

**AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE
COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH
EMPLOYEES**

by

Ursula Ströh

Senior Lecturer

Department of Media, Arts, Communication and Information

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Technology, Sydney

PO Box 123

Broadway, NSW, 2007

Australia

Tel: +16 (0)2 4294 3207 Mobile: +16 (0)418 216 435 Fax: +16 (0)2 4294 2766

ursula.stroh@uts.edu.au

Submission of Papers Competition:

IABC RESEARCH FOUNDATION PAPERS COMPETITION

2001 – 2002

Abstract

In this study an attempt was made to clarify the growing importance of communication management (especially the role of relationship management) during change in organisations. The assumption is tested that a positive relationship between the organisation and its publics, especially the internal public/employees, will lead to greater communication effects and a greater willingness to change. An experimental study was conducted to determine the relationship between the communication management strategy followed during change in an organisation and the resulting relationship- and behavioural effects of the employees.

The methodology followed in this study was an experimental approach because it was important to be able to manipulate certain characteristics or factors to measure the influence thereof on the dependant variable. The findings of this study imply that there is significant proof of the internal validity of the experimental design used indicating that the experimental manipulation (the two different change management strategies) had a definite effect on the relationship that employees have with the organisation. The results of this study show that a higher degree of participation during high change in organisations will lead to significantly more positive overall relationships between an organisation and its internal publics than with lower degrees of participation and a planned approach. It furthermore indicates strong correlations/relationships between the strategy followed during change and the resulting projected relationships with internal stakeholders of the organisations. The findings support a strong participative two-way communication strategy to be followed when organisations go through major change processes.

1.1 Background and problem statement

In this study an attempt was made to clarify the growing importance of communication management (especially the role of relationship management) during change in organizations. The basic assumptions studied were that changes occur in organizations because of changes in the environment. Conflicts arise between the organization and different interest groups of the organization because of these often uncontrolled influences from the environment. During high change situations the different publics of the organization become involved in the change issues, they actively seek information about the issues. If the organization would utilize communication management more effectively and in a **two-way symmetrical way with optimum participation**, they would build more positive relationships with the publics involved. Communication management could be the way organizations reorganize themselves out of disorder and chaos. Strategic planning will become even more important but will have to change from the basic premise of control and

prediction to scenario planning and emphasis will be on relationship building using the full participation of the stakeholders involved.

1.2 Key concepts of this study

1.2.1 Public relations, communication management, and relationship management

Grunig and Hunt (In Grunig, 1992: 4) defined public relations as the “management of communication between an organization and its publics.” According to Grunig this definition equates public relations with communication management. For the remainder of this study the term “communication management” will be used for the reason that the term “public relations” is widely misunderstood, especially in an administrative management sense. This study is applied to administrative management and the management of change and therefore the term “communication management” will be better understood by all parties concerned and to whom this research might be applicable.

A new development in the field of public relations is that the term has evolved and that the term ‘communication management’ is seen as not describing the full strategic function of the field. The term ‘relationship management’ is becoming a more used term as it describes the study field more in terms of organization-public relationships than the central focus merely being on communication (Ledingham, 2000).

Relationships can be conceptualized as relationship antecedents (behavioral consequences on each other); maintenance strategies that include five dimensions (positivity, openness, assurances, networking, and shared responsibility); and relationship outcomes (Grunig & Huang, 2000: 34). Relationship maintenance strategies are of importance in terms of the strategies followed in change management and the outcomes pertain to the effects of the strategies. The four relational outcomes measured in this study are control mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction, and relational commitment. A short description of each of these will clarify the methodology followed as well as the measuring instrument used:

- Control mutuality can be described as the “the degree to which partners agree about which of them should decide relational goals and behavioral routines” (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Control mutuality refers to equality in power, but even if the power is not equally distributed – as more than often happens in reality – a norm of reciprocity may lead to a good relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000: 43).

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES

- Trust has been defined as the belief that the other party will not exploit one's good will and that there is a willingness to open up (Grunig & Huang, 2000: 43).
- Relational satisfaction refers to the extent to which both parties have a favorable affective response to the relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000: 45). It refers to both parties receiving equal rewards that outweigh the costs to the relationship.
- Relational commitment encompasses a belief to continue the relationship by believing in the goals and values of the organization, putting effort into the relationship and a desire to maintain the relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000: 46). A further dimension pertains to calculations of the possible costs incurred by leaving the organization.

Numerous studies have shown high intercorrelations among these four dimensions of relationships (Grunig & Huang, 2000:47; Ledingham, 2000: xiii).

1.2.2 Change management in organizations and Communication management

The two basic approaches to change management will be mentioned shortly as these approaches formed the basis for the assumptions tested in this study. These approaches to change have evolved in the same way that management approaches have advanced from a more mechanistic view held in the Industrial Age, to a more organic epistemology – the way managers think and learn about business as organisms (Sherman & Shultz, 1998:28). The traditional approaches to management correlate well with the planned approaches to change management, and emergent management styles with developing transformation approaches. There are thus two main approaches to organizational change management.

The first approach is a planned approach representing a variety of models of which most descend from the practice of Organizational Development (OD) (Burnes, 1996:180; Senior, 1997:258). Senior (1997:227) also distinguishes between hard systems models and soft systems models (OD). She relates hard systems change management to the rational-logical models where people issues are low priority and soft systems models that refer to change models concerning organizational politics, culture, and leadership – people issues. The second major approach represents emergent perspectives and will be discussed after looking at the traditional approaches to change management.

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES

Specific characteristics of the planned approach (OD) is that it places emphasis on processes; deals with change over a significant period of time; follows a holistic approach; is starting to encourage participation; ensures full support from top-management; and involves a facilitator that takes on the role of change agent (Senior, 1997:258). Criticisms against these models are that they are still seen as too rigid; that phases cannot be so distinct and chronologically ordered because of the extreme turbulence in the environment; that the emphasis is on incremental and isolated change rather than radical transformation; that reliance on management is too heavy; as well as the fact that one kind of change could work for all organizations (Burnes, 1996:186).

The second group of approaches to change was developed because the highly dynamic environment demanded more contingent methods, which would be more situational and where change strategies would be adapted to achieve maximum fit with the ever altering environment. These approaches have been developed because of a basic disbelief in the effectiveness of the planned change approaches (Burnes, 1996:187) as well as out of a need for approaches that could address the fast changing and unpredictable environments organizations are faced with (Sherman & Shultz, 1998:22). According to the emergent approaches organizations can rely less on detailed plans and projections and should rather develop an understanding of the complexities of environments and the issues concerned.

Dawson (In Burnes, 1996:188) claims that change should be linked to changing markets realities, flexible boundaries and relationships with stakeholders, work ethic changes, and alterations in management controls. He contends that short-term change strategies will yield short-term results and increase instability.

According to emergent approaches to change management, organizations will be obliged to increase their environmental scanning abilities in order to identify issues and trends that might affect them so that decision making processes can be adjusted accordingly (Burnes, 1996:188). Management will also have to rethink and reformulate what change is all about and not just change for the sake of change. They will have to move away from thinking in a linear, planned way and allow for unanticipated behaviors and probabilities (Sherman & Schultz, 1998:22). Postmodern management is more complex and chaotic than before.

Because of the fact that the communication manager is the mediator between the organization and the environment, this role can assist by providing intelligence to assist in decision-making (Spicer, 1997:61). By

performing environmental scanning, the communication manager can gather information that should bring all the possibilities to the strategic boardroom.

1.2.3 The situational theory

The situational theory explains why and when groups of people communicate and what the effects of communication could be for different publics (Grunig, 1997). The publics most pertinent to public relations strategies are differentiated according to the amount of responsiveness around issues regarding the organization. During changes in organizations publics are influenced by these changes and they become involved and more active in the issues that influence them. Publics arise around problems that occur because of changes in the organization or the environment of the organization (Grunig, 1992:138). The more the problems have relevance to the publics and could affect them the more they will become active concerning those issues. Problems will also define the publics concerned with those problems rather than publics defining problems. The situational theory poses that when publics become involved and active they generate consequences for organizations. That is why it is important to pay attention to these publics. The most effective communication would be to active and aware publics because they are more likely to process and seek information on issues at hand (Grunig, 1992:171).

When a problem is recognized (such as issues that cause changes in environments and organizations), if the constraints are low in terms of communication, a group feels very connected to a situation and start feeling that something should be done about the issue. The likelihood of processing and actively seeking information on those issues increase. Furthermore the communication effects will be strong and people will change their attitudes, beliefs and behavior (Grunig, 1997). As communication management is all about the management of relationships, the assumption can further be made that this public will also have a positive relationship with the organization. It can also be derived from this theory that a positive relationship between the organization and its public will lead to greater communication effects and a greater willingness to change. These assumptions were tested in this study.

1.3 Research statement and objectives

1.3.1 Research statement

An experimental study of:

- the relationship between the communication management strategy followed during change in organizations and the resulting relationship- and behavioral effects
- the influence of the communication management strategy followed during high levels of change in organizations on relationships with the internal publics/employees of the organization and the behavioral effects

1.3.2 Research objectives

The main research objective of this study was to ascertain the relational, communication, and behavioral outcomes of different communication strategies during change in organizations.

More specific secondary research objectives were to compare the different communication strategies followed in order to establish a causal relationship between the strategy followed and the relationships between the organization and its publics as well as the strategy followed and the change effects achieved.

Table 1.1 – Summary of Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses regarding experimental validation and control measures (Test Hypotheses TH):	
TH₁=	There is a meaningful difference between the experimental controls of Scenario A (Planned approach) and Scenario B (Participatory approach) as perceived by the respondents.
TH₂=	There is no meaningful difference between the different organizations in terms of respondents responses to the two different scenarios.
TH₃=	There is no meaningful difference between the different educational levels of respondents in terms of their responses to the two different scenarios.
TH₄=	There is no meaningful difference between the different levels in which respondents function within the organization in terms of their responses to the two different scenarios.
TH₅=	There is no meaningful difference between the real change management styles followed in respondent organizations in terms of the experimental test of the relationships with the two scenarios.
TH₆=	There is no meaningful difference between the change or not in respondent organizations in terms of the experimental test of relationships with the two scenarios.

Research Hypotheses (H):

- H₁** = High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly more trust between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach.
- H₂** = High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly more control mutuality between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach.
- H₃** = High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly higher commitment between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach.
- H₄** = High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly more satisfaction with the relationship between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach high.
- H₅** = High participatory communication and change strategy will lead significantly more positive goal attainment and change behavioral effects between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach.
- H₆** = A higher degree of participation during high change in organizations will lead to significantly more positive overall relationships between an organization and its internal publics than with lower degrees of participation and a planned approach.
- H₇**= There is a meaningful difference between the relationships with internal stakeholders in relation to Scenario A (planned approach) and Scenario B (participatory approach).

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design was executed in two broad phases, namely the exploratory phase (literature and qualitative phase) and the descriptive-empirical phase.

1.4.1 Exploratory phase

A literature study provided a background on all related theories and information that are relevant to the study in question. Aspects relating to change management, relationship management and theories relevant to this study were investigated. Apart from an extensive database search for relevant literature on change management and relationship management, the exploratory phase of the project involved testing of the constructs used in the questionnaire.

1.4.2 Descriptive empirical phase

After completion of the exploratory phase the next step of the research process could be undertaken. The descriptive empirical phase of the research pertains to the measuring instrument, the sampling frame of the research and the physical data collection.

1.4.2.1 Measures

After careful consideration it was decided to use the randomized block design with projective scenarios involving a mixed two-factor experiment with repeated measure variables. Data collection was conducted in ten different organizations representing different kinds and fields of enterprises and state organizations. The independent randomized block variables on the change strategy were operationalised by two scenarios of a flexible, high participatory approach (Scenario B) and a planned, low participatory change approach (Scenario A) using existing literature on change management and postmodern theories. The two scenarios of change were treated as a fixed variable in the organizations selected. (Refer to table 1.2.) This also ensured that the independent variable did not rely merely on single stimuli, which in turn minimized experimental error (McGuigan, 1990:232). Richins (1983) encourages complex experimental design by motivating that the results could be generalized outside the restricted contextual area of a single situation.

The randomized block variable of the communication strategy followed was based on the situational theory of Grunig (1997) and on the literature on change approaches and the resulting effects. This variable was treated as a repeated measure where respondents received projected scenarios of which one was high participation within a flexible and open communication approach (two-way symmetrical approach) and the other represented a planned approach with little to no participation from stakeholders in the change process (asymmetrical approaches). The dependent variable measure consisted of a battery of statements operationalised through existing literature on relationships with publics and behavioral and change effects. (Refer to table 1.2.)

Table 1.2 A model for the proposed methodological approach of this study

Fixed = Independent variables	Dependent variables = factors to be manipulated				
	RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS				Behavioral effects
Communication and change strategy followed	Trust	Control Mutuality	Commitment	Satisfaction	
High participatory & low constraint – Scenario 1: Emergent approach	+	+	+	+	+
Low participation & high constraints – Scenario 2: Planned approach	-	-	-	-	-

1.4.2.1.1 The independent variables

The independent variables in this study, which were the two change scenarios, were pre-tested both qualitatively and quantitatively for manipulation success. Focus groups and manipulation check were used to test the wording of the scenarios of the independent variables in order to ensure that these variables actually operated in the study. Two scenarios were constructed from the focus groups and theory:

Scenario A: This organization is going through a major change process. The change is structured and the process is planned in detail with specified objectives to be reached within a given time span and a carefully planned budget. The decisions surrounding the changes are made by top management and communicated to all employees. The changes are mostly infrastructural/tangible changes. Top management are management orientated and a change management team is assigned by management to manage the process. The process is monitored throughout by management, measuring performance against strictly set goals. Problems associated with the changes are controlled immediately to avoid unnecessary conflicts and waste of money. Management gives recognition for the achievement of set goals. Management controls all information and only relevant and essential information is communicated.

Scenario B: This organization is going through a major change process. The change is flexible and continuous, and the process is managed according to desired outcomes and a vision set by all those involved in the process. The decisions surrounding the changes are made by relevant employees involved in the changes, and communicated freely in all directions. The changes are mostly transformational involving cultural intangible changes. Top management are leadership orientated and a change management team is assigned by employees to lead the process. The process is monitored throughout by getting feedback and sharing information with all parties involved and problems associated with the changes are managed by allowing conflicts and managing it creatively. Peer evaluation provides the award system for changes in behavior. The process is characterized by complete openness and transparency.

1.4.2.1.2 The dependent variables

The dependent variables were measured using an itemized questionnaire where two change and participation scenarios were given to the respondents before they completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire used the relationship scale distributed by The Institute of Public Relations (Hon & Grunig, 1999) as basis for measuring relationships internally as well as relationships with external stakeholders. The measuring instrument consisted of 21 items measuring trust (six items), control mutuality (five items), commitment (five items), and satisfaction (five items). Eleven manipulation check items were used after each relationship measure of a scenario to ascertain the effectiveness of the explanations of each scenario. As the scenarios were fictitious, two questions were asked in connection with the real organization each respondent worked for, or had a continuous relationship with in terms of the change strategy followed in that organization. This was followed by some classification questions to determine educational level, years employed in the organization, level in the organization, and designation to establish whether these variables could have had an influence on the dependent variables.

1.4.2.2 Data collection

Nine organizations were used from different industries and sectors, and the experimental subjects consisted of 10 to 37 employees from each organization. Each employee evaluated the two different scenarios, which resulted in more or less 372 evaluations in total (some questionnaires were not fully completed) (see table 1.3). The questionnaires were distributed evenly between levels from upper management to non-managerial levels in each organization. The scenarios were concerned with changes in general and about many different issues. A satisfactory response rate of 186 respondents was obtained, which made it possible to analyze the results scientifically.

Table 1.3 Data collection strategy

Type of Organization	Amount of respondents	Evaluations
Org 1 = Private sector – large bank	20	40
Org 2 = Large private industry	37	74
Org 3 = IT company	35	70
Org 4 = Professional body	1	2
Org 5 = Large bank - governmental	21	42
Org 6 = Large private industry	10	20
Org 7 = Large corporate (partially privatized; semi-parastatal)	19	38
Org 8 = Higher education	32	64
Org 9 Higher education	11	22
TOTAL	186	372

The data was collected by distributing the questionnaires to the employees of the organizations involved. Two different questionnaires were distributed – the scenarios were alternated. Half of the respondents completed the questionnaires with the planned scenario first and the other half completed the questions pertaining to the participative scenario. The respondents did not know that there was a difference between the questionnaires. This was done to ensure that the order of the scenarios did not affect the responses (although this effect was tested for).

The data was captured using Microsoft Excell and this data file was exported to a statistical software package (Statistica) and the data cleaned and analyzed. Reliability analysis, validity analysis, ANOVA, MANOVA, correlations, and cross tabulations were performed on the data.

1.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

1.5.1 Test for order differences

An ANOVA test was performed to ascertain whether there were any differences between the responses of the questionnaire with Scenario A first or those with Scenario B first. The ANOVA showed no significant differences between the order options in the responses to Scenario A. There were some significant differences between the orders in the answering of Scenario B. The reason for this could be that Scenario B was considered more positive and after questioning respondents concerning this they reported that if they answered the questions concerning the planned approach first they considered it to be rather positive. They did however change their minds about the positivity of the planned scenario after reading the participative scenario. Respondents who answered the questionnaire with the participative scenario first evaluated the

planned scenario significantly more negative than those who read the planned scenario first (Detail results of this ANOVA are available on request).

1.5.2 Experimental control measures - TH1

There were highly significant differences found between the experimental control measures of Scenario A (planned approach) and Scenario B (participative approach), which means that the two approaches were perceived as being radically different. This emphasizes the validity of the experimental measures. This test is regarded as significant proof of the internal validity of the experimental design indicating that the experimental manipulation had a definite affect on the dependant variable of the measuring instrument. (Detail data available.)

1.5.3 Test for variables that could also influence relationships during change (TH2 to TH6)

In order to further provide proof that no other possible variables regarding change could have an influence on the relationships that respondents could have with organizations when they go through their change processes, various variables were tested for significant differences. Refer to the hypotheses regarding these.

1.5.4 Reliability and Validity Analysis

The Cronbach Alpha-coefficient was used to perform a reliability analysis on the relationship scale distributed by The Institute of Public Relations (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The reliability analysis resulted in a coefficient of 0.97, which is highly satisfactory compared to statistical benchmarks of 0.70 given in the literature.

The Cronbach Alpha-coefficient was also used to perform a reliability analysis on the four dimensions of the relationship instrument of The Institute of Public Relations and they all obtained coefficients of 0.9 and above.

A principal component factor analysis was performed on the relationship statements and a satisfactory factor solution resulted in a cumulative explained variance of 78.34% - which means that the instrument explains nearly 78.4 % of all variability between different relationships. A correlation matrix shows that the dimensions are not independent and that they are highly correlated indicating a high existence of multi co linearity. This could be the reason why the items loaded on mostly one factor with the exception of three items.

1.6 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

In this section, the general descriptive results will be presented and discussed. The statistical significance testing of the results follows in later sections of this chapter.

1.6.1 The relationship scale

The following items were tested for both scenarios:

Table 1.6 Relationship Scale Index of the Institute of Public Relations (Hon & Grunig, 1999)

	Item on Questionnaire
1	This organization treats people like me fairly and justly
2	Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me
3	This organization can be relied on to keep its promises
4	I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions
5	I feel very confident about this organizations' skills
6	This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do
7	This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say
8	This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate
9	In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around
10	This organization really listens to what people like me have to say
11	The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process
12	I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me
13	I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me
14	There is a long- lasting bond between this organization and people like me
15	Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more
16	I would rather work together with this organization than not
17	I am happy with this organization
18	Both the organization and people like me benefit from the relationship
19	Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this organization
20	Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with people like me
21	Most people enjoy dealing with this organization

- It seems as if the respondents feel that with the planned approach the organization does not take peoples opinions into account when making decisions, but the respondents have confidence in the fact that this organization will be able to accomplish what it sets out to do.
- In the planned approach it seems that the respondents felt that this organization does not listen to the opinions of its stakeholders and does not let employees participate in decision-making.
- The fact that people do not participate and feel as if they are listened to seems to have an affect on people's commitment to the organization because the item pertaining to forming a long lasting bond with the organization was rated very low (42.2% of all respondents rated this item very low).

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES

- It seems that the respondents are not very pleased with the relationship that this organization has established with them (38.4% rated this item very low).
- With the participative approach a high percentage of respondents seem to agree with most of the statements as more than 40% of the respondents rated all except one item very highly (6 and 7 on a scale of 7).
- The statement on the reliability of the organization was the only one rated as very high by less than 40% of the respondents, but it was still a high percentage (37.6%) that felt that this organization was reliable.
- The two items rated the highest by most of the respondents (item 4 and 16) indicate a very high commitment and close working relationship with an organization that follows a participatory approach.

1.6.2 Descriptive statistics on respondent organizations

1.6.2.1 Percentage of scenario approach followed in respondent organization

The amount of respondents that indicated that they followed a participative approach in the organization in which they are working, is relatively high but it appears that it is still the planned approach that is followed for managing change.

Table 1.7

	N	Percentage
Scenario A - planned	95	54.6
Scenario B – Participative	79	45.4
Total	174	100

1.6.2.2 Percentage of organizations that have been through major changes according to respondents

The amount of respondents that indicated that they are going through major changes was very high, which is normal for the South African organizational arena. Most organizations are affected by the equity bill, affirmative action, etc.

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES

Table 1.8

	N	Percentage
Yes	160	87.9
No	22	12.1
Total	182	100

1.6.2.3 Educational level of respondents

This group of respondents was rather highly educated with a unusually high percentage of graduates (18.4%) and post graduates (25.9%). For the purposes of this study all post school qualifications were grouped together to enable easier distinction of groups and because certificates, diplomas, and degree systems in countries differ.

Table 1.9

	N	Percentage
Matric/Grade 12	38	20.5
Post school education	147	79.4
Total	185	100

1.6.2.4 Level in the organization

The levels in the organisations were divided into middle to higher management and this group of respondents consisted of a large percentage in this group (60.5%). The non-managerial and entry level respondents were 39.5% of this group.

Table 1.10

	N	Percentage
Middle to higher management	112	60.5
Entry level management and non-managerial	73	39.5
Total	185	100.0

1.7 HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULTS

In the following sections the research hypotheses are re-stated. The hypotheses are stated in the alternative form (in order to simplify the discussion), although the null hypothesis was tested.

1.7.1 Hypotheses regarding experimental validation and control measures (Test Hypotheses TH):

TH₁= There is a meaningful difference between the experimental controls of Scenario A (Planned approach) and Scenario B (Participatory approach) as perceived by the respondents.

As reported earlier in the discussion this test is regarded as significant proof of the internal validity of the experimental design (indicating that the experimental manipulation had a definite affect on the dependant variable of the measuring instrument.)

TH₂= There is a meaningful difference between the different organizations in terms of respondents responses to the two different scenarios.

	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's R	df 1	df 2	p-level
1	0.807	2.486	16.000	352.000	0.001

This implies that the null hypothesis will be rejected and that organizational type, size, or culture, or any other characteristic that makes organizations different to one another does have an affect on the relationship that the respondents would have toward the organization ($p < 0.01$). This finding has significant implications for this study as it will be important for communication managers to consider the type of organization when deciding on a change management approach to follow as this seems to have an influence on the success of an approach followed. This response was not as expected and could be contributed to the types of organizations used in this sample as they were not representative.

TH₃= There is a meaningful difference between the different educational levels of respondents in terms of their responses to the two different scenarios.

	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's R	df 1	df 2	p-level
1	0.940	2.796	4.000	358.000	0.026

From this finding it seems that null hypotheses is rejected ($p < 0.05$) and that the educational level of employees could have an influence on how they respond to communication approaches followed during change management. Again the representativeness of the sample could have influenced the results.

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES

TH₄= There is a meaningful difference between the different levels in which respondents function within the organization in terms of their responses to the two different scenarios.

	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's R	df 1	df 2	p-level
1	0.976	0.547	8	358	0.821

In this case the null hypotheses is accepted and there seem to be no significant difference between the levels in which respondents function in terms of how they responded to the two scenarios.

TH₅= There is a meaningful difference between the real change management styles followed in respondent organizations in terms of the experimental test of the relationships with the two scenarios.

	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's R	df 1	df 2	p-level
1	0.997	0.243	2	171	0.785

There seem to be no significant difference between the management styles followed in the respondents' organizations in terms of the relationships with the scenarios and thus the null hypotheses is accepted.

TH₆= There is a meaningful difference between the change or not in respondent organizations in terms of the experimental test of relationships with the two scenarios.

	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's R	df 1	df 2	p-level
1	0.988	1.044	2	179	0.354

In this case the null hypotheses is accepted and there is thus no significant difference between the change happening in the respondents' organizations and the relationships within the two scenarios.

These findings imply that there is proof of the internal validity of the experimental design concerning some of the variable and that the experimental manipulation (the two different change management strategies) had a strong effect on the relationship that employees have with the organization. It does seem though as if the type of organization and the educational level of respondents had an influence on the results. This needs further research to ascertain how and why these factors influence the change management style followed. The level in the organization, changes in the respondent organization, or change management style followed in respondent organization had no influence.

1.7.2 Research Hypotheses (H):

In terms of the research hypotheses one to five (H_{1-5}) it seems as if all of the null hypotheses could be rejected in favor of the stated alternative hypotheses.

Table 1.11 Dimension average and ANOVA of dimensions on change approach

Dimension Average									
	Trust	Control Mutuality	Commitment	Satisfaction	Behaviour				
Scenario A	3.70	3.24	3.43	3.53	4.56				
Scenario B	5.07	5.02	5.23	5.19	4.41				
Analysis of Variance									
Marked effects are significant at $p < .05000$									
	SS	df	MS	SS	df	MS			
	Effect	Effect	Effect	Error	Error	Error	F	p	
TRUST	189.1	1.0	189.1	548.8	370.0	1.48	127.465	0.000	Significant
CONTMUT	331.6	1.0	331.6	511.0	370.0	1.38	240.138	0.000	Significant
COMMIT	344.7	1.0	344.7	635.7	369.0	1.72	200.083	0.000	Significant
SATIS	282.7	1.0	282.7	644.3	369.0	1.75	161.926	0.000	Significant
BEHAV	2.1	1.0	2.1	758.5	354.0	2.14	0.991	0.320	Not significant

$H_6 =$ A higher degree of participation during high change in organizations will lead to significantly more positive overall relationships between an organization and its internal publics than with lower degrees of participation and a planned approach.

Table 1.12 Scheffé Test

	TRUST	CONTROL MUTUALITY	COMMITMENT	SATISFACTION
TRUST	0.000			
CONTROL MUTUALITY	0.000	0.000		
COMMITMENT	0.000	0.000	0.000	
SATISFACTION	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

$H_7 =$ There is a meaningful difference between the relationships with internal stakeholders in relation to Scenario A (planned approach) and Scenario B (participatory approach).

Table 1.13 Manova Test for Difference in two scenarios and Relationships

Summary of all Effects					
Scenario	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's R	df 1	df 2	p-level
A	0.633	106.797	2.000	368.000	0.000
B	0.886	23.684	2.000	368.000	0.000
A & B	0.879	25.216	2.000	368.000	0.000

1.8 MAIN FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

Regarding the most important general findings of this research it was found that:

- Although people seem to show confidence in organizations that follow a planned approach they seem to feel that these organizations are neither caring nor considerate, and they do not appear to be committed to these organizations.
- Although employees seem to evaluate an organization that follow a participative change approach as slightly less reliable than an organization that follow a planned approach, they seem to feel more committed and more positive toward an organization that follow a participative approach.
- High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly more **trust** between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach.
- High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly more **control mutuality** between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach.
- High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly higher **commitment** between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach.
- High participatory communication and change strategy will lead to significantly more **satisfaction with the relationship** between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach high.
- High participatory communication and change strategy will not necessarily lead to a significantly more positive goal attainment and change behavioral effects between an organization and its employees than with a lower degree of participation and a planned approach. This was the only hypothesis that could not be accepted and possible reasons for this could be that a positive relationship does not imply behavioral change. It could also be that the items used to determine this dimension was not well designed and did not actually measure what they set out to measure. These items are not part of the measuring instrument set up by The Institute of Public Relations (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES

- A higher degree of participation during high change in organizations will lead to significantly **more positive overall relationships** between an organization and its internal publics than with lower degrees of participation and a planned approach.
- There is a meaningful difference between the relationships with internal stakeholders in relation to Scenario A (planned approach) and Scenario B (participatory approach).

1.9 MANAGERIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the practice and thinking of communication management will have to be adjusted and new strategic interventions will have to be followed. A first implication is the way information is managed. Traditionally the reaction to crisis and disorder was to secure information and control it but the findings of this study and emergent theoretical approaches suggest that information should flow more freely so that systems can adapt faster to environmental changes using feedback and intelligence (Youngblood, 1997:69).

Traditional hierarchies and borders in organizations should furthermore be challenged and Kiel (Evans, 1996:492) proposes that the participation of citizens and customers should be encouraged to increase empowerment, ownership, and service excellence. More strategic and improved communication can improve these relationships with outside stakeholders and create arbitrary boundaries for the organization (Sherman & Schultz, 1998:169). Boundaries within the organization should be broken down and a more interdisciplinary approach should be followed.

Building a culture of constant, flexible change within the organization is a further responsibility of communication management and within the postmodern paradigms leadership should be concerned with guiding vision and values through constant communication in all directions (Wheatley, 1994:64). This would imply allowing, and even facilitating, the questioning of management decisions, conflict, dialogue and debate. Participation of employees in decision making and driving change processes should be facilitated by providing channels to transmit, analyze, and discuss change issues (Burnes, 1996: 194).

A further implication for communication management is the involvement in strategic planning and strategic decision-making. As environments become more turbulent and unpredictable organizations find it increasingly difficult to plan for specific outcomes. *"Planning doesn't work well in relation to unanticipated*

behaviors because it is essentially linear" (Sherman & Shultz, 1998:22). New sciences emphasize limitless possibilities and the *"process of everlasting becoming"* (Sherman & Shultz, 1998:23). This entails the practice of scenario planning and considering all possibilities for outcomes. In order to consider all possibilities it is necessary to have enough information from the environment. The boundary spanning function of the communication manager is prevalent in this regard.

But the most important implication for communication management is the obligation of relationship building in order for organizations to achieve its strategic objectives (Grunig, 1992:11). Communication should be used strategically in order to build trust, commitment, mutual satisfaction and mutual control of relationships with all the important stakeholders of the organization (Flower, 1993:50). The quality of relationships can be increased by facilitating participation and communication in all directions and overcoming barriers to knowledge sharing and strategic information (Marlow & 'OConnor Wilson, 1997:68). Building relationships will provide a strong basis to manage any crisis from, will assist in change management processes and gear the organization for any possible scenario it may be faced with. This will lead to a higher morale and positive climate and culture in the organization, which will in turn lead to improved customer service and a constructive contribution to the strategic goals of the organization.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Although the findings of this study indicate strongly that the participation of employees will lead to more positive relationships toward the organization and thus to a higher willingness to change, it would be even more significant if these findings could be generalized to other stakeholders such as clients, communities, suppliers, government, the media, and financial stakeholders of the organization. It was the initial intention to include these stakeholders in the study but the time limit and funding of this study did not allow this. Another very important hindrance to this was that too few responses were received from these parties to do any useful analysis on the data. It will also be important in future studies to test for the influences of type of organization and the educational levels in organizations.

A further limitation is that experimental cross sectional research can never provide the same depth of information as that which could be obtained from a more qualitative longitudinal study, especially where change management is concerned. Further research should also be conducted on the behavioral effects with

the use of a more reliable and valid measuring instrument concerning this dimension in order to ascertain a stronger relationship between change strategy, relationship outcomes, and change behavior.

1.11 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In a fast changing world and complex environment such as the South African socio-political climate the transformation management strategies followed by organizations are crucial to relationships with different stakeholders of the organization. Communication managers should constantly strive toward creating media and channels to assist participation and they should facilitate a two way communication process in order to provide a climate that would benefit change initiatives and build healthy relationships with all concerned stakeholders. The employees are the most important of these stakeholders to consider, as they are the most precious assets of any organization. The attitudes and loyalty of employees are directly influenced by their participation in communication efforts and this has a direct influence on how they treat customers and clients, which in turn leads to growth of the bottom line.

1.12 Reference List

- BURNES, B. 1996. *Managing change: A strategic approach to organizational dynamics*. London: Pitman Publishing.
- EVANS, K. G. 1996. Chaos As Opportunity: Grounding a Positive Vision of Management and Society in the New Physics. *Public Administration Review*, 56(5):491-494.
- FLOWER, J. 1993. The Power of Chaos. *Healthcare Forum Journal*, 36(5): 48-54.
- GAY, L.R. and DIEHL, P.L. 1992. *Research methods for business and management*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- GENUS, A. 1998. *The management of change*. Perspectives and Practice. London: International Thomson Business Press.
- GRUNIG, J. E. (Ed.) 1992. *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*. Hillside, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- GRUNIG, J. E. & HUANG, Y. 2000. From organization Effectiveness to Relationship Indicators: Antecedents of Relationships, Public Relations Strategies , and Relationship Outcomes. IN Ledingham, J. A. & Brunig, S. D. *Relationship Management: A Relational Approach to Public Relations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES

Erlbaum.

HON, L.C. & GRUNIG, J.E. 1999. Guidelines for measuring relationships in Public Relations. The Institute for Public Relations Commission on PR Measurement and Evaluation: University of Florida.

LEDINGHAM, J. 2000. Government-community Relationships: Extending the relational theory of Public Relations. *PR Review* (In the Press).

MARLOW, E. & O'CONNOR WILSON, P. 1997. *The Breakdown of Hierarchy: Communicating in the Evolving Workplace*. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann.

McGUIGAN, F.J. 1990. *Experimental Psychology: Methods of Research*. New York: Prentice Hall International Editions.

RICHINS, M.L. Negative Word-of-Mouth by Dissatisfied Consumers: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Marketing*, 47 (Winter): 68-78.

SENIOR, B. 1997. *Organizational change*. London: Pitman Publishing.

SHERMAN, H. & SCHULTZ, R. 1998. *Open Boundaries: Creating Business Innovation through Complexity*. MA: Perseus Books, Reading.

SPICER, C. 1997. *Organizational Public Relations: A Political Perspective*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

STAFFORD, L. & CANARY, D.J. 1991. Maintenance strategies and romantic relationship type, gender, and relational characteristics. *Journal of social and personal relationships*, 8, 217-242.

WHEATLEY, M. J. 1994. *Leadership and the New Science: Learning About Organization From an Orderly Universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

YOUNGBLOOD, M. D. 1997. *Life at the Edge of Chaos: Creating the Quantum Organization*. Dallas: Perceval Publishing.