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Strategic Communication Concepts

Summary

Strategic communication (SC) is practiced in many fields, including communication, the military sciences, business management and marketing, politics, public health and a host of others. All the fields that practice SC have developed terms, practices and definitions to meet their own needs. The first purpose of this book is to unify the understanding and practice of strategic communication across these subfields. The job of this first chapter, then, is to lay the foundation for doing so by providing an understanding of SC that can be used across all constituent subfields at all three levels of grand strategic, strategic and tactical communication. To do that, this chapter briefly introduces the scope of SC and how this book is organized and then defines grand strategy, strategy and tactics and explains their relationships. With this background, the chapter then defines SC and explains four generic grand strategies, which serve as archetypes of the policy views that guide much SC practice.

Strategic Communication Is Big and Getting Bigger

The first challenge for anyone studying or practicing strategic communication is that the field is growing so fast in both its core employment and at its margins that no one can get a good handle on all the places and ways we practice it. In addition, there is no generally accepted list of all the constituent subfields of SC, although as discussed later what data there is suggests that the largest subfields of SC include public relations (PR), marketing-advertising-promotion, and public health education (also sometimes known as social marketing). In the United States, for example, there are separate federal employment statistics available that fit pretty well with these three, which can be called the core subfields because the primary purpose of each is to conduct communication campaigns.

Many other fields have only one or a few members doing SC work per organization where the primary purpose is something other than communication campaigns, so these can be described as secondary or peripheral subfields. These are SC practitioners who might work for units of government, in political campaigns, for charities, for religious organizations, as community advocates, in the armed forces, in corporate communication departments, and in the newly emerging communication industries such as social media, web-page design and online research, as well as some independent practitioners and consultants and so on. Although the primary purpose of these fields is not communication

campaigns, the practitioners who work in them are by no means marginal practitioners and they may or may not outnumber the SC practitioners working in the core subfields of SC. However, there are no separate data collected on these practitioners and as a practical matter they are uncountable today. Then there is the academic field of organizational communication, to which SC owes substantial intellectual and practical debts. Organizational communication is (a) where many SC practitioners, both core and secondary, get their academic training, (b) the historical home of much SC research (see especially the rhetorical organizational communication tradition), and (c) a subject area that does not restrict itself to strategic campaigns, so it is not a core subfield of SC.

Employment in SC

It is very difficult to estimate SC employment in any one country, let alone worldwide. This is largely due to two related issues. First, there appear to be no data published for strategic communication by that name. Second, the enormous SC employment in secondary subfields is not parsed out and reported anywhere. On the other hand, there are some data available for the three core subfields in some countries, such as the United States, that can provide some guidance in understanding SC employment, although the way employment categories are grouped again injects some lack of precision.

In the case of public relations in the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) separates the 240,700 non-management public relations specialists from the 65,800 public relations and fund-raising managers (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016–17). But then BLS data do not similarly report on non-management marketing communication specialists at all. Instead they merely report 225,200 “advertising, promotions and marketing managers,” not all of which fit the definition of strategic communicators. These data, in turn, appear to contribute significantly to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016–17) overall estimate of 484,640 in “advertising, public relations and related services.” Not included in this figure, however, are all the non-management jobs in marketing or the 63,000 health educators (social marketers or social marketing), many of which are core SC practitioners. Notably, health communication jobs are expected to grow much faster than PR or advertising, promotions and marketing jobs.

Clearly, adding up all the jobs and job growth in the core and margins of SC would be impossible, but an estimate of SC employment in the three federally reported core subfields in the US alone by 2020 would be in the range of 600,000–750,000. A guesstimate of total SC employment in the US alone by 2020 would be well over a million, suggested in part by the number of job openings in SC today. For example, in August 2015 one internet job site alone listed 149,797 job openings in strategic communication, although some of the listed jobs fell short of what would be called SC in this book (Indeed.com, 2015). The same source listed 64,954 PR jobs, 228,491 jobs in marketing communication and 375,460 jobs in health communication on the same date, although many of these listings clearly overlap, job titles are a bit subjective and, again, not all the jobs listed on this site fit the definition of SC used in this book.

A guesstimate for worldwide SC employment by 2025 might be in the range of 2–2.5 million jobs, with the largest numbers in the US, Europe (France, United Kingdom and Germany leading) and China. This is at best a wild guess, but a quick check of how much SC is discussed on the internet every day can at least hint at the size of the field and maybe at future employment.

SC on the Internet

The number of SC hits found with simple internet searches appears to be in the area of 50–100 million. In 2010, Yahoo alone returned 204,003,168 hits, but with possible changes to their search procedures that number had dropped to only 16,400,000 by late 2015, at a time when Google had 36,900,000 and

Bing 11,700,000. Many but not all of these are clearly duplicates, but since it would take the reader years just to visit this many sites, with no time for downloading or reading to confirm their content, gross estimates will have to do.

SC's rate of growth in the scholarly arena is also impressive. For example, Google Scholar listed 2,700,000 academic-related SC publications by late 2015, more than double the 1,220,000 of 2010. A 2010 search for SC in the most used scholarly database in just the Communication field (ComAbstracts) returned 369 journal articles, a number that grew to 690 by mid-2012, while ProQuest listed 27,597 documents. A search for SC in the largest scholarly database in management sciences returned only 1,355 sources in 2010 but 3,534 in 2012. SC is growing at a tremendous rate but it is probably not doubling every two years, so these data again suggest that search protocols may have changed. In addition, in the same era, military periodicals as a group contain 11,777 articles on SC, and the ISI Web of Knowledge lists 1,428 books and journal articles. The Science Direct database offers 590 sources, EBSCO Host lists 2,421 sources and, finally, Dissertation Abstracts International lists 1,180 PhD dissertations since 1861 that address SC in some way.

Organization and Goal of This Book

This book is made up of 10 chapters divided into three parts. The first part, "Elements," addresses the basic concepts and components of SC in four chapters: (1) SC as a field, the roles of grand strategy, strategy and tactics and basic grand strategies; (2) the relationship of theory and practice, and an explanation of the cocreational metatheory and the cocreational molecule; (3) the centrality of stakeholders, customers, markets, audiences and publics and how these differ from each other, as well as how publics form and function. Finally, Chapter 4 addresses ethics in SC and related subfields, as well as ethical pledges for practitioners and organizations.

The second part, "Strategies," covers strategic implications and issues in three chapters: (5) issues and issues management, including crises; (6) deriving basic campaign strategies and tactics from theory; and (7) a cocreational view of SC in risk and preparedness situations.

The third part, "New Challenges," offers a cocreational perspective on new and expanding challenges in SC, also in three chapters, including (8) social media and other new information technologies in SC; (9) a cocreational view of international and intercultural SC, including public diplomacy; and (10) terrorist and counterterrorist SC from the cocreational view.

Note that this book does not contain a separate chapter on research in spite of its central role in all strategic communication, and particularly in any cocreational approach. Covering research in SC could take up a whole book if done properly, so there is no way a single chapter could do the subject justice. There are also numerous research methods texts and guides in several SC subfields. Two non-objective recommendations would be *Investigating Communication* by Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000), which is a basic text on research methods, and *Interpreting Communication Research* by Frey, Botan, Friedman and Kreps (1992), which is a case study approach to research methods.

The goal of this book is to use the best that each subfield of SC has to offer and combine those into a single comprehensive publics-centered view intended to be useful to those practicing, researching or teaching in all the subfields of SC. In other words, one goal of this book is to answer the question: How can a field like marketing or charity fundraising help improve the practice of SC in political campaigning or public diplomacy? The question is not whether simple tactical skills can be useful across subfields—many can and several good writing books address this tactical level, including Kent (2010), Meeske (2008), Newsom and Haynes (2010), and Rich (2009). The real issue is whether, and how, strategic-level skills can be used across fields.

The next two sections of this chapter help lay a foundation for defining SC from a cocreational perspective by discussing how communication can be constitutive of organizations and what role information plays in SC.

Communication as Constitutive

Because SC is about communication, the discussion in this book assumes an understanding of what communication is, because explaining that is too big a task to add to this book. One important understanding that helps shape this book is that communication plays a much bigger role in organizations than most realize. In fact, as our colleagues in organizational communication have been telling us for more than a generation, communication is more than just a tactical tool of an organization—it is constitutive of all human organizations, meaning that communication is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for building and operating all human organizations. This means communication is a core function of every human organization, so when you work with communication in an organization, you are working with that organization's very core.

For example, imagine that you have a pile of bricks, money in the bank, a bunch of people standing around who are willing to work, desks and computers. Do you have an organization? No. An organization comes into existence only when repetitive flows of communication are established that allow for specialization and division of labor, as well as coordination. The thing we call an organization is the result (i.e., the “product”) of the process of communication. This is not to say that the organization is made up only of communication, but rather that organizations cannot exist in the absence of systematic communication. Thus SC is not just about externally directed campaigns. Instead SC includes all the strategic uses of communication within and by organizations. In this sense, not only are PR, marketing and health communication subfields of SC, but so is much of organizational communication. No nation, non-governmental organization (NGO), corporation or military organization comes into existence without SC playing some role, usually a large one, which means that both armies and countries are, in part, products of the process of SC. The idea that communication as constitutive is also used by some to suggest that reality itself is socially constructed through communication (cf. Berger and Luckman, 1966; Gergen, 1985), although this discussion is, again, beyond the scope of this book.

Role of information Understanding that communication is constitutive of both organizations and publics is important for understanding the role of information in SC. As used in this book, information is simply what reduces uncertainty (Daft and Lengel, 1986; Shannon and Weaver, 1998). In SC this includes both the inflow of information into the organization about publics and the outflow of information to publics that they can use to reduce the uncertainty in their minds. Information is what publics use to create new knowledge and meanings for themselves and others. In a way, information is a fuel for the cocreational process. One major implication of this for SC is that to provide publics with information, what reduces uncertainty, a practitioner must first somehow assess what publics already know. This is another reason real SC always begins and ends with research.

As used in this book, the term “strategic communication” refers only to the planned campaigns that grow out of first understanding what publics think and want. Campaigns based on anything else may be creative, insightful, long, short, well run, poorly run and have other attributes; they just cannot be strategic because their relationship to what publics are thinking is not clear so what are called strategies may not in fact be strategic.

With the size of SC reported, the organization and goal of the book established, and the constitutive role of communication explained, this chapter now turns to one of its two central tasks, explaining and defining SC and closely related concepts, including grand strategy, strategy and tactics.

General Definition and Role of SC

Used by many fields and in many ways, the term SC has taken on a life of its own. Unfortunately, SC is sometimes used as just a buzzword. For example “consultants” selling pre-packaged sets of fill-in-the-blank forms providing a sort of checklist of the questions that should be answered in planning a campaign seem to think they can charge more if they call the paper with blank lines on it a *strategic* plan than if the blanks were not labeled as being strategic. Even more problematic are those who believe that simply following orders from higher ups, or being a tactician in a campaign planned by others, makes them strategic communicators. Following this logic a little further would mean that the tactician working on a poorly conceived (non-strategic) plan would be acting strategically. Perversely, this might even be taken as proof that the plan itself has become ipso facto strategic.

These views of SC are erroneous. In communication, the term strategic should be taken to mean campaign plans based on research. More specifically, as in this book, the term strategic means that good communication strategy begins with what publics think and feel about our relationships with them. Thus it is the *information inflow* portion of SC that comes first and that can be most important to others in the organization as well. Because SC practitioners who practice strategically are often the most aware of, and often best trained to understand, the range of relationships an organization develops with its publics, the department or division charged with leading SC should usually be the default organization-wide collector of strategic information, with other departments and divisions engaging in specialized information collection as needed. As a primary provider of strategic information on publics—information which is often time-critical and can affect both the organization as a whole and relationships among its divisions—there should be a direct reporting link from the information inflow function of SC to at least the COO level of the organization, if not the CEO level.

Thus, SC is one practice with two parts. The first part is collecting *strategic information*. The second part is developing *planned strategic communication campaigns* based on the information collected. From the point of view of SC, the information brought into an organization is strategic information insofar as it is information that can be used to describe, explain or predict the relationship between an organization and its publics (Figure 1). Describing, explaining and predicting relationships with publics are then the foundation of strategic campaign planning. This is why real SC always begins with publics and never with the simple wishes of the organization. Strategic campaigns should be based on a realistic understanding of current and potential relationships rather than on wishes. Starting from the wishes of the organization may be part of why campaigns have historically had extremely low (often single-digit) success rates.

People from different fields and with different interests define the term SC in very specific ways so there is little agreement as to what it means. In fact, what SC is and how to practice it can be disputed even within a single organization if it is a large one or highly segmented. For example, Josten (2006) describes parts of the federal government as unable to agree: “presently the Department of Defense (DOD), US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), and other USG agencies are struggling with the concept of strategic communication (SC). There are several definitions of SC within the government, with some consensus that Military Information Operations (IO), Public Diplomacy (PD), and Public Affairs (PA) are primary components” (p. 16).

Figure 1 Strategic information defined

Strategic information is information that can be used to describe, explain or predict the relationships between an organization and its publics.

However, these fields often do appear to agree on at least two things about SC. As opposed to non-strategic efforts, SC involves (1) research about the publics and the lie of the land, and (2) constructing a *plan* that takes into account both the goals of the organization and the feelings, needs and attitudes of publics. A third common element might be implied, although it is not explicit: (3) SC uses evaluative research to assess how publics think and feel during and after a campaign.

This is an opportune point to introduce a metaphor to help visualize the relationship of subfields to the overall field of SC, and for a definition of SC derived, in part, from my earlier definitions of both the subfield of public relations and of strategic communication.

Tree metaphor of strategic communication as a gestalt SC is a gestalt, a whole. This simply means that while something is made up of parts, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and that the whole would be something different if any of its parts were missing. A tree can be used as a metaphor for a gestalt because it is made up of roots, trunk, branches, leaves, etc., but none of these can survive on its own. To be a living whole—and greater than the sum of its parts—each part needs the other parts and when they work in concert they make a new living thing.

SC can be thought of as similar to a tree in the sense that the various subfields and the specializations within them are like the branches and leaves of a tree. Each looks separate to the casual observer, but a trunk and root system supports all the branches and leaves and ties them all together into a whole living thing. Therefore, although there are boundaries between the subsystems of a tree (the trunk and leaves do have differences, for example), the boundaries are often not as important as the function of each as a necessary subsystem, what each subsystem contributes to making the whole viable.

The subfields of SC are a little like the branches of a tree in that each looks separate from the others. But there is something that links all of SC together, much as a tree's trunk links the branches together. This SC "trunk" is made up of at least the three things that are characteristic of all SC subfields: (1) the central role of publics in the relationship between a group or organization and its publics, (2) research as the source of information about that relationship, and (3) communication campaigns using strategies derived from research. The most professional strategic campaigns have three additional characteristics: (4) evaluative research and a willingness to be evaluated on the basis of it, (5) an express willingness of the group or organization to change itself to adapt to the needs of publics rather than just seeking ways to get publics to change, and (6) adherence to an ethical code or set of standards. To extend this metaphor just a little more, the whole tree is supported by its root system, which draws nourishment from the soil *before* there can be branches or leaves. For an organization's strategic communication, the soil we draw nourishment from is our publics, which helps explain numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 just noted. For the purpose of SC strategy begins with publics at the center of the process, and it is our relationship with them that is most important. The message actually exists only to serve this relationship; thus message crafting or testing should never be thought of as a separate part of SC. Figure 2 defines strategic communication from the perspective of the cocreational metatheory (explained in Chapter 2).

SC is the use of information flowing *into* the organization (research) to *plan* and carry out a communication campaign addressing the relationship between an organization and its publics. SC is research based and publics centered rather than organization or message centered.

Figure 2 Strategic communication defined

This definition involves several components that are discussed throughout the book. For now it is enough to note three things.

- 1) Both planning and implementation are part of SC, but the planning and implementation aspects can be separate and carried out by different people. When this happens, the planner is practicing SC while someone who only implements the plans of others is basically just practicing tactical communication.
- 2) To help see that this definition is another thread that runs through the book, it can be linked easily to the discussions in Chapters 2, 3 and 6 by just stopping to think of a campaign plan as a kind of mini-theory. The next chapter, for example, defines a theory as a statement about the relationship between two or more phenomena. In a plan, practitioners basically predict that if they do certain things there may be predictable effects on their relationships with publics. Thus, a campaign plan is a kind of mini-theory.
- 3) There are meaningful distinctions between the setting of organizational policies, the development of campaign strategies, and the implementation of a campaign, as discussed next in the relationship of grand strategy, strategy and tactics.

Grand Strategy, Strategy and Tactics

The concepts of strategy and tactics are generally not new to experienced scholars or practitioners, although grand strategy may be. Grand strategy helps explain some of the widely disparate assumptions, findings, and advice in the business literature, the public relations literature, public diplomacy, and elsewhere.

Many fields have used the terms strategy and tactics to mean slightly different things but there are some similarities. Drawing on those similarities, this discussion has four goals, to explain: (1) the idea of analoguing, (2) the idea of grand strategy, (3) four archetypal grand strategies (similar to organizational worldviews), and (4) how grand strategy, strategy and tactics are related. Much of this discussion is an adaptation of Botan (2006) and begins with a brief historical background.

History

Strategy and tactics are concepts originally developed in military sciences over about two and a half millennia, so it is no surprise that SC is used by militaries around the world. Acknowledging the military background of an idea, however, does not mean that SC campaigns should adopt a military perspective or discuss “defeating” anyone. Only the most backward practitioner would suggest such a possibility. Among others, Cutlip (1994) and Moore (2010) have written about the history of SC, although Cutlip’s large volume was limited to the subfield of PR.

Although it may be a bit of a stretch for some readers, Moore (2010) worked with his own view of what SC is and suggested that the earliest SC occurred in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods and was introduced to help overcome the uncertainties of life then, often with a religious element.

This process [SC] may be speculatively traced archaeologically in the cave paintings and rock art surviving in France, Spain, Australia, South Africa, and the southern United States, or the “Venus” figurines found across central and eastern Europe, to the astonishing ceremonial sanctuaries like Gobekli Tepi in Turkey and other burial chambers and temples of seminomadic and

more settled societies of later hunters and early cultivators in at least the Mesolithic and Neolithic, under excavation in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. These first great attempts at organized as opposed to spontaneous or personal communication are, so far as can be known, ritualistic or proto-religious. (p. 228)

Much ancient architecture had as one of its purposes impressing audiences with how powerful and important the builders were, often by combining the secular with the religious and military. For example, Moore (2010) reported that

Pharaoh Ramesses II combined these features in the temples to himself, his gods, and his family at Abu Simbel completed around 1264 BC, fronted with statues of himself, decorated inside with painted reliefs of Ramesses worshipping himself and defeating the Hittites at Kadesh (in reality a probable tie). Abu Simbel faces the Nile on the southern border of Egypt. The location was important to awe the Nubians to the south. The orientation was important because it was [the] first thing travelers to his land saw as they journeyed down-river. The function and decoration were important because they defined the Pharaoh's public personality. (p. 233)

I was similarly impressed when visiting the tomb of Ramesses II (also Rameses or Ramses) in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. You enter the tomb through a large somewhat square entry and are immediately surrounded by hieroglyphs painted on the walls and ceiling. These depict both writings from the famous *Book of the Dead*, a primary religious document of the day, and illustrations of Ramesses's military victories, with prisoners being marched into slavery and his chariot riding over the broken bodies of his opponents. Since the plan was to seal up the tomb, keeping it hidden and dark for all time, it seemed clear the most likely intended audience was the gods of the day. Thus, combining religious sayings with military depictions and gold may well have been an attempt to communicate a strategic message to the gods that Ramesses either was already one of them, or should be admitted into their membership.

In business, the term strategy appears to have a much shorter history. For example, Kay, McKiernan and Faulkner (2003) say they trace

the evolution of thinking about business strategy over the nearly forty years in which it has been identified as a distinct subject ... we begin from the 1960s perspective in which strategy was largely equated with corporate planning, describe the 1970s emphasis on diversification and portfolio planning and observe concern in the 1980s for concentration on the core business and the development of less analytic, more people-oriented approaches to management. (pp. 27–28)

Although the concept is ancient, the term grand strategy has a relatively short history. The authors of the books *Grand Strategy* (Sargeant and West, 1941) and *Strategy* (Hart, 1954) are among those who have distinguished between grand strategy and strategy based on the original work of Sun Tzu in the 5th century BCE (Sun Tzu, 1963). For them, strategy operates at the level of a campaign, while grand strategy operates far above the level of a campaign. For example, at the level of a whole country, grand strategy is not a property of the military (except in military dictatorships) but involves questions of policy and planning at the highest levels of government. At the level of a nation, this means, for example, diplomacy and national alliances. Strategy, on the other hand, is a property of campaigns

and is about planning and the maneuvering and allocation of resources. As Sargeant and West (1941) explained the relationship:

We all try to keep informed on military strategy—the maneuvering of the general staff and the commanders in chief. But what of grand strategy ...? This highest type of strategy emanates not from the military chiefs but from the war cabinets and their advisors, above all the Prime Minister or President. (p. vii)

This discussion returns to the relationship of grand strategy, strategy and tactics after a discussion of analoguing, the process being used here to explain grand strategy, strategy and tactics. A short caveat is in order before moving on to analoguing. This discussion of the history of SC has, by virtue of being short, also been very incomplete. Each subfield has its own history, many parts of which may support the view that it is a subpart of SC as described here, and many parts of which may support that view that important aspects of the history of that subfield do not fit within SC. Public relations, for example, has quite different histories in different countries (see the discussion of the matrix in Chapter 9). In the US and Canada, for example, PR largely evolved out of journalism, so views of the field often focus on superficial similarities between journalistic writing and PR writing, as well as the important economic role of media relations practices in both journalism and PR. These similarities exist primarily at the *tactical* level, however, and ignore the fundamentally different *strategic* and *societal* roles of the two fields. The emphasis on using journalism practices at the *tactical* level in PR has led to a tactical self-concept for many in PR (including the author, for many years). This tactical self-concept has in turn contributed to holding down pay levels of practitioners, limiting perceived job opportunities, quite different emphases in PR curricula at the university level and, most important, a message- and sender-centered focus that is diametrically opposed to the cocreational view this book is based in. These differences suggest that some of those in PR who self-identify with a more tactical perspective, including but certainly not limited to the hired gun and technician models discussed in Chapter 4, may be made uncomfortable, or even angry, by seeing their field discussed as a subfield of *strategic* communication. It is easy to imagine that there are many such historical artifacts in other SC subfields that merit analysis but doing so would require specialists from each subfield who understand their own subfield, and its history, far better than the author does.

Analoguing

Analoguing is the metatheoretic practice of overlaying terms and their relationships from one theory or conceptual model onto another so as to better understand a relationship under investigation. Hawes (1975) discussed analoguing at length (cf. pp. 7, 110–117) and Botan and Hazleton (1989) discussed its application in the first chapter of *Public Relations Theory*.

To help make it easy to apply the concepts of grand strategy, strategy and tactics to other strategic communication contexts, it is easiest to start at the grand strategy level and use a hypothetical example. In the military context (recall that SC is not about fighting or conquest), the grand strategic level is government policy and alliances. Therefore, in SC, the analog of the grand strategic level is organizational, industrial, and even society-level policies and laws. In the military context, the strategic level is the war or campaign planning level usually carried out by a general staff. Strategies address the planning and maneuvering of personnel and resources to carry out a campaign-level mission and are a property of campaigns. The analog of the strategic level in SC is the planning and maneuvering of resources such as what information will be collected (research) or disclosed, to which publics, what arguments will be made, and in what order. In a military context, the tactical

level is the actual fighting required to carry out a strategy and is often conducted by low- to mid-level officers and enlisted personnel. Note that both military organizations and corporations often have a fairly clear line of demarcation between those who carry out tactics and those who do strategic planning. Few if any enlisted personnel are likely to be involved in a general staff's strategic deliberations, and few if any staff charged with maintaining clippings files or media relations contact lists are likely to be involved in planning the strategy of a \$20 million marketing campaign.

For example, if the company you work for as an SC manager has decided to expand from just web-page hosting into selling advertising, it has made a policy-level (grand strategy) decision to change the fundamental business it is in, work with new partners and suppliers (the analog of alliances for a nation) and to take on new competitors and new risks. As an SC manager you hopefully shared in the decision-making process but you did not have the authority to make this decision on your own. Once the policy-level decision is made, however, you might well take the lead in developing communication strategies for implementing the new policy with customers, investors, the media and employees, among others. You might involve your most senior subordinates in this process but probably not your communication technicians who build and maintain your website. One of your strategies might be to reassure key customers, and maybe investors, before a public announcement so they feel they are trusted and that they can trust you. You might develop several ideas to share with them—strategies—such as emphasizing continuation of their already successful relationship with your company while benefiting from cost savings by having a single company provide both mass media advertising and web-page content. The strategies involve deciding what ideas and evidence to present, what arguments to make, in what order, to which type of customer. Your strategy is the plan, while the steps taken to actually carry out the plan are the tactics. You might assign people to units to develop ideas to implement this strategy, such as personal informational visits to major investors before the public announcement. Tactics for implementing this strategy might include producing visual aids (videos, booklets, diagrams, etc.), requesting informational meetings and so on. Actually producing the visual aids is not a strategic endeavor, any more than writing and mailing letters or making calls is, but the content (arguments and logic) of them is strategic. The tactics are the concrete form your strategies take, so tactics are often directly measurable while strategies may have to be measured indirectly. For example, this strategy of assessing key customers might have to be measured by critiquing the impact of each of several tactics and then summarizing the effect of the overall strategy. Tactics give your strategies substance and make them real. Without tactics to make them real, strategies are just ideas, in the same way as grand strategies are just wishes without strategies to implement them.

Specifically measurable outputs Note that a single tactic such as making a video to show customers is often accomplished by breaking the work down into even smaller measurable tasks that can be called *specifically measurable outputs*. These are the actual units of tactical work that are measured, such as hours used, pages of written script, the number of news releases sent out and so on. Specifically, measurable outputs are not different from tactics in kind (in the way tactics are different from strategy): they are merely the measurable units of work within a tactic. Thus, some tactics are directly measureable because they are specifically measurable outputs. That is, there is no need for smaller units of work to implement some tactics, such as simply giving an oral presentation. Other tactics may be measured through more than one specifically measurable output.

Level of analysis The relationship between grand strategy, strategy and tactics is easiest to see if one is clear about level of analysis. As strategic communicators, our level of analysis is almost always the

campaign level. For us, the grand strategy is the policy-level decision that we must follow, while tactics are the actual work procedures used to implement the strategic plans we create.

Unfortunately, these three simple-sounding levels of SC are often hard to differentiate in practice. *The relationship between strategy, tactics and specific outputs gets complicated when practitioners lose perspective and begin to think from their own point of view rather than from a campaign perspective.* In such cases, practitioners might quite validly say that they got an assignment and had to figure out a strategy for implementing it; or that they are working as part of an SC campaign so they must be being strategic. The level of analysis in SC is the campaign, not the individual practitioner's workload. As long as practices are looked at from the perspective of the whole campaign, it is easy to see that strategies are parts of the campaign plan. Individual practitioners who think of ways to carry out one piece of a campaign may be being creative and doing SC work but their decisions are not about the whole campaign so what they are doing is not campaign strategy—it is implementing someone else's campaign strategies. Remember, however, that those *strategies only become concrete and have a real-world existence because someone is implementing them, so each practitioner is a valuable and indispensable part of SC but not necessarily making decisions at the strategic (i.e., campaign) level* and that work done without guidance from a strategy is not *strategic* communication.

With analoguing complete it is possible to define grand strategy, strategy and tactics in general enough terms to be used across SC applications.

Grand Strategy

Most organizations and many publics adopt grand strategies for dealing with their environments. These are analogous to but different from the grand strategies of nations (see Figure 3). For example, Toyota had a grand strategy that led to making three brands of cars for different market segments. As a result, Toyota developed strategies for three advertising and marketing campaigns covering Toyota, Lexus and Scion, which has since merged back into the Toyota brand. Each brand's marketing strategy must be subordinate to the corporate grand strategy of brand differentiation for different market segments. Corporate grand strategy outranks any one strategic marketing campaign, so, for example, the Toyota brand is not allowed to encroach on Lexus's luxury turf.

Figure 3 Grand strategy defined

Grand strategy is the policy-level decisions an organization makes about goals, alignments, ethics and relationships with publics and other forces in its environment. (Botan, 2006)

Strategy

Because strategies must be subordinate to grand strategies, the public relations staff of the US White House and the staff of Exxon-Mobil were constrained by the grand strategies of their organizations during different crises. Exxon-Mobil practitioners, for example, were no freer to admit wrongdoing after the Valdez oil spill than were Clinton White House practitioners during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Strategies are properties of campaigns that exist to implement grand strategies (see Figure 4). Thus, strategy is always constrained by grand strategy and should not exist separately from a grand strategy. A strategy existing for any reason other than to implement a grand strategy can be called an *orphan strategy*. These are wasteful at best and counterproductive at worst. Each strategy in a campaign should clearly belong to a grand strategy and orphaned strategies should not occur.

Strategy is the campaign-level planning and decision-making involving maneuvering and arranging resources and arguments to meet the needs of publics and organizational grand strategies.

Figure 4 Strategy defined

Strategies are also not static. A plan is not made by specialists and then blindly followed by subordinates because the others in the relationship, including the publics, get a vote on how they want to change the relationship, such as in the marketing context where they can vote with their wallet. Thus strategies are often slightly rough road map from experts that those who actually take the journey fill in and adjust as the relationships between an organization and its publics unfold. Finally, strategies are not discrete in that they do not exist in isolation from one another. Strategies link to and facilitate, or impede, other strategies in a campaign, strategies from previous campaigns, and strategies in future campaigns. One can think of a strategy that is planned to bridge multiple campaigns, such as a theme or jingle that operates below the level of grand strategy. These and strategies that affect the long-term relationships between an organization and its publics are often matters of concern to the higher, grand strategy, level and may require approval.

Tactics

Finally, tactics—the actual activities or doing that comprise the practice of SC in any subfield—have to be designed to implement one or more specific strategies. While it is possible, and sometimes highly efficient, for a single tactic to serve more than one strategy, it is relatively rare and can be confusing. Tactics are properties of a strategy, are subordinate to strategy and exist to implement strategy (see Figure 5). A tactic that exists without serving a strategy can be called an *orphan tactic* and, like orphan strategies, would be wasteful of resources at best, probably confusing and possibly even counterproductive. Each tactic should belong to a strategy and orphan tactics should not occur.

It is no surprise that the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) has three regular publications, two of which are named *Strategist* and *Tactics* (PRSA, 1995a; 1995b). The former is targeted primarily at the counselor or planning level and the latter primarily at the tactical/technical level, although it also contains news of the field, among other things.

Tactics are the specific activities and outputs through which strategies are implemented—the doing or technical aspect of public relations.

Figure 5 Tactics defined

Relationship of Grand Strategy, Strategy and Tactics

The hierarchical relationship in which each lower level is subordinate to a higher level is only half the relationship between grand strategy, strategy and tactics. Each higher level also gets its concrete existence or “reality,” if you like, from the levels below it. That is, grand strategies are basically just ideas without strategies to implement them and, in turn, tactics to implement those strategies. Although grand strategy is at the top of the hierarchy, it is completely dependent on tactics, often many tactics, and one or more strategies to give it any substance. Likewise, a strategy is only an idea about how a campaign should be conducted. The campaign only gets its substance through tactics so strategy is also completely dependent on tactics.

Thus, in the relationship of grand strategy, strategy and tactics there are at least two dimensions. Authority and guidance flows downward but substance flows upward. This relationship can best be understood as a kind of duality much as light and dark are a duality. Each is separate from but

dependent on the other, at least in the sense that one is only really meaningful if the other exists. If there was only light, what meaning could dark have? In somewhat the same way, tactics without strategy lack meaning but so does strategy without tactics.

Finally, *there are no cut-and-dried distinctions between grand strategy, strategy and tactics*, although up to now this book has treated them as distinct. For example, the real relationship between strategy and tactics can best be understood as existing on a continuum from purely strategic to purely tactical, with most of the continuum being comprised of practices that are predominantly one thing but which include aspects of the other, as illustrated in Figure 6. Because this book examines SC at the strategic rather than tactical level, it is primarily concerned with the right side of Figure 6.

Tactics are not the focus of this book on strategic communication and much of the book directly addresses strategic-level issues in SC so, since strategy flows from grand strategy, the remainder of this chapter is given over to a brief summary of generic grand strategies and how they influence SC.

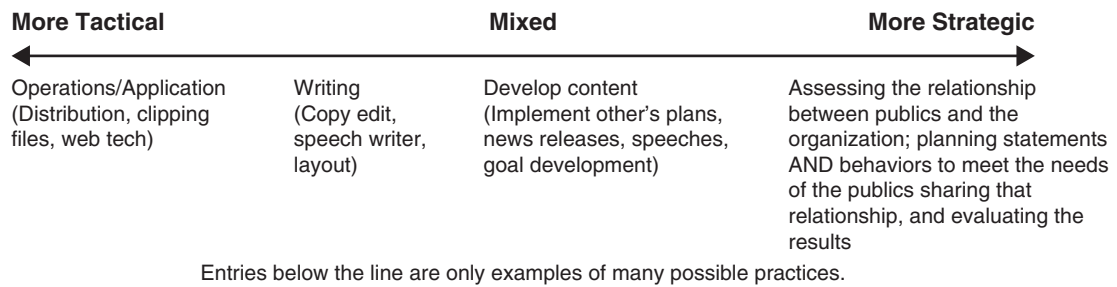


Figure 6 Tactics–strategy continuum

Generic Grand Strategies

Organizational grand strategies develop and then change over time so there are almost an infinite number of possible grand strategies. For the purpose of clarity in explaining grand strategies and what they mean for SC, they can be grouped into four fairly general archetypes involving seven areas of organizational views that are important to SC and, interestingly, to ethics. *The particular grand strategy a real organization develops is likely to include bits and pieces of at least two of these generic models and which model is predominant may change from situation to situation.* For example, an organization that tends to be resistant or even partnering in its overall approach may slip into an intransigent grand strategy during a crisis, often the most potentially damaging time to do so. Newscasts are full of stories about politicians and organizations that, when faced with a crisis situation, become highly intransigent and pay dearly for that mistake.

I want to repeat for emphasis that these grand strategies do not appear in these pure forms in the real world of SC. The use of these generic grand strategies is a pedagogical tool to help illustrate both major components of organizational grand strategies that relate to SC, and what role SC will play in a particular organization. They can also help to visualize what kind of life an SC practitioner is likely to have in a particular kind of organization. From an SC perspective, grand strategy is built from at least seven dimensions of an organization's culture and worldview, including attitudes toward (1) the environment, (2) change, (3) publics, (4) issues, (5) research, (6) communication and (7) SC practitioners. These are summarized in Table 1 and discussed briefly in the next section.

Background

Work by Jones and Chase (1979, p. 6) and, much more importantly, by Crable and Vibbert (1985) provided a foundation for developing these hypothetical grand strategies, although both of those teams of researchers sought only to address strategic options in the narrow area of public policy debate. The work of Crable and Vibbert is particularly important to SC and this book because those authors made the seminal contribution of focusing on publics as the generative force in the life cycle of an issue. In focusing on the role of publics Crable and Vibbert's work provided a foundation for at least the fourth, sixth and seventh dimensions (issues, communication and practitioners) in Table 1. Both Table 1 and the discussion that follows are adapted and expanded from earlier discussions of grand strategies by Botan (2005; 2006).

Intransigent Grand Strategy

The goal of an intransigent grand strategy is to make no changes in the organization in response to outside forces. SC does not typically play an important role in intransigent organizations, which is important to remember when planning a career. Intransigent grand strategies are very uncommon in professionally run organizations but parts of the intransigent grand strategy appear frequently in actual organizational practices. They tend to crop up most frequently in crisis situations, which, as noted above, is also the most dangerous time to fall into intransigence. For example, when the author worked as a consultant years ago, most of his clients were influenced by intransigent views although none was completely intransigent. Organizations engaged in highly competitive work, such as for corporations or political campaigns, tend to be slightly less prone to intransigence, while those facing little competition, like some government bodies, often tend to be slightly more prone to it, in spite of exceptions such as BP after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

Environment The intransigent grand strategy assumes the organization should be free of unwanted pressures from its environment yet it will still seek to get what it wants from its environment because, for an intransigent organization, publics exist only to meet its needs. Famous historical examples of intransigence include the mishandling of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, the leadership of Enron after it was caught stealing millions of dollars in stockholder equity, President Richard Nixon and the erasure of tapes to maintain his stonewall of denial during Watergate and the ensuing cover-up, and Saddam Hussein, who had new victories announced on Iraqi state-run television even as US and Allied tanks were entering Baghdad.

In an intransigent organization, “freedom” to pursue its goals without accountability to the environment is among the highest goods, and those outside the organization are thought not to have any real right to interfere. When threatened, the first instinct is to cut off communication and reject those outside in order to protect the organization, conserve its resources and limit legal exposure. That is, the first instinct is to stop not only communicating strategically but communicating at all and often to just claim that “we did nothing illegal.”

Change To an intransigent organization, change is bad, partly because it costs money. Any change may be seen to imply that someone in the current leadership has failed so leaders may try to block any change they do not initiate. Those advocating change may risk the label of not being team players and become marginalized.

Table 1 Grand strategies

Environment		Change	Publics	Issues	Research	Communication	SC practitioners
Intransigent	Organization seeks control	Negative	Use	Defend	Bah!	One-way	Technicians
	• Make environment adapt to us • Outside control is bad and should be beaten back • Stonewall until issues go away • “We did nothing illegal” is enough	• Bad avoid/oppose • Costs money • Implies current leadership’s failure so leaders often bitterly opposed	• Exist to meet organization’s needs • No legitimate “stake” beyond organization’s wishes	• Result of wrongful external attacks by those lacking our knowledge and understanding • Illegitimate tries at impeding right to manage	• Already have the experience • Already understand issues and publics • Good research always supports current management	• Since organization is right just “educate” publics • The less we need the better our management is • Withholding information is legitimate strategy • Only useful tactically • Seek magic bullet	• Loyalty primary • Only explain management decisions • Communication only a tool for controlling environment • Ethics decided by organization • Strategy is others’ job
Resistant	Organization seeks control	Negative	Use	Avoid/Solve	Strategic only	Modified one-way	Technicians
	• Avoid/resist outside influence when possible • BUT organization must adapt to its environment	• Bad/costly • Usually implies failure • MiniMax principle • Foot dragging is default approach	• Powerful but dangerous • Appeasing is necessary evil • Fail to understand organization well enough	• Result of external interference or lack of understanding leaders • Ignore when possible • Put issues behind us as fast and cheaply as possible	• Only to find how much adaptation is absolutely necessary • Supports current leaders and policy • Test messages to find best way to change publics	• Mostly one-way • Some two-way for adapting messages or organization (develop magic bullet) • Media work key • Social media used • Minimize communication	• Explain decisions • Ethics still decided by organizational SC ethical standards • unimportant • Minimal strategic responsibilities

(Continued)

Table 1 (Continued)

Environment		Change	Publics	Issues	Research	Communication	SC practitioners
Partnership	Separate but equal	Negative	Separate/Equal	Solve	Ongoing	Strategic	Communication managers
	- Separate from but interdependent with the environment - Organization must adapt - Try to shape issues to organization's needs "Enlightened" management	- Natural but painful - Good change managers valued for reducing pain - Investment in future	- Constructive force - Legitimate stakeholders - Still need to understand organization better	- Publics play role in defining issues - Part of organizational life - Avoid when we can but learn from each	- Strategic and evaluative - Environmental scanning - Up the time stream - Still test messages to find best way to change publics	- Communication is lifeblood of organization - Dialog (two-way) and social media important - More is better	- CEO is top one - Professionals with own skills and ethics - Strategic advisors BUT usually not at main table
Cocreational	Organization subordinate	Positive	Together	Build with	Ongoing	Strategic	Strategic team
	- Publics cocreate environment and its meanings - Organizations must integrate selves into that environment	"Our element" - Lack of change would be unnatural and dangerous - Publics, organization, and relationship constantly evolving - Ability to change is organization's main asset	- Defines relationships - Legitimate interests, own agendas and meanings - Reason for existence - Sometimes cannot tell where organization processes stop and public ones start	- Publics cocreate - Issues = opportunity - Natural part of life - Lack of issues means lack of growth and progress by organization	- Strategic and evaluative - Organization learns own future and actual values by research - No major decision without research	- Organization and public are both product of communication - SC is core function for all executives - Social media very important within and between publics	- SC staff are, first and foremost, experts on publics - At main table - Internal and external roles, including leading many change processes - Ethics leadership

Notes: (1) Intransigent seeks to subordinate portions of the environment to the organization while resistant, partnership and cocreational accept that the organization is subordinate to the environment so change is necessary. (2) Resistant seeks to avoid change so long it often appears to outsiders to be intransigent. (3) Intransigent/resistant believes issues are impositions from an essentially dangerous environment while partnership/cocreational accept that publics have legitimate agendas and define issues.

Publics Intransigent organizations believe publics have no right to a voice in or about the organization and its practices. They treat publics as if they exist solely to meet the needs of the organization or are the foils of activist groups; but they also view publics as dangerous. For example, publics are often seen to have a legitimate role only as customers and not as stakeholders in the environment. This view may be justified on the basis that publics do not know as many facts, have as much experience, or know as much about a situation as organizational leaders. So, as was the case with the White House during Watergate, internal and external publics and even government regulatory and investigative bodies are viewed as troublemakers and agitators to be defeated.

Issues For intransigent organizations, issues are impediments imposed by an often threatening environment. (Note: An issue is an unsettled matter the publics say is important; see Chapter 5.) Those raising issues are defined as troublemakers and are sometimes even accused of creating the issue to make themselves look important. Thus the best way to protect the organization is thought to be keeping the media, employees and interest groups from getting information that could be used to interfere with the life of the organization.

Research Intransigent organizations typically have little regard for research. This may be because they believe their leaders know so much more about a situation than do publics that finding out what publics think would be a waste of time; or because opinions that differ from established policy will be ignored anyway. What research is used may be just seeking to find out what is causing the public to be so wrong as to disagree with the organization.

Communication Since intransigent organizations see themselves as both knowledgeable and in the right, communication is of use primarily to educate publics: to inform publics of the right way to act. This is an application of the “if you knew what I knew you’d make the same decision” assumption (Gaudino, Fritsch and Haynes, 1989). One-way campaigns are generally thought to be sufficient for this purpose, so the goal is often simply to find the magic persuasive bullet—that one appeal or great news release—that will help those who do not understand how right the organization is to start doing things the right way.

Practitioners In an intransigent organization, SC practitioners are technicians whose skills are to be used to implement decisions already made by someone else. SC practitioners are not involved in strategy discussions because a practitioner’s job is to win support for management decisions no matter what publics may think. Thus practitioners surrender the authority to make all decisions, particularly ethical judgments, to the organization’s leadership. How ethical a practitioner can be is entirely dependent on the ethical integrity of those making policy decisions. The old aphorism that “we can get inside and change it from inside” is largely a myth because intransigent organizations see those who are not loyal to the current leadership as not part of the team so they seldom get to a position where they can make meaningful changes. If a practitioner feels uncomfortable about the ethics of what they are asked to do, it will most likely only get worse. Practitioners may also find that there is not enough opportunity for advancement because of the organization’s view of the role of communication, almost regardless of the quality of work done.

Resistant Grand Strategy

The goal of a resistant grand strategy is to resist making any changes as much as possible. Some almost raise stalling to the level of a strategy, hoping that if they resist change long enough the pressure will simply blow over. When they are wrong, they may rush into damage control without a plan. Nevertheless, a resistant organization differs significantly from an intransigent one.

Environment Recall that organizations with an intransigent grand strategy seek to control (i.e., “conquer”) their environment and to maintain autonomy from the environment. The primary difference in resistant organizations is that they accept that they are dependent on the environment and that ultimately they must adapt to it to survive. For those familiar with systems theory, the distinction between intransigent and resistant grand strategies is somewhat similar to the difference between a closed system (intransigent) believing it can get what it wants out of its environment while returning little, and an open system seeking to maintain homeostasis (equilibrium) in exchange with its environment. Those with a resistant strategy accept, albeit grudgingly, that they are a subsystem within a larger open system and must exchange more equitably with their environment.

Change Even knowing that it must change sooner or later, the resistant organization has to be dragged kicking and screaming into each change. The reason is because it operates on a MiniMax principle in which the minimum amount of change publics will accept is the absolute maximum amount the organization will accept. Change does not necessarily reflect failure in a resistant organization, but it is expensive and disruptive and to be avoided. For example, the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill illustrates resistance as a fallback when intransigent communication strategies fail. After the *Exxon Valdez* tanker hit a reef in 1989 and spilled huge quantities of crude oil into Alaskan waters, the Exxon Corporation further hurt itself by attempting to declare the clean-up finished before it really was, another common behavior of resistant organizations.

Neither external nor internal publics can know what organizational leaders are thinking so they have to read into leaders’ actions and public statements. *Although a resistant organization is fundamentally different from an intransigent one in its attitude toward change, it is often so grudging about change that its publics cannot see the difference so they treat the resistant organization as if it were an intransigent one.* The irony comes when leaders of a resistant organization believe that they are being treated unfairly because publics (including the media) see any change as the result of outside pressure so they give the organization little or no credit for any changes it makes (Botan, 2006, p. 230).

Publics Resistant organizations perceive publics as essentially reactive. That is, publics are known to be powerful, but are assumed to be a little like Pavlov’s famous dog—their behaviors can be explained as simple reactions to external stimuli so the resistant organization tries to stimulate the reactions that meet its needs at the least possible expense in time and resources—MiniMax again.

Issues Resistant organizations see issues as imposed on the organization from the environment of which they are a normal part. Thus, issues are part of the cost of doing business and need to be gotten

past, or waited out. Issues happen, even to well-run organizations, but the really well-run ones will not allow issues to divert the organization from its original path. Crises are often thought to be the result of meddling by activists, by the media or by government regulators, unless they are the result of clearly aberrant behavior.

Research The use of research by resistant organizations is primarily for one of two purposes, either to support current leaders or to provide data for a MiniMax decision by finding out what is the absolute minimum amount of change that publics will accept in a particular situation. Thus, research by resistant organizations is typically limited to determining what to say to support already set organizational policies. The results of such research are often of little strategic use to the upper levels of the organization or planning and evaluating campaigns.

Communication Except for sales promotions, advertising or finding out the absolute minimum the organization can get away with doing, resistant organizations often minimize their communication with publics. Technical production skills are often valued highly and Sullivan's (1965) craft values are important. This organization might feel like it should have a presence in the social media but often will not understand a strategic role for social media or evaluate whether its use helps build relationships. The resistant organization may utilize social media as an early warning system and a method to get free advertising.

Practitioners Practitioners are primarily seen as possessors of the technical skills to carry out decisions made by others, so, like their counterparts in an intransigent organization, they often work at a structural dead end. A structural dead end can be easily seen by just looking at an organizational chart. If SC reports only through some unit that is not primarily focused on SC (e.g., through human resources), that organization has already decided that SC is not of major importance to the whole organization and the promotion path might end as low as department manager. Similar to SC practitioners in an intransigent organization, those in a resistant organization are expected to accept what the organization's leaders decide is ethical—or at least not illegal—and to carry out their assignments.

Partnership Grand Strategy

A partnership involves two separate entities working toward common goals. An organization with a partnership grand strategy sees itself as a distinctly separate entity from its environment but one that is very dependent on its environment and should work in collaboration with it even in matters that go beyond the financial. Ongoing relationships with all publics are thought to be desirable and change is accepted as natural.

Environment Partnering organizations try to shape issues to meet their needs rather than avoiding or ignoring publics. They often practice what is called enlightened management, and many modern organizations, particularly those with well-educated leaderships, perceive themselves as partners with their publics. The real test, however, comes when the organization's self-perception is challenged by a crisis. Then they may adopt a resistant, or sometimes even intransigent, posture.

Change Ongoing change is expected by partnering organizations and it is not taken to mean failure on anyone's part, but it still consumes scarce resources. Unlike in intransigent or resistant organizations, the partnering organization treats making changes as an investment in the future so skill at managing change is a valuable asset for upper managers.

Publics In a partnering organization, publics are seen as having a legitimate, sometimes almost a cocreational, role in the issues organizations face and, partly because of the attitude toward change, publics can be seen as a constructive force.

Issues Partnering organizations see publics defining issues in much the same way Crable and Vibbert (1985) described. That is, publics are independent of the organization and decide whether the organization has a problem, what stage that problem is at, whether the organization must respond immediately, and, to a large extent, the menu of strategic options available to the organization.

Research Ongoing environmental scanning is an integral part of a partnering organization's day-to-day behavior. Since publics are seen as the definers of issues, the partnering organization accepts the need for consistent research to see what issues are developing, why, and at what stage. Research is counted on to help the partnering organization "move up the time stream" (see Chapter 5), meaning that they try to identify issues early enough in their development that joint responses are likely to work.

Communication Management in partnering organizations is often defined as a communication activity and skill as a communicator is seen as a prerequisite for leadership positions. In addition, either publics or the organization can initiate communication with equal validity so skill in dialogic communication is essential, the complete opposite of the intransigent organization.

Practitioners In partnering organizations, building ongoing relationships with publics is a primary job of leaders and members, including the CEO or president. In contrast to intransigent and resistant organizations, the president or CEO of a partnering organization may even describe the job as primarily SC so the practice is highly valued. Information collected by SC practitioners plays an important strategic role in the organization, although SC may not have a formal seat at the main table. SC practitioners are expected to know and be able to explain the ethical standards of their field and how the organization can best meet those standards.

SC practitioners usually have a clear and well-marked path toward higher leadership positions. For example, the CCO (Chief Communication Officer) of a partnering organization is as likely to be an SC specialist.

Cocreational Grand Strategy

An organization with a cocreational grand strategy seeks to integrate itself into an ever evolving web of relationships with its environment (see Botan, 1993c, for background on what was then called the integrative grand strategy). While organizational identity is important, maintaining a clear separation, as partnering organizations do, is not particularly important in a cocreational organization.

Environment Cocreational organizations see themselves as an integral part of the environment so they work toward open two-way and communication. Publics are not usually seen to be in need of being educated about how right the organization is.

Change Cocreational organizations embrace change. In 2006 Botan said, “while intransigent organizations try to put up a stonewall against all changes, resistant organizations have to be dragged kicking and screaming into each major change ... and even [partnering] organizations see change as a painful and often unpleasant experience, integrative [now cocreational] organizations believe change is ‘our element’” (p. 234). Cocreational organizations expect to flourish by being better than others at identifying the need for change, as well as better at implementing change.

Publics As with a partnering organization, publics are understood to play the central role in defining issues and are themselves seen as products of the process of communication (Botan and Soto, 1998). Publics are neither static nor reactive but are seen to mutually create and recreate themselves and the organization.

Issues Cocreational organizations see issues as defined by publics and the resolution of issues as also determined by publics (see Chapter 3 and Crable and Vibbert, 1985). This sophisticated understanding of issues can make available strategic options that even partnering organizations may miss.

Research Like partnering organizations, cocreational ones engage in ongoing environmental scanning and see it as an integral part of day-to-day behavior. Here, however, publics are seen as cocreators of issues so research focuses not only on how publics think and feel but also on the relationships between the organization and its publics.

Communication From a cocreational perspective, an organization is literally a product of the process of communication so there is little need to explain the importance of SC as in intransigent or resistant organizations. Repetitive flows of communication between the organization and its publics, both internal and external, are seen as a central function of the organization and they define its structure (see Giddens, 1977; Weick, 1979).

Practitioners Because practitioners are part of a core function of the organization, they can be a part of the strategic leadership. For example Chester Barnard, then president of AT&T, said, “the first executive function is to develop and maintain a system of communication. This involves both a scheme of organization and an executive personnel” (1938, p. 271).

Change in Grand Strategies

Grand strategies evolve slowly, but they do change. So the names, content, and understanding of grand strategies probably should change as well. For example, what is now called the cocreational grand strategy I used to call the integrative grand strategy. The new name still reflects many of the assumptions and values of the old, but a new name is needed to emphasize some of the changes in

communication, in our understanding of publics and, most importantly, in how publics see and practice their own meaning-making process. Some of these changes in publics and communication are better discussed in the context of Chapter 8 on social media and new information technology than in this chapter.

It is doubtful that any one SC department or staff can bring about substantial changes in an organization alone, but over time SC has a major role to play in the evolution of an organization's grand strategy. Given the growing understanding of the constitutive role of communication in organizational life, as well as the expansion of mass and social media, that role may be expected to expand in the coming decades.