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The Business Leader

One of the most privileged positions a communication professional can have in an organization, is that of the *trusted advisor* (Maister, Green & Galford, 2000). The trusted advisor is the next step from strategic advisor in the career path of a communication professional and defined by the International Association of Business Communicators as the *Business Leader*. “The communication professional at this milestone demonstrates the ability to serve at a senior peer level, leads within an organization by providing counsel, advise, coaching, and helps to set organizational direction at a strategic level” (IABC, 2020).

At this level within an organization, the communication professional is setting the standard within their organization aligned with the principles of *The Global Standard of the Communication Profession* (IABC, 2020). The principles of Ethics, Context, Consistency, Analysis, Strategy and Engagement are applied across the career path, however, as the business leader, there is a professional duty to set the standard for their organization and continually hold the organization and its executives to that standard. When we look at these principles, we can distill each principle to what it means to someone operating as a business leader within our profession.

1. **Ethics** – Both advising on and dealing with the ethical issues that threaten the organization’s reputation
2. **Context** – Provide counsel and leadership to the executive on communication impacts from global business issues and trends
3. **Consistency** – Coach and develop executives, to provide a consistent organizational communication approach and set of competencies
4. **Analysis** – Provide both industry and organization analysis/research to decision making.
5. **Strategy** – Be part of the development of the business strategy and demonstrate the value of and return on investment from the communication strategy.
6. **Engagement** – Build and maintain the relationships (stakeholders) that support the organization’s mission and goals

The business leader plays a critical role in shaping the future of the organization by setting the standards for the communication practice, and building and maintaining a well-structured, competent communication function. Business acumen is the central area of competence seen and the communication professional has developed a distinct set of competence in several areas of communication expertise. The communication professional at this level spends their time influencing the strategy of the organization with original concepts and ideas that will often lead to changing the way the business operates. The business leader has earned their stripes technically and has spent considerable time in the role of strategic advisor within an organization. It is now time to be the *trusted advisor*, where influence and personal reputation are paramount in gaining trust and equality within the executive suite.

“Leadership is a privilege to better the lives of others. It is not an opportunity to satisfy personal greed.”
— Mwai Kibaki

Adopting the right mindset is vital in achieving at an executive level (along with a good dose of agility, and more than a dash of political astuteness). Having a mindset that leadership is indeed a privilege and that it is an

even greater privilege to influence the business by influencing the executive, will help you focus on what is truly important. Any communication professional operating as the trusted advisor knows this privileged role and how fragile that role can sometimes be. In this chapter, we will explore:

- The ability to influence at an executive level
- The value you add to the business.
- Your skills as a business leader
- Influence and impact through coaching.

We can better the lives of others, our stakeholders and the broader world as communication professionals because of the position we hold. We are in a time in our history, where people have lost faith in truth, are frustrated by world leadership, are blinded by celebrity, lack trust in many areas of society and are concerned about job and financial stability. As we look towards the 2020s, there is a growing need to re-establish both security and connection. Executive communication and the communication professional's ability to lead and coach gives our profession a clear purpose as we move to re-establish the relationship between people, organizations and society as a whole.

Executive Influence

In looking at executive influence, we need to look at the characteristics and traits of leaders; just like any good piece of strategic communication, knowing your audience is critical to influencing the outcome of your communication. Raymond Cattell, a British and American psychologist and a pioneer in the field of personality assessment, developed the Leadership Potential equation in 1954, based on a study of military leaders. From his original work, a set of traits of effective leaders was defined (Cattell, 1957; Cattell & Stice, 1957): emotional stability, dominance, enthusiasm, conscientiousness, social boldness, tough mindedness, self-assurance, compulsiveness, high energy, intuitiveness, maturity, team orientation, empathy, and charisma.

For many years leadership has been measured by these traits as well as how we assess, position and train leaders. These traits do not always align with those associated with communication professionals, traits like creativity, openness, vulnerability and expressiveness, for example. Additionally, the changing post-pandemic world and the re-establishment of relationships will change some of these leadership traits. The landscape of influence will continue to evolve, and the opportunity for communication professionals to have a greater impact will get stronger. The 2020s may well be our time to influence the executive more than ever before.

It is essential to know your executive, as a group and as individuals, know what kinds of traits they have, know their personality type and yours. The more insight you have on your executive, the better you can adapt and change your approach to influencing and coaching. You can tap into insights you may already have in your organization through the Human Resources department or the training a development team if you have one. Personality profiling tools like DISC or Myers-Brigg Type Indicator provide insights into the personality traits of those you wish to influence and most important insights to your personality type. There are many tools available and promoting their use within the executive team, or with a leader, you may be coaching can garner benefits for them and you. Advantages to using these tools include understanding of yourself and your executive team; increased ability to develop relationships; understanding of executive culture; increased ability to influence behavior.

No matter what preference tool you use, it is the start of a journey to better awareness and a better understanding of yourself and others.

The increasing use of artificial intelligence may help us influence others. Tools like Crystal, an AI personality tool, are available to access personality tests and quizzes. The AI learns and adapts to give you personality insights and tips on how to communicate better, have a difficult conversation or even pitch an idea. Figure 1 is a screengrab from one of the tools within Crystal; it shows the DISC personality type that the AI has gained from data on LinkedIn and is giving some tips for holding a meeting with the individuals presented. No matter what tool or ways you use to gain personal insight into the executive, it is critical that you use the insight to drive your ability to relate and influence.

Figure 1: Sample from Crystal (2020)

Personality Types +Add Note			
NAME ^	JOB TITLE ^	DISC ^	TYPE ^
 Taylor Swift	Singer		Influencer
 Bill Gates	Co-Founder		Analyst
 Oprah Winfrey	Media Executive		Initiator

Provide Support +Add Note		
NAME	DO THIS	SAY THIS
 Taylor Swift	Switch topics quickly to catch her interest	<i>Speaking of, I was also thinking...</i>
 Bill Gates	Provide information about best use cases	<i>Specifically, you can use it for scenarios like...</i>
 Oprah Winfrey	Discuss thoughts or questions on a call or in person	<i>Let's meet to talk about...</i>

Know How You Can Influence

Dr Robert Cialdini (2020), founder and director of influence at work, cites six principles necessary for persuasion and ultimately for influencing others: reciprocity, scarcity, authority, consistency, liking, and consensus. Figure 2 (see next page) identifies ways that Cialdini's six principles can be used to influence your executive.

These six principles are a good way of getting an outcome and form a vital part of a communication professionals personal influencing strategy. Applying these approaches at different times with the various executives will give insight as to which method works. People will be influenced by different approaches, so it can sometimes be trial and error. However, the more you build your executive relationship, the more you get to know and understand the individual.

Building Relationships is Critical

A significant part of executive influence is the ability to build strong relationships as a peer and equal rather than a subordinate. In many cases communication professionals come from a position of disadvantage. Three common reasons for this disadvantage include:

- Organizational maturity - perception of what the communication function does/should do; past experiences of what the communication function delivers
- Executive communication expectation - they expect communication is done for them; they focus on their *want* rather than their *need* for communication.
- The communication professional – focuses on delivering rather than advising; focusing on tactics around the wants rather than the need

These reasons highlight that communication influence and the ability to build relationships is premised on a mismatch of expectation. It can sometimes feel like the chicken-and-egg saga, has the organization expectation been

Figure 2: Applying Cialdini's (2020) Persuasive Principles.

Principle	Simple definition	Executive influence
Reciprocity	People are obliged to give back to others the form of a behavior, gift, or service that they have received first.	Remove issues, solve problems and add value. Do more favors and then asking for them.
Scarcity	People want more of those things they can have less of	Make your value and deliverables unique. Not everyone can deliver what you can provide!
Authority	People will follow the lead of credible experts.	Show that you are at the top of the profession. Think of qualifications like certification or training. Write, speak and share case studies.
Consistency	People like to be consistent with the things they have previously said or done.	Consistent application of good strategic communication management practices. Define and practice communication standards for your organization
Liking	People prefer to say yes to those that they like	Build great relationships, use what you know about their style and modify how you interact
Consensus	People will look to the actions and behaviors of others to determine their own	Benchmark and conduct research, providing executives insight to other organizations performance or communication behaviors.

driven by what the communication professional delivers, or has the communication professional been pushed into a role based on the maturity of the organization and the executive expectation? Consider leadership traits and personality styles, and you realize operating as a peer may take a little work. However, here are a couple of areas of focus that will help communication professionals break the chicken-and-egg cycle and operate as a peer.

It's Not About Your Position

The communication professional does not always have the position. Many organizations hide their best asset, the Chief Communication Officer (CCO), somewhere within the organization, from marketing, to HR, legal and sometimes in corporate affairs. However, none of these is the right alignment for what is essentially a strategic executive function. No matter what the role is called, the top job in communication navigates the organization's communication needs in equal weight from external to internal communication. Let's not worry about position; once you have earned the right, the position will follow. As a communication professional, influence comes in part from your access to research and insight from right across the organization, skills, knowledge and abilities, and relationships.

The Cromptley and Mavalwala Client Relationship Model (2010), first established as part of a training program for communication professionals to build their capabilities from tactical deliver to strategic advisory, can be used to shape the relationship between the communicator and the executive. In the model, your executive member is the client. Let's explore what each relationship means in the context of executive influence.

In the tactical relationship, your executives are likely to see you as a communication expert. Typically, they might come to you with a request for a communication *want* – an output such as a website, an event or a series of media releases. Your time is likely to be spent creating and delivering these things. What they get from you is a communication output. They are likely to judge success on factors such as whether you produced it on time and to budget, whether it looks good.

In the strategic relationship, executives see you as someone who can use communication to help them address a business *need* or resolve an organizational problem. They see you as a communication expert but also, importantly, a businessperson like they. You will both be focusing on the same business issues and goals, but you each have different types of expertise to call on to deliver those goals.

In this type of relationship, you are likely to spend your time understanding their issue, helping them define the problem they want to solve, and determining what they need the audience to know, feel and do to resolve it. Once you both understand this, you'll develop a communication solution to meet those objectives. What they get from you is a business outcome – help to solve the problem they brought to you. Success is measured through the impact you had on the business outcome.

Figure 3: Cropley and Mavalwala's Client Relationship Model (2010)

	What you <i>provide</i> your client	Where you spend your <i>time</i>	What your client <i>gets</i>
TACTICAL RELATIONSHIP	Understanding of Communication	Creating Delivering	Implementation of their idea
STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP	Understanding of the business	Defining the problem Developing the solution	Business outcome
TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP	Understanding of them	Listening Advising Coaching	Trusted business partner

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In the **trusted relationship**, your executives see you as someone they can talk to; they trust and respect your opinion. You understand their issues, and you also appreciate them as a person. In this type of relationship, you're likely to spend much more of your time listening, advising and coaching. In this way, over time, you also build executive communication competence. What they get from you is a genuine business partner.

If you don't have the position to influence, then you can influence through building your executive relationships by focusing more on the strategic and trusted relationship. However, these three relationship types are not mutually exclusive. You could have a strategic relationship with someone as well as a trusted one, for example. Your interactions with the same person may also vary. For instance, your CEO may trust and respect your advice, and you might coach him/her through preparing for an investor meeting. But they may also ask you to draft the occasional note for them. Overall, you'll probably know intuitively which box your relationship falls into with someone most of the time.

Thinking back to the point about organizational maturity and expectations of the organization concerning the perception of the communication function, you need to understand where your relationships currently are within the organization and plan to change them over time. For example, think about moving into a new role in a new organization; in the beginning you may have to start in a tactical relationship to build your skills and knowledge credibility. However, staying in that relationship will drive an ongoing expectation on you and the communication function to continue tactical delivery. Review your relationships over time and have a plan.

Give Leaders What They Need

We don't have to look far to see the amount of research around that makes a connection between employee engagement and good leader communication. Although our focus is often to support and develop line managers, effective communication starts at the top. It is put into practice through knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of senior managers as role models. As the executive coach on communication, we need to help executives fulfill their role in effectively communicating with their stakeholders. There are four basic needs we can address in leaders to boost the focus on effective communication practices:

- Give them insight
- Give them training
- Give them the tools
- Give them measures and rewards.

Figure 4: Review your relationships with the Client Relationship Model

	Where are they now?	Where do I want them?	My observation/plan
Tactical relationship	Legal Counsel		
Strategic relationship	CEO	Legal Counsel	I need to work with them, so they have a better understanding of what good communication outcomes look like
Trusted relationship	CMO	CEO CMO	The CEO has excellent skills and seeks out my advice. Continue to coach and give feedback. The CMO and I have a stable, trusted relationship, no change.

Give them insight: The most challenging task is to get leaders to buy into the idea that communication is a vital part of the role they play within the organization. Starting with the end in mind is the key. We want to provide leaders with the data and measurement that tells them how effective their communication is, and that is in the measures. Therefore, we should initially look at some of the external data, information, and reports we have access to and share this information with the executive team.

Nothing speaks volumes like measures on the impact of change, as well as feedback gathered from various stakeholders. The access we have to organizational research gives leaders something they don't get elsewhere, thereby gaining greater buy-in. Building leader communication into the communication or engagement survey will provide a regular opportunity to gather data. Thinking back to the insights we gain from exploring personality profiles, these are great insights for the leaders themselves. See the example of Taking Shape on the next page.

If we can use insight to increase self-awareness in our executives, we then have an opportunity to engage them in a conversation about their style and the styles within their teams; we can call this a coachable moment. These opportunities are what will help communication professionals build strategic and trusted relationships.

Give them training: The insight will get communication on the leaders' radar; however, insight alone does not equip leaders to effectively communicate. This is where training comes in, and it is important to understand what type of training is needed to equip leaders to be effective. It is easy to get distracted by the plethora of communication skills courses, tips techniques etc. and equally distracted by who should be conducting training within the organization. It is critical not to get bogged down in territory wars with HR or outlaying a considerable cost on training programs. Keep training simple, not just in terms of the content but also in terms of time. We need to find a way of offering something they will not get from anywhere else.

- Avoid the temptation to put leaders on skills training that is offered by hundreds of providers, such as effective writing, conflict resolution, presentation skills and so on. As valuable as they are for some, you are doing something HR can easily do. You want to give them strategic communication skill development.
- Offer simple concepts and tips for leaders and re-enforce them; for example, develop them on simple ideas like the 4Ms of communication: Message, Market, Media and Measure. Help leaders understand important messages, audience segmentation, being able to apply the right channel and measuring outcome. A simple but effective concept that can be remembered and applied.
- Instead of producing a series of training programs, incorporate a module of communication into an already established leadership development program if your organization has one.
- Add learning opportunities to executive meetings, link the insights gathered identifying the communication gaps within the organization, with what skills might need to be developed.

We are looking for the coachable moment to get in front of the leaders to help them develop communication effectiveness. This is an all-important step toward building a trusted relationship and more strategically positioning the communication function.

Give them tools: The best way to build capabilities of leaders is to give them the keys to the car and put them in the driver's seat. Simply put, make communication easy through cheat sheets, templates and tools. We have given the leaders the techniques through training and coaching; now we need to support them by providing ways to help

Taking Shape Australia

Taking Shape is a leading fashion retailer in the curvy women's wear sector of the market in Australia. In 2018 they set about creating one team across the corporate headquarters of around 100 staff. They wanted the team members from executive to front line staff to better understand each other as a team, develop team communication and relationship building skills.

The Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence ran a series of workshops, where every leader and team member completed a DISC profile and attended a facilitated team workshop with a focus to:

- Bring the team together “become one team” that adds value to Taking Shape as an organization
- Raise self-awareness of individuals' preferred working styles and behaviors
- Understand and develop excellent communication and influencing skills
- Identify and articulate a new set of shared ways of working both as a team, and as an organization

The workshops ran over several weeks where team members and executive got to explore both their own and others personality styles as well as gaining a picture of the potential gaps in various teams and the organization as a whole. Not only did the whole team gain insight, built communication and influencing skills, but there was also an increase in cross-department understanding and interworking. The executive found that the insight helped them focus much better on understanding and communicating better with their teams and an appreciation of how diversity in type a significant contributor to the business outcome was. Cross-team communication and collaboration is very high within Taking Shape as a result.

them succeed. Like every good consultant, the communication professional working at an executive level, works with their client, brings them something no one else can as the subject matter expert. Think about the budgeting process within an organization; as a leader, you are in charge of producing your own or departmental budget, the finance department doesn't do it for you. Still, they will give you the templates and tools to complete the process. So too, the communication department should be providing the tools, templates and advice on communication planning. There are some aspects of communication where cross organizational efficiency means a central approach is needed, but on the whole, leaders should not be outsourcing their role in communication.

Build your toolkit: Using the consultant analogy, have lots of consulting support you can reach for easily such as a file of stuff you can share to support your leaders in the organization – templates, online resources and links, guidelines, tips and cheat sheets. Add the insights and research you have available and continuously collect. Experienced communication professionals will often go back to reports and analysis from years earlier as sources of information. It is not surprising that many issues we face in communication are issues we have faced before and will face again.

Give them measures and rewards: Finally, as much as we need to give measures and research as part of insight, we must measure the impact and outcome leaders' communication on their stakeholders. Constant feedback channels, whether informal or formal, are essential to let leaders and executives know how they are doing. The focus is on their impact, what are the outcomes gained from their communication. Does the clarity of team members' roles increase productivity? Does leadership communication of the vision and work of the organization create more substantial alignment and engagement? Does their relationship with customers improve business outcomes when they communicate better? The more measures we can collect and give to them, the more they will feel in control of what they are doing and the more they will buy into communication as one of their roles instead of someone else's responsibility. We must include leadership communication as part of our engagement and customer surveys so we can also measure change over time and give us the ability to adjust training and support.

Finding ways to reward leaders is the next step. Once measures are in place, we can use those measures as a way of rewarding leaders, the feedback alone is excellent and maybe enough in some cases. However, when you

make leaders accountable for communication and set communication as part of their key performance indicators or objectives and key results, depending on what measure you use in your organization, what you will find is that leaders suddenly pay much closer attention to their role and the accountabilities of their position like every other aspect of their bonus.

We should not, however, underestimate the power of awards or other peer recognition to drive behavior, as simple as a thank you or acknowledgement on a good piece of communication goes a long way. Leaders and executives are only human, and you will be surprised how engaged they become when you take an active interest and give a little encouragement, yet another coachable moment. Use role model leaders, the ones that do it well, to set the example for others, share success stories, ask them if they could share good practices with other leaders in the various forums.

When we put these four actions together, we can elevate communication as an essential role and skill across the organization. The example of our executive drives culture and behaviors, so think about:

- **Give them insight** – Make sure they know it's their job. Give them something no one else can give them (the research), data about other organizations' approach.
- **Give them training** – Assess and fill the skill gaps in leadership development that already exists. Look for learning opportunities and coachable moments.
- **Give them tools** – Build your toolkit, so you have the handy tools, tips and templates to give.
- **Give them measures and rewards** – Give them feedback and measures on how they are doing. Make communication part of their bonus.

Add Value to the Business

When we look at the role of the business leader, a communication professional is exactly that, a leader of the business. This means that we must demonstrate the skills and abilities of business within the organization. We will cover competencies later; however, there are two essential questions to ask yourself: Where do you add value? How are you perceived?

These questions go hand in hand and remind us about the saying “You are what you eat,” which is said to originate from French author Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in 1826 who wrote: “tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.” It is an excellent metaphor we can use as a communication professional in identifying our brand and how that brand is driven by what we do. In 2018 I worked with a global client, where my company was conducting a communication audit. The client's business was in logistics with more than 40,000 employees in 50 countries; the communication team had a corporately centralized function, along with independent groups in the various business divisions. The head of global communication sat on the executive team and reported to the CEO. During the work, I was interviewing one of the other executive team members about communication, who seemed very happy about the value the communication function was offering. He mentioned that the publications looked professional, the team sent out lots of clear messages internally and got press releases out regular, the head of communication was at every executive meeting to take the minutes which were promptly distributed. As I drilled down, it was clear that although communication had a seat at the executive table, communication was not equal in perception. I use this example to demonstrate how communication may be perceived and indeed how might the personal brand of the head of communication be portrayed. It was difficult to get communication initiatives over the line at executive meetings, and part of the reason for the audit was to use research to drive engagement in what could be improved with communication.

Think about the actions you take and how that is perceived; your brand is made up of several parts. However, who you are (your character, traits and preferences) and what you do (actions, outcomes, skills and abilities) are probably the most important ones to think about. We influence through better understanding ourselves and others, but we are judged on what we do. With finite time to do the work we do as communication professionals, we need to carefully manage our brand by adding value on the right stuff.

As part of the *Act like an Agency* program (Cropley & Mavalwala, 2010), there is an activity called a Time Value Audit, which you can conduct on yourself. Simply put, identify the activities you do that make up your job in a typical week or month, then give a rough value to it on two dimensions: the time it takes and how valuable this activity is. Think about how you would measure value, is this activity valuable to the organization or is it beneficial to yourself? Particularly, if you are looking at how you may be perceived as a communication professional,

also remember what types of activities you would have performed earlier in your career compared to the ones you may be performing now. (See Figure 5a and 5b)

Figure 5a: Time Value Audit

Instructions: Take a few minutes to think about how you spend your working week. Divide your time into High, Medium and Low %. High is anything over 10% of your time, medium between 5 and 10% of your time and low under 5%

	Percentage of time spent on the activity	Value this activity adds to your organization
	High/Medium/Low	High/Medium/Low
1. Building your network and developing relationships with key stakeholders		
2. Getting to know your business - understanding and reflecting on business issues and strategies		
3. Advising your executives about communication, recommending solutions and, helping them make informed decisions		
4. Coaching or practically supporting leaders to be more effective communicators		
5. Producing materials - e.g. writing, editing, working on layout or design etc.		
6. Working with colleagues in other parts of the organization to identify improvements		
7. Conducting research		
8. Measuring the results of your communication		
9. Developing communication plans for specific projects or activities		
10. Working on or managing channels – e.g. newsletters, intranets/internets, media releases etc.		
11. Making stuff happen – organizing meetings, conference calls, making media calls, event management and supplier management		
12. Developing your career (Personal Development)		
13. Firefighting/reacting to last minute or unexpected requests		
14. Following up tasks given to you because people don't know who else to ask!		
15. Producing dashboards on the progress of communications plans.		
16. Entering awards, speaking at conferences or writing case studies to share externally/ internally.		
17. Others (keep listing what you do)		

To deal with the areas of most benefit or concern, just deal with the high and low combinations, i.e. High Time/ High Value, High Time/Low Value, Low Time/High Value and Low Time/Low Value. Remember, when we have a finite time on all the things we do as communication professionals, we want to be seen to be adding value to the organization but also adding value to our brand (how we are perceived). Here are four approaches to help focus on the valuable stuff and get more time to do so.

Figure 5b: Time Value Audit

Activities	Approach
High Time / High Value	Look at ways we can do these activities more efficiently. Maybe outsource the less valuable parts, look at process improvements or a technology that might help. Our goal is to reduce the time we spend
High Time / Low Value	The fact it is taking lots of time is an indicator it needs to be done but can this be done by someone else. Can it be outsourced?
Low Time / High Value	If these activities are helping our brand, we want to do many more of these.
Low Time / Low Value	Ask yourself, if I simply stopped doing these, would anyone notice. Try and get rid of the activities that may just be a habit, or we inherited along the way.

As communication professionals working as business leaders or strategic advisors, our brand and what we are seen for is critically important. We may be able to influence well; however, we also need to manage how we are perceived to maintain credibility.

Developing the Skills and Abilities as a Business Leader

As communication professionals operating at the business leader level, we need to take stock of skills and abilities we offer the organization, mainly if our career growth has been via internal promotion. Also, we often get caught in the hamster wheel; when we realize we're so busy doing, there's no time to plan or develop both our current and future competencies within our role. We also have to keep a very close eye on the activities we do and what we deliver, asking ourselves, do these reflect the role of a business leader? Let's take a closer look at the position against the Global Standard (IABC, 2020):

1. **Ethics** – Both advising on and dealing with the ethical issues that threaten the organizations reputation
2. **Context** – Provide counsel and leadership to the executive on communication impacts from global business issues and trends
3. **Consistency** – Coach and develop executives, to provide a consistent organizational communication approach and set of competencies
4. **Analysis** – Provide both industry and organization analysis/research to decision making.
5. **Strategy** – Be part of the development of the business strategy and demonstrate the value of and return on investment from the communication strategy.

Firstly, let's look at the *IABC Career Roadmap* (IABC, 2020) and what it suggests as the focus of the most senior career milestone:

- As a Business Leader, **a communication professional plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the organization by advocating for promising people, programs and ideas that align with the organization's direction.** They lead the application of the principles within their organization and hold the leadership to account.
- They have developed a specific competence in several areas and are well-regarded in the profession often operating in a national, regional or global role. They effectively represent the organization on critical strategic issues and are sought after to provide counsel, coaching and function at a peer level with other senior executives.
- The Business Leader is adept at identifying new business opportunities, motivating buy-in and gaining resources through a well-articulated and clear strategy. They effectively represent the organization on critical strategic issues.

These are the actions and outcomes generated by someone in the role of business leader, which does suggest we need to both analyze our current skills against the skills we require and then decide how we can fill those gaps. In smaller organizations the most senior communication professional may be operating at the strategic advisor level, so it is essential to look at the definition in that role and potential gaps.

In the last few years, we have seen some great frameworks, models and tools developed to help assess the skill gaps and define the competencies required of professionals within the discipline of communication.

The Global Standard for the Communication Profession and Career Roadmap

The Career Road Map (IABC, 2020), which formed the foundation of the IABC Academy offerings, and the Global Standard are based on quantitative and qualitative research, with a broad range of stakeholder groups, including more than 6,000 IABC members and input from the Global Alliance and other associations' members between 2011 and 2014. This work, which is the culmination of thousands of hours of volunteer time committed by senior communication professionals, paved the way for the Global Communication Certification Council and certification of communication professionals at the CMP and SCMP levels. This was the first time competencies had been defined for core communication management principles and a career purpose-built to explain the role of a Communication Professional.

The Global Standard

Career Purpose

“Communication professionals represent the voice of an organization as it interacts with customers, clients, employees, partners, shareholders, competitors and the community. The communication professional brings the organization to life with a brand voice that aligns its verbal, visual and digital messages and activities with its mission and vision. By clarifying the brand, communication professionals also help ensure the organization runs efficiently and effectively. Communication professionals build a strategic communication plan based on thorough research; they communicate with a variety of audiences in a range of styles; they develop and edit content. They assess where and how to communicate and how to evaluate the results of their work. They act as the organization's conscience and strive for its financial, social and environmental sustainability” (IABC, 2020). The competencies are defined under six key principles: ethics strategy, analysis, context, engagement, and consistency.

IABC Career Roadmap

The career purpose and six principles are then applied to each milestone of the career roadmap: Foundation, Generalist / Specialist, Strategic Advisor, and Business Leader. The competencies of IABC's Career Roadmap are mapped against the milestone of Business Leader in Figure 6.

The Communication Value Circle Framework

The Communication Value Circle (Zerfass & Viertman, 2016) is the result of research from the Institute of Communication and Media Studies, University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany, which identified four themes (roles) for communication professionals within organizations:

1. Support business operations internally and externally to ensure the fulfilment of the mission.
2. Build reputation, brands and corporate culture to establish a corporate identity
3. Foster trusted relationships with stakeholders to deal with uncertainty in the marketplace, and
4. Listen for shifts in external and internal environments to adjust strategy and planning if necessary.

The Communication Value Circle framework defines communication as a part of the value chain, where usually top management and communication professionals seldom share a consistent view or understanding of the supportive role of communication. It is critical to make a clear connection in value from communication to the business of the organization.

- The report shares some observations about building our value, connected right into the business we support:
- Communication professionals need to explain how communication contributes to organization success.
 - The framework can be used as a tool for planning and managing communication strategies. It can also be used to clarify the value of communication.
 - The value circle can be adapted to suit your organization, closing the gap between top management and communication understanding of the value add.

Figure 6: Competency Framework, Business Leader

Milestone - Business Leader			
Competence	Required Knowledge	Required Skills	Required Behaviors
Ethical and Legal Communication (Ethics)	Legislation applicable to the industry Global challenges facing the industry	Explaining actions to take when questionable issues arise Communicating on ethical problems facing the industry and organization	Deal with legal and ethical issues threatening the reputation and the brand of the organization and the industry
Strategic Communication (Strategy)	Advanced scenario planning	Developing scenarios	Determine the communication possibilities of the business strategy Demonstrate the value of communication within the organization Develop the communication competence of the organization
Analytical Thinking and Application (Analysis)	Advanced analytical thinking and scenario planning approaches	Analyze and interpret high-level industry reports Identify research projects that will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the communication function.	Report the implications of the industry analysis to relevant stakeholders Advocate for and oversee the allocation of resources to research
Business Context (Context)	Approaches to interpret the global business environment and identify and map relevant stakeholders	Advise the communication function on trends that impact on the business environment Negotiate communication contracts and communication elements on behalf of the organization	Report to the organizational leadership on the communication impact of global business issues Articulate business imperative of effective communication Articulate the business strategy to the communication function Communication leadership that will enable communication to be a strategic partner
Facilitate Engagement (Engagement)	Global cultures and diversity		Lead senior-level relationship building
Consistent Messaging (Consistency)	Counselling and mentoring	Providing communication counsel to organizational leadership	Lead and mentor the communication function Represent the interests of the organization in strategic forums

The Global Capability Framework

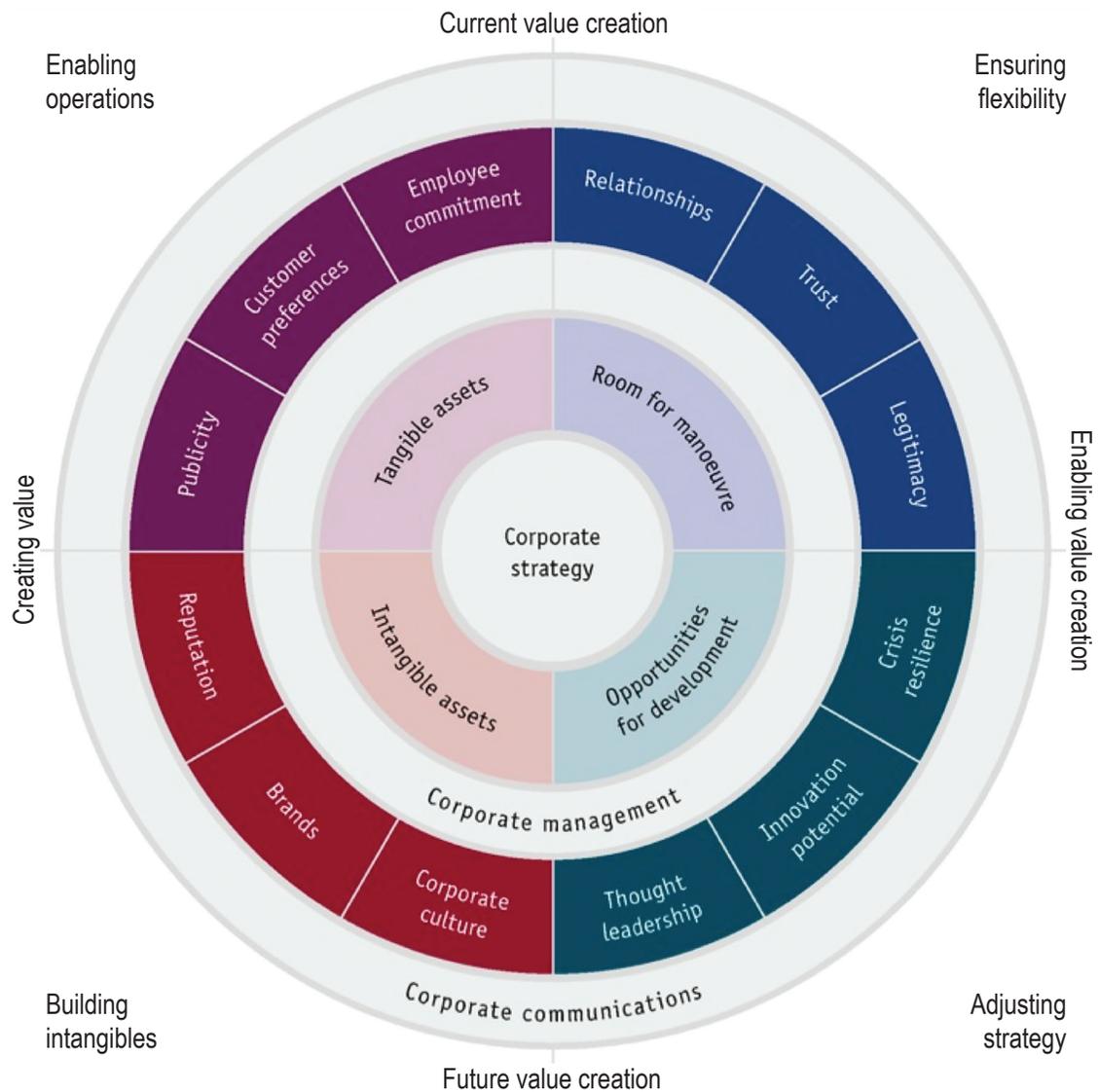
In 2018 the Global Alliance released the Global Capabilities Framework for Public Relations and Communication Management, which was the result of a two-year research project led by the University of Huddersfield (UK), with partners in eight countries across six continents. Much of what had been developed in IABC with the career roadmap research and other associations' research from across the globe was reflected in this study, making it a robust framework in which to work

The framework takes a high-level view of what communication professionals can deliver:

Communication Capabilities

- To align communication strategies with organizational purpose and values
- To identify and address communication problems proactively
- To conduct formative and evaluative research to underpin communication strategies and tactics
- To communicate effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies

Figure 7: The Communication Value Circle



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Organizational Capabilities

- To facilitate relationships and build trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities
- To build and enhance the organizational reputation
- To provide contextual intelligence

Professional Capabilities (those expected of any professional)

- To provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor
- To offer organizational leadership
- To work within an ethical framework on behalf of the organization, in line with professional and societal expectations
- To develop self and others, including continuing professional learning

(Gregory, Fawkes, Montoya-Martinez & Turner, 2018, p.6)

Using insights from these resources, you can look reflect on your skills and pose some key questions:

- What are the skills I have now?
- In comparing my skills to these frameworks, where are the gaps?
- How do I fill those gaps?

Think about using assessment tools such as the Career Evaluator™, which is a free self-assessment that evaluates individual knowledge and experience against the Global Standard of the Profession, best practices and

the Cropley Competency Model for Strategic Communication Management. This career evaluator helps identify your strengths and gaps in each area of competence, highlights your priority professional development needs, and enables you to hold informed discussions with your manager, mentor or coach in preparing the next steps as a business leader.

As a business leader, you are at the stage in your career where training alone will not give you as much outcome from development as coaching, enlisting a coach to support you as you develop the skills needed to work with executives is very important.

Coaching Executives

One of the most privileged positions a communication professional can have in an organization is trusted advisor. In being that trusted advisor or business leader, you hold a special relationship with the organizations executive that puts you a position where you have the greatest opportunity to influence through coaching. Coaching is a process that aims to improve performance in someone, focusing on the here and now, helping them to learn. The access and relationship we have with executives will continuously present us with challenges, but also give us coachable moments. It is these moments we should seize and embrace the opportunity to coach.

Most communication professionals will agree that their role is the conscience of the organization. When it comes to communication, everyone thinks they can do it and that it is easy. However, there are so many communication disasters when left unchecked and unguided.

When working with leaders, we have ample opportunity through coaching to help them learn from the experiences they have and the reactions they have to situations. Let's look at coaching in the context of executive communication and our ability to influence through coaching.

Being a Great Coach

"In the past, a leader was a boss. Today's leaders must be partners with their people. They no longer can lead solely based on positional power."-- Ken Blanchard, American author on leadership.

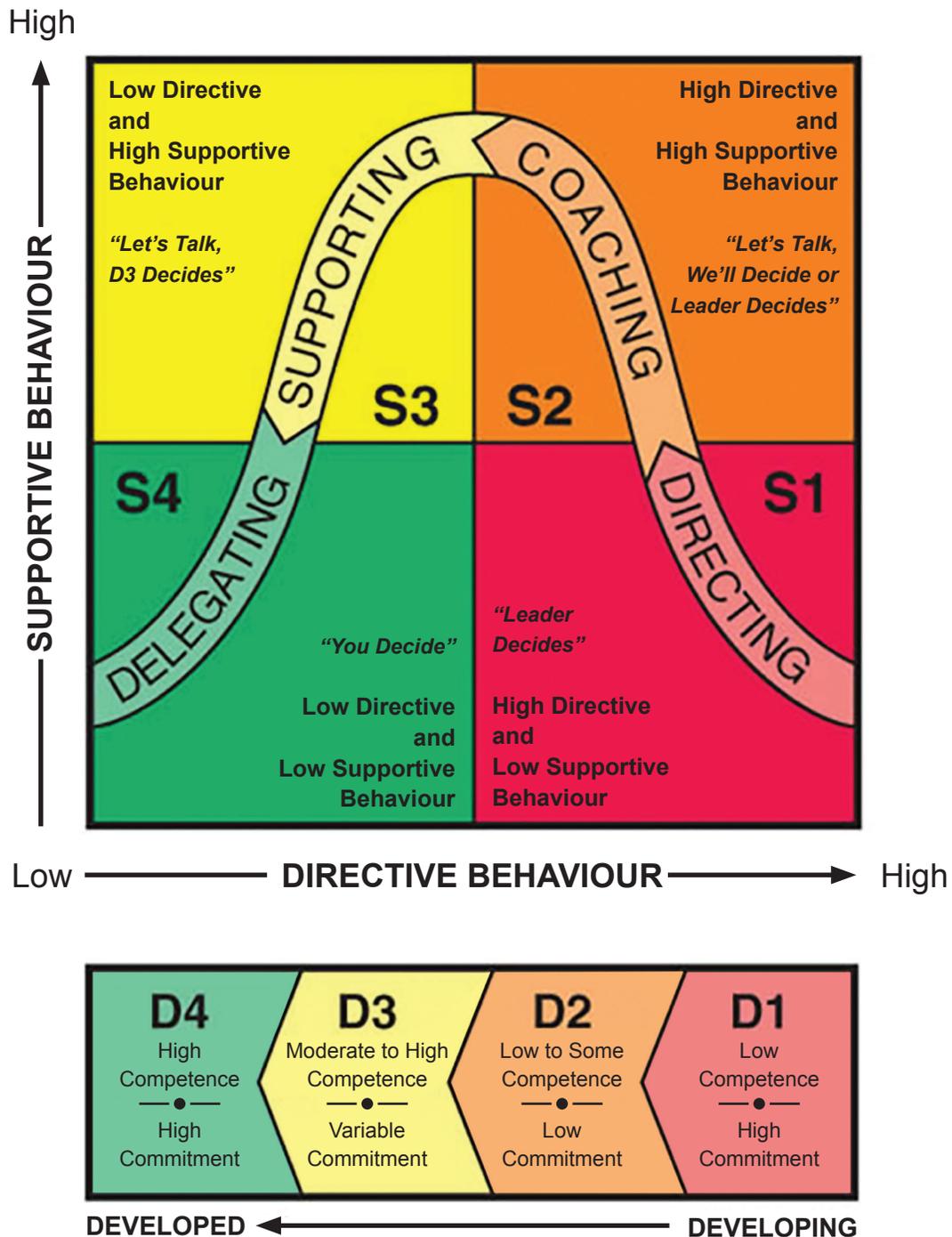
Ken Blanchard and Paul Hersey (1969) developed the life cycle theory of leadership. Situational Leadership®, which is the model they created, means "choosing the right leadership style for the right people." This concept suggests that leaders look less like bosses and more like partners. We can apply this model to the coaching context when working with leaders. It is the gift that keeps giving when we can coach leaders on how to partner with their people. I use this model (Figure 8) in training leaders and in training communication professionals on how to coach.

In the simplest form, the development level (D1-D4) is the process a learner will go through when learning something new, a task, a skill, even a new job. As they progress, they increase their competence, and their commitment towards the task changes over time. This is mainly due to how they feel about the task and their progress. This means that the leader or coach needs to understand how best to support them in their learning and commitment. This is where we apply the leadership style, which is the behavioral approach from supportive to directive. The model assumes that a new learner that has no competence at the skill and is eager to learn requires a leadership style that is more directive. Over time and with high commitment, the learner needs both low support and low directive behavior of the leader as reflected in the S1-S4 quadrants. The reason why this is a great coaching model is that you assess the development needs of an individual, you continually adjust your leadership behavior to address those needs. Also, if you look at the S2 quadrant, which is the coaching quadrant, you can see that the required behavior is both highly supportive and high directive, both qualities of a good coach.

Another model that is quite helpful in the coaching context is The GROW model (or process) (Whitmore, 1992). It is a simple yet effective model in helping you coach others, as it provides a framework for a coaching conversation.

Using the GROW model, it is easy to start seeing from a communication point of view, that there are two essential elements in being a great coach: the ability to ask good questions and the ability to listen well. These two elements go hand in hand. It is assumed that as the business leader or trusted advisor you have built great relationships with the executives and leaders within your organization. Given we already know everyone is unique with various traits and characteristics, it is also assumed you have built either strategic or trusted relationships, have a

Figure 8: Situational Leadership® Model



reliable brand where you are seen to be adding value, and have well and truly earned the right to coach. So now, the job of coaching is simple, as long as you build your questioning and listening skills, an easy concept in theory but it does take practice.

Here are some tips for asking good questions:

- Know when to ask open-ended questions versus closed questions. Remember open-ended is about exploring, probing, getting information out. Closed questions are about goal setting, actions, decisions.
- Ask questions people like to be asked. It's about them. It does not have to be about work or task or business. It's about interests and passions.

Figure 9: GROW Model (process)

G	Goal	The endpoint, where do you want to be?
R	Reality	The current state, where are you now?
O	Options	There are many to get to the goal; what could you do?
W	Will	Way forward, what will you do?

- Ask questions to clarify and gain a better understanding of the issues, the needs or the wants.
- Keep a check on your tone and mindset. In coaching, we want to have an inquiring tone and an open mindset, which shows we are listening.

“Be a good listener,” Dale Carnegie advised in his 1936 classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. However, listening is not all it is cracked up to be. We mostly think we are listening, but are we? I have found that there are three basic modes of listening:

Pretend listening: It is not that we set out to pretend we are listening, however often our reactions to someone request to “have you got a minute to chat?” is met with “yes of course,” yet it is time we have not planned for, and our brain has not switched off from the list we have to get through by the end of the day. Also, we are hardly prepared just to stop and listen. The result is that we simply do not tune in to what is being said or worse keep glancing at our phone, computer or watch. We think time alone send the right message but seldom does, as the person has picked up on the non-verbal cues and feel unheard. This can happen even when we plan to listen!

Active listening: Through training in active listening skills, we learn the steps to demonstrate to others how well we listen. We know over time:

- Remove all distractions
- Make time to listen
- Build rapport
- Ask clarifying questions
- Watch for body language.
- Match and mirror or repeat what they say for clarification

These are all excellent tips to listening, and it is often said you need to put much energy in to successfully hearing. I have had some incredible outcomes with active listening.

Intuitive listening: This is the ability to be present to the person you are listening to. It is very much a mindset, leaving judgement out, going into a listening session with an open mindset gets a great result. There are only two things you need

- Time – look at this time as an investment, if you don’t have time now, schedule time later.
- Being present – Be there, as with active listening, remove all the distraction, but don’t overthink it, only be there for the other person. Don’t write notes; it’s not a meeting.

To listen well, you have to have a mindset that someone is sharing with you a gift, a gift of their story, their issue or drama. Just remember this is not your time to problem solve; you simply need to be present, open and allow time for them to talk. It is surprising how much more you remember when you are present and listening and not thinking ahead.

When it comes to coaching executives and leaders, regardless of their tenure or expertise, they are still learning; coaching is an excellent way for you to show your value, by taking the time to stop, listen, explore and ultimately upskill them. After all, you are the expert in communication as the business leader.

Summary

Being the business leader and trusted advisor is indeed a privileged position. It is vital that we know the role that we are playing in the organization, that we learn to influence and build critical relationships at the highest level and continue to add value. Adding value by being at the top of our game and continually expanding our skills, equips us to train, coach, then mentor others to be better communicators.

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