with others on matters that, on the surface, appear to be wide-ranging and only tenuously connected to business matters, and are often informal in character (Dalton, 1959; Kotter, 1982).

The degree and significance of managerial communication, particularly with external individuals/groups, appears to vary widely by industry, organisation type and managerial position. However, most studies concur that managerial interaction and communication are a central feature of the management process – of what managers do and how they perform their roles. Indeed, Silverman and Jones (1976) have suggested that communication is not simply what managers spend a great deal of time doing, but is the medium through which managerial work *itself* is constituted.

The Informal Aspects of Managerial Work

Not all managerial work is necessarily concerned with the formal purposes of the organisation. Indeed, a number of studies over the years have pointed to the ‘informal or unofficial’ elements of managerial work (e.g., Dalton, 1959; Stewart, 1967, 1982) which are often associated with the internal power struggles and machinations through which managers attempt to preserve their positions, secure or defend their resources, or implement corporate policies at a local level in a more favourable way *vis-à-vis* local line and staff functions.

Although questions are often raised about whether such informal managerial activity is conducive or detrimental to ‘proper’ managerial work, one argument advanced is that such informal practices often serve as the ‘lubricant’ of successful organisational operation and even the preservative of managerial ‘sanity’. Others have argued that it is difficult, if not impossible sometimes, to draw a clear distinction between what constitutes *formal* and *informal* practices as such distinctions will often depend on what individual managers perceive to be, or not to be, part of the job.

Kotter (1982) has also highlighted the important distinction between ‘informal/unofficial’ managerial practices and an ‘informal management style’ of doing things and of communicating with others. The latter refers to a more ‘relaxed’ approach to managerial interaction and communication, which can often prove highly effective in encouraging others to contribute to the achievement of the desired outcomes.

Summarising the Evidence about the Characteristics of Managerial Work

Despite the various caveats and cautions highlighted earlier about treating descriptions of managerial work as largely unproblematic, it is possible to distil some more or less common characteristics of managerial work from the body of extant research:

- Managerial work often combines a specialist/professional element and a more general managerial element.
- Managerial work is contingent upon, *inter alia*, function level, organisation (type, structure, size) and environment.
- The substantive elements of managerial work involve day-to-day responsibility for people and work processes and essential liaison, beneath which are subsumed more detailed work elements which in turn are characterised by: short, interrupted and fragmented activities; a preoccupation with the urgent, *ad hoc* and unforeseen, rather than the planned; and an obligation to react to events, problems and the requirements of others.
- Much managerial time is spent on day-to-day troubleshooting and *ad hoc* problems of organisation and regulation.
- Patterns of managerial communication vary in terms of what the communication is about and with whom it takes place.
- Managers appear to spend a lot of time accounting for and explaining what they do, in informal relationships and ‘politicking’.
- Little time seems to be spent on any one activity, particularly on the conscious, systematic formulation of plans; rather planning and decision-making seem to take place as part of other activities.
- Managerial activities are subject to constant contradiction, cross-pressures and conflicts: much managerial work involves coping with and reconciling internal social and technical conflicts.
- There is often considerable choice exercised in terms of what is done as well as how things are done: an important part of managerial work involves setting the boundaries and negotiating over the work itself.
- Beyond these common characteristics, managerial work appears to vary considerably in terms of: the balance between different elements; the type of contact patterns; the patterns or rhythms of work; where work is carried out (the work context); the extent of dependency on others; the degree of interaction involved; and the degree of choice available.

Thus perhaps the key conclusion that emerges from this review of previous research into managerial work is that any search for uniformity and consistency in managerial work roles and practices may be misplaced, and that a degree of diversity in work activities and roles that appears to exist can be seen to largely reflect the variety of managerial jobs and contexts.

Of course, managerial practice and scholarly debate about it do not stand still, and even the broad consensus that seems to have emerged about the nature of management and managerial work remains under threat as rapid changes in technology and organisational structures over the past decade or more have resulted in marked changes to both the pattern and scope of managerial work. Indeed, some scholars have suggested there is already evidence of a steady demise of managerial positions, particularly at the ‘middle management’ level, as organisations change from hierarchical,

rule-bound bureaucracies to much more decentralised and empowered networks or ‘post-bureaucratic’ organisations, in which skilled knowledge workers and smart computers combine in flexible, task or problem-based self-managing teams (Drucker, 1988; Heckcher & Donnellon, 1994; Kanter, 1989).

However, a more detailed examination of such debates is beyond the scope and the purpose of this book, save to acknowledge that such changes in the nature of mainstream managerial jobs and work may well be echoed in patterns of managerial work found in organisational communications departments or functions. We have provided some guidance to further reading for those interested in pursuing these debates with the management literature at the end of the chapter.

This review of the way the thinking about the concept and practice of management has evolved and about the suggested commonalities as well as diversity in managerial work clearly has some interesting implications for our understanding of managerial roles and work in the organisational communications context. Indeed, how this book differs from other books in this field is in the explicit parallels we have attempted to draw with management theory. In fact, we believe that it makes little sense to talk about public relations as a ‘management’ function unless we have a clear understanding of what this term means and how it is understood by other organisational functions. In the following sections of this chapter we examine how professional and academic thinking about the concept of management and the manager’s role in the organisational communications context has developed, and we go on to advance what we believe is a useful framework for examining the managerial process and managerial practice in this context.

AN EVOLVING THEORETICAL DOMAIN

As with virtually all disciplines, thinking and theorising about public relations continue to take place, albeit with the pace and magnitude of change varying over time. Moreover, there has been considerable debate about the disciplinary ‘roots’ of public relations theory, particularly in terms of whether it should be considered a management- or communications-based discipline. Looking more specifically at research and theorising about the *management* of communication within organisations, Vercic and Grunig (2000) suggested that the origins of public relations theory can be traced back to early ‘economic theories of the firm’, and in particular to the preoccupation with efficiency of organisational behaviour, perhaps most closely associated with the ground-breaking work of F.W. Taylor in the early twentieth century. Taylor went on to disseminate his ideas in his seminal work, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, published in 1911. Vercic and Grunig suggest that Edward Bernays, who is widely acknowledged as the one of the founding figures of professional public relations, utilised similar principles to Taylor to establish public relations as a ‘scientific approach’ to the management of firms’ relationships with their environments. Bernays (1923, 1928, 1955) saw the key elements of this process as ‘crystallizing, manipulation, and ultimately the engineering of public opinion’. Bernays (1928: 44)