

# Evaluation and measurement of strategic corporate communications

International Business Communication

Master's thesis

Anna-Maija Koskimäki

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## **Evaluation and measurement of strategic corporate communications**

### **Objectives of the study**

The objective of this study was to investigate the role of strategic corporate communication and the role of evaluation and measuring in strategic communication in large international organizations in Finland. The study aimed to answer the main research question: What is the role of evaluation in strategic communication today? The main research question was answered by posing three sub-questions: (1) What is the role of strategy in communications? (2) How are goals set for communications? (3) How do companies evaluate their communications?

### **Methodology**

Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted among ten communication directors and two communication managers. The communication directors represented Finnish companies operating internationally, and the communication managers represented international companies operating in Finland. All interviewees had extensive working experience in strategic leading positions in large organizations, and majority also in communications. The companies represented different fields of business.

### **Results of the study**

The research findings indicated that the role of evaluation in strategic communication today varies in large organizations. The findings indicate that there is mutual understanding of the role of strategy in communications: the purpose of communications is to support the execution of business strategy. Thus it is vital for communications to understand the business. The goals of communications were based on business goals, but their adaptation for communications varied a lot and related to how well they were remembered. Furthermore, the findings showed that there is a lack of common ground and tradition in the field communication evaluation. The communication professionals felt that they had to justify the existence and need for resources as well as demonstrate the effect communications has on business success. There is a large amount of evaluation tools and methods, but too little knowledge and time to focus on choosing the correct ones for the purposes. Evaluation of communications needs to be better linked to communication and corporate goals in order for them to contribute to the business success.

### **Key words**

International business communication, business strategy, communication strategy, goal setting, evaluation, measuring

## **Strategisen yritysviestinnän arviointi ja mittaaminen**

### **Tutkimuksen tavoitteet**

Tämän tutkielman tavoite oli tutkia strategisen yritysviestinnän roolia, ja erityisesti arvioinnin ja mittaamisen roolia strategisessa viestinnässä suurissa kansainvälisissä organisaatioissa Suomessa. Tutkimus pyrki vastaamaan kysymykseen: Millainen rooli arvioinnilla on strategisessa viestinnässä tällä hetkellä? Pääkysymyksen lisäksi kolme ala-kysymystä asetettiin: Millainen rooli strategialla on viestinnässä? Miten tavoitteet asetetaan viestinnälle? Miten yritykset arvioivat viestintäänsä?

### **Tutkimusmenetelmät**

Aineisto koostui 12 teemahaastattelusta: 10 viestintäjohtajan haastattelusta ja kahdesta viestintäpäällikön haastattelusta. Viestintäjohtajat edustivat suomalaisia kansainvälisesti toimivia yrityksiä, ja viestintäpäälliköt Suomessa toimivia kansainvälisiä yrityksiä. Kaikilla haastateltavilla oli laaja kokemus johtavista strategisista tehtävistä, ja suurimmalla osalla myös viestinnästä. Yritykset edustivat eri liiketoiminnan aloja.

### **Tutkimuksen tulokset**

Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että arvioinnin rooli strategisessa viestinnässä vaihtelee suurissa organisaatioissa. Tulokset osoittivat, että alalla on yhteisymmärrys strategian roolista viestinnässä: viestinnän tehtävä on tukea yritysstrategian toteuttamista. Siksi on tärkeää, että viestintä ymmärtää yrityksensä liiketoimintaa syvällisesti. Viestinnän tavoitteet pohjautuivat yritysten tavoitteisiin, mutta niiden mukauttaminen viestinnän tarpeisiin vaihtelee suuresti yritysten välillä. Huomattavaa oli, että tavoitteiden yleisluonteisuus vaikutti niiden muistamiseen. Lisäksi tulokset osoittivat, että viestinnän arviointiin ei ole yhteisiä käytäntöjä. Viestinnän ammattilaiset kokivat, että viestinnän olemassaolon oikeuttamiseksi ja resurssien saamiseksi sekä viestinnän vaikutuksen osoittamiseksi yritysstrategian toteuttamisessa on oltava konkreettista näyttöä. Haastateltavat kokivat, että viestinnän arviointimenetelmissä ja -välineissä on runsaudenpula, ja oikeiden valitsemiseen ei riitä aikaa ja taitoa muiden tehtävien ohella. Viestinnän arviointi täytyy liittää paremmin viestinnän ja liiketoiminnan tavoitteisiin, jotta se voi vaikuttaa yrityksen menestykseen.

### **Avainsanat**

Kansainvälinen yritysviestintä, yritysstrategia, viestintästrategia, tavoitteiden asetus, arviointi, mittaaminen

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in measuring and evaluating communication (e.g. Zerfass, 2007). According to a survey focusing on Finnish communication professionals (Viestinnän ammattilaiset, 2009) half of them have experienced an organizational change lately and almost a half are members in the management board. At the same time the communications functions typically have a budget of their own and form an independent profit center. Therefore it seems evident that the strategic importance of the contributions of communication functions for the success of organizations has been acknowledged. In order to be able to prove its importance for the organization and the effects of its activities, communications functions need concrete measures to evaluate their performance. Also, most communications professionals are increasingly recognizing that without data on the effectiveness of their activities, they cannot gain the credibility they desire from senior management (Argenti, 2006). Thus the subject of evaluating communication has become relevant.

The increasing strategic importance of communications has been shown in a study by Frandsen and Johansen (as cited in Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Uusi-Rauva 2011) where they were able to show how the need for information officers in the 1960s has changed into a demand for strategic communication professionals in the 2010s. Also Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Uusi-Rauva (2011) demonstrated in their study of corporate communication professionals and top management about their perceptions of competencies required from communication professionals in the 2010s that required skills for communication professionals have changed dramatically in recent years. Their study showed that today the communication professionals are expected to be strategic communicators sharing knowledge rather than information officers delivering facts. This implies that the role of communications has changed and that the communications are expected to promote strategy implementation in organizations. Likewise, Hallahan (2007, p.11) emphasizes that today communication theory and research must focus on

how communication contributes to an organization's purpose for being. In other words, it is not enough today for communications to operate simply as an information deliverer when contribution to the success of the whole organization is required.

In a study by Wright (1997) in 1997 the corporate executives other than public relations still considered organization's communication function to be important to their organizations, but were confused with what the communications function actually is and does. However, already in 2010 a study conducted by Wuolanne (2010) among six CEOs in Finland about the strategic role of communications revealed that the role of communications has become clearer and is considered to have significant strategic value. According to Wuolanne (2010), internal communication is considered to be strategically important in communicating corporate strategy to employees, whereas external communication was perceived as strategic due to its influence on corporate image and reputation. Furthermore, successful external communication was considered vital since it may also affect the views employees form of the company. The study by Wuolanne (2010) showed that communication professionals should have profound knowledge of the corporate strategy and strategy process in order to be able to contribute to the strategy work in all stages. Also Kamensky (2004, p.36; see also Khanfar 2007) notes that in the 2000s strategic management will strongly develop towards management by interaction. According to Kamensky (2004) this means that the organizations will need to think how more and more complicated dependency relations are understood and managed and how they will be turned to positive assets by interaction. Moreover, Goodman (2009) emphasizes the increasing importance of good reputation and image for organizations; he argues that the influence of the financial crisis in the end of the 2010s caused an increasing need for companies to maintain a good reputation in order to fight against challenges caused by the crisis. Thus it can be concluded that the need for successful strategic communications has increased in corporate strategy work.

In order for organizations to meet their goals, their strategy must be implemented efficiently and communication forms an integral part of the implementation process. It is communication that makes the strategy understandable (Puro, 2002). As the

importance of strong communications for efficient operations of organizations has been acknowledged in recent years (e.g. Goodman, Hallahan 2007, Argenti 2006, Wuolanne 2010, Dolphin, 2000, Ritter 2003), rather many studies and theories have been developed for strategic corporate communications. Khanfar (2007) argues that especially methods for long-term strategic planning for communications have been derived from strategic management theory. Most of the models and methods are in textbooks (Zwijze-Koning & de Jong, 2007) on communication management as guidelines for how communication should be managed and planned (e.g. Cornelissen 2011, Juholin 2011, Smith 2005). Correspondingly, Michaelson and Stack (2011) argue that the attempts to develop measures for communications remain primitive and possibly even misunderstood by the significant proportions of public relations professionals and academics, in addition to even the measurement and evaluation community itself. Michaelson and Stack (2011) further argue that public relations measurement and evaluation community has developed soft guidelines for consideration rather than a definitive model that can be adopted by and adhered to by the profession.

On the one hand, Hon (1998) argues that the little research about goal setting in corporate communications and its effects on corporate goals “is almost entirely prescriptive – emphasizing what practitioners should be doing rather than illuminating what they really are doing and why.” On the other hand, Steyn (2003) suggests that the concept of “corporate communication strategy” has received little attention within public relations. Nonetheless, rather little investigation has been conducted on measuring communications and its link with corporate strategies in practice. Ritter (2003) argues that for a long time it was possible for communications to use the excuse of the impossibility to measure corporate communications as they are intangible to explain the lack of concrete proves of the value of communications for the success of an organization. He suggests that nowadays it is no longer acceptable, and that communication professionals should develop effective ways to measure their administration, efforts and improvements of the communications in order to show how and where the communications add value to the company. Also Michaelson and Stacks (2011) suggest that public relations has used a number of explanations and excuses for



not having been able to achieve consensus on standard measures for communications, such as the diversified nature of public relations and thus the impossibility of finding a common ground for the large crowd.

Hence, corporate communications has long been criticized for not being able to prove its importance for the success of the business. Although measures that serve communication have been developed actively since the 1970's, John Pavlik (1987, p.65) said in the 1980's that the measuring of the impact of communication can be compared to finding the Holy Grail a.k.a. impossible. Although the interest in evaluating communication has increased, it is still rather infrequent; for example, according to the survey among Finnish communications professionals in 2009 (Viestinnän ammattilaiset, 2009) only around 50% of companies evaluate the impact of the activities of their communication.

The role of communications in organizations has changed lately (e.g. Viestinnän ammattilaiset 2009). According to Juholin (2011), for example, instead of controlling and top-to-bottom communication, organizations strive for dialogue today. In order for dialogue to work efficiently it needs to be evaluated and the results analyzed and put into action. Juholin (2011) argues that measuring "the eyeballs" does not go in line with today's idea of also getting a response from the message receiver. This suggests that also the evaluation systems must become strategic and supportive for dialogue.

In order to be able to evaluate it is important to know what is wanted (e.g. Hämäläinen & Maula, 2004; Smith, 2005; Holland & Gill, 2006). This is also the case in evaluating communication; in order to be able to evaluate the impact of communication, the communication goals need to be clear. Hon (1998) suggests that public relations goals should be derived from the overall mission, goals, and objectives of the organization in order for the public relations to be able to demonstrate either directly or indirectly its role in organizational goal achievement. Only lately have organizations understood the need of clear goals in communication. Seeing communication departments as support units has caused a lack of planning and strategy for many communication departments

that have instead focused on running the daily tasks and being reactive rather than proactive. The lack of goals makes it difficult to define what needs to be evaluated and what is the knowledge wanted from the evaluation, not to mention how to use of the evaluation results. Without knowing what one wants it is difficult to define the evaluation targets and tools. Therefore, it is vital to link the communication goals and activities to the communication strategy, which must be linked to the business strategy.

Since the 1990's there has been an interest in evaluating communication, but only until 21st century the theories have been taken to action (Juholin, 2011, pp.16). Today there is a large variety of tools for evaluating communication; therefore the question now is how to find the appropriate tools for the purposes. As Ritter (2003) suggests, for long managers have striven to show a good number of measures for proving their efficiency, but they often lack a clear link with the corporate strategy.

In spite of the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of communications for the success of organizations and the consequent need for communication evaluation, Hon (1998) suggests that rather little research has been conducted on the practices of organizations in evaluating their communication. Especially a lack in research can be detected on the link between corporate strategies and current communication evaluation practices. More effort has been put into research on evaluation models for management (e.g. Kim & Hatcher 2009) and some for developing measures for communications in general(e.g. Kim 2001). However, one study could be found relating to the relation between strategy, communication and evaluation in practice; Hon (1997, 1998) investigated the role of corporate communications in organizations and found from her studies among communications practitioners and CEOs that in many organizations public relations was already considered significant and that many practitioners conducted informal evaluations, but only a few formal evaluations. She found that according to the practitioners, corporate communications was valuable to their organizations for various reasons: they help organizations to survive, helps organizations to make money, helps other organizational functions make money, helps organizations save money, and helps organizations diffuse opponents. However, in spite

of these benefits that corporate communications can add to an organization, they were often undervalued or unacknowledged.

Measuring and evaluating communications is a vital part of the development and implementation of communication strategy, and several models and theories have been developed for doing it. Metrics are essential to good management, since many executives understand that you cannot manage what you cannot measure (Goodman& Hirsch, 2010, p. 133). Probably one of the most acknowledged ones is the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton for strategy management. This model has also been used for communications, but according to Juholin (2010), lately the model has often been criticized for being operative and focusing on short-term results. The model has then been further developed by Craig Fleisher and Darren Maffay (1997) to a balanced scorecard for public relations management. However, today many communications professionals find the model outdated since it sees communications as a support unit and not as a function that reaches to all areas of organizations (e.g. Zerfass 2007). Zerfass (2007) developed the model further to Corporate Communications Scorecard that aims to cover both the operative and strategic levels.

Often communications professionals are accused of not being able to give solid ROI (Return on Investment) values for their activities (Juholin, 2011). According to the Global Benchmark study by Gaunt and Wright (as cited in Zerfass, 2007), where 1000 public relations professionals were interviewed, three-quarters of the interviewees stated that new methods are needed for determining the return on investment of communications. It was considered vital in the internal competition for resources and competencies. Although the demand for ROI values for communication means that communication as a field has reached the level of being accountable for profit in organizations, the critics claim that the activities of communications units are so multifilament that measuring the return for the invested money cannot always be measured immediately or in terms of money. When corporate communication was still seen as one-way top-to-bottom persuasion (Cornelissen 2011), ROI values may have

been more accurate for evaluating the communication activities, but today many see looking only for ROI values for communication too “black-and-white” and thus inadequate by itself.

According to Viestinnän ammattilaiset (2009) survey among communication professionals in Finland, there is a lack of appropriate measures that would suit the evaluation of the total impact of communications functions to an organization (see also Zerfass, 2007). The same situation seems common in all Europe since, as European Communication Monitor (2010, see p.107) showed, 82.3% of PR professionals in Europe tell they use clippings and media response to evaluate their activities, and 69.7% internet and intranet usage (number of visitors, time spent at the page etc.), whereas only 25.7% measure the impact of their activities on financial and strategic targets and 24.3% the impact on tangible and intangible resources. This reveals that in many organizations the level of evaluating the impact of communication is still undeveloped and on operative level.

What makes evaluating communications difficult is its nature of being part of all operations of an organization (Hargie & Tourish, 2000). Thus it is often difficult to separate the merits of a communication department from those of other departments (Zerfass, 2007). Juholin (2010) points out that good communication does not automatically mean success for the whole company; even an excellent job from the part of communications department does not save a company lacking in other areas, and on the other hand an organization may enjoy great success in spite of poor communications. Therefore it is of interest to study how the communications functions in organizations find and separate the merits of the communications units from those of other activities in the company.

In spite of the expanding need for communication evaluation, there have been few studies focusing on the evaluation organizations actually use and its role in strategic communication. Until now researchers have mainly focused on developing models and theories, but little research has been made in organizations. Thus it is important to get

an understanding of the current role of corporate communications in strategy work, and especially the current role of evaluation in strategic communication.

The purpose of the present study is to get an understanding of how large organizations that have the most resources to put in communications, evaluate their communication at the moment and how the evaluation is used for meeting the set strategy. Therefore this present thesis focuses on finding out the current practices of strategic communication and especially the role of evaluation in it.

### 1.1. Research objectives and questions

The overall goal of this study is to examine the role of strategic corporate communication and the role of evaluation and measuring in strategic communication work in large international organizations in Finland. In particular, the study focuses on examining the role of corporate communication in strategy work, goal-setting for communications, and the role of evaluation in meeting the set communication goals and further business goals. This study focuses on the perspectives that communications directors have on the strategic role of communication and the supporting evaluation.

Thus this study focuses on one main question with three sub-questions, all of which are shown below.

What is the role of evaluation in strategic communication today?

1. What is the role of strategy in communications?
2. How are goals set for communications?
3. How do companies evaluate their communications?

Since the tradition of evaluation in the field of communication is rather new, it is of interest to study whether organizations actually have already accepted it as part of their activities, and if it has reached the strategic level. By examining how communications

use business strategy in forming their communication strategy and further goals, I expect to comprehend whether communications is considered a strategic function in the organizations and if it affects the daily work. Furthermore, by investigating what organizations evaluate, with what tools and how the information obtained from the evaluations is used, I expect to get an understanding of the role of evaluation in communication in these organizations and the role of evaluation in supporting strategic communication and contributing to the success of the organization.

## 1.2. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. This introductory Chapter 1 has described the relevance of the topic for the field of communications and presented the research objectives and questions. Chapter 2 presents previous literature focusing on the link between business and communication strategies, goal setting, and evaluation of communication. Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology. In Chapter 4 the findings are presented from the data collected from the interviews, and in Chapter 5 the findings are discussed. The final Chapter 6 returns to the aims of the study, recaps the research and main findings, and finally discusses the implications of the study and gives suggestions for further research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews previous literature, which focuses on the link between business and communication strategies, goal setting, and evaluation of communication. The review consists of an overview of three areas: the concepts of business and communication strategies and their relationship, goal setting for communications, and evaluation of communication work.

This chapter begins with an introduction of the concepts of business strategy and communication strategy and their relation in section 2.1., which is followed by goal-setting in communication work in section 2.2. Although goal setting for communications may be considered as a part of business and communication strategies, the researcher/ author found it such an essential part of the strategic communication process that it was given a section of its own. Section 2.3. concentrates on giving an overview of evaluation and measuring in strategic communication work. Based on the literature review, section 2.4. develops a theoretical framework, which will be used for analyzing the empirical findings of the study.

### 2.1. The relation of business strategy and communication strategy

This section presents the concepts of business and communication strategies and discusses their relation. First, in subsection 2.1.1, strategy as a concept is discussed, after which in subsection 2.1.2 theories on the link between business and communication strategies are presented.

#### 2.1.1. Business and communication strategies

The term “strategy” originates from war vocabulary. The word strategy comes from the Greek word ‘strategos’, which means the skill of leading war (Kamensky, 2004, p.19). Nykysuomen sanakirja (1996) defines the Finnish translation of the word strategy (strategia) as theory of winning a war. Similarly, Oxford English dictionary gives the

definition of “the art of a commander-in-chief; the art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of a campaign” for the word. It also defines the word “strategy” as “a plan for successful action based on the rationality and interdependence of the moves of the opposing participants”.

Today the word strategy is popular in business language and a “must” for every organization. Kamensky (2004, p.20) defines strategy as a community’s conscious choice of central goals and guidelines for actions in a changing world, whereas Aaltonen et al. (2001, p.3) views strategy as a completeness of conscious and subconscious choices by the organization for guiding the actions of its members to a parallel direction. This suggests that the strategy is both planned and on the other hand affects subconsciously the decisions made in an organization.

According to Aula (2008, p. 40), strategy is usually defined as a unity of internally logical, important decisions made in an organization. The decisions aim for the success of the organization or at least surviving in its environment. Hämäläinen and Maula(2004, p.16) suggest that strategy describes how the organization is going to achieve its vision and execute its mission. They propose that strategy often answers to a question “what we should do in order to succeed in future”.

Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta and Uusi-Rauva argue that the recent wide discussion of strategic corporate communications assumes three basic meanings for the word “strategic”. Firstly, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2012) argue that “strategic” refers to something “very important”. Secondly, they argue, “the underlying association between “strategy” and “purpose” can be seen when “strategic” refers to any activity that has an explicit goal or aim”. Thirdly, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2012) suggest that “strategic” in a business context is usually regarded as something that is related to corporate strategy and its implementation, in other words, an activity that is part of the overall strategy work or dialogue in the organization”.



According to Cornelissen (2011, p.83) there is a range of paradigms that exist on the strategy-making process. He states that strategies can be formed in various different ways: following a rational planning mode, in which objectives are set out and methodically worked out into comprehensive action plans, following a more flexible intuitive or visionary process, or rather incremental or emergent where the strategy formation process is rather continuous and iterative. Cornelissen argues that in spite of these differences, all strategies have three common points:

1. Strategy formation consists of a combination of planned and emergent processes
2. Strategy involves a general direction and not simply plans or tactics
3. Strategy is about the organization and its environment

According to Cornelissen (2011), strategy involves a combination of both logical, rational aspects where visions and objectives are translated into programs and actions, and more emergent aspects where actions arise from the environment but fall in the strategy scope of the organization. Strategies direct the organization and its positioning in relation to stakeholders in its environment for a longer period of time than single, specific activities and programs. Cornelissen (2011, p.84) also states that the reason for strategy is its task in interacting between the organization and its environment to ensure the best fit between the two.

According to Hämäläinen and Maula (2004, p.31) strategy communication supports the commitment of the employees to their work and the organization, affects the reputation, and may even increase innovation by promoting the understanding of the link between the daily tasks and the strategy. Also Mantere et al. (2003, p.50) emphasize the significance of strategy communication and importance for employees to understand it and apply it in their work as the profound understanding of it may evoke higher motivation since the people feel they are working for the common good. Hämäläinen and Maula (2004, p.28) argue that strategy communication includes three parts:

- Communication about *strategy content*, which contributes to developing and implementing the strategy by informing and creating mutual understanding about the strategy
- Communication *supporting strategy implementation* links to daily communication work that supports and leads the work towards the strategic goals
- Communication about *strategy process*, which contributes to communicating the policies, processes and systems relating to developing and implementing strategy as well as the roles, responsibilities and schedules.

According to Smith (2005, p.3), strategic communication is intentional communication, and it has a purpose and a plan, in which alternatives are considered and decisions are justified. He adds that strategic communication is based on research and subject to eventual evaluation.

The strategy should be in a form easy to read and remember. Ritter (2003) argues that the corporate strategy is often clear “until the business units try to integrate it into their own operating plans”. He suggests that often a detailed articulation of the strategy translated into concrete objectives would help the units to link their plans to the corporate strategy. Also Juholin (2006, p.66) suggests that both the communication strategy, as well as the corporate strategy, should be in a form that everyone relating to communications in some way is able to understand it in order for everyone to be able to contribute to the business goals. Thus she states that often two versions are written; a longer version where more justified and detailed information is given, and a shorter version where only the main issues are mentioned on a more general level. Samansky (2003, p.24), on the other hand, suggests that a good strategic plan should include both the strategy and the tactics that will be used to achieve the strategy.

#### 2.1.2. Link between business and communication strategies

Hargie, Tourish, and Wilson (2002) argue that effective communication forms a vital part to business success, and therefore should form an fundamental part of the strategic

planning process for all organizations. As the purpose of a strategy is to direct the relation between the organization and its environment (Cornelissen 2001, p.84), the contribution of communications forms an important part of the process. Goodman (2001, p.119) sees the role of communications in business changing and it becoming more strategic and vital for the success of organizations than before. Furthermore, Goodman (2001) suggests that the importance of communications will only increase in future in an information-driven economy.

Communication strategy should be in line with the corporate strategy and aim for the objectives of the business. Hallahan (2007, p.1) defines strategic communication as the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission. Genasi (2005) amplifies that a communication strategy that is clearly aligned to organizational strategy and has proper, business-goal-supporting, measurable objectives, provides the best framework for demonstrating effectiveness against objectives.

Correspondingly, Dolphin and Fan (2000, p.105) suggest that corporate communication has a key role to play in the strategic planning of an organization. They state that a communication strategy is a first essential for any organization and it needs to be formulated by the director in close conjunction with the CEO and the executive team, which suggests that the director should be part of the team.

Similarly, Holtz (2004, p.55) states that organizations' communication efforts should follow a strategic plan, and the communication plan should be aligned with the company's strategic plan. Moreover, Cornelissen (2001, p. 84) suggests that in order to have a truly strategic role in an organization, the corporate communication strategy cannot be separated from the organization's corporate strategy. Additionally, Lindenmann and Likely (1997/2000, see p.107) emphasize that goals of the public relations should be tied directly to the overall goals of the organization. The link between corporate strategy and communications is vital also since, as a study by Kalla (2005) suggests, effective knowledge sharing increases the efficiency of employees and

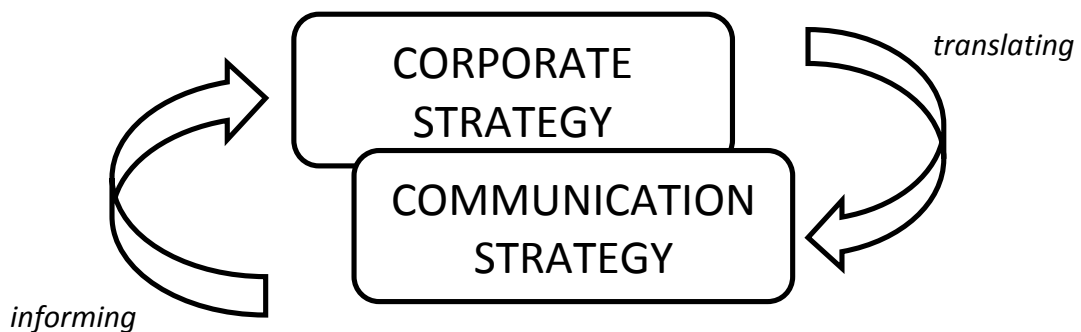
true effectiveness can only be obtained through incorporating all organizational members.

According to Steyn (2007, p.142), the purpose of a communication strategy is to outline the communication needs for reaching the business goals, expressing organizational positions, promoting managers' change and leadership communication skills and assisting them in obtaining loyalty and support from employees for strategies, and acting responsibly.

Most of the definitions and purposes defined for communication strategy and strategic communication suggest they are either aligned to or communicating the business strategy, thus being rather reactive than proactive. Cornelissen (2011, p.84), however, is of the opinion that communications should have a more proactive role in the strategy formulation process of an organization. He emphasizes that the purpose of a communication strategy is to translate the corporate strategy to all stakeholder groups. He argues that where corporate strategy provides a strategic vision for the entire organization and the vision often also articulates how the company wants to be seen by its various stakeholder groups, communication strategy is a functional or operational strategy concerned with how corporate communication can develop communication programs towards different stakeholders to achieve that vision and to support the corporate objectives in the corporate strategy.

According to Cornelissen (2011), corporate strategy and communication strategy are linked in two ways; translating and informing, as the following Figure 1 illustrates:

Figure 1. The link between corporate strategy and communication strategy (Cornelissen, 2011, p.85)



As can be seen in Figure 1, according to Cornelissen (2011, p. 85) corporate communication and communication strategies need to be linked to the corporate strategy. The link is two-way need the business strategy affects the communication strategy and vice versa. On one hand, the purpose of a communication strategy is to translate the business strategy into actions, which aim towards reaching the issues stated in the business strategy. On the other hand, the link relates to communications informing the senior executives on stakeholder and reputation issues, and therefore influencing the decisions made by executive board concerning corporate strategy and vision. Typically, corporate strategy has been seen as moving “top-down”; corporate strategy has cascaded from the executive boards to all levels of the organization level by level. Cornelissen (2011, p.85) suggests that a strategy process should rather be more flexible and decentralized so that units and functions would be encouraged to initiate ideas that “then become the catalyst for changes in strategy throughout the organization”. Thus the purpose of the communication unit would not be just translating the corporate strategy, but also informing on the success of corporate strategy implementation.

According to Cornelissen (2011, p. 85-86) an important requirement for the above-presented model to happen in practice requires management expertise and skills from the communication professionals. He states that practitioners need to have knowledge of the industry or sector in which the organization operates and of how communication can contribute to corporate and market strategies and to different functional areas within the company. Correspondingly, Gay (2006, p.24) suggests that in order for communication to be truly effective in an organization, leaders must have a sense of ownership and participate in the process. Furthermore, Argenti & Forman (2002, p. 64) propose that in an ideal situation the head of corporate communication reports to the CEO so that the expertise of the communication directors on key constituencies can be made good use of on determining company strategy, vision, and mission and their implementation. Also Määttä (2000, p. 17) points out that the traditional strategy-thinking, where the management is the strategy-developer and the employees are the realizers, does not work in the competitive business environment of today. According to Määttä (2000), each member of an organization works as a developer, interpreter, and realizer of the business strategy every day, and thus no organization should underestimate the importance and the possibilities the wide knowledge and expertise create for the organization.

According to Steyn (2007, p.140), there are six functional responsibilities of PR as a function with a strategic mandate:

1. Developing PR strategy that addresses the organization's key strategic goals and themes that are aligned to organizational goals and positions,
2. Developing PR strategy that addresses constantly emerging societal and stakeholder issues that are identified in the organization's issues and stakeholder management processes.
3. Formulating a strategic PR plan to achieve PR goals.
4. Developing, implementing, and evaluating communication plans in support of the PR function's deliberate and emergent strategies.

5. Counseling organizational leaders/managers/supervisors on their communication responsibility toward their employees.
6. Managing the activities of a support function.

To conclude, this section has presented diverse views on strategy, and especially communication strategy. Furthermore, the diverse perspectives on the link between business and communication strategies have been introduced. These issues have been presented to show the supposed existence and importance of a communication strategy and its vital link to the goals of the organization and its business strategy, which is highly relevant for the present study on the role evaluation in strategic communication. In order for communications to have true strategic value and be able to efficiently contemplate to the success of the business they are in, they must be aware of the business strategy and communication strategy and the necessary link between them.

## 2.2. Goal setting for communications

This section presents strategy development and goal-setting theories for communications. Diverse views on how focus areas and goals of communications relate to strategic communication process are presented. Although goal setting for communications may be considered as part of communication strategy, it was considered such an important issue in the strategic communication and especially for the successful evaluation of it, that it was given a section of its own. That is also why the section is not divided into sub-sections.

As Hallahan (2007, p. 7) suggests, a critical characteristic of strategic communication is purposefulness. Furthermore, he argues that strategic communication focuses on how the organization itself presents and promotes itself through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees, and communication practitioners. In other words, as the activities of leaders, employees and communication practitioners of an organization contribute to the self-presentation of the organization, all of them should be aware of the

strategy in order to commit to the same, shared goals and creating the wanted presentation. Thus, developing a purposeful and logical strategy and further goals for each unit of an organization, such as communications, is vital.

Communication strategy should contribute to the success of business strategy, and therefore the communication goals should, at least on some level, link to the business goals. Holland & Gill (2006, p. 20) argue that the goals of the communication plans should strive for the same goals as the goals of the business plans are, “so that the achievement of business goals becomes the ultimate measure of communication success”. Juholin (2006, p.65) proposes that since communication strategy is based on the whole corporate strategy, it should change when the main strategy changes or is revised. She states that it is important that the communication strategy is developed and updated in parallel with the development and updating of the corporate strategy. Also, Juholin (2006, p.65) suggests that communication strategy is composed of a definition, choices and objectives, of which applying and executing the organization is successful today and in future. She states that the main focus of a strategy should be in future.

Correspondingly, Cornelissen (2011, p.84) proposes that seeing corporate communication as a strategic boundary-spanning function requires that communication professionals are involved in decision-making on the corporate strategy itself. Such a view of communication means that communication strategy is not just seen as a set of goals and tactics at the functional or operational level – at the level of the corporate communication function – but that its scope and involvement in fact stretch to the corporate and business-unit levels of the organization as well.

The first step in communication strategy development, that supports the business strategy, is setting the wanted outcomes (Juholin 2006, Gay 2006, Lindenmann &Likely 1997/2003, Mason, 2007). Holland and Gill (2006, p.20) suggest that in order for organization’s communication activities to be worth the investment, communication must have measurable goals that support business goals. Similarly, Gay (2006, p.22) states that the communication planning process begins with setting objectives to make



sure that the communication function contributes as much as possible to the business success. Gay suggests that this should be done by looking at the business objectives and understanding how currently it contributed to each one. Also, Lindenmann and Likely (1997/2003, see p.107) state that the plans and accomplishments should always be linked to the overall goals, objectives, strategies and tactics of the organization as a whole.

Strategy work is a multi-level process (Kamensky 2004, Ylisirniö 2011, Juholin, 2006). According to Kamensky (2004, p.29), most business people admit that strategy makes or breaks the success of a company in the long run. Kamensky (2004) suggests that the successful strategy challenge is tripartite and each level is higher than the previous one. He further suggests that a company may succeed in the long run if it is able to:

1. develop a success strategy
2. execute it well, and
3. revise the strategy according to changing demands.

Ylisirniö (2011) is, on the other hand, of the opinion that in the strategy process there are levels such as thinking and envisioning the goals and possibilities, making decisions based on certain foundation, and finally, executing the actions that lead to the wanted result. Similarly, Argenti (2007, p. 25) suggests that setting an effective organization strategy is a three-stage process: 1) determining the objectives for a particular communication, 2) deciding what resources are available for achieving those objectives, and 3) diagnosing the organization's reputation.

Corporate communication planning happens on different levels of specificity (Juholin, Åberg). Juholin (2006, p.68) suggests that there are two levels of planning in corporate communications: operative and strategic. With operative communication planning she refers to brainstorming and organizing different kinds of activities when the stakeholder groups are known, as well as their needs and wants for information flow and interaction. She suggests that operative planning often is developing and organizing different

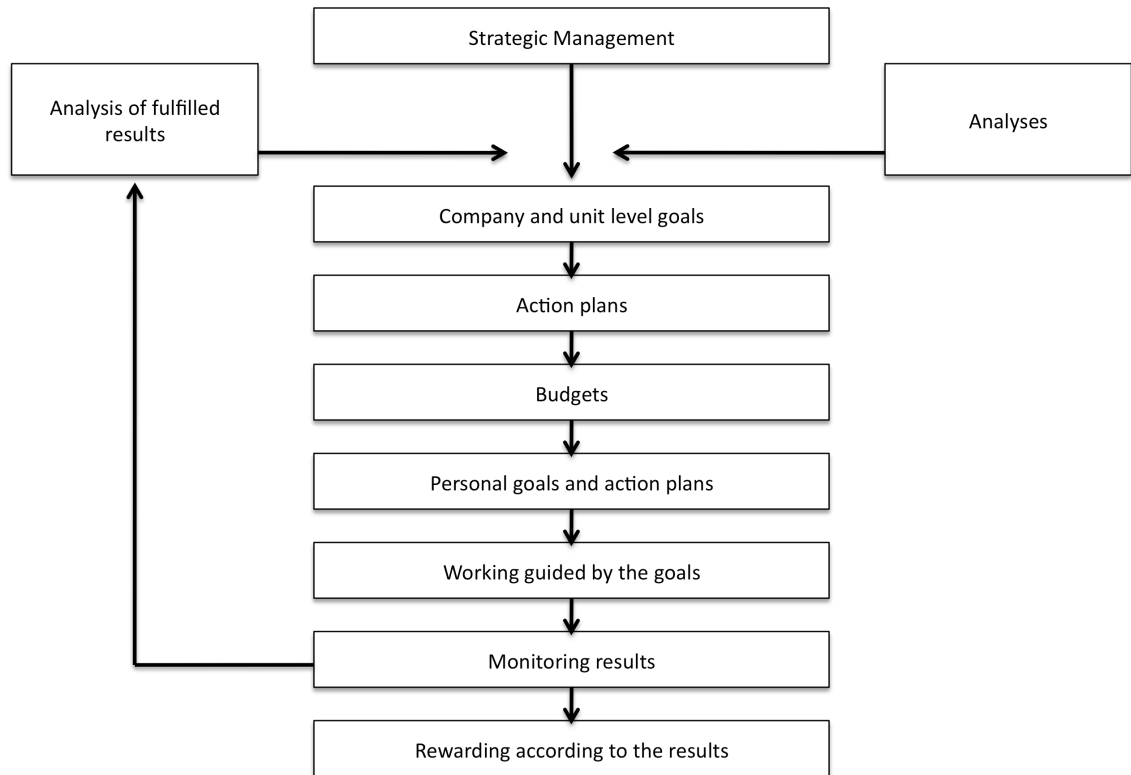
outputs of communication, such as designing and organizing events, campaigns, contents for employee magazines and internet- and intranet pages, or communication relating to a launch of a new product. Operative planning refers to deciding cooperation and target groups, and actions for them, planning timetables for the actions, outlining the budget and other resources and people in charge of them.

Strategic communication planning instead is about defining where is aimed for with the operative actions –what is the target change or state with the actions according to Juholin (2006, p.68). Strategic planning is more far-reaching, and aims for the success of the whole organization. Examples of these are the corporate reputation, the efficiency of information flow, work atmosphere, or other change in the knowledge, attitudes or choices of other stakeholder groups. Juholin (2006) states that another important aspect of strategic planning are different kinds of studies and analyses, that indicate about the current state of the organization and its direction of change.

Åberg (2000, p.235) adds a third level of planning between the operative and strategic: tactical level. He suggests that on a tactical level the use of resources is planned. This includes, for example, elements such as specifying the resources needed for communications, specifying cooperation groups and basic instructions for work, as well as operational environment analysis, SWOT-analysis and instructions for crisis situations. Åberg (2000) emphasizes that the instructions and plans should not be too binding, since the environment and the situations change constantly, and not all can be taken into account beforehand. Tactical planning directs strategic plans towards operative plans.

Figure 2 by Kamensky (2004, p.310) shows how strategy should be divided into year goals and action plans.

Figure 2. Operative management model of Kamensky (2004, p. 310)

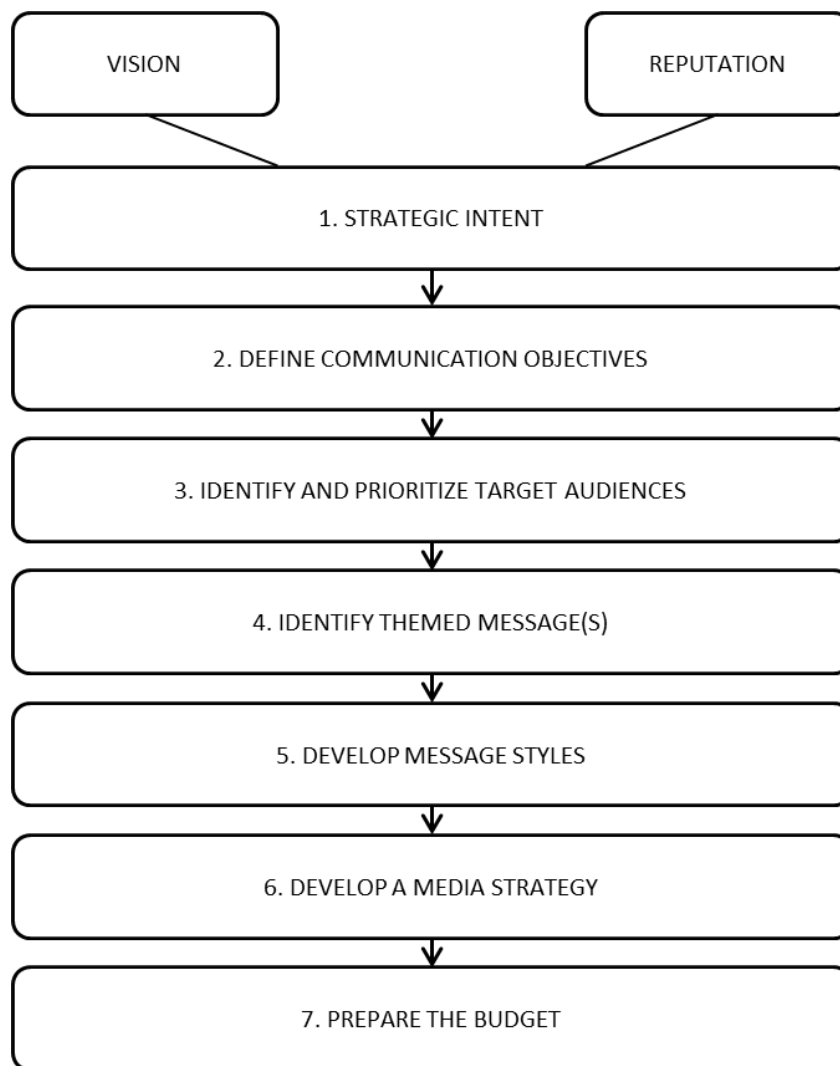


As shown in Figure 2, Kamensky (2004, p.310) introduces a nine-level operative management model for dividing a strategy to year goals and action plans for units and their subunits, and to personal goals and activities of the employees. The basis for the model is naturally the corporate strategy, which can be further updated and focused by conducting research and analyzing it for the year plans. Kamensky (2004) states that the most important aspect of year-planning is the goal-setting of the units. The balance for the goals is found from the strategy for the correct economic goals, outside and inside efficiency, and development plans. For all the central goals are set action plans, and the further personal goals for employees. The goals set should guide the work of the people

and lead to reaching the set strategic goals. In order to motivate people, the results are followed after, and rewarded accordingly.

According to Cornelissen (2011), in the formulation of communication strategy and the activities, the current position of the organization must be considered in relation to the wanted position, as the following Figure 3 illustrates.

Figure 3. The process of planning communication programmes and campaigns of Cornelissen (2011, p.108)



As shown in Figure 3, when formulating communication strategy, and planning actions and activities it is important to be aware of the current reputation and the wanted reputation (vision) of the organization, and the gap between them. A model developed by Cornelissen (2011, p. 108) describes the seven levels of the process of planning communication programs and campaigns. The model helps to plan the communication programs and campaigns according to the organization's long-term vision. Through defining the current reputation and vision, the strategic intent is defined. Strategic intent "formulates a change or consolidation of stakeholder reputations of the organization" (p.108). After formulating the strategic intent, the communication objectives are defined in order to determine whether stakeholders' awareness, attitude, more general reputation, or behavior is sought to be changed or consolidated. Cornelissen suggests that communication objectives should be as tightly defined as possible. He suggests using 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) for covering all important aspects of objective defining.

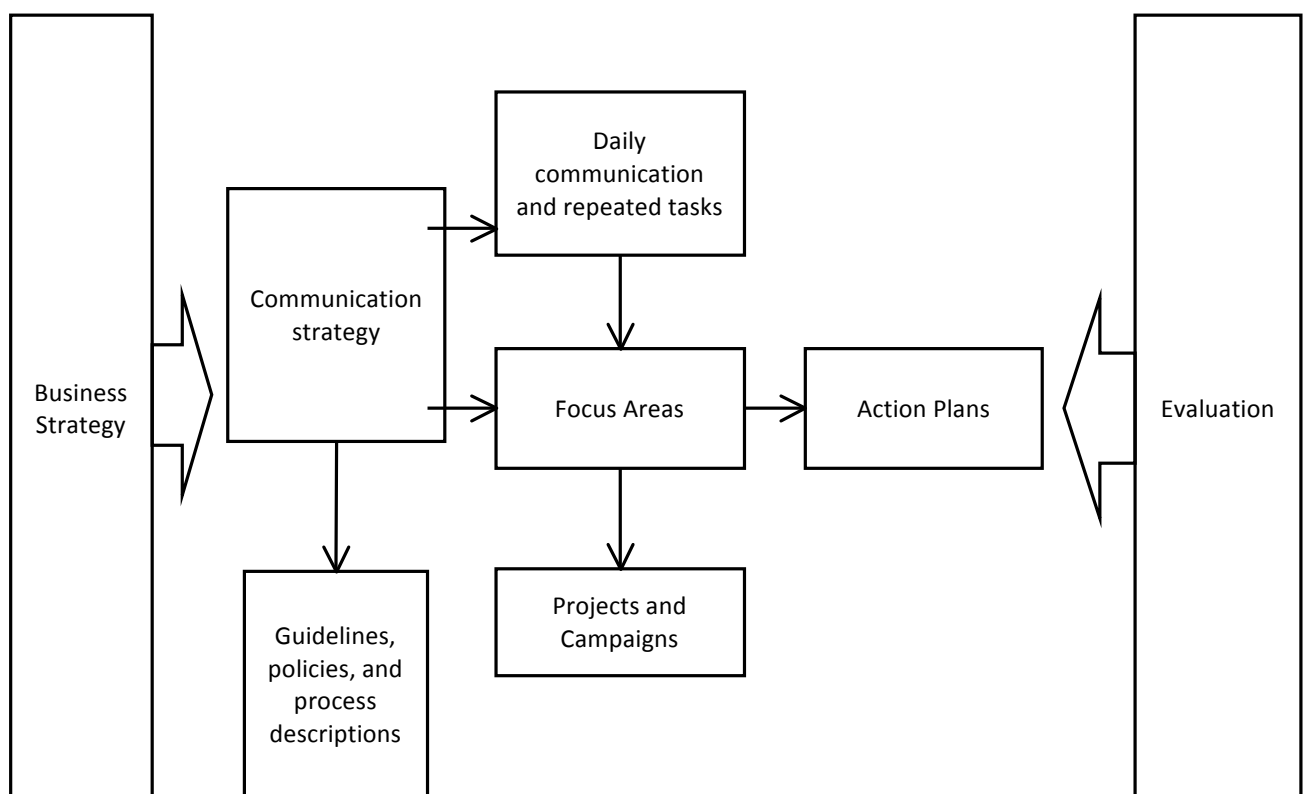
Cornelissen (2011, p.109) states that "well-articulated objectives are measurable in that they specify a time-frame and the number of people that the program or campaign sets out to reach and affect. It is then possible for communication practitioners to evaluate and determine whether objectives have been met." After defining communication objectives, target audiences are identified and prioritized. To the selected target audiences are identified the themed messages and message styles, which is continued by developing a media strategy and preparing the budget.

According to Juholin (2011), the business strategy is the base for communication strategy, which is the base for all communication activities and evaluation of input for business success.

Juholin (2011, p.108), states that the professionalism of the communications stems from how tightly the strategic planning and goals are derived from the strategy of the organization, and how well the execution of communications leans to the communication strategy. Furthermore, Juholin (2011, p.100) suggests that target-oriented planning starts from a strategic level, where a frame is given for the

communication objectives that serve the goals of the whole organization. The planning continues on the operative level where all activities and projects are linked to the general goals. Thus, Juholin states, the strategic goals have a double purpose: to give the direction to what needs to be done tangibly, and on the other hand to allow the evaluation of whether the planned activities further the communication strategy. Figure 4 shows how Juholin (2011, p.110) structures strategic communication planning.

Figure 4. Structuring communication planning (Juholin, 2011, p. 110)



As can be seen from Figure 4, all communication actions derive from business strategy. A communication strategy is formulated based on the business strategy. Based on the company policies and communication strategy guidelines, policies and process descriptions are written down. Communication strategy directs on one hand the daily

tasks and yearly-repetitive tasks, and on the other hand the focus areas of the strategy to require special attention during the stated strategy period. Communication strategy guides the daily communication tasks that are routine-like responsibilities everyone is aware of, and the yearly-repetitive tasks, such as performance appraisals, regular publications, and stockholders' meetings. The focus areas of the strategy on the other hand lead to campaigns and projects that further the objectives pointed in the strategy. Based on the focus areas an action plan is formulated in order to direct the work towards the wanted objectives. The accomplishment of the set activities is evaluated and the results used for improving the work.

The development of strategies are clear for business and communication professionals, but often the strategy professionals seem to face difficulty in the execution (Kamensky 2004, Ylisirniö 2011, Frigo & Litman 2001, Sterling, 2003). According to Sterling (2003, p. 27), in a study conducted in 1999 nearly 70 percent of strategic plans and strategies were never successfully implemented. Similarly, Kamensky (2004) states that often people tend to find the strategy planning easy, but the execution difficult. He suggests that companies often develop vast amounts of plans, but not a strategy that would be a unity of plans aiming for the success. He states people are often unable to state the main issues of the strategies they have built. Also Ylisirniö (2011, p.22) has come across the same issue; professionals often state the strategy development has been successful, but the execution failed for some reason. Ylisirniö (2011) raises a question whether a strategy has been developed successfully if it has not been able to successfully fulfill. He suggests that a strategy is a unity, that has elements like development and execution, but the joint effect is the one that matters.

In summary, theories and models on goal setting for communications have been presented in this section. All models shown subchapter demonstrate that communication strategy is derives from the business strategy and that evaluation is a vital part of the process in further developing the business and communication goals and actions. The theories presented in this subchapter have further emphasized the importance the setting of goals and focus areas for communications to be vital to base them on corporate

strategy in order for communications to be able to translate the business strategy into actions, as well as to inform the organization about current status of strategy execution. In order for communications to be able to evaluate correct issues and thus influence the business success, communications goals must be in line with the business strategy.

### 2.3. Evaluation of communications

This section presents the diverse aspects of communication evaluation. First, the importance of measuring and evaluation of communication is discussed. In the second subsection, the basis and motivation for communication measuring and evaluation is discussed, and in the third subsection models for the evaluation process are presented. The fourth subsection presents differences between short- and long-term evaluation, and the fifth subsection between qualitative and quantitative research.

#### 2.3.1. Importance of evaluating communications

The importance of evaluating communication has increased (Ritter 2003, Juholin 2010, Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, Johansson & Heide, 2008). According to Juholin (2010) the increasing importance of communication evaluation is due to two trends: the change in the role of a corporate communications officer and the clearer role of communications as a part of organization management than before. Thus, Juholin (2010) suggests, it has become a presumption that goals are set for communications and the success of reaching them is followed. Also Vogt (2004, p. 25) states that organizations with high communication effectiveness constantly measure and refine their programs, whereas Johansson and Heide (2008) emphasize the importance of measuring in order for communications to be able to show its importance for the organization in the constantly changing environment and to insure its presence in the agenda and budget.

Likewise, Hämäläinen and Maula (2004, p.119) suggest that the pressure on following up profitability and efficiency of operations has generated different kinds of practices



relating to measuring and evaluation. Hämäläinen and Maula (2004) propose that gathering information and feedback gives advice for planning and realization of strategy communication, as well as sometimes also for renewing of the whole company strategy. They emphasize that if evaluation is carefully planned and the results made versatile use of, even with small evaluation efforts important information can be gathered about the success of strategy communication. However, Mantere, Hämäläinen, Aaltonen, Ikävalko, and Teikari (2003, p.141) raise a question of whether it can be said that the strategy has been successful when it has been realized the way the strategy planners imagined it. They suggest that a successful implementation and realization of a strategy can be completed when the planned strategy and operative work meet.

As Barrett (2002) argues, the strategic role means that communication must be integrated into the company's strategy and recognized for its strategic implications and effects. In order to prove its importance, implications and effects in the success of the organization, communications needs to show evidence of its successful efforts towards meeting the business goals. As Genasi (2005) suggests, in order for communications to be able to build board-level influence and show its strategic role, it must demonstrate board-level practice and strategic contribution.

Argenti (2006, p.30) states that measurement of communications efforts is important because:

- it enables communications professionals to meet demands from CEO's and other senior managers
- it justifies communication budgets
- it allows communications professionals to develop more effective communications strategies and apply those strategies to all C-level functions to prompt better business outcomes.

According to Cornelissen (2011, p.124), many communication experts and scholars have recognized the importance of research for corporate communication both in a

direct and indirect way. Direct in a way that feedback on communication activities indicates whether the objectives have been met and where the work should be directed to, and in an indirect way since the research may improve organizations' executives' perceptions on the value of corporate communication. Also Lauzen (1995) suggests that it is important for communications to focus on decision-making based on formal and informal research in order to act proactively towards the business goals, and thus obtain credibility in the corporate decision-making.

Setting clear goals and objectives keeps an organization focused, suggest Goodman and Hirsch (2010, p.133). Furthermore, they state that “objective and scientific, *not* emotional and anecdotal data, provides a context for evaluating performance, provides guidance for making mid-course adjustments, helps to identify competitive weaknesses and obstacles to overcome, and provides the basis for setting goals.”

Kim (2000), on the other hand, emphasizes organizations' need for showing tangible outcomes, such as revenues and profitability. Kim states that “showing a direct and measurable relationship between public relations activities and tangible benefits to organizations has become a key”; lacking the ability to show concrete evidence for the invested resources by the organization, public relations runs the risk of being marginalized.

Furthermore, Genasi (2005) states that communications should be identified and measured as a strategic function by the practitioners in order for it to be regarded as such by others. Genasi (2005) suggests that the biggest issue, according to the communication practitioners, affecting the growth and competitiveness of communications, is the difficulty to effectively measure the strategic impact of the work. Therefore, Holland and Gill (2006, p.21) suggest that an organization's communication plan must have goals that are at least linked to, if not the same as, business goals. They remind of the need to demonstrate how communication may in the long run save the organization money by supporting its business.

Argenti (2006), on the other hand, suggests that in order for communications professionals to have a greater effect on business outcomes going forward, instead of only justifying what they have done in the past, they should aim for better understanding how the communication activities affect business outcomes. Argenti (2006) suggests that this would not in most cases require more or better measurement, only better use of the existing ones. Hurst (1991) alternatively proposes that communication evaluation is important for the organization, “since it gives a more objective picture of what is happening compared to what senior executives think (or have been told) is happening” (Tourish&Hargie, 2004, p. 237).

Thus, as the literature shows, in order for the communications to be able to operate efficiently and be able to demonstrate it to the organization, communications need to have clear goals derived from the corporate strategy. Furthermore, an efficient evaluation of the actions is needed for proving the importance of communications for the strategic operations of the organization. The literature presented in this subchapter shows that there is a need for communication evaluation and that the communications professionals need to pay attention on the matter in order to prove their reason for existence.

### 2.3.2. The basis for evaluation

There are undefined amounts of measuring and evaluation methods in communications, but what is important is to find the correct ones for the purpose. Juholin (2009, p.106) stresses that in order for the evaluation results to have validity, the correct targets need to be found for the evaluation. So that the measures truly serve the strategic communication, they must as strictly as possible follow the organization’s philosophy and goal-setting, suggests Juholin (2009, p.106).

Measuring and evaluating communication should always have a reason and a predetermined objective (Tourish &Hargie 2004, Juholin 2010, Ylisirniö 2011, Cropley & Dark 2009, Gay & D’Aprix 2007, Holland & Gill, 2006). Ylisirniö (2011, p.25)

suggests that there should always be a reason for measuring, since it does not have a value as on its own and thus should serve a larger meaning behind it. He emphasizes that the pragmatic nature of measuring is essential; by measuring and evaluating something is aimed to be done, and it is not done just for sake of knowledge. He states that often the problem seems to be that measuring is too broad with a large battery of questions, but the answers end up being too general and do not lead to any adjustments. An example of such would be too general questions about organization's strategy and endless possibilities to answer in open space (2011, p.23). Juholin (2010), on the other hand, states that since there is such a large variety of tools and services, both subject to charge and free of charge, offered for measuring on the market, organizations should prepare well for the purchase of services by first defining their needs and objectives for it. Juholin (2010) states that the key to contracting measuring and evaluation services is to make sure the organization needs the information obtained from the evaluation and how it will be made good use of.

Gay (2006, p. 25) suggests that in order to be able to measure the business impact, an organization must proactively plan communication strategies that will have a business impact. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the measuring effectiveness derives from setting the objectives first. Likewise, Samansky (2003, p.25) proposes that in a strategic plan the goals and objectives must be clearly stated in order for the communicator and other people of interest to be able to measure progress and achievement.

On the one hand, Hämäläinen and Maula (2004, p.121) are of the opinion that careful planning is the key for reasonable and economical evaluation and measuring. They propose that in order for evaluation to serve the organization and the results to be worth the effort, it is wise to consider carefully what is wanted to be found out, what kind of questions give the right answers to the real needs, can the evaluation be repeated, can already existing measurements and tools be utilized, and what factors in the organization need to be considered when planning the evaluation.

Furthermore, Lindenmann and Likely (1997/2003, see p.107) note that “the PR measurement and evaluation should never be carried out in isolation, by focusing only on the PR components.” They stress that by identifying and understanding the organization’s principal messages, key target audience groups, and desired channels of communication, the effectiveness of communication can be evaluated. Similarly, Ylisirniö (2011, p. 31) emphasizes that the subjects of measuring strategy should be in all the elements that are significant to the strategy and that have influence on the strategic success of the organization and how the highest level goals are reached. Moreover, Zwier (2007) suggests that measurement plans should be aligned with tangible business outcomes.

One should make clear what is wanted to be measured and why., emphasize Holland and Gill (2006, p.23) Furthermore, Holland and Gill suggest that there are three golden rules for evaluating and measuring the success of corporate communication in order for avoiding valueless information and the chosen measuring to have significance:

1. There’s no “nice to know.”
2. Only ask about things that can be changed.
3. Research findings must lead to solutions.

Also Juholin (2006, p.357) suggests that in order for a study to be meaningful and forward the communication work, the following issues should be considered before beginning the process:

- What are the needs of the organization, what is wanted to be studied
- How are the results of the study going to be used
- Who will conduct the study
- Which methods are going to be used
- Which groups are going to be studied
- What is the timetable
- What is required from the reporting

- How much can the process cost

Smith (2005, p.238) notes that criteria for evaluation should be a) useful to the organization by being clearly linked with the established objectives; b) realistic, feasible and appropriate as to cost, time or other resources; c) ethical and socially responsible; d) credible, with accurate data; and e) presented in a timely manner.

Often measuring communications is conducted by the easiest way, not the useful way, suggest Lewis and Doolittle (2008). According to Lewis and Doolittle measuring data such as media frequency offer limited value to business decision making, thus they suggest that the goal of evaluating communication should be in its effectiveness to affect business strategy execution and inform communication planning. Moreover, Sinickas (2005) proposes that the reason for less strategic communication evaluation is on the executives; they demand measuring activities such as number of news releases, entries to web sites, or number of newsletter articles because they can be counted accurately. Sinickas (2005) recommends that besides giving executives the metrics they want, communication professionals should measure also more meaningful outcomes along the activities.

The literature presented in this subchapter shows that communication evaluation should not be conducted just for the sake of it. Conducting evaluations without a strong basis on the strategy does not contribute to the successful implementation of it. Thus, it is vital to develop a communication strategy and activities that derive from the corporate strategy in order to be able to link the evaluation results to the communication strategy and further link the success to the corporate strategy.

### 2.3.3. Evaluation models

Often communication professionals seem to be looking for a communication evaluation method that would cover the total success of the efforts communications has put on its operations. However, Lindenmann and Likely (1997/2003, see p.107) note that there is

no one, simple, all-encompassing research tool, technique, or methodology that could be relied on to measure and evaluate public relations effectiveness. Tourish and Hargie (2004, p. 241) suggest that there is wide variety of alternative approaches to measuring communication. They emphasize that “the ones selected should be the ‘best fit’ for the organization”. They state that the methods that are going to be used should be tailored for the corporate body under analysis in order for them to fit the required dimensions. Similarly, Ritter (2003) argues that it is important to have a panel of essential instruments to measure the success of communications, instead of loads of “instruments measuring anything, which does not allow differentiating what is important from what is superfluous”.

In order to receive meaningful results from evaluation and measuring, the process needs to be planned well (Tourish & Hargie, 2004). Tourish and Hargie (2004, p. 237) suggest that an effective measuring process has four steps:

1. auditing current levels of performance,
2. disseminating the results of the audit widely across all levels,
3. implementing an action plan tailored to rectify identified deficits, and
4. conducting a follow-up audit to evaluate the effects of the action plan.

On the other hand, Holtz (2004, p.245), suggests a three-level measuring for a typical communication process. First, before developing a strategy, a baseline for the process should be set by measuring the current status of the issue in interest. Second, the validity of the communication plan developed should be assessed with a sample test. Third, the most critical part is finding out whether the plan worked.

Furthermore, Smith (2005, p.237) points out that certain issues need to be considered before the implementation in order to design an effective evaluation research:

- On what criteria should the program be judged?
- What information is needed?

- What standards of accuracy and reliability are needed for this information?
- Who has the information needed?
- How can it be obtained from them?
- Who will receive the final evaluation, and what will they do with the information?
- How willing and able are decision makers to receive less-than-fully-positive evaluations?
- Besides decision makers, who else would have an interest in the evaluation?

A balanced scorecard system for evaluating corporate communications, as well as for all units and the whole organization is proposed by Ritter (2003). He emphasizes the benefits of the balanced scorecards to be diversified. Ritter suggests, for example, that:

- they promote the systematic development of vision and strategy
- they minimize information overload
- they force managers to focus specifically on a small group of measurements which are critical for the performance of the organization and the business
- the defined measurement parameters allow one to verify whether a certain strategy has succeeded or failed in the stage of projecting future business (looking forward) and not just when the books show the lack of results (looking back)
- the employees access to understanding the strategy allows for closing an information gap but also promotes constant and systematic dialogue between the board, the departments and the employees about corporate strategy topics.

Ritter (2003) further proposes that in developing a balanced scorecard for communications, for example the following issues should be considered:

- What are the objectives set in the business strategy and vision that are aimed to be achieved by communications?
- How the current communications plan and program fit within the strategic objectives set by the company?

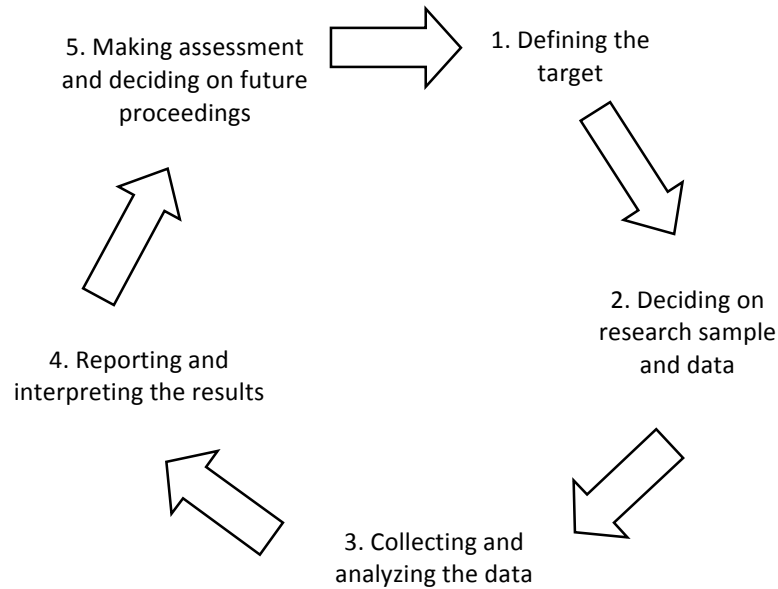


- Do the communications' vision and mission provide information and help overcome obstacles?
- What are the key success factors necessary for the communication process to meet the strategic objectives set for the organization?
- What indicators permit measuring each key success factor?
- Do the resources match benefits from the measurements?
- Is the process clearly understandable?
- Do the measurements help in meeting the strategic objectives?

According to Ritter (2003) the balanced scorecards are useful tools in strategic management especially for communications, since they “highlight that corporate communications management is measurable and therefore the object of continuous improvement”, they tell “what is working and what is not”, and especially, as Ritter emphasizes, they tell “how the communications strategy is advancing in line with the corporate vision and strategy”.

Juholin (2010) suggests there are five stages in a research process, as the following Figure 5 illustrates:

Figure 5. Stages of a research process by Juholin (2010, p.72)<sup>1</sup>



As can be seen in Figure 5, there are five stages in the research process model by Juholin (2010). The first stage of a research process is defining the target; deciding and defining the target question. The target question should be concrete, and it can have more defined sub-questions. Juholin (2010, p.72) emphasizes that it is also important to clarify the purpose of the research: does it serve the development of the operations, product development or defining a new strategy, or does it clarify whether the goals of communications have been reached. She also emphasizes that the consequences of the results must be clear; to what and how they are going to be taken advantage of. The second stage of the research process is choosing the research sample and data. Depending on the sample size and how in-depth answers are wanted, a quantitative or qualitative research method is chosen. Quantitative research gives answers to questions such as what, how many, how much, or how big percentage, whereas a qualitative research answers to questions such as how, what kind of, and why. The third stage of

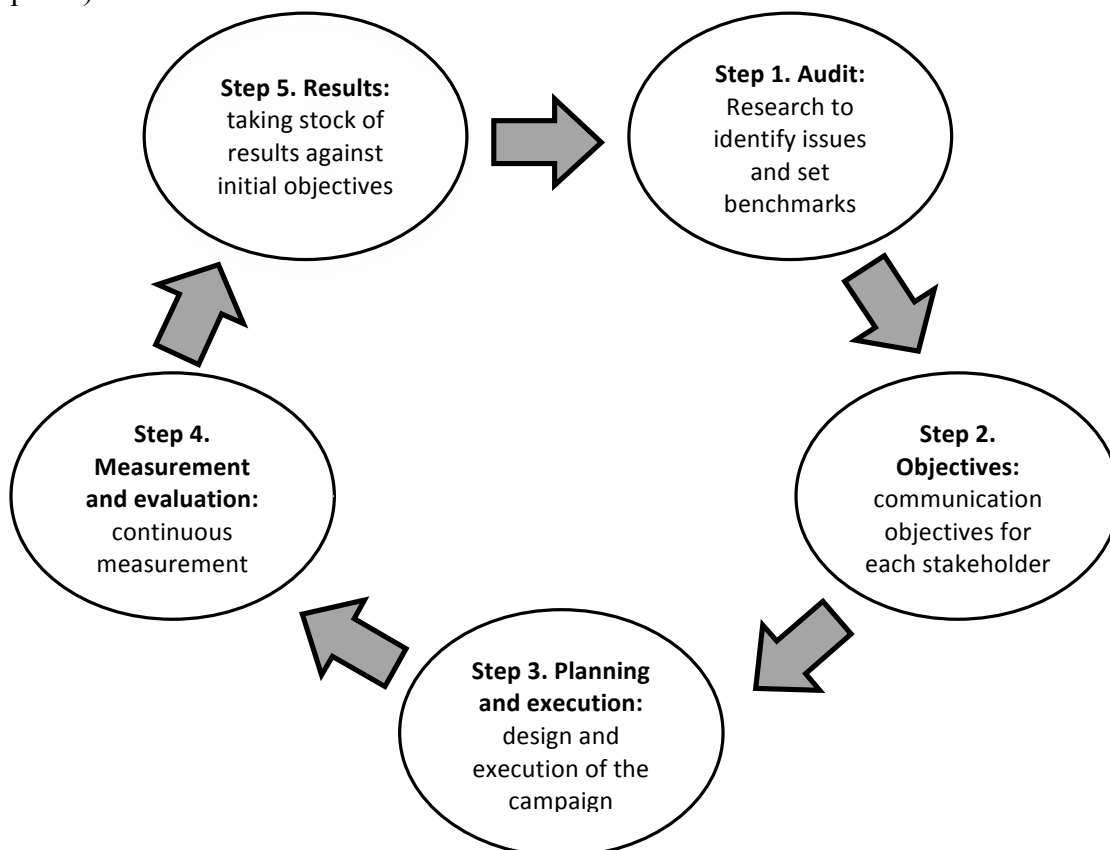
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<sup>1</sup> The figure has been translated from Finnish to English by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher alone is responsible for possible inaccuracies in the translations.

the research is collecting and analyzing the data. Depending on whether the research is quantitative or qualitative, data collection is conducted by, for example, surveys or interviews. The fourth and the fifth stage of the research process consist of reporting and analyzing the results, and deciding on future proceedings. The analysis of the results is the easier the better the research questions were defined. Based on the analysis is decided what issues need to be developed or require special attention. Juholin (2011, p. 80) also emphasizes that it is not enough to present the results, but analysis is needed for explaining what they mean and what can be concluded based on them.

Cornelissen (2011, p.126) proposes that research and evaluation should be an integral part of the planning process for communication programs or campaigns. He has broken the program evaluation into five stages, as the following Figure 6 illustrates:

Figure 6. Research and evaluation within communication campaigns (Cornelissen, 2011, p.126)



As can be seen in Figure 6, there are five stages in the model for research and evaluation within communication campaigns by Cornelissen (2010). The first stage of planning cycle is auditing, meaning that formative research is done for setting benchmarks and identifying issues for the program or campaign. Second stage of the cycle is setting objectives, which follow from audit and are in line with the corporate aims. The objectives should be defined in measurable terms, like time and target people. The third stage of the cycle is planning and executing the program or campaign. The fourth stage involves measuring and evaluating whether the goals are getting reached and whether adjustments still need to be made. The fifth stage of the cycle includes evaluating the overall success of the program or campaign and possibly informing the audit stage of a next program of campaign.

As can be noted from the literature by several researchers presented in this subchapter, an evaluation process has multiple stages. The evaluation process begins with an auditing of the current situation and defining targets, which requires the strategic goals to be clear. After, the planning and execution are implemented followed by continuous measurement and analysis. In order for the evaluation to have an effect on the operations, the analyses are pulled together and taken against the strategic goals. Therefore it is vital to have the goals of the organization and the communications clear in order to be able to see the achieved results.

#### 2.3.4. Different points of views for evaluating and measuring

The impact of communication can be measured or evaluated both in the short and long term. Juholin (2006, p.68) suggests that sometimes there is a need for instant feedback on whether a message has been noticed, how has it been understood, or how has it been received, whereas the success of reaching the strategic goals can be evaluated through continuous measuring on, for example, reputation and its different elements' development in different stakeholder groups.

Furthermore, as an example of different kinds of measuring and evaluation, Juholin (2011) also mentions follow-up (seuranta) and evaluation (arviointi) as terms used for different kind of methods for verifying the communication work within different timeframes. According to Juholin (2011) the meaning of the two terms is close but the first one, follow-up, is more continuous, whereas the second one, evaluation, is more occasional although repetitive.

According to Goodman and Hirsch (2010, p. 133) quality research requires a clear vision of the reason for the research and focused goals, both for long-term strategy and operational and tactics. They recommend considering appropriate and affordable metrics, tools, and techniques, such as media content analysis, Internet assessment, trade show and event measurement, polls and surveys, focus groups, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, ethnographic and corporate culture studies, observation, participation, or role-playing techniques.

Lindenmann (as cited by Goodman &Hirsch, 2010, p. 133) on the other hand, suggests that short-term public relations measurement and evaluation “involves assessing the success or failure of specific PR programs, strategies, activities or tactics by measuring the outputs, outtakes and/or outcomes of those programs against a predetermined set of objectives”. In the long-term measurement and evaluation, according to Lindenmann, is included “assessing the success or failure of much broader PR efforts that have as their aim seeking to improve and enhance the relationships that organizations maintain with key constituents.”

Communication evaluation and measuring can also be divided into qualitative and quantitative evaluation based on different attributes of the wanted results. According to Juholin (2011, p. 73) qualitative evaluation is recommended when profound information is wanted from a known, limited group, whereas quantitative research is wise when the opinions of a larger group are of interest. Qualitative evaluation answers to questions such as how, what kind of, and why, and aim for finding out the deepest thoughts and experiences of the interest group. Quantitative evaluation on the other hand, answers to

questions such as what, how many, how much or how large quantity. Hämäläinen and Maula (2004, p.121) suggest considering the wanted outcomes of the evaluation and based on that deciding whether to use a qualitative or quantitative approach. They amplify that quantitative method is more recommended when the reason for evaluation is finding out about products of the activities of the communication personnel, like the amount of press releases or publications, and qualitative when the impressiveness of the communication is of interest, such as how satisfied the employees are with the communications.

#### 2.3.5. Unsuccessful evaluation

The rising popularity of evaluating communication has increased the number of measuring methods and tools offered on the market. Due to the extensive supply of communication evaluation tools, organizations are easily able to purchase them. This may lead to study overload and lack in efficient use of the results. Traditionally communication practitioners have tried to measure communication effects, such as attitude change, awareness, and communication recognition, which are difficult to relate to financial returns (Schultz p. 352), which may lead to difficulties in finding correct evaluation methods and thus to overload of evaluation data. Juholin (2006, p.334) suggests that the increase in communication research may lead to a situation where no one in the organization is aware of all the studies and reports conducted, and the results that have been received from them. This also leads to extra expenses if a new study focuses on the same issues that have been studied already in the previous studies. Holland and Gill (2006, p.23) point out that if too many things are tried to be measured, for example, the surveys become too long and thus limit people's eagerness to participate, or focus group discussion may become too dispersed.

Juholin (2011, p.78) suggests that a reason for communication evaluation overload might be the lack of expertise from the communication managers. She states that many service providers have noticed that buyers do not often know how to take efficiently advantage of services. Juholin further notes that a reason for this may be that the buyers

do not have their goals and needs clear and defined. Also Mason (2007, p.19) has noticed the issue of lacking awareness goals; she states that many public relations professionals she has worked with indicate that they have never seen their organization's business or strategic plans, and are thus planning their communications in a void.

Hämäläinen and Maula (2004, p.124) have also come across the organizations' difficulty in making good use of the results obtained from measuring and evaluation. According to Hämäläinen and Maula many organizations continuously gather information with different kinds of measuring tools, that are then not used efficiently and the resources are lost for nothing leaving the people participating in the measuring feeling frustrated. Sometimes the information may be in such an unclear form that it is impossible to analyze them correctly. Thus, they suggest that before beginning the evaluation process, it should be considered how the results will be used, who they will be presented to, and in what context. Also, Hämäläinen and Maula suggest, it is wise to anticipate before evaluation what kind of results can be obtained with the measurements and what are the possibilities for utilizing them later.

Due to the extensive, complex, emotive and controversial nature of the concept of strategy, it is no surprise that managers find evaluating and measuring it difficult, states also Ylisirniö (2011, p.20). He suggests that there is a principled difference between the management and rest of the organization in relation to strategy work. According to Ylisirniö there exists a separate "strategy world" and then the rest is all the work that needs to be done. The problem here is that the success of strategy work is often evaluated by asking the employees, for example, how communications have succeeded in communicating the strategy, how is the strategy implementation going, what the employees think about the strategy, how satisfied they are, and how the strategy implementation has affected their work. According to Ylisirniö, questions mentioned above are tried to be used for uniting the two different worlds, but are often failed.

On the other hand, there are many organizations that do not evaluate or measure their strategy implementation and/or communication at all. Tourish and Hargie (2004, p. 243) suggest that one main reason for lack of evaluation may be that managers are afraid of being exposed to inspection and thus maybe shown up in a negative light if the results are not flattering. Tourish and Hargie (2004) also suggest that the reason may also be that managers do not see a reason for evaluation and find it a waste of time. Tourish and Hargie (2004) have identified ten main attitudinal obstacles to the idea of an audit: smugness, conformity, inertia, authoritarianism, cynicism, futility, paranoia, defeatism, exhaustion, and frugality.

Similarly, Holland and Gill (2006, p.20) and Gay (2006, p.22) suggest that common excuses for lacking evaluation of communication are lack of money, time, and expertise, as well as superiors' disapproval and the fact that it has never been done before. Yongwook (2000, p.274) has noticed that communication practitioners also think that it is sometimes impossible to measure the economic impact of public relations.

Juholin (2011, p.40), on the other hand, proposes that a reason for unsuccessful studies relates to negative attitudes towards the results of the studies. She states that an organization may be tempted to manipulate the results according to its own interests or refuse from believing the results by doubting the trustworthiness of the study, the proficiency of the researcher and the interpretations made by them.

As the literature presented in this subchapter has showed, measuring and evaluating communications efficiently has often been experienced difficult to accomplish successfully by the communications professionals. There are many organizations that do not evaluate their communications at all. Reasons for this have typically been lack of resources, like money, time and expertise. Organizations direct rather vast amounts of resources into communications, but it seems that too little amount of it is directed into planning and evaluation of it.



To conclude, this literature review has presented different points of views for measuring and evaluating communication strategically. The importance of communication evaluation has been brought up in order to form a deeper understanding of the strategic importance communications possesses in strategy work. Furthermore, the basis for the evaluation and different models for evaluation steps have been presented on how communications should proceed when planning on evaluating their work. Moreover, short- and long-term evaluations, as well as differences of qualitative and quantitative evaluation have been clarified. In addition, reasons for lacking or unsuccessful communication evaluation and measuring were presented in order to clarify reasons behind the difficulties communications are facing currently. In the next section a theoretical framework is formulated based on the issues discussed in the literature review so far.

#### 2.4. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that is described and displayed in this Section 2.4 is based on the reviewed literature in Sections 2.1-2.3.

The theoretical framework is an adapted combination of models and theories presented in the previous literature. Although all literature presented has affected the formulation of the framework, it is mainly derived from the Cornelissen's model of research and evaluation within communication campaigns (Figure 6, p.42) and a model of the link between corporate strategy and communication strategy (Figure 1, p.20). In the framework are also incorporated the operative management model by Kamensky (Figure 2, p.26) and the stages of a research process defined by Juholin (Figure 5, p.41). Figure 7 is a visualization of the framework.

Figure 7. Theoretical framework



As the Figure 7 demonstrates, the framework consists of a two-way link between the corporate strategy and the communication strategy, and five lower-level stages of the communication strategy process. Cornelissen’s model of the link between the corporate strategy and communication strategy (Figure 1, p.20) forms the basis for the framework. The model emphasizes the two-way influence of the corporate and communication strategies to the corporate functioning. The purpose of the communication strategy is to translate the corporate strategy into actions and further influence the corporate strategy by informing the business on its status in the strategy process and giving ideas for future proceedings.

The communication strategy itself is formed from five stages: (1) linking, (2) goals, (3) activities, (4) measuring, and (5) evaluation. For this part of the framework especially the models by Cornelissen (Figure 6, p.42), Kamensky (Figure 2, p.26), and Juholin (Figure 5, p.41) have been used. The first step in the framework is linking the communications to corporate strategy, meaning defining the strategic communications goals based on the corporate strategy. This includes identifying issues and setting benchmarks for communications. Based on the strategic goals and the identified present status, communication goals are set for each stakeholder in the second stage. In order to achieve the set goals, activities for them must be designed and executed, as demonstrated in the stage three. The stage four is measuring: during the execution continuous collection of data and monitoring results should be conducted in order to become aware of the success in reaching the objectives set for activities and to make redirections for the activities when necessary. In the fifth stage the total success of reaching the strategic goals set for communications is evaluated by taking stock of results from continuous measuring and comparing them against strategic goals set for communications. The results from evaluation as well as other issues that have risen from measuring and evaluation during the process are then used for informing the business on its status in the strategy implementation and for deciding on future proceedings and giving ideas for improvement. This information derived from evaluation is used for both corporate and communication strategy developing.

### 3. METHDOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods of the study, the data collection and analysis. It also describes the reasons for choosing them and discusses the trustworthiness of the study.

#### 3.1. Semi-structured interviews

Since the purpose of this study was to investigate the role of evaluation in strategic communication in organizations, a qualitative research approach was chosen: semi-structured interviews. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, p. 35) interviews are appropriate when the area of research is unknown or little research has been conducted in the area. Since hardly any research had been conducted in organizations about the evaluation of strategic communication the qualitative interview method was found appropriate for this thesis. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) further argue that interviews are proper when it is known beforehand that the theme of the interview will produce complex and multifaceted answers and the themes may be difficult. Since it was clear that evaluation is a complex issue in communications and little common ground could be formed, the semi-structured interviews were found appropriate for the study.

The research was conducted by interviewing twelve communication professionals from large companies operating in Finland, as presented in Table 1. All the interviewees represent companies that are on the Talouselämä 500 list. Talouselämä is a Finnish newspaper focusing on economics and lists yearly 500 largest companies in Finland. Ten of the companies chosen for the interviews were Finnish that are operating internationally, and two of the companies were international operating in Finland. All interviewees had extensive working experience in strategic leading positions, and majority also in communications. Therefore they represent a good sample for the study to share their views on the role of evaluation of strategic communication.

The interview invitations were sent by email to 20 communication directors and managers in March-April 2011. The interviews were carried out in March-May 2011. The recipients of the invitations were chosen according to the following factors: all were in the highest communication position in their companies in Finland, all companies were in the top end of the Talouselämä 500 list, and they represented different fields of business.

The interview invitation can be found in Appendix 1. The invitation explained the purpose of the study and its importance for the field of communication, as well as the high value of the participation of the person in the research. From the 20 sent invites 13 accepted the invitation. The interviews were agreed from one week to a month from the date the invitations was sent. No interviews were cancelled or postponed. One interview was unsuccessful, because the interview did not proceed in the limited time from one fourth of the interview questions planned since the interviewee talked too much and lost the path when answering the questions. Thus the interview was deleted from the study, leaving the total number of interviews to twelve. The interviews were recorded and transcribed within a few days after each interview.

The framework for the interview can be found in Appendix 2. Eleven of the interviews were carried out in the interviewees' company premises and one was conducted by Skype due to long distance. All interviews were carried out in Finnish, which is the mother tongue of all the interviewees and the interviewer. The interviews lasted from 27 minutes to one hour and four minutes. Table 1 presents the gender, position of the interviewees, industry of the companies, education, dates of the interviews, and whether the interviewees were members of the board of directors in their companies.

Table 1. Background of the interviewees and interviews

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Position of the interviewee</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Date of the interview (2011)</b>	<b>Member of the executive board</b>
1	F	Director, Reputation and Sustainability	Retail trade	Communication theory and mass media, journalism	March 11	Yes
2	F	Director, Identity and Communication	Banking and Insurance	Political science	March 16	Yes
3	F	Communication and HR Director	Insurance	Geography, economics, sociology	March 17	Yes
4	F	Communication Manager	Consumer goods	Speech communication	March 31	No
5	F	Senior Vice President, Communications	Information technology	English	April 1	Strategic Executive board
6	F	Communication Director	Media	International Business	April 4	Yes
7	M	Communication Director	Media	Communication	April 6	Yes, secretary of the board
8	F	Media Relations Manager	Information technology	English and German	April 7	Management board of a business unit
9	F	Communication Director	Telecommunications	Political science	April 7	No
10	F	Communication Director	Message and product transfer	Agriculture and forestry	April 13	Extended executive board
11	F	Director, Communication and law	Brewery	Law	April 14	Yes
12	F	Communication Director	Industrial products and services	Economics, correspondence	May 4	No

As can be seen from the Table 1, the interviewees represented a diverse group of organizations from different fields of business. Most of the companies are listed companies. All companies operate internationally.

Eleven of the twelve interviewees were women and one man. Ten of the interviewees hold a position of Communications Director in the company they represent and two of the interviewees hold a position of communications manager. The communications managers were working for the international companies operating in Finland and have a communications director above them in the head quarters in the country of origin of their companies. The other interviewees held the highest communications position in the companies they represented. Nine of the interviewees are in the executive or management boards of the companies. The educational background of the interviewees varies from communication, business, and political science to law and agriculture and forestry.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed in Finnish and later translated in English for the purposes of this thesis. The interviews were analyzed both individually and comparing themes between the cases. The need for analyzing each interview as an individual case was necessary since the strategy and evaluation process is a circle and needs to be seen as a whole. However, some themes were been able to compare separately between the cases. When there were more than six interviewees agreeing on a subject, it was considered a majority. Less than six interviewees having same kind of opinion were considered a minority and the number of them mentioned.

### 3.2. Trustworthiness of the study

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, p. 184), the quality of the research interview process should be observed continuously. Hirsjärvi and Hurme argue that the trustworthiness of a study depends on the quality of the interview data. They suggests that the trustworthiness can be improved by planning well the interview body. For this study the interview themes and questions were developed and revised several times and

by two people involved in the research process in order to find the correct points of views for the questions. The trustworthiness was further enhanced by transcribing the recorded interviews as soon as possible after the interviews, as recommended by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008).

According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p.286), whereas reliability and validity are important criteria for establishing and assessing the quality of quantitative research, there has been a discussion on whether the same criteria can be used in qualitative research. Thus Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose alternatives for the reliability and validity terms in order for researchers to be able to specify terms and ways for establishing and assessing qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that trustworthiness of qualitative research should be assessed four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

By credibility in qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to carrying out the research according to good practice and submitting research findings to the members of the social world in order to investigate whether the researcher has correctly understood it. In this study, the researcher has continuously during the research process submitted findings to and discussed them with communications professionals. Second, transferability is typically an issue in qualitative research, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), since qualitative research tends to focus on small groups and points of views of groups of individuals. In this study, the challenge of uniqueness of the sample was avoided by choosing the interviewees from a large variety of business fields. Also the education and career backgrounds of the interviewees are diverse. Third, by dependability of qualitative research Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose adopting and auditing approach, which means that records are kept of all phases of the research process, such as problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts etc. In this study the selection of research participants, fieldworks notes, and interview transcripts have been kept. Fourth, the confirmability of a qualitative research according to Guba and Lincoln is reached when the researcher has not allowed personal values and theoretical inclinations affect the research and findings.



In this study the researcher was new to the subject and had no previous experience in strategic corporate communications or in using evaluation in communication work and thus had not formed subjective view of the area of the study in practice.

Furthermore, as Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, p.186) argue, the reliability of a research has typically been evaluated by its repeatability in future. Though, Hirsjärvi and Hurme argue that in qualitative research based on interviews it should be remembered that the situation and the environment change, and thus no precisely equal studies can be conducted. Also in this study it should be remembered that the interviews were conducted during a period when many of the organizations participating in the study were going through strategic organizational changes and thus the basis of the study has continuously changed since the interviews were conducted.

## 4. FINDINGS

This section will present the findings of the study, based on ten interviews conducted with communication directors of large companies and two interviews with Finnish communication managers of large non-Finnish companies operating in Finland. As presented in section 1.1, the main research question is: What is the role of evaluation in the strategic communication work? In order to be able to answer this question, three sub-questions also presented in section 1.1, need to be answered. The sub-questions are:

1. What is the role of strategy in communications?
4. How are goals set for communications?
5. How do companies evaluate and measure their communication?

The findings will be reported in the order of the three sub-questions. Section 4.1. will present the findings on what is the role of communication strategy in the operations of the communications functions. Section 4.2. will present the findings on how goals are set for communications. Finally, the section 4.3. will concentrate on the role of evaluation and measuring in the operations of the communications function.

### 4.1. The role of strategy in communications

This section reports on the interviewees' perceptions on the role of communication in a company's strategy work. Section 4.1.1 reports on the purpose of communication strategy. Section 4.1.2 presents the basis of the communication strategies. Section 4.1.3. reports on the participants in developing the communication strategy, and section 4.1.4. presents the timescale of the communication strategy.

#### 4.1.1. The purpose of communication strategy

The views of the interviewees on the meaning of communication strategy in their companies varied. Most of the interviewees understood the role of communication strategy to be a support for executing the company's business strategy. Majority of the interviewees stated that their company was going through or had just recently gone through an organizational change, and that was why the role of communications in the organization and the development of communication strategy was currently in process. Even though the organizational change was in process, the interviewees had it rather clear that the role of communications in a company was to support the company in executing the company strategy. The statements<sup>2</sup> of two Interviewees summarize the ideas of many of the interviewees:

*Communication strategy is a long-term plan on what ways communications can support the execution of the business strategy and the business and implementation in the business units. (Interviewee 11)*

*Communication strategy means supporting the implementation of a business strategy. Straight forward. The core of it is to support our business and the goals becoming true. (Interviewee 7)*

On the other hand, the changes that majority of the interviewees reported their organization to be going through, were also causing some unclarity and confusion in defining the concept communication strategy. As illustrated by the following quotation with seven "you knows", a considerable amount of hesitation can be noticed:

*(...) And that is actually, you know, essentially the vision that we, you know, want to be as a brand house. And that then also in a way defines the strategy. That we have...ummm...that we, you know, actually have...how should I say this, I believe we will,*

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<sup>2</sup> Since all the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Finnish, the quotations used in the study were translated into English by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher alone is responsible for any possible inaccuracies in the translations in this thesis.

*you know, have one of those (strategy). This is, you know, in a way difficult, because this is changing. I could have told you much more confidently six months ago. We are actually, you know, in a changing period in the sense that we of course, there is the global strategy you know, and then that is quite strongly based on our mission.*  
(Interviewee 4)

The interviewees felt that communications should follow the business strategy and not be separate from it. Thus, many of the interviewees used the business strategy as a basis for developing the communication goals and actions. Indeed, four of the interviewees stated that instead of a separate communication strategy, they had developed an action plan for communications based on the business strategy or business unit strategies. They emphasized that the goals and activities for communications came straight from the business strategy or business unit strategies, and therefore a separate communication strategy was not needed. They also emphasized that when the goals and activities came directly from the business strategy they are linked to the goals of the company and thus make sure that they support the execution of the business goals, and not the goals of their own. An interviewee emphasized that although there was no need for a paper called “strategy”, it was important to have something concrete where the goals were defined in medium-term, which then prioritized the actions of the units. Below, some quotations illustrating the link between corporate strategy and communications strategy as pointed out by Interviewees:

*There is no need for a company to have a separate communication strategy, because the role of the communications is to support the execution of the business strategy...but then we have principles and policies that are used for managing the practical tasks, but a separate communication strategy no, because we have the group strategy.*  
(Interviewee 2)

*In my opinion communication has to be a part of the business strategy, and it needs to be included in it. It doesn't work very well if it is a completely separate thing. But of*

*course we have a strategy that we follow, but it is mostly for leading our own work.*  
(Interviewee 5)

*In our company it works in practice so that we do not talk about communication strategy, in general I'm against it. We have a policy that we don't make many strategies. Because at some point you get a strategy overload if everything has a some kind of a strategy. So we have a strategy that navigates all business, and every unit then needs to think how to support the strategy or the goals by their own actions.* (Interviewee 9)

*It doesn't necessarily have to be called strategy, but it is important to have that kind of a paper that defines the goals in medium-term and prioritizes the actions.* (Interviewee 3)

Two of the interviewees pointed out that they do not have a communication strategy, but rather another kind of a strategy that is not the business strategy, but it serves the company on the whole and without limiting it to only strictly communications tasks. An Interviewee was in the stage of the process of developing organizational change where no final decisions had been made yet, so her views indicated about the future plans and ideas about how communication should be included in the business. She emphasized that instead of a communication strategy they will rather build an identity strategy, because it then affects the company on the whole: the image and the identity as well as the corporate brand. The following quotation illustrates the views on a strategy other than a communication strategy for the communications unit:

*I have always thought that it should rather be an identity strategy than a communication strategy, because then it starts shaping the company's identity and image, or corporate brand, and then it moves in all areas, because it has to.*  
(Interviewee 6)

Many of the interviewees stated they find it important that the strategies are clear and easy to read. They reported that previously their companies had had communication

strategies that were not clearly linked to the business strategy or were so long documents that they were never read after developing them. Thus many of the communication directors had put effort into developing a completely new, high skim-value business and/or communication strategies in order to reach the audience and help remembering the core ideas. One interviewee especially mentioned that they had distributed strategy cards to every employee in order to help everyone to remember the core items of the strategy. She stated that the purpose of the cards was that every employee “caught in the elevator” and asked about the core values would remember them. In her company all the goals and actions for all functions were derived from the company strategy and core values. The following quotations illustrate how companies have aimed for clearer and simple strategies that are easy to remember:

*Before the company’s strategy was such a terribly long prose document that no one could remember. That is why we condensed it to be like that(..) and it felt natural to condense the core of the communication and marketing strategy to the same format. (Interviewee 3)*

*Nobody reads the 20 pages long word documents. We noticed already last fall, when we were making the strategy rounds and communicating the strategy first to managers and then to the whole personnel, that it was made so wrong again. There were 110 slides. The whole day “bombing” the managers with details. (Interviewee 9)*

Interviewee 6 also stated that many times the problem of communication strategies is that they have lists of goals set high, but the goals are not reachable and thus do not get accomplished. Thus she believed that in order for a communication strategy, or any kind of strategy, to succeed, they should have goals matched to the reality that then truly guide the work, as the following quotation shows:

*When I think about the traditional communication strategies that some consultant has made that I have seen, they are very often lists of that the purpose of the communication strategy is this and that, that it must do this and that –but it never does it. When you*

*look at the strategy, it looks like a wish list to the Santa Claus. It does not commit to the matter if it can be carried out. (Interviewee 6)*

#### 4.1.2. The basis for the communication strategy

This section presents the bases for the communication strategies in the companies that stated having a communication strategy. As mentioned in section 4.1.1. four of the companies had an action plan, instead of a communication strategy, developed from the business strategy. Thus some interviewees did not answer the question about how communication strategy is developed, but rather explained how the goals and actions are set for the communications. The goal setting will be more thoroughly discussed in the section 4.1.5.

Majority of the interviewees stated that they have a communication strategy, and all of them stated that it is based on the business strategy. Two interviewees also added other central points when they create the communication strategies for their companies: one mentioned that they develop the communication strategy based on what is the role of the group brand versus the product brands, other emphasized the importance of defining the target image of the organization.

As the following quotation illustrates, an Interviewee, who stated that they have a communication strategy, explained that they see the larger themes that need to be focused on in the business strategy and what business units require for it to be carried out, and based on them develop the strategy for communications.

*We built the communication strategy based on the larger themes that need to be accomplished and what business units require for them in order for them to be carried out. (Interviewee 12)*

Four interviewees stated that they had gone through major strategy building processes in their organization lately, and all parts of the organization had been included in the

process. They reported that they had done vast stakeholder defining and identifying the target image, mission and vision. The interviewees pointed out that extensive workshops and other kinds of innovation groups were created in order to develop a correct target image and thus the strategy. In the following quotations interviewees explain their strategy building processes:

*The process started with mission and vision, the big basic questions first, and then each unit and function planned their own strategy, but it was all the time an iterative process with discussion and everyone knew what others were doing. (Interviewee 12).*

*The starting point is actually the basic target image. And then you start unraveling it from the company basis and see how communication, influencing and dialogue can support the execution of the (business) strategy in the best way. (Interviewee 6)*

An Interviewee pointed out that in her company there was no strategy or any kind of policy for communications when she joined the company, and thus the first thing she did was developing one in order to be able to know what she was supposed to do. The same process was done in cooperation with marketing since they were also lacking a strategy.

#### 4.1.3. The participants of communication strategy building

All except one of the interviewees were the main people in charge of the communication strategy and/ or communication action plan building in their companies, or in the communication managers' case in the Finnish unit of the company. Majority of the interviewees also include their communication teams in the building process, especially in the cases where there is no communication strategy but rather a communication action plan. Also a majority of the interviewees make the first draft of the communication strategy or plan themselves, and then give it to the executive board for comments and approval. Four of the interviewees state that they develop the communication strategy and/ or plan together with the CEO of the company. One



interviewee stated that the communication strategy is approved by the board of directors of the company.

Of the interviewees that include the communications team in the communication planning process, two emphasized that by developing it together with their teams, they want to make sure that the team members feel that the goals and activities in the plan are meaningful and challenging enough to them.

Communications were perceived important for all the company and thus the need for units to participate in the communications strategy process was necessary. Two of the interviewees mentioned especially that they include managers and directors from different units of the company to participate in the process, but in the end they are the main responsables for the communications strategy, as the following quotations illustrate:

*When we developed the strategy we saw that it is not the communication function's job, neither is it the job of the communication professionals in the retail co-operatives, but that communication is everyone's job together. Of course communication professionals are in central position there, but most of all the communication responsibility is on directors and management to communicate to the whole personnel. So it has been seen as far-flung, that it is definitely not the communication function's or professionals' strategy but it is the whole group's strategy. (Interviewee 1)*

*It is very important that communications support the directors of the company in leading the company. So even though I am in charge, I would not make the decisions before discussing in the executive board that this is the direction and these are the strategic projects that we will do next. But in the end I am the one who's head is on the plate. (Interviewee 2)*

One communication manager did not exactly know how the communication strategy is developed in the Finnish unit of the company or who does it. She explained that the

company strategy comes from the global headquarters. She assumed that the communication strategy in the business unit where she is a member in the management board must be developed by communication management, and then the management board approves it. The interviewer's comments are included in the following quotation in order to point out the doubt the interviewee possesses:

*Interviewer: So in this business unit where you are, who has developed it (communication strategy)? How has it been developed?*

*Interviewee: Well it is developed there you know...there in the throne room or exactly there, based on the business strategy is developed then, developed then, you know, the communication strategy.*

*Interviewer: So who then participates in developing it? The management board or?*

*Interviewee 8: Umm...I think it goes the way that the communication management, you know, develops it and then it is blessed.. you know, that the management board blesses it. (Interviewee 8)*

#### 4.1.4. The timescale of communication strategy

A half of the interviewees stated that the business and communication strategies are created for around three years, and two of the interviewees stated that the strategies are developed for periods of five years. Majority stated that action plans are developed for a period of one year. In two of the companies the strategy is reviewed yearly, but the vision is for a period of two to three years and for five years. All interviewees stated that the communication strategy follows the timetable of the business strategy.

Many interviewees mention the need for the strategy to be elastic and able to change when the environment demands it. According to an Interviewee who was currently developing the communication function for a company that was going through extensive organizational changes, the strategy should not be linear, because it needs to be able to develop and change all the time. She reminded that naturally there is no way to escape the fact that time exists, but the strategy should not be too glued to it. In her

opinion the smaller projects and tasks should have time goals and deadlines, but not a communication strategy for a long period of time, because it needs to be able to live in the moment and change when needed. Similar kind of an opinion came from Interviewee 2, who follows the business strategy in periods of three years, but instead of an action plan develops strategic project for periods of one year in order to be able to change rapidly without forgetting the big picture. The following quotation illustrates the need for elasticity in the communication strategy as perceived by an interviewee:

*A year is a very long time. Even though we set the goals for this year, the year may look completely different when we go on, since the pace of change is so fast, that you can't (make plans for a longer period). A certain big picture you have to have clear in your mind about the direction you want to go, like do you want more dialogue, do you want more impressiveness, and that is the big picture that you have to have in your mind all the time. But then the activities there... something might happen. (Interviewee 2)*

An interviewee, a media relations manager, was not aware of the timeline of the communication strategy in the company she works for. She acknowledged though that it may have to change rapidly when needed. The following quotation demonstrates her unawareness of the timeline:

*Interviewer: For what period of time are the communication strategies usually developed?*

*Interviewee 8: Ummmm.....hhh (sighs) ...if I only knew...well...of course it depends on on...they can be several years in a way the basic strategy, but of course they can change even twice a year when the world changes. (Interviewee 8)*

## 4.2. Goal setting for communications

This section reports on the interviewees' perceptions on goal setting for communications. Section 4.2.1. reports on the goal setting process. Section 4.2.2.

presents the qualitative and quantitative goals. Section 4.2.3. reports on the main goals mentioned by the interviewees.

#### 4.2.1. Goal setting process

There were few shared practices in the goal setting processes and the level of detail of them varied a lot. However, some trends were being able to separate. Special attention in this subsection was put on the concrete practices some of the interviewees shared. The findings show that unclear goal setting processes and remembering of the goals are related.

All interviewees stated that they have goals and actions for communications that direct the work to the wanted direction. Two of the interviewees also emphasized that the purpose of the goals is to make people work towards certain goals and aiming higher than the daily routines. Majority points out that the communication plan is developed based on the business strategy and the goals for the communications are derived from the goals of the business strategy. All the goals mentioned by the interviewees can be found in Table 2 in the end of this chapter. Majority of the goal setting processes presented by the interviewees begin with the corporate strategy, as the following quotation points out:

*We have company goals and then they "cascade" down... (Interviewee 3)*

Four of the interviewees emphasized that the goals need to be concrete in order for them to be understood by the employees and them to be able understand how their work further the successful execution of them. They explained the goal setting process and mentioned the set goals in detail. For example, an Interviewee who worked as a communications director for a brewery explained how the goals set for communications come straight from the company strategy and goals; every three years workshops are held for developing company level 'must win battles' that are then cascaded into all levels of the company. They set four commercial battles, and one for corporate social

responsibility and one for human resources. All the functions of the company then must find the ways to win these battles in their own function. She gave an example of one commercial battle: 'making beer a profitable business', which it is not at the moment due to hard competition in the field. Thus the interviewee transformed the battle for communications as 'Let's improve the image of beer'. Then the interviewee, together with the communications team, searched ways for improving the image of beer, and concluded that, for example, emphasizing the role of beer as a good drink with food is a way to do it. Then actions were planned for presenting beer in a good light with food: organizing events, writing articles in magazines, and planning menus when guests are visiting. One of the goals for a person working at the communications function was to plan a meal and event for around 30 journalists that were then invited to participate in an evening event where food with beer was cooked. The interviewee finds that the whole goal development system they have in the company is rather concrete. The following quotations compacts the company's concrete goal setting process:

*Here everything really goes through the battles. So it is quite concrete then.*  
(Interviewee 11)

*We have six of them (company battles). And yes, we have created a message to all of them. So everything is translated to what is communications' strategy and then there come the actions. And if it says here (strategy), for example, that 'We are the winner team', it means the whole company is the winner team. So I have to do something with my team that guarantees that we as a team are a winner team. That we always are the most wanted, always the brewery that the journalists contact first for example.*  
(Interviewee 11)

Also another Interviewee stated that each person in communications has goals set for them. They have a document where goals, actions, and evaluation methods are stated. She explained that every communication manager in her team has three goals that are linked to the bonus system, and that the people know what they are supposed to do. The communications has seven goals that are in the responsibility of the interviewee, and

she has then divided each of the goals to the communication managers, who have then divided them to their subordinates.

However, there was a large variation between the interviewees on how aware they were of the goals set for communications. Some, like interviewee 11, had a clear idea of the goals and started explaining about them with details immediately when asked, whereas some needed a moment to think about what they had set as goals for communications. The findings show that a general level of the goals and an unclear goal setting process were related. Instead of explaining the goal setting process when asked about it, some of the interviewees tried to remember the goals, suggested they should check them from the strategy document and came to a conclusion that they are rather general. The following quotations illustrates the difficulties the interviewees faced trying to remember the goals:

*Umm... I really have to think about the scorecard what's on it. Well they are, you know, very large entities, on the level of the whole group and then of course there is the thing that how many of them are action goals and linked to them, you know... I really feel like tenkkapoo...well but let's say that they are very general goals and group level goals that we have there. (Interviewee 1)*

*Well I should have of course brought it with me so I could talk about it a bit better... (laughs) (Interviewee 7)*

*Well, well, if I, you know, well now I should probably dig out the strategy, the document into view, but... But for example in the external communication it goes about so that we try to, you know, umm... wait a second, I could actually dig it out from here so I could look at it at the same time...so it is, you know, the main goals are quite on the general level, you know, that have then been divided into sub-goals, or more like an action plan... (Interviewee 5)*

The following Table 2 demonstrates the goals mentioned by the interviewees. The table illustrates how different kinds of goals the interviewees mentioned and how different generality levels they are on. The findings show that the more general the goals, the worse they are remembered. The following Table 2 presents the goals set for communications by the interviewees:

Table 2. Communication goals mentioned by the interviewees

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Goals set for communications</b>
Interviewee 1	Create a steering mechanism for communications that serves the group target image To enhance the transition from print to electric customer communications
Interviewee 2	A part relating to brands, social responsibility, and co-operation Two strategic project entities: marketing & communication, and brands & social responsibility
Interviewee 3	Target company image Correct information of the market and operational environment
Interviewee 4	Not allowed to state her personal goals Top-level company goal: Halve the carbon footprint and double the profit An example of personal goals: A certain amount of NGO representatives she needs to meet
Interviewee 5	Each sector of communication has its goals: external, internal, IR and CSR Top-level goal: sustainability In the more concrete level i.e. a certain amount of articles or blogwritings
Interviewee 6	Following through successfully the change
Interviewee 7	Appearance in the public Doing and being in the social media Employee satisfaction (how they feel about getting information about strategy and direction, flow of information between the directors and subordinates) The attitude towards the group independent of who is asked
Interviewee 8	Themes in communication By business units Cooperation with marketing
Interviewee 9	Developing reputation of better quality Excellent customer communication Communicating organization Increasing credibility Brand positioning and valuing customer
Interviewee 10	Crisis communication Committing Reciprocity

	Social media tools Itella culture and management  Social media presence From words to pictures Internal and external networking Reputation management: increasing orderliness
Interviewee 11	6 must win battles: i.e. making beer a profitable business, we are the winner team, slick organization quantitative goals: amount of articles and tone, compared to competition, popularity among journalists
Interviewee 12	Brand management Renewing communication foundations (viestintäalustat) Successful strategy communication

#### 4.2.2. Qualitative and quantitative goals

The qualitative and quantitative nature of the communication goals were of interest since, as mentioned in the literature earlier in this thesis, the communication professionals have often claimed that communication cannot be measured or evaluated since communications can not put in numbers.

However, the interviewees were rather unanimous with whether the communication goals should be qualitative or quantitative; majority of the interviewees state that they have both qualitative and quantitative goals set for communications. Two of the interviewees on the other hand state that the goals on the strategic level are always qualitative. The concepts of qualitative and quantitative goals were disunited. The following quotations illustrate two different kinds of perceptions interviewees mostly had:

*Qualitative. There on the strategic level are no numeric goals. (Interviewee 7)*

*...Umm...well they are qualitative yes...I mean yes... Well the strategic goals everyone understands that, of course it can be also quantitative but... (laughs)...the problem always is of course the measuring. (Interviewee 12)*



When asked about whether the goals were more qualitative or quantitative, majority answered that both, but then when giving examples they all tend to give examples of quantitative goals. They gave examples of goals such as how many articles of a certain tone need to be achieved and how much more than competitors.

*Ummm... aaa...we have you know...both! Both, we have goals for example for when we follow the media and the tone that it is written, then those are goals, about the tone, how much there has to be. We also have goals on how much more we have versus the competitors...of this kind. (Interviewee 11)*

*It can be quantitative like did we achieve such and such many you know...In my plans there could be for example that how many NGO representatives have I met and discussed with...or brought up. But then we have like these kind of, for example, employee satisfaction measuring, like is the percentage rising or depreciating. (Interviewee 4)*

On the other hand, some interviewees found that the quantitative goals do not always give a fair picture of the success of communications. An Interviewee mentioned that before they used to have goals on the number of clippings obtained, but she realized that it does not necessarily tell anything about whether the communications succeeded. Another interviewee mentioned that of course the goals can be forced into numbers, giving an example of percentage of successfully executed strategic project, but she doubted whether it actually is a quantitative goal.

*Before we used to have this kind of like number of clippings, which doesn't tell anything at all. Well, of course you can value it quantitatively but it doesn't necessarily tell anything about how successfully the goal has been reached. (Interviewee 4)*

*We have to have both. Well, of course you can force it (to quantitative), like 60% of the project plan came true, but is it really a quantitative goal? Isn't it more like...no, no it*

*isn't in that way a quantitative like, for example, market share is. So we have to have both.* (Interviewee 3)

The interviewees that stated that they had both qualitative and quantitative goals, first gave examples of quantitative goals, and then after qualitative. In the end many came to a conclusion that there are needed qualitative goals, since the quantitative do not always give a justified picture of the success of reaching the goals in communications. They emphasized the importance of atmosphere and overall impression that they considered good indicators for tracking the success in achieving the goals. In the following quotations are examples of perceptions of some of the interviewees:

*We have lots of measures about the impression. There are many studies that we follow and then get them from that...so that always correlates a little. Always communication, in my opinion, cannot be measured by quantities, but you have to measure it with qualities. Or at least a combination of them.* (Interviewee 2)

*I was just thinking that the quantitative measuring is quite difficult. It (evaluation) is more composed of all these elements, like a combined impression. And then the last comes the development of sales. It is of course never improved by communication, since so many other things affect it. We also consider important how the attitude atmosphere moves.* (Interviewee 4)

Then again, the interviewees had differing opinions about whether quantitative goals are easy for communications. Interviewee 10 stated that they have been trying to find more numeric goals for communications but it had proven to be difficult, whereas interviewee 8 stated that in the global level goal setting the numeric goals are in focus since they are so easy to measure.

*We have both. We have strived for more and more to quantitative, but they are so hard to find.* (Interviewee 10)

*The quantitative are maybe in the main focus here when we set up these goals globally, because the quantitative are always so easy to measure. (Interviewee 8)*

The terminology seemed disunited among the interviewees, since they seemed to give opposite answers and kept some kind of goals other qualitative and other interviewee quantitative. For example, two interviewee gave an example of giving a grade to the success; one interviewee gave an example of finishing a project and the other interviewee gave an example of successfulness of management communications. The first considered the goal to be qualitative and the second one found it quantitative.

*For example if a person's job is to give support to a big change, like creating a communication strategy. So it is really difficult to find the measures for it...you can't really (measure it). So then we have chosen people who are asked about how the thing has come off. So that then is a kind of a qualitative evaluation. From one to five, and four is what was looked for, so that then is the goal. (Interviewee 10)*

*We have both. You see, certain things you can measure, for example in projects just by seeing that they get done on time and correctly and they are as accurate as possible. On the other hand, you can follow the employee satisfaction survey results, what kind of a grade does the management communications receive during the times of change etc. So there you have a quantitative measure. (Interviewee 2)*

#### 4.2.3. Main goals of communications

Majority of the interviewees seemed confident when explaining the main goals they have for communications. The level of generality of the main goals varied between the interviewees, as can be noted from the Table 3. Several interviewees mentioned change communications and social media as their main goals for communications.

Although every company naturally has its own main goals, one common trend could be identified from the interviews. Since many of the companies the interviewees worked

for were going through organizational changes, naturally majority of them mentioned the change communications and communicating strategy to be one of the main goals set for communications this year. However, as eight of the interviewees had stated that they are currently going through some changes, but five mentioned communicating the new strategy and changes to their organizations to be one of the main goals this year. Another identifiable main goal that a few interviewees mentioned as their main goals is taking social media and interactive tools successfully into their means of communication. On the other main goals mentioned no trend could be identified. The main goals of each interviewee are listed in Table 3:

Table 3. The main goals for communications stated by the interviewees.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Main goals stated by interviewee</b>
Interviewee 1	Developing communication skills of personnel: ability to communicate about customer commitments/ promises, important matters regarding the group, business idea and vision
Interviewee 2	Increasing dialogue: Modernizing the communication of co-operative systems Building group-level sustainability program Implementing social media Updating communication policies inside code of conduct Reconstructing a multi-channel solution for annual report
Interviewee 3	Operational culture truly customer-oriented Adjusting communication to more humane direction, more emotional External: brand project Calibrating rewarding to be sufficiently ambitious
Interviewee 4	Was not allowed to state her goals
Interviewee 5	Internal: communicating strategy to personnel External: following company's business strategy and market segment approach, enhance communication of company's brand position in the field of business with clear messages and shareholder, establishing relevant media relationships, focus on growth segments as further strategy IR: continuously aiming for developing investor relations, communicating company to value investors, increasing visibility of CEO and central directors CSR: making the report, bringing up positive aspects of how the sustainability shows in operations
Interviewee 6	Following through the change
Interviewee 7	Taking social media into the array of communication channels in a logical way Taking personnel dialogue relating to company's new strategy, new values, and new vision to personnel

Interviewee 8	Worldwide level Regional level Personal level + own goals developed for company's Finnish communications based on a commissioned communication study
Interviewee 9	
Interviewee 10	All kind of change management
Interviewee 11	Must win battles
Interviewee 12	Developing a new communication platform allowing interactivity for internal comms Develop tools for corporate responsibility communication and reporting Communicating new strategy well

As Table 3 illustrates, the generality of the main goals for communications varies between the companies. Majority of the companies focus on change communications and many also in developing their social media.

Two of the interviewees emphasized the basis of the communication goals to be in business strategy, and thus the main goals came directly from the main goals of the business. The main goals of the company had been broken into strategic projects and into activities. Thus they will lead to achieving the main goals on the strategic level.

*To all these (business goals) are linked to us: what does it mean for communications, and then there are the actions to them. To exactly everything. (Interviewee 11)*

Seven of the interviewees seemed confident when stating the main goals; they seemed to have a clear idea of the main goals and did not need to check them from a document or answer on a general level. Two of the interviewees did not mention any specific main goals and one read the goals straight from a strategy document.

### 4.3. Evaluation of communications

This section reports on the interviewees’ perspectives on the role of evaluation and measuring in communications. Section 3.2.1 reports on evaluation tools and methods. Section 3.2.2. reports on the responsibilities for evaluation planning, and section 3.2.3. reports the frequency and revision of evaluation. Section 3.2.4. reports on the use of evaluation results. Section 3.2.5. presents the most important evaluation methods according to the interviewees and section 3.2.6. on the present satisfaction and future expectations the interviewees have on communication evaluation.

#### 4.3.1. Evaluation tools and methods

All interviewees stated that they believe communication can be and should be evaluated and measured. In their companies communication is measured and/or evaluated at least on some level. On the other hand, the ways to measure and evaluate differ a lot between companies and there seem to be few traditions on the topic in communications. For some, the evaluation process forms the working frame (e.g. scorecards) and for some it does not have an effect on their work. Five of the interviewees stated that they have lately been or are currently developing the evaluation methods and tools for communications. The findings showed that the communication professionals feel evaluation of communication difficult. The methods and tools the interviewees used for evaluation are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Evaluation and measuring tools and methods stated by the interviewees

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Evaluation tools and methods</b>
Interviewee 1	Four-level merit pay contract: Group-level barometer (group’s profit) Unit-level barometer (unit’s operative profit, group reputation based on reputation and sustainability study and brand study) Management board’s barometer (management and direction group’s delineation) Personal barometers (30%)
Interviewee 2	Development and result conversations

	<p>Score card: group's strategic barometers, i.e. growth  Projects being completed on time  Projects being completed correctly  Grade given for management communication during change  Impression  Service image research  Media barometer  Operative barometers:  Deadline hours in crisis communication  Amount of readers of internal online magazine  Amount of journalist contacts in a year  Instant feeling from daily question in online magazine</p>
Interviewee 3	<p>Balanced scorecard:  Group level  Business unit level  Function level  Personal level</p> <p>Performance barometers, i.e. customer satisfaction  Degree of realization of the development projects  Change in the service culture: interviewee's colleagues (unit directors and their staff) asked "how well has communication and HR been able to help you in developing service culture?" Scale from 1 to 5.  Great place to work competition (strategic barometer in the company's score card)  Pulssi-studies  Media barometer (not on the score card, good to know)  Employee survey  Development projects: how succeeded, is it done</p>
Interviewee 4	<p>Personnel satisfaction survey Pulssi (percentage of "how do you feel", or "how important you consider the company's sustainable development activities?")  Marketing people require:  Number of clippings  Advertising value estimation  Impact value  Customer service (direct feedback, i.e. percentage of what went wrong in a product)  The job has been done, and has been noticed in the media  General feeling</p>
Interviewee 5	<p>External: media follow-up (amount of articles, the way mentioned), experts' blogs, web follow-up, media barometer  Internal: employee satisfaction survey (question relating to strategy communication), Pulssi surveys during the change, Intranet (most read posts, comments and thumbs-ups), Amount of press releases, amount of news articles, amount of customer-case articles</p>

	CSR: Sustainability portals(amount of visitors uploading and what)
Interviewee 6	So far nothing In future could be something like what kind of a people person/leader/team member, numeric barometers
Interviewee 7	Incentive system and conversations Share of voice Amount of employees in media in positive light Employee dialogue completed
Interviewee 8	Amount of articles regarding certain themes Amount of articles per unit or corporation (only the articles exclusively about the company) Amount and tone of articles regarding strategic themes Oral estimation how themes have been taken further Media relations of the interviewee Also mentions, but I'm not sure they use themselves: Advertising Value Equivalency Success fee Amount of bloggings and tweets in social media
Interviewee 9	Internal customer satisfaction survey Monthly status reporting Media exposure analysis (key messages) Impressiveness of communication measuring (public value, visibility value, key messages exposure) Media barometer Exposure of projects in the media(amount of articles, value of media space, credibility rate) Intranet usage research Reputation research
Interviewee 10	Amount of proactively buffed articles Journalist contacts Incentive matrix→ Key Performance Indicators Intra: local roll outs, average number of visitors, team site visitors, enhancing blogging Communication index of employee survey PR-barometer Amount of articles in Finland Monthly communication meetings about proactive articles Media follow-up (only proactive followed up actively)
Interviewee 11	Conversation with CEO based on the KPIs(competition's exposure vs. own, tone, the goals completed, cases with positive publicity) Feedback from every unit's director Guestpack survey tool Media barometer Reputation research Parent company's reputation study Parent company's atmosphere study



	360-studies Pulssi-study, C15
Interviewee 12	Corporate responsibility: tools are defined by the deadline Strategy communication: a question in employee atmosphere survey E-learning follow-up for strategy implementation and feedback

As can be seen in Table 4, the variety of methods and tools used for evaluating communications is large and only a few common trends were found. The most common evaluation tools and methods mentioned by the interviewees were different kinds of scorecards and rewarding systems. In case there was some kind of a scorecard in use, it was mentioned first of all the evaluation methods and tools. Interviewees stated that scorecard is used for directing the work to the wanted direction, which is supporting the execution of the business strategy. Two of the interviewees stated that the items on the scorecard are very general and on a company level. Some interviewees, on the other hand, stated that the items chosen for the scorecard or bonus systems should be from the strategic goals and above the daily tasks.

Two interviewees stated that, due to the difficulty of finding appropriate tools for measuring, often the success of communications is evaluated by the overall atmosphere and feeling that they have on the matters. An Interviewee found that barometers like number of clippings do not give a good picture of the success of communication efforts, and that sometimes it is quite difficult to find fitting evaluation and measuring tools for communication. That is why she often trusts her intuition about the success of their communication efforts. The following two quotations demonstrate the difficulty of evaluating the success of communications sometimes:

*They are more like this kind of, sad to say, but more like this kind of intuitive things that I feel or see. So the kind of hard facts, since there really can't be them in communications, it is very one-sided to think that how many clippings you got from this. So it is more like, for example, some percentage of positive feedback about something.*  
(Interviewee 4)

*(...)with the indicator that is the situation under control or isn't the situation under control. So it is red/ green. (Interviewee 4)*

All except one interviewee stated that one method of measuring the success of communication is counting the number of clippings and the tone from them. On the other hand, many interviewees found that it does not tell about the complete picture of the success, but it is an easy way to have numeric data. An Interviewee also found that the information received from it is not relevant, and thus they have decided to count only the amount of articles that they themselves have proactively offered to the media. She did not find it relevant information how many thousands of articles have been published based on their press release. Thus they have also included the amount of published proactive articles in their key performance indicators this year, which is expected to help in obtaining more of the proactive articles. The following quotation illustrates how number of clippings used does not always give relevant information according to an interviewee:

*We don't count the amount of hits, only the proactive ones. If we have some walkout, the STT news is then in every single paper in Finland, and it is not relevant information to us that there have been a thousand clippings. And it costs oodles. (Interviewee 10)*

An Interviewee explained that they measure the success of the strategic projects from different angles. For the year when the interview was conducted they had made a strategic level goal of increasing dialogue in the whole organization and within all stakeholder groups. Therefore she considered the grade given to the communication of directors during the change and other areas of the employee satisfaction survey good indicators of whether dialogue has been successful. She also added that different projects under the strategic project indicate how has been succeeded; for example the online magazine has been successfully transformed to a new form that allows two-way conversation and feedback, as the following quotation demonstrates:

*For example, easily the grade that the communication of the directors gets in this kind of a big change tells also how the dialogue works. Then from the employee satisfaction survey can be found other factors. And then different kinds of projects: Our whole online magazine has been renewed during this year, it was completely one-way, and now it has been given a new layout. There have been included conversation tools, you can comment on things, you can participate in that way. So in a way that the project has been managed to do, I think is a clear measure for that now we are one step closer to that interactive work community communications. (Interviewee 2)*

#### 4.3.2. The responsible(s) for evaluation planning

Majority of the interviewees stated that they are mainly the person in charge of developing the evaluation and measuring methods for communications, but most also reported that they do it in co-operation with their superiors, usually the CEO of the company, and/ or the executive team. The communication managers pointed out that their evaluation methods and tools come from the global level. Some of the communication directors perceived that on paper it is their superior that makes the decisions, but in practice they are the ones finding the correct methods and suggesting them to their superior who then approves them. An interviewee stated that his superior, the CEO, decides them, but in practice he has neither the expertise nor the interest to do it. Thus the task has been delegated to him as the communications director:

*Formally and officially it is of course my superior, the CEO, but in practice it is that he doesn't have enough a) expertise b) interest. When you have confidential relationship then it is totally...he has very well delegated it to me and he doesn't have to bother about it. (Interviewee 7)*

An interviewee stated that she mainly decides the evaluation tools after discussing with the CEO about the changes that need to get done and then she finds the ways to do them. She also noted that the immediate superiors are then responsible for finding the correct evaluation methods for their subordinates.

Three of the interviewees stated that they develop the goals for communication in a team that has, beside themselves, the directors of the business units and the CEO. One also has the HR director in the team. An Interviewee stated that she was developing a new evaluation system with the directors of the business units and they all had some parts of the system in their responsibilities, but that they work together in order to find a system that works together efficiently:

*The executive board level people want to get this entity to work. But then, for example, I own the management measures and personnel measures and then communication measures and the director of our largest function owns certain process measures and decides from them which are the best ones. Then we together supervise and develop it so that it becomes a whole entity, because the cause and consequence relation is the joke here. We don't do anything with the information that comes from a single measuring point. (Interviewee 3)*

#### 4.3.3. The frequency and revision of evaluation

All interviewees reported that follow-up is continuous and ten of them that once a year is done a larger scale evaluation on the success of reaching the goals. The scorecard and development assessment conversations are held once a year, and in companies that use a bonus system, the bonuses are decided yearly based on the success in reaching the set goals. Three of the interviewees reported that besides the revision at the end of the year, they make follow-up development discussions with their subordinates in order to find out whether any adjustments need to be done in order to reach the goals at the end of the year. An Interviewee 's statement compacts with the ideas of many of the interviewees:

*Projects start with setting goals to them, and when they end, we evaluate how did they go. Certain studies come once a year. We do some magazine reader satisfaction surveys. So it really depends on what you look at. But then on a year level with everyone we go through result and goal conversations, where we sum up the whole year. Then during*

*the strategy period is followed how the strategy is executed. Then comes the moment when a new strategy comes and then is when you see have we achieved the strategic goals. (Interviewee 2)*

The interviewees stated that the evaluation and measuring tools and methods are revised from time to time. However, a half of the interviewees emphasized the importance of keeping the same methods and tools for evaluation in order to keep the continuity in results. They noted that when the methods are the same and for example the questions in the surveys same, the comparison of the results is easier and a trend can be detected. They found it vital to be able to see the trend, and how they had developed from previous years or other periods that they had evaluated, as the following quotations demonstrate:

*Very many of our studies have a long history, so we can see the trend. (Interviewee 2)*

*Every year we revise them, but of course you have to keep some kind of continuity. For example, the reputation and sustainability study, and the brand study we have had for several years, because it's really good to have that continuity. (Interviewee 1)*

*Yes there come new ones, but they don't really change that often. That some certain line is kept there to have some sort of comparison in the long run to the past on how our performance has developed. (Interviewee 7)*

On the other hand, one interviewee had a differing view of keeping the same evaluation tools for a long time. She did not find having the same tools for several years important, because she finds looking in the past useless for improving the work of today.

*What I would like to see being forgotten is this terrible believing in continuity. What the heck do I do with the information of how things were 20 years ago? I mean, as if these research arrays and question batteries could not be changed every now and then*

*because we lose the possibility for comparison. Well, then we lose it for some time, but there will come other years when we can continue with it. (Interviewee 3)*

Some interviewees stated that the evaluation methods were continuously developed, but rarely anything new comes up. Two interviewees mentioned that they had now, while including social media in their communication channels, tried to find evaluation tools for social media and other interactive channels.

An interviewee who also acknowledged the need for continuous development and that the tools had been developing a lot, but she admitted that they were rather slow and beginners with measuring in her company, since they had had their separate communications function from 2006 and had thus had to put all resources for developing the basic tasks required from communications. She believed that maybe one day they would focus more on measuring and evaluation, as the following quotations illustrates:

*...(sighs) I guess, yes all the time of course it needs to be revised what services you buy and use...and they have developed so much. But we are quite...slow (laughs), or in the beginning of measuring communication all in all, and with using different tools. Since we have had only since 2006 our own communications, so for only a few years now, our resources have gone for creating this reporting and general PR and policies and the ways to do the job and putting the basic things in order. So maybe it (measuring) is then coming later at some point. (Interviewee 12)*

Furthermore, Interviewee 3 stated that during the years there had been gathered so many studies and surveys that they did not form a complete analysis of the state of communications in the organization, and that was why they were now developing a new complete evaluation system for the whole organization.

*No (they have not been revised), exactly what has happened here is that during the years it has accrued like “let’s take that one” and “let’s take that one”, and then*

*suddenly there is a billion of them, and they don't form any united analysis, and that is why we are now doing this new evaluation system. Now they still come up at different times of the year, and when they are fresh they are usually seen, and then noted that "heigh-ho, next".* (Interviewee 3)

#### 4.3.4. The use of evaluation results

The interviewees had differing ways to use and forward the results of evaluation and measuring. The most mentioned ways were using them for the bonus systems and forwarding the information to executive board and/ or board of directors. Many acknowledged that the results were not used efficiently for improving their work.

Many interviewees stated that the evaluation and measuring results are presented to the executive board once or more times a year. One interviewee stated that the results are also taken to the board of directors. Also, an interviewee added that when they were conducting surveys repeatedly during the most important phase of the organizational changes, the results from the survey were shared in the executive board, because they were considered important for analyzing the success of change in the organization during the process.

The evaluations that were most commonly shared in the companies were all kinds of employee surveys and studies. Three of the interviewees stated that the employee studies are shared in the organization and one interviewee was planning on beginning to share it among the employees. On the other hand she was wondering whether people would be interested in it since there is already a risk of information overload.

*I have lately been thinking that should we start sharing them a bit more widely, it might be interesting. You always a little concerned who's interested...that there is so much information already, but...the executive board at least has been that kind that has received the results.* (Interviewee 5)

On the other hand, one interviewee confessed that the results are basically not used for anything. She noted that they receive big amounts of information from measuring, but they do not cause any adjustments anywhere in their work. In the following quotation she describes the use of evaluation results in her company:

*You could collect with a loading shovel all the measuring information that we receive from different kinds of surveys. They don't go anywhere, they don't cause anything...I mean they just keep coming but they are used nowhere...they don't cause any adjustments here, and they aren't any surgical surveys that would help us make some adjustments. (Interviewee 3)*

Two interviewees emphasized that the results of the surveys are put into action in order to improve the issues that are lacking. Interviewee 11 had a more practical outlook on the evaluations; besides the results of the evaluations being part of the bonus system, she gives an example of how the employee studies are immediately analyzed and, in the units, where separate results can be derived because there are over 5 respondents, taken further into improvements. She had found out that sometimes the problems could be fixed with as little efforts as installing more news televisions in the facilities. When the issue is about lacking management communications, an outside consultant is directed to the unit to help fix the problems.

One interviewee stated that in her organization all results are shared among all employees. They share, for example, the employee survey results and consumer surveys in order to inform everyone in the organization about the status on the moment. She emphasized that, since the organization is rather small, the information sharing is easy. In the following quotation she explained how information was shared in her organization:

*We twirl very much data inside the house. For example, the employee survey is shared to everyone. Then it goes to Europe, because then our directors are evaluated based on that how well they have done their job. Then customer surveys and these kinds are*



*circulated, because everyone needs to know what the consumers think. The same way usually whatever survey, we very gladly forward it always to everyone. Since we are this small organization, it is easy to throw around the information. Then we have the disk drives so go to look from there. Then for example in the monthly meetings we share what we have received, ask what they like about it, and tell that we just heard this.*  
(Interviewee 4)

Two of the interviewees pointed out that the results are mainly for themselves and for the communication team. One interviewee perceived that other people do not have time to be interested in them, and therefore the results are then linked to the bonus systems in the end of the year when she presents the results to her superior the CEO. The following quotations illustrate how information on evaluation were shared in their organizations:

*Only to myself. No one here has the time to be interested in them. So just then in the end of the year they swim to the bonus systems and are shared), but otherwise no.*  
(Interviewee 10)

*No, I present them then in my own goal and development discussion. I then present them to my boss, the concern director...As much as he is interested in them (laughs). As long as the business runs. A bit with that principle it has been taken until now, you know.*  
(Interviewee 10)

#### 4.3.5. The most important evaluation methods according to the interviewees

The methods and tools the interviewees considered the most important vary quite much. Very few linked them to the strategic goals and main goals mentioned earlier in the interviews. The most mentioned evaluation and measuring methods and tools were employee-related studies and direct feedback. Five of the interviewees mentioned employee-related evaluation and measuring methods to be the most important in their opinion. Four of the interviewees valued especially different kinds of employee surveys, whereas one also mentioned instant feedback, and one the development conversations

between managers and subordinates. These methods and tools were considered the most important because they give direct feedback from the people and tell about the success in serving the organization. The most important methods and tools stated by the interviewees can be found in Table 5. The following quotations illustrates the importance the interviewees give to direct feedback and employee survey:

*I take our employee satisfaction survey very seriously, because it is direct feedback to us, and then I also take very seriously all customer feedback. (Interviewee 4)*

*In my opinion our internal satisfaction survey is really good, just because of these support functions, so we can see that are we serving the organization well relating to these kinds of internal activities. They help us to see whether we have earned our place in the organization. (Interviewee 9)*

Most of the interviewees find qualitative feedback to be the most valuable. Especially the parts, where people are given the chance to write in their own words how they feel about different issues, are found valuable. Though it was pointed out how difficult it is to obtain answers to them. People rarely bother to answer to the open questions, even though they often are the most valuable feedback to the interviewees.

*We have these kind of 'have-your-say'–web surveys, where you always answer to some questions and then you can give free feedback. When you read the answers, you get the real picture more than from 'tick-the box' answers, where the given answers may not suit you exactly. (Interviewee 12)*

*In my opinion the qualitative is the most important. I personally hate in all these questions, these web surveys, the open part to tell my opinion. I never make up anything. But the fact is that it tells more if you just bother to put up a few words there, that tells so much more than any numeric assessment, like from one to five, what do you think. (Interviewee 4)*

One interviewee mentioned bonus matrixes to be the one she considered the most important. She found the bonus matrix to be the most important, because they had put special attention on developing a new matrix that is close to each person's own work and possibilities to affect the achievement of the goals. She said they used to have too remote goals in the matrix and it did not give people the feeling that they could actually influence the results. An example she gave was the company's customer satisfaction, where the communication unit had little chances to influence and see the results, and which they therefore dropped from the communication goals and replaced it with something that the people can see whether they achieved it or not. Interviewee 9 also found tools that are linked to their job to be important, such as the media exposure analysis.

*Well I have to say the bonus matrix. The goal and development conversations, and the goal setting are important, because we all the time aim for getting close to the personal work. How much is your goal to get those articles through. It directs the work, or at least it should...If we have had, for example, customer satisfaction of the whole company there in the scorecard, what communications can do for it is so small, so then it doesn't direct the work and activities actually at all. In order for it to have the directing effect, the goals have to be as close as possible to your own work that you can affect. That is why we don't have any generic goals. (Interviewee 10)*

The most important evaluation and measuring tools and methods mentioned by the interviewees are listed in the Table 5 below.

Table 5. The most important evaluation and measuring tools and methods according to the interviewees.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Most important evaluation tools and methods</b>
Interviewee 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Surveys, although it can never go to total quantitative</li> <li>•The job has been done</li> </ul>
Interviewee 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Development appraisals</li> <li>•In the end the most important: Growth of the company Is growth goal reached Customer satisfaction</li> <li>•Dialogue: Grade of management communication during change Employee satisfaction survey Projects completed</li> </ul>
Interviewee 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Scattered</li> <li>•Rather good internal communication barometers already</li> <li>•Purpose is to develop an entity</li> </ul>
Interviewee 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Employee survey</li> <li>•Customer feedback</li> </ul>
Interviewee 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Did not come up clearly</li> <li>•Supposedly follow-up of communicating strategy (i.e. Pulssi)</li> </ul>
Interviewee 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Nothing yet</li> </ul>
Interviewee 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•All kinds of direct conversations</li> </ul>
Interviewee 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Did not up clearly</li> </ul>
Interviewee 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Media exposure analysis</li> <li>•Internal customer satisfaction survey</li> <li>•Follow-up of projects</li> </ul>
Interviewee 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Incentive matrix</li> </ul>
Interviewee 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Instant feedback</li> <li>•Atmosphere surveys</li> </ul>
Interviewee 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•'have your say' kinds of surveys with open questions</li> <li>•spontaneous comments/ instant feedback</li> </ul>

As can be noted from the Table 5, many of the interviewees trust in direct feedback and employee surveys in evaluating the success of communications. Interviewees also find important customer feedback and media related feedback. Although there can not be found a strong common trend on the most important evaluation tools and methods considered by the interviewees. Very few were of the tools and methods were linked to the main goals mentioned earlier in the interviews.

#### 4.3.6. The present satisfaction and future expectations of the interviewees for evaluation of communications

About a half of the interviewees were satisfied with their evaluation methods and a minority that they were unsatisfied. Some interviewees were not sure about their opinion. A half of the interviewees recognized that the evaluation methods need to be revised and developed continuously. Although, some interviewees doubted whether ever will be developed perfect evaluation methods for communication. The following quotation of the an Interviewee conforms to the sentiments of many of the interviewees:

*Well yes... I guess it is a kind of an eternal question in communications, that how should these be done... I'm sure they could be better... But I haven't found the philosopher's stone...But let's say, that from one to ten I'm probably an eight...or it is that since we now start to have measures for intranet and social media... they are at least in a better shape than they were a year ago. But they aren't close to perfect yet.*  
(Interviewee 10)

Lack of knowledge of the evaluation tools on market was considered an issue. Lack of time and resources for finding the correct tools and methods was mentioned by the interviewees. The following quotations illustrate the frustration some interviewees feel in front of the evaluation tool market:

*Well, no I'm not very satisfied, because I haven't put effort on it. I'm not satisfied with it and I don't know enough about it.* (Interviewee 11 )

*I don't even know all that the market has to offer. Somehow maybe we also have too little time to put on this kind of overall developing and thinking about them, so on the other hand it is because of me also. I should have more time to follow what the market has to offer.* ( Interviewee 10)

The interviewees feel that there is embarrassment of riches with the tools and methods that are on the market. Therefore they found the difficulty to be in the choosing of the correct ones, since all cannot and should not be purchased. It was emphasized that one should focus on the essential, and remember that measuring should not be the main resort in developing communications. Furthermore, the interviewees were aware of the risk of study overload, and thus prefer keeping the measuring tools to few.

*The studies should not be bought just for the sake of having studies, or if you do too many of them, then you get a study overload and no one has time to read them.*  
(Interviewee 9)

On the other hand, an Interviewee felt that one needs to know how to use the methods and tools and filter out the ones that are not needed, because there is not one tool that would reveal the whole truth. She noted that the methods need to be linked to the activities and goals and that is why she had decided to drop some methods, because they did not help in reaching the goals they had set. Also another interviewee had felt that not all the tools were worth it, and thus had decided to drop off the palette a tool that did not give any value to her work.

*Yes, I am (satisfied), because you need to be able to read them a little bit, since in communications there can't be just one grade like 9.6 and this tells everything. So you need to know how to filter from the ones on offer. And then see the success. Of course you can buy everything, but the buying has its limits too. Just like we tried the impressiveness of communication research, it was good as such, but then when we didn't feel that we were linking it directly to our work, and it felt useless to pay for it on top.* (Interviewee 9)

Furthermore, the interviewees found the linking to the goals and using of the evaluation methods to be the challenging part. Especially the effectiveness and impressiveness of communication was found to be difficult to measure. Many recognized that they had a rather good variety of tools and methods, but they felt they lacked know-how in using

them efficiently for improving their work. The following quotations demonstrate how the linking of the evaluation to the work is considered challenging:

*Well... yes and no. The thing I'm not satisfied with is how we know how to use them. I believe there are means enough, but maybe not of all we know how to use them so well... or it isn't in a way a natural part of the process. (Interviewee 7)*

*Umm... well I think we have a lot to do with prioritizing. We are measuring and researching quite extensively, but do we truly use the results and so well, so systematically and well than we could use? So I see a lot of developing there. (Interviewee 2)*

The findings show that there was a need for clearer proves of success and necessity of communication in the business world, since also other units in the organizations demand to see some concrete results. The interviewees feel it annoying not to be able to show anything concrete. On the other hand, some doubted, as the following quotation demonstrates, whether there would ever be found a way to tell a direct connection between the resources invested in communications and the benefit from it:

*In a way you have always had to think a lot about it and explain, so of course it sometimes annoys that you can't show anything concrete. That when we do this, we get this. Because they aren't that straight forward cause-effect relations. They really aren't. So you then just have to prove with some other ways. I'm not quite convinced whether there will ever be a way to tell the link between when you invest this you get this... (Interviewee 5)*

The interviewees' expectations for future of evaluation of communications somewhat differed. Some common vision the interviewees had though; they would like to see methods and tools that would help in evaluating the impressiveness of communication and envisioned that social media will affect the communications in the future. It was

also wondered whether marketing would have something to offer for communications relating to evaluation and measuring.

Some of the interviewees longed for being able to measure the impressiveness of the communication. They would like to be able to measure how messages affect people instead of just measuring the amount of articles written about the company. The interviewees had not found the way to do it, and doubted whether it would ever be possible. They suggested that it would have to be such an extensive tool that it would then be complicated and uncomfortable to use, as the following quotation illustrates:

*Of course it would be easy if we could somehow reasonably measure the impressiveness...But the base for the system then would have to be quite complicated or extensive where the results would be analyzed then...but some sort of more developed version of a tool to how a message affects people would be nice. (Interviewee 12)*

The interviewees suggested that social media and interactive means of communication would cause a big change in communication in the next years. They mentioned that companies needed to revise their evaluation methods in order to see whether they remained accurate, and what more intelligent options there would be for evaluation. On the other hand, the interviewees saw also more need for business value understanding in communications in the future. They suggested that there would be a need to prove the importance of communications in organizations in order to receive resources from them; the monetary value of investing in communication must be justified. An Interviewee though strongly believed that communication people that understand business will find the ways to prove it, as the following quotation demonstrates:

*If you truly want to show that communication matters, you need to find numeric base and some kind of measuring analogy for it. But when you have communication personnel that understand business logic, then the direction is correct. People who have business logic can find the measures. I don't think it's a problem. It's just a good excuse. (Interviewee 2)*



## 5. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the main findings based on the interviews conducted with ten communication directors and two communication managers and compares them with earlier research and especially the theoretical framework of the study. This chapter also focuses on answering the main research question: what is the role of evaluation in strategic communications?

The link between the strategy, the goals and the evaluation methods is fussy and fragmented. The findings suggest that the role of evaluation in strategic communications varies a lot between companies. In some companies evaluation of strategic communications has rather well been included in the strategy work of the communications, whereas most have not been able to include them yet.

The findings suggest that the communication strategies are built based on the business strategy, and the role of communications is to support the company in the business strategy execution. Thus, the findings support the theoretical framework (Figure 7, p. 49) and Cornelissen's (2011) model of link between the business strategy and the communication strategy (Figure 1, p.20), where one of the two purposes of the communication strategy is to translate the business strategy. In some of the companies the role of business strategy is seen as so strong that they find no need for a separate communication strategy, but have rather build strategic action plans for their function directly from the business goals.

Most of the interviewees are in the executive board or in close work-relationship with the people in the executive board, thus they are aware of the business strategy and often take part in the business strategy building process. This supports the literature presented earlier in this thesis, as, Cornelissen (2011; see also Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen and Uusi-Rauva, 2011; Wuolanne, 2010), for example, argues that in order for communications to be strategic the involvement of communications directors in corporate strategy process is vital. Furthermore, the communication directors

emphasized that even though they are the main responsables for the communication strategy and action plan building, they interact with the executive board during the process. This can be interpreted that also the executives of other functions and business units have found communications as an important part of successful strategy execution.

Goal setting, on the other hand, was not in average as clear for the interviewees as the importance of communications in business strategy execution. Majority of the interviewees stated that the goals set for communications are based on the company goals. This supports the theoretical framework and earlier literature; for example, Kamensky (2004) has suggested that the goals should guide the work of the people and lead to reaching the set strategic goals. However, one would expect the strategic goals set for communications to be clear and come automatically to the minds of the interviewees who all are heads of the communications in the companies they work for. In some cases it seemed that the interviewee was not able to state the goals, or needed help in remembering them, but then again more than a half seemed very aware of them. The same could be identified with main goals set for communications; not all interviewees were able to state their main goals without hesitation.

Findings suggest that the level of generality of the goals relates to how well they are remembered. Some of the interviewees stated that the goals set for communications are on a strategic level since communication is seen as strategic and not operative, whereas some interviewees on the contrary stated that they had tried to get the goals as close as possible to each person's work and possibilities to affect the results. The interviewees that stated that the goals are close to each person's work seemed to remember better the goals that were set. This raises a question on whether the strategic level goals, that supposedly are directing the communication work towards the strategic business goals, actually direct the work at all if even the communication director has trouble in remembering them. Could the "smaller" activity and project goals actually direct the work better towards the strategic goals of the business since they can easily be remembered, related to the strategic goals and understood when they are achieved? As the theoretical framework and the literature presented earlier in this thesis suggest, the

goal and activity planning process should be in line with the corporate strategy and each goal and activity should be purposeful and lead to forwarding the strategic goals (see, for example, Kamensky, 2004; Hallahan, 2007; Holland & Gill, 2006).

The findings suggest that the role of evaluation in strategic communication work varies a lot between companies. The need for evaluation and measuring has been noted in all companies, but most do not feel confident about its role in the strategy work. This suggests that evaluation and measuring have not reached a standardized role in corporate communication yet. This supports the earlier literature presented in this thesis, as studies by, for example, Ritter (2003), Hämäläinen & Maula (2004), and Viestinnän ammattilaiset 2009 show.

All interviewees state that they measure communication, which however, is contrary to the Viestinnän ammattilaiset 2009-survey presented in the literature of this thesis. According to the survey, only a half of the communication professionals measured their communications. There is, however, a lack of common ground in measuring and evaluation of communication. Although, the findings of this thesis suggest that for most of the communication professionals the terminology of evaluation and measuring is unclear. Most interviewees used the term 'measuring' relating to all kind of evaluation and measuring. When asked about evaluation, some interviewees did not quite understand the question until rephrasing it as measuring.

There is a large variety and amount of tools and methods that are used in the companies for measuring and evaluation. The findings suggest that there are lots of tools in the market designed for measuring communication, but the communication professionals find them difficult to use and expensive, which supports the literature presented earlier in this thesis (e.g. Juholin, 2011). Since there are so many tools offered on the market, but no common ground in the communication field, many communication professionals seem confused with the options. This has led to some skipping the measuring completely and some others to buying everything there is on offer.

Communication professionals also often find measuring and evaluation tools somewhat difficult to link to their work, and therefore not worth spending the money. However, even though there is a large variety of tools offered in the market, the communication directors and managers value instant feedback and direct conversations with personnel and other stakeholder groups the most. This is, because they feel that it gives a more trustworthy and truthful picture of the reality and useful ideas for development. This indicates that the qualitative feedback is found the most important and the most useful in developing the communication work. Furthermore it can be interpreted that, although giving exact facts, the quantitative surveys are not as valued among the interviewees due to their generality and tendency for averages that do not reveal that much.

The use of measuring and evaluation of results of communications varies a lot between companies. Some companies have clear link from the evaluation results to action and further development of the strategy, but most companies lack the link from the evaluation of communications to the communication and corporate strategies. Thus, the informing part of the two-way link between communication strategy and corporate strategy presented in the theoretical frame is not supported by the findings of this study. Moreover, the findings suggest that the measuring and evaluation processes are more concrete and clear for most of the interviewees on a project and activity level than the evaluation of the whole communication entity.

Based on the findings there is a need for communications to justify their existence and need for resources. Since the role of communications in successful strategy work has become acknowledged, but on the other hand companies are constantly trying to cut costs, there is a need for communications to prove their need for resources. According to the findings of this study, many communication professionals find the proving difficult since the people who verify the justification, often would like to see something concrete and factual. On the other hand, the communication directors often find the “hard numbers” ill-fitting for revealing the complete picture of success of

communications. Thus many interviewees mention that they continuously search for quantitative measures for communication, but by now have not found any good ones.

All in all, the findings of this study mostly support the earlier research on strategic communications and evaluation: the strategic role of communications has been acknowledged and goals for communications are strategic. Thus, the translating role of communications strategy, as presented in the theoretical framework, is clear in the corporate strategy implementation process in large companies today. Also, the measuring practices in communications have become more common than the earlier research suggests. However, the role of evaluation in conducting the strategy work is lacking and the informing link from communication strategy to corporate strategy presented in the theoretical framework of this thesis is faint. Activities are measured, but an evaluation that would pull all together and affect the whole strategy process is still rare in communications.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the study by presenting the research summary in section 6.1. and main findings in section 6.2. In section 6.3. practical implications are presented with a model for strategic communication planning and evaluation. Limitations of the study are discussed in section 6.4., and finally in section 6.5. suggestions for further research are given.

### 6.1. Research summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of strategic corporate communication and the role of evaluation and measuring in strategic communication in large international organizations in Finland. The study was motivated by the lack of research of the evaluation of strategic communication conducted in organizations.

The study focused on examining the role of corporate communications in strategy work, goal setting for communications, and the role of evaluation in meeting the set communication goals and further business goals. The study focused on the perspectives of communications directors on the strategic role of communications and the supporting evaluation.

The main research question and the three sub-questions are show below:

What is the role of evaluation in strategic communication today?

1. What is the role of strategy in communications?
2. How are goals set for communications?
3. How do companies evaluate their communication?

The theoretical framework was an adapted combination of models and theories presented in the previous literature. Although all literature presented affected the formulation of the framework, it was mainly derived from the Cornelissen's model of

research and evaluation within communication campaigns (Figure 6, p.42) and a model of the link between corporate strategy and communication strategy (Figure 1, p.20). In the framework were also adapted parts of the operative management model by Kamensky (Figure 2, p.26) and the stages of a research process defined by Juholin (Figure 5, p.41). The framework consisted of a two-way link between the corporate strategy and the communication strategy, and five lower-level stages of the communication strategy process. The purpose of a communication strategy in the two-way link between with business strategy is to translate the business strategy into actions, and on the other hand inform the business on the success of reaching the set strategic goals. The communication strategy itself was formed from five stages: (1) linking, (2) goals, (3) activities, (4) measuring, and (5) evaluation. For this part of the framework especially the models by Cornelissen (Figure 6, p.42), Kamensky (Figure 2, p.26), and Juholin (Figure 5, p.41) were used.

The study was qualitative. Empirical data was collected by conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with ten communications directors and two communication managers. All interviewees had extensive working experience in strategic leading positions, and majority also in communications. Therefore they represented a good sample for the study to share their views on the role of evaluation of strategic communication.

## 6.2. Main findings

First, the findings show that the strategic of communications for corporate strategy execution is considered vital. There is a common understanding among the communication professionals that communications has or should have a strategic role in organizations. Today in large internationally operating organizations the role of communications is to support the business in its strategy execution. Thus the communications must understand the business strategy and be able to further its execution by its own actions.

Second, the practices on goal setting for communications varied a lot between the organizations. In all companies communication goals are set based on the company or business goals. However, the level of generality of the set goals varied significantly. It could be noted that the level of generality of the goals relates to how well they are remembered; the more general the goals, the more difficult to remember them.

Third, in majority of the organizations the evaluation results do not have an effect on operations and do not contribute to the further development of the corporate strategies. there is clearly a lack of common ground in communication measuring and evaluation. There clearly is a need for finding proofs to justify their existence and need of resources and the effect the communications have on the business success, but the communication professionals find it difficult to find correct evaluation methods. There is too little time and resources for finding the correct combination of tools and methods for the purposes. However, all interviewees at least intent to measure their communication, but the feelings of succeeding in it vary. The findings suggest that the measuring and evaluation processes are more concrete and clear for most of the interviewees on a project and activity level than on the evaluation of the success of the whole communication entity.

Based on the findings can be concluded that communication has claimed its place in the strategic role in organizations, but the link between the strategy, the goals, and the evaluation is often fussy and fragmented. Communication strategies translate the corporate strategies, but in most companies evaluation of communication is not used for informing the communication and corporate strategies and for further developing them. Although there still is lack of tradition and common ground in communication evaluation today, it can be expected to start changing in future since it is evident that the business will require it in return for resources. All interviewees agreed that evaluation and measuring is definitely a field where they will focus more in future.



### 6.3. Practical implications

The findings of this study showed that there is still a lot of room for development in the field of strategic communication and its evaluation in order for it to be able to show its contribution on business strategy execution. First in this section three practical implications of the study are discussed, and then a model for strategic communication planning and evaluation is presented.

First, the findings show that communications form an important part in the corporate strategy. Therefore, the communications directors participate in the corporate strategy developing process and are often members of the board of directors.

Second, the findings of this study suggest that the importance of measuring and evaluation of communications has been acknowledged. Therefore the use of evaluation tools and methods can be assumed to become a common practice in companies.

Third, as the findings show, the linking of the strategy, goals and evaluation is still lacking in communications. Communications directors need to better link the goals and activities to corporate strategy and evaluate what forwards the execution of the communication strategy, which contributes to the successful execution of the corporate strategy.

To respond to the practical needs of the communication directors and truly strategic communications in companies, a model for strategic communication planning and evaluation was developed based on the knowledge gained from the interviews and literature on strategic communication and communication evaluation and measuring. The model is mainly developed based on the knowledge that was gained from analysis of the needs of the communication functions and parts that were found interesting in the goal-setting and measuring processes of the communication functions. The model is in Appendix 3.

This model replies to the interviewees' need for being able to show something concrete and numeric, that is often required for justifying the importance of communications in enhancing the success of business strategy. At the same time both qualitative and quantitative measures can be added in the model in order to evaluate the success of reaching the strategic goals. The model is presented in the following Figure 8.

Figure 8. Model for strategic communication planning and evaluation

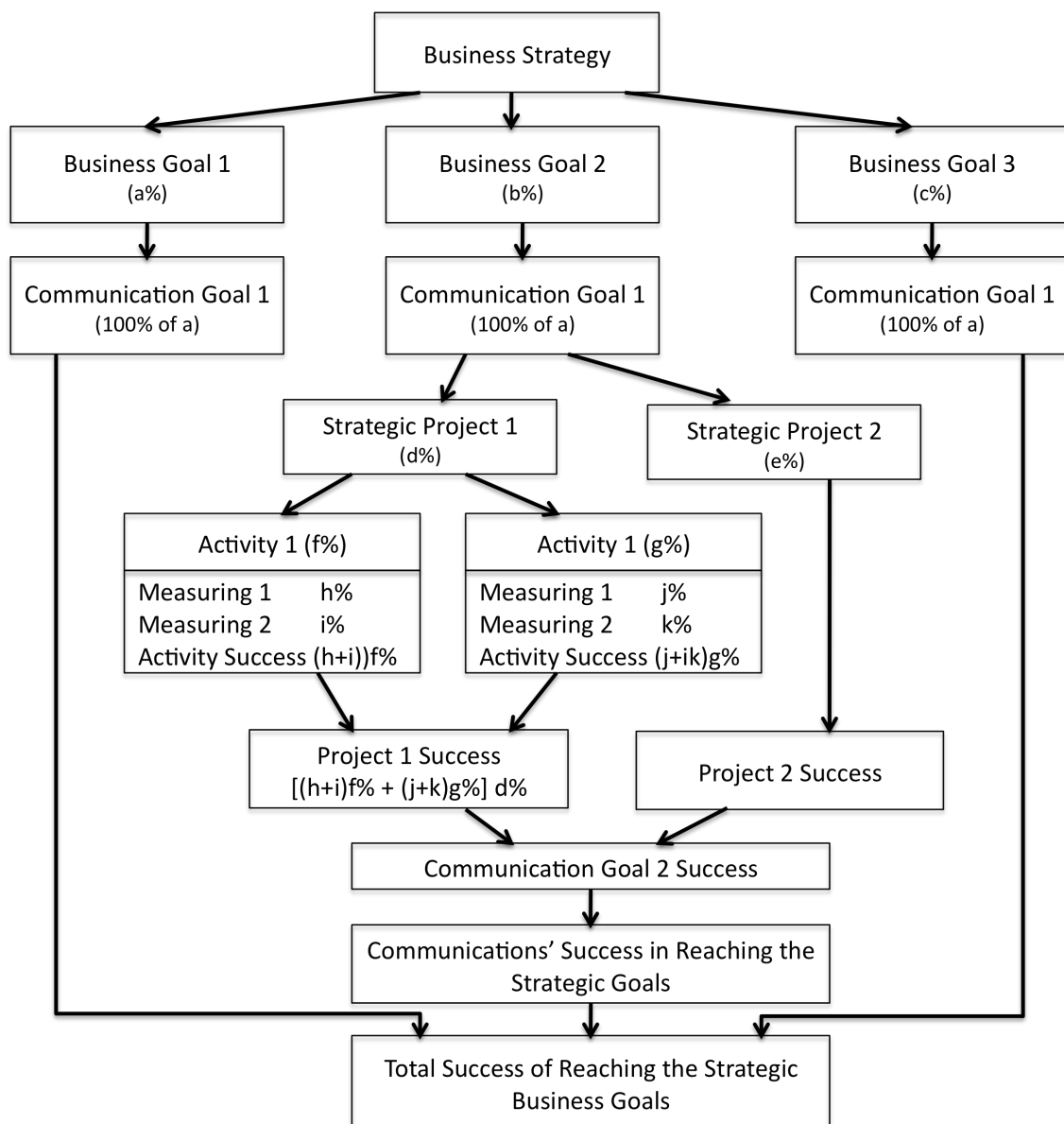


Figure 8. illustrates a five-level strategy building process together with a five-level strategy success evaluation process in order to evaluate the total success of reaching the business goals. The basis for the goal-setting process is derived from the goal-setting process described by an interviewee in the section 3.1.5. A somewhat similar kind of process model formed also the basis for this study. The central idea of the model is the link between business goals and communication goals, and the projects and activities derived from them.

The findings suggest that often communication professionals look for a measuring tool that would reveal the total success of communication efforts. However, I suggest that the exact opposite should be done and, instead focus should be put on the activities. The success of activities is often easier to measure, and by combining the successes of the activities the success of the projects and thus the larger goals can be evaluated.

The ultimate base for following the model is in the business strategy, or more accurately in the business goals. The business goals should be of the kind that can be transmitted to function and unit levels in the organization. A great example of this is the ‘must-win-battles’ explained by an interviewee. The term ‘battle’ is optimal, since it suggests that the issue is something that must be won, and therefore it has an end. No battle is supposed to last forever. In order for it to be won, the characteristics of the victory need to be defined, meaning in this case the characteristics of the business goals.

The communication goals are derived from the battles and divided into projects. Inside the projects are built activities that forward the project and thus achievement of the ultimate goal. The success factors of each level of the process are defined and rated based on their importance in reaching the upper level goal. By calculating the weighted rates of each piece of the process the total success level of the goal and the battle can be calculated. Furthermore, the model enables the two-way contribution of the business and the communication function in the strategy execution process, as also described in

the theoretical framework in section 2.4 of this thesis. Where communication can use the model for translating the business goals –or battles – into its own goals and actions, it may also help the communication function to actively evaluate current situations of various important aspects of the strategy process and therefore further the information to other functions of the company and thus effectively direct the work towards the set strategic business goals.

#### 6.4. Limitations of the study

This section reviews some of the limitations relating to this thesis by analysing the study from a critical perspective. The six limitations of the study should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings of the study. However, they do not diminish the trustworthiness of the study.

The first limitation relates to interpretations. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, all findings and analyses are made based on the researcher's interpretations of the interviews. The researcher does not possess an extensive experience on managing communications in large organizations, which may have affected the interpretations.

The second limitation of the study relates to the confidentiality of the interviews. Since all data collected from the interviews is confidential, the data processing was at times challenging and may have affected the outcome.

The third limitation is that the study includes only 12 interviews. Even though the group of interviewees present a diverse group of communication leaders from different fields and sizes of business, and different education backgrounds, a larger number of interviews would have expanded diversity and more trends and conclusions could have been detected.

The fourth limitation of the study relates to the demography of the interviewees. All but one of the interviewees were women, which may have given a rather one-sided view of the topic. However, it must be noted that today most of the communication leaders in large Finnish companies are women.

The fifth limitation of the study is that the study may have a positively biased sample. Since all interview invitations were sent by email, only the people, who found the topic interesting and important, may have responded to the invitation. Also, the fact that communication evaluation and measuring are a rather “hot topic” in the communication field at the moment may have affected the interviewees’ eagerness to participate.

The sixth limitation of the study is that the empirical part of the study was made to order for a strategic communications agency. Although this cooperation gave the researcher highly valuable information and practical experience from the field of strategic communications, the opinions of the co-workers in the communications agency may have shaped the perspective of the researcher who had no previous experience on the topic.

#### 6.5. Suggestions for further research

The study shows that there is a need for appropriate evaluation tools for communication, and quite a lot of research has been conducted in the field already, thus I suggest that further research should focus on developing concrete evaluation models that companies could use. Therefore, the model for strategic communication planning and evaluation presented in this thesis in section 6.6 would be a good starting point for developing a new model.

In order to develop further and test the model developed for evaluating the success of communications in reaching the strategic goals, further research should be conducted by case studies in companies that have clear business goal setting and find communications

an important part of the strategy execution. The model created for communication evaluation could be tested by getting to know strategy of the case company and the communication goals the communication director has set for the function. Together with the communication director and/or team strategic projects for communication could be developed and the activities for them. In order to find fitting measures for each activity the person developing them must be aware of the complete picture of the business, the strategy, and the value of each activity for the company. Although the projects and activities are dependent of the company, some common trends might be identified that could then be used for creating an evaluation model that would serve in developing complete evaluation systems for other companies and further contributing to creating strategic evaluation traditions for the field of corporate communications.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Interview invitation

Hei,

olen kansainvälisen yritysviestinnän maisteriopiskelija Aalto-yliopiston Kauppakorkeakoulusta ja teen pro gradu-tutkielmaani aiheenani viestinnän strateginen rooli yrityksissä. Keskityn erityisesti viestinnän onnistumisen arvioimiseen. Tutkielma on tilaustyö helsinkiläiselle Ellun Kanat –konsulttitoimistolle.

Viestintä on kriittinen osa strategiatyötä, mutta sen onnistumisen arvioiminen kaipaa lisätutkimusta. Tutkimuksessani pyrin kartoittamaan menestyneimpien suomalaisten ja pohjoismaisten yritysten käytäntöjä viestinnän strategisesta roolista. Haastattelutulosten pohjalta tulen lisäksi toteuttamaan toukokuussa 2011 kattavan kvantitatiivisen tutkimuksen menestyneimmissä suomalaisissa ja pohjoismaisissa yrityksissä.

Haastattelisin mielelläni teitä, sillä uskon, että (yrityksen nimi) arvostettuna suomalaisena yrityksenä ja toimialansa aktiivisena kehittäjänä antaisi arvokasta ja mielenkiintoista tietoa tutkielmaani.

Organisaatioiden nimiä ei mainita lopullisessa tutkimuksessani ja kaikkia antamianne tietoja käsitellään anonymisti. Halutessanne saatte kopion tutkimusraportista itsellenne.

Löytyisikö teiltä aikaa vajaa tunti haastattelulle?

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Anna-Maija Koskimäki

Aalto-yliopiston Kauppakorkeakoulu/ International Business Communication

045-6385125

anna-maija.koskimaki@aalto.fi

## Appendix 2. Interview questions

### 1. Haastateltavan tausta

koulutus

syntymävuosi

työkokemus,

kauan ollut viestinnässä,

minkä takia kiinnostunut viestinnästä

miksi kokee sen tärkeäksi

### 2. Viestintäjohtajan rooli yrityksessä

- a. Miten viestintäfunktio on organisoitu yrityksessä?
- b. Mitkä ovat vastualueesi?
- c. Montako ja millaisia tiimejä viestinnässä on? Alaisten lukumäärä?

### 3. Viestintästrategia

- a. Miten ymmärrät viestintästrategian? Mitä se teillä tarkoittaa?
- b. Miten luotte viestintästrategian? Mistä viestintästrategia koostuu/ mille pohjalle rakennettu? (tuleeko suoraan liiketoimintastrategiasta vai onko painotukset toisenlaiset)
- c. Ketkä osallistuvat sen luomiseen?
- d. Mikä on kuluva kausi eli aikajakso, jolle strategia tehdään?



#### 4. Tavoitteet

- a. Minkälaisille asioille on asetettu tavoitteita? Onko tavoitteita asetettu yksittäisille viestinnän teoille (kuten kampanjat) vai/ja suuremmille kokonaisuuksille?
  - a. Kuka ne on päättänyt?
  - b. Ovatko tavoitteet numeerisia vai laadullisia?
  - c. Onko tiettyjä päätavoitteita asetettu kuluvalle ”kaudelle”?

#### 5. Seuranta/ Arviointi

- a. Arvioitko viestinnälle asettamienne tavoitteiden onnistumista?
- b. Mitä arvioitte?
- c. Jos käytätte paljon erilaisia arviointimenetelmiä, niin minkä/mitkä koet tärkeimmiksi? Miksi juuri ne?
- d. Kuka päättää arviointikohteet? Kuka päättää arviointimenetelmät?
- e. Mitä tietoja haette arvioimalla?
- f. Kuinka usein arvioitte?
- g. Kenen tietoon/ käyttöön arvioinnin tuloksia annetaan?
- h. Vaihdetako arviointimenetelmiä koskaan? Kuinka usein? Miksi juuri silloin?
- i. Oletteko tyytyväinen tämänhetkisiin arviointimenetelmiinne? Miksi/ miksi ette?
- j. Miten kehittäisitte arviointianne?/ Millaisia työkaluja toivoisitte arviointiin?/ Toivomuksia tulevaisuuden suhteen?

Mittaaminen: Miten mittaatte viestinnän tekojen (kampanjat, projektit yms.) onnistumista