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# Corporate Television: Its Effects On Employees' Learning And Memory Of Corporate Messages

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**CORPORATE TELEVISION:  
ITS EFFECTS ON EMPLOYEES' LEARNING AND MEMORY  
OF CORPORATE MESSAGES**

**BY**

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for the Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication  
Seton Hall University  
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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Corporate television is a relatively new form of internal communication that simulates a cable television network within a corporate environment. Programs are transmitted via satellite to geographically dispersed locations. Corporate television generally borrows its programming format from commercial news and information programs. The medium has become a powerful vehicle for internal communications.

A corporate television network offers not only an innovative method of communication, but an opportunity for better message understanding by employees (Kelley, 1995). Also, unlike print communication, television allows the viewer to feel more involved in a situation. Marlow (1992) wrote that corporate television news programs help employees learn and understand the goals and missions of the company. "An employee who understands why he or she is doing (a particular task) has a better opportunity of doing a better job..." (p. 3).

The success of corporate television may be attributed to the growth of television as an information medium. Since its inception in the 1940s, television has been regarded as a powerful instrument for the distribution of news and information. Many studies over the years have pointed to television as the American public's main source of news and information. Is the same true in the corporate environment? With this study the author hopes to learn if internal television news programs in the financial services have the same impact within the corporate environment as regular television news programs claim to have with the overall public.

### Research Question

Do internal corporate television new programs, when used as part of an internal communication program, improve employees' learning and memory of corporate messages?

The author intends to answer this question with a literature review and data collected from a survey of 1,607 employees of a corporation that currently houses an internal television network. There is a scarcity of literature about internal corporate television and little research has been done on the news and information aspect of corporate television (Kelley, 1995). Therefore, the main theme of the literature review will be television news and its impact as an information medium. Particularly, the author will examine the literature that describes various aspects of television news that improve viewers' memory of the information. The survey, on the other hand, will provide data regarding employees' television news viewing habits and their attitudes regarding their internal television network. The author will then draw parallels between research of television news and data collected from the survey.

### Need for the Study

In recent years, employee communication has become a management priority in the corporate arena. Increased global competition, continuous restructuring, mergers, acquisitions, and deregulation have had an impact on corporations and the need to continually keep employees informed. Companies are looking for fast, dynamic methods of communicating with their employees. Michelson (1998) claimed that "an informed, valued staff is a proud, productive sales force and image-building team, which...builds the business" (p. 4). Corporate television appears to be an ideal enhancement to an employee communication program.

The corporate television industry has grown significantly in recent years. Despite its popularity, however, literature about its effects on employee behavior is scarce. Academic writings fail to report on the topic. Trade publications primarily focus on the benefits of developing this type of communication system. Measured results of success or failure of such a network are absent entirely. With this original research, the author will attempt to measure the impact of corporate television on employee behavior.

### Objectives

In conducting a study that examines employees' attitudes toward television news, an existing internal corporate television network, and an internal television new program, the author has identified two primary objectives: (a) to determine which aspects of televised news presentations enhance employees' learning and memory of corporate information, and (b) to make recommendations for future internal television new programming.

### Definition of Terms

1. Learning. Integration of new information into an individual's existing knowledge.
2. Recall. Recollecting of an earlier event and its surrounding circumstances (Booth, 1970). Booth (1970) claimed that although many variables can be used to measure the impact of a particular communication medium, recall is probably the most manageable.
3. Internal corporate television. Internal corporate television can be defined as "a private television network owned and controlled by a specific corporation..., broadcasting news, information, and other programming, via satellite or wired network, to a designated audience" (Kelley, 1995, p. 33).



4. News. "The collection and distribution of information concerning events in the environment both outside and within any particular society" (Booth, 1970, p. 604).

#### Limitations of the Study

The author's survey research focused on a three-state region of a 13-state corporation. Therefore, the research sample is representative of a portion of that total population. The sample was comprised of employees in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Marlow (1992) wrote that employee news shows are not as popular in metropolitan areas "like New York" (p. 143). Large cities are generally saturated with broadcast news sources that might dilute the effectiveness of a corporate television system. Therefore, since the sample was comprised of employees located in the New York metropolitan area, the participants' opinions may not necessarily reflect the opinions and behaviors of the entire 13-state population.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### History of Corporate Television

Internal corporate television as it exists today evolved from companies that first established systems for using videotape for communication. The use of videotaped presentations in corporations can be traced to the late 1950s. At that time, video was used sparingly, generally because of the lack of available equipment. A 1969 American Management Association study (cited in Marlow, 1992) reported "...early equipment was large, non-portable and very expensive" (p. 157). Later, in the 1970s, introduction of the one-half inch Beta and VHS (video home system) formats enabled corporations to begin to distribute video presentations. By 1979, corporate managers began to recognize the need for more innovative methods of employee communication. Once management began to realize that with less money and time spent traveling, better management decisions could be made quicker (Kelley, 1995). Corporate television began to shape itself as a medium for internal communication in the mid-1980s. During that period, domestic and global economic conditions warranted a need for quick, accurate internal communication. In addition, television and satellite communications became technologically sophisticated enough to be used in a corporate setting.

During the 1980s advancements in satellite technology led to the creation of internal television networks. A survey conducted by Knowledge Industry Publications (cited in Marlow, 1992) in the early 1980s indicated that about 53% of respondents owned satellite networks of between one and 25 locations and nearly 16% of respondents had networked over 100 locations.

Until the 1980s, corporate television was used primarily as a training vehicle. In the late eighties, for the first time since the inception of the corporate television concept, that trend began to reverse itself. Companies' use of internal television networks for general employee communications became more prevalent. The sudden growth of the medium was necessitated by the economic uncertainty of the decade. Although the decade was one of growth, the 1980s were also a time of mergers, acquisitions, downsizing, reengineering, and restructuring. Uncertainty about the future was spurred by the stock market crash of 1987 and the savings and loan crisis. The need to communicate to widespread employee populations quickly and accurately resulted in the meteoric growth of corporate television. The 1992 KJH Executive Summary (cited in Kelley, 1995) reported that there were 73 private domestic internal corporate television networks and 132 networks worldwide. From 1973-1993 the corporate television industry doubled in size every 2 years, averaging 17.5% growth annually ("Corporate Communicators", 1993). The explosive growth of corporate television was a result of organizations learning how the medium could enhance their employee communication methods.

### Benefits of Corporate Television

The driving force behind the success of corporate television is that the medium appeals to today's generation of workers that were born and have grown in the television age, were weaned on television, and are comfortable receiving information via that medium. Printed pieces have become secondary to this younger generation (McCathrin, 1989). Corporate television offers a number of benefits to organizations that turn to this method of internal communication.

Corporate television offers many benefits to organizations that wish to improve their internal communications networks. First, television is the best way to communicate to everyone

simultaneously, regardless of what position the employee holds. In doing so, the medium also provides the ability to broadcast a coherent corporate message to all groups across all geography (Keenan, 1995). Second, television, with its ability to deliver critical information real-time, can reduce "water-cooler" gossip. Third, television cannot be cast aside or unopened as easily as printed communication. Next, television's visual characteristics allow management to communicate in ways very different from printed news. On-screen appearances by corporate officials, managers, and even employees command attention. When a senior management figure makes a statement on television, the statement is more direct, alive, personal, and more credible (Marlow, 1992). Finally, messages are more likely to be understood and remembered when broadcast on television because the information has been delivered "face-to-face" (Concelmo, 1997).

Allen (1989), Marlow (1992), Concelmo (1995), and Ladio (1996) outlined numerous reasons why corporate television systems work:

1. Speed. Television helps keep employee attitudes positive because information is given to employees as soon as possible. Messages can be transmitted in a matter of hours or taped, duplicated, and sent in only two days to a domestic and/or international employee audience.

2. Clarity. Written news can be ambiguous. Television clarifies the message because viewers look directly at the messenger, see the speaker's mannerisms, and hear vocal inflections.

3. Reach. All employees can have access to the network regardless of their work. For example, executives and back-office employees can receive the same information at the same time.

4. Ease. Watching television requires little effort by the end-users to be successful. Since television is the primary news source for many people, employees are likely to accept the system rather easily.

5. Credibility. Television is considered a chief source of news. A figure seen on television gains credibility. Furthermore, the information is delivered to employees direct and unfiltered, bypassing levels of management and reducing the opportunity for misinterpretation.

6. Efficient. The satellite signal can be used for other purposes (i.e. training, teleconferences).

7. Cost Effective. The capital investment to initiate this type of system can be amortized over the life span of the network. In addition, using the teleconference capabilities of the satellite network can reduce travel expenses.

8. Targeting. Targeted messages can be designed for segments of the internal audiences, similar to regular television programming.

9. Perception. Employees may appreciate the efforts of the organization to deliver timely and accurate information.

10. Image. Corporate television networks are developed from state-of-the-art technology normally reserved for companies that specialize in the electronic media. Using an internal television network implies that the organization's practices are sophisticated.

11. Culture. Companies can use their television networks to promote their culture.

Overall, television is an effective and relatively low-cost method for fast mass communication to distant sites. Many notable companies use corporate television networks. Chrysler Corporation uses television to disseminate information to its 5,000 domestic dealerships. Chrysler's mechanics receive most of their training from televised training courses.

J.C. Penney used to fly hundreds of its buyers to various locations for fashion shows. Now the company saves millions of dollars in travel, accommodations, facilities, and models by televising those fashion shows. Ford Motor Corp. claims that 60% of its blue-collar work force and 40% - 45% of its white-collar employees watch its corporate television programming. Other companies that use internal television networks include Lockheed Martin, FedEx, IBM, General Motors, Hewlett Packard, Merrill Lynch, Home Depot, Wal Mart, Dominos Pizza, and Jiffy Lube.

Clearly, corporate television is considered by some to be an effective method of communicating with employees. Thus far the literature claims that the speed and visual power of corporate television make it an effective, credible source of corporate information. However, to better determine its effectiveness as an employee information tool, corporate television must be considered in terms of television news, the concept from which the medium was derived.

### Television News

Since the inception of television, the American public has learned to rely heavily on the medium as its primary source of news information. Steady watchers of television may not bother to read newspapers or listen to news on the radio, but generally make themselves available for television newscasts (Katz, Adoni, & Parness, 1977).

Despite its popularity as a news vehicle, however, questions exist regarding the impact of television as a news information source. Viewers do not retain much of the information presented during a newscast. Why then, do people watch television news? Katz et al. (1977) concluded that many viewers watched the evening news because "it was on" (p. 239), and that watching news was perceived by viewers to be a civic responsibility. Graber's research (1990)

indicated that viewers felt obligated to watch the news and did so out of habit, rather than from an interest in gaining information.

Television traditionally has been considered an entertainment medium. As such, many Americans watch television news to relax. Stauffer, Frost, and Rybolt (1983) claimed, however, that the most popular reason for watching the news was to acquire information, rather than watching as a means of recreation or diversion. In 1990, Robinson and Davis wrote that those who claimed to watch news to gain information learned no more than viewers who watched for entertainment, even though television was considered a credible medium.

Crigler, Just, and Neuman (1994) maintained that television was more believable than radio, newspapers, and magazines. Although television news is considered to be a believable, limitations of its effectiveness exist. Robinson and Davis (1990) outlined several limits that inhibit television's impact. First, a televised newscast contains fewer words and ideas per story than do printed news. Therefore, these programs have limited opportunity to develop an entire story. Second, these programs provide little, if any, repetition that is needed for viewers to understand the information. Thus, viewers are limited to the amount of information from which they can draw conclusions. Third, viewers are generally distracted and their attention fragmented during news programs. Therefore, daily television newscasts may be perceived as interesting and useful by only fractions of the viewing audience. Fourth, viewers who do expose themselves to news broadcasts do not spend time and effort understanding its content (Robinson & Davis, 1990). Next, television news programs do not always coordinate pictures and copy, and thereby create confusion and misunderstanding of the facts by the audience. Finally, Klein (1978) wrote that the way in which the sender organizes a newscast might be perceived as disorganized by the receiver. The program's producer (sender) decides which is important and which is not

important. The receiver's (viewer) sense of importance, on the other hand, may not agree with the producer's perception of importance. Therefore, dissonance occurs and learning is inhibited.

Graber (1990) noted that such careless processing of news is accepted by Americans. New programs' lack of clarity in presentation, coupled with viewers' lack of interest in news, does not encourage the audience to spend the time and effort needed to understand news content when an individual has other priorities. This is rather unfortunate, as information must be processed in order for learning to take place.

### Information Processing of Television News

Information processing occurs when an individual is able to incorporate new information into an existing supply of knowledge. To enable processing to occur an individual first forms a schema, which was defined by Chang (1998) as a "model by which people internalize, structure, and make sense of an event" (p. 328). The schema, in turn, helps television viewers process new information because it refers to existing information and looks for similar data that will aid in understanding. In the context of television news, schematic thinking enables an individual to capture those bytes of information from news stories that the viewer deems important enough to remember. Although information processing enables the audience to remember information, not all information is learned.

Television news viewers select the information that they choose to process. The individual's lifestyle creates interest in particular news events, creates the need for information, and decides how much time and effort the viewer will spend obtaining the information. The goal of the schema process is to understand information, not memorize data. Therefore, to avoid information overload, individuals extricate only a portion of the news presented to them and



discard the rest (Graber, 1990). If the new information is similar to existing schemata, it does not get processed. The existing knowledge is saved and the new information is ignored. Woodall, Davis, and Sahin (1983) wrote that information processing occurs because television's audiovisual qualities grab the viewer's attention, but existing schemata enable the viewer to make the effort to focus and concentrate on the new information. Once information processing has taken place, learning may or may not occur.

### Television's Effect on Attention, Learning, Memory, and Recall

While studying the effects of television news on memory, it is important to realize the distinction among the comprehension, learning, and memory of news information. Comprehension, as illustrated by Findahl and Hoijer (1985), relates to the processing of information by a viewer during a newscast, whereas memory describes the process by which an individual stores and retrieves information after watching the news. Learning television news, however, occurs when new information is combined with information already stored in memory. During the learning process the viewer is able to make inferences by using the stored information, and the new information becomes part of the viewer's knowledge base (Woodall, Davis, & Sahin, 1983). Katz et al. (1977) found that most news watchers remembered only 2 or 3 stories out of 14 or 15 presented during a 30-minute newscast. They claimed that the average viewer felt that was all that was necessary to remember. In 1990, once cable television offered more news outlets and availability of more news information, Graber noted that out of 15 to 18 stories per newscast, no more than one was retained well enough to be retold with accurate detail. Because news information cannot be recalled, however, does not mean the information has

disappeared. Wicks (1992) claimed that the information probably has been stored, but the new information does not motivate the individual to retrieve the stored data.

Regardless of its power as an information medium, viewers do not retain much of the information imparted by television news programming. Many viewers cannot recall details of news information to which they were just exposed. Graber (1988) found that although many viewers watch the news, many do not pay attention to the broadcast. Therefore, many of the facts presented in a newscast are forgotten, if understood at all. Ultimately, only a small part of the information becomes a part of the individual's knowledge base. Before learning and memory of television news can take place, the audience must focus its attention on the content of the news program.

Attention has been defined as the ability of an individual to concentrate on a particular stimuli, while ignoring other stimuli, thereby creating a stable focus on the foreground without interference from the background (Stauffer et al., 1983). As noted earlier, television is considered an entertainment medium, many viewers watch the news because they feel obligated, and viewers are generally distracted while watching the news. Therefore, the audience's attention is not completely devoted to all news stories. However, most viewers probably focus their attention to some news stories (Woodall et al., 1983). Attention plays an important part in learning, for information processing cannot take place without it. In order for the viewer to pay attention to the news item, the story must attract the individual's attention at its onset.

In her 1988 study, Graber noted that individuals who paid attention to news stories were cued by the program. In these instances, the stories were announced by the program's anchorperson and were treated as a predominant story within the newscast. The same respondents indicated that stories with which they did not pay attention were not presented to be

prominent enough within the program to grab their attention. Price and Czilli (1996) also found that the emphasis the media places on a topic affected the audience's perception of importance. This may be why news programmers place importance on the stories presented at the start of the newscast. Graber (1988) also indicated that viewers "want to pay attention to news if it can be done with little time and effort" (p. 107). Therefore, if the news program announces which stories are important, viewers can spend little effort decoding that information. Then, viewers will process stories that are interesting and easy to understand. The individual components of a news story, however, can slow the learning process.

Television news is comprised of two channels, auditory and visual. Grimes (1991) wrote that attention is organized differently when these channels are perceived by viewers as one unit as opposed to two individual units. When the auditory and visual elements are perceived as one unit viewers can process the presentation easily. When news is perceived as two individual units, each channel will be considered a separate unit by the viewer and demand its own attention. When attention is divided this way, the viewer will focus on the channel that is the simplest to understand. Attention divided among stimuli can cause the viewer to reject information.

Information is rejected by the viewer when the data is perceived as having little to offer to the individual. Viewers may therefore limit their attention to story announcements only or fail to process the information entirely. Little effort is needed to block unwanted information. Graber (1988) outlined several reasons why viewers may reject news information. First, viewers' lack of interest in story content was cited as the biggest conscious reason for information rejection. Second, many news stories are rejected simply to save time and energy. Other stimuli, such as family or job matters, reduce the audience's willingness to process the information that is

presented during a news program. Next, viewers will often ignore the details of a prevalent news story until the story is complete, then catch up on the story by reviewing the facts as summarized in closing reports. Should economizing information in this manner not provide enough short cuts to cope with the vast amount of information presented by television news, viewers may reject the information entirely and let time pass without paying any attention to news at all. Once that time has passed, few viewers bother to catch up on missed information.

Viewers who spend the time and effort necessary to pay attention to the news are more apt to learn the information. Marlow (1992) wrote that an individual's motivation to learn is inherent. He claimed that obtaining knowledge, as well as the search for information, bolsters an individual's sense of competence. Therefore an individual will gravitate toward information that fulfills a psychological need (Graber, 1988). In addition, people seek information that is congruent with their beliefs and use the media to determine what information is important and deserving of their time. Therefore, the motivation to learn is greater when the individual has a goal for learning. Then, the process becomes cyclical. Once the individual is accustomed to learning from the news, the knowledge will act as a catalyst for learning new information, which will create an interest in watching television news.

Interest plays a chief role in viewer acceptance of news information. Graber (1988) claimed that "exposures produce learning" (p. 114). People who are continually exposed to television news tend to remember information whether or not they are interested in the subject matter, although interested viewers will learn more than disinterested viewers. Interest encourages the viewer to grasp details of a news presentation, which can then be learned. However, not all stories will appeal to all audience members.

Postman and Powers (1992) quoted a television news executive as claiming "a televised news program must be put together with the assumption that each news item will be of some interest to everyone who watches" (p. 113). Because news is written for a mass audience, its content cannot offer detailed or complex information that viewers may need to develop interest. Low interest viewers do not focus their attention and generally do not know what information they want from a newscast. In addition these viewers generally lack information and opinions about current events that enable them to make inferences as news is presented. Therefore, individuals with little interest learn little from television news.

Studies have revealed other reasons why viewers do not learn from television news. In their 1977 study of television news and memory, Katz et al. wrote "it is questionable whether rapid-fire presentation of a string of disconnected events can serve...anybody...very well" (p. 239). First, learning from television news is difficult because the information is presented only once (Wicks, 1992). A televised news story does not offer the opportunity for the viewer to review the information as many times as may be necessary to retain the information. Also, since television news is overwhelmingly comprised of visual stimuli, its content does not offer full explanations of events. Evening newscasts, as Postman and Powers (1992) pointed out, illustrate the day's happenings as a series of unrelated, fragmented events. To many viewers, the unrelated events do not form an understandable message. Other factors may explain why viewers may not learn information from news programs.

Graber (1988) found that newscasts themselves included disincentives for learning. First, television news programs often consist of repetitive scenes, regardless of the story content. Some of these visuals may not match the text, which will obstruct learning. Or, viewers may tune out the repetitiveness of the scenes. Second, overlap between newspapers and television

news content and repetition of stories on early and late newscasts keep viewers from paying attention to new developments of a news story. Finally, many topics are too complex, too boring, or both for the mass audience of television news.

To compensate for the lack of clarity news producers tend to group related stories. Learning is hindered when related stories are grouped. Viewers become confused when presented with stories of similar events and situations (Findahl & Hoijer, 1985). The distinctions of each story merge together and become blurred in the mind of the viewer. Stauffer et al. (1983) described "flattening" as a reason for not learning from news. With flattening, details of a story are forgotten almost immediately after the newscast is over and only concepts are remembered. However, storing information in this general form is a common, natural reaction to news watchers in the current age of information overload. Just how much information can be recalled depends on the viewer.

Several researchers have outlined the effectiveness of television in relation to recall of news stories. Katz et al. (1977) found that recall is discerning. A viewer's recall of news information is affected by the importance the viewer places on the information at the time the individual is exposed to the data. Therefore, the more the story is perceived as newsworthy, the better chance there is of recall by the viewer. Also, the more prominently the story is placed within the news program, the more likely the viewer will recall its content. Findahl and Hoijer (1985) found that information about where an event occurred and who or what was involved in the situation was most easily recalled. Despite the aforementioned research, prominent news stories are not always learned.

Ironically, news stories that create the most misunderstandings are items about well known news events. Because the events are reported frequently, the viewers begin to ignore

newer details and used their existing knowledge base to fill in the missing information (Findahl & Hoijer, 1985). Since a sizable knowledge base is necessary to reconstruct stories, misunderstanding of news stories are more common among viewers with greater amounts of prior knowledge. Likewise, information about causes and consequences is more difficult to recall. Stauffer et al. (1983) indicated that audience recall of information declines as the news program progresses. Therefore, the researchers recommended that significant news stories be placed throughout a newscast. The circumstances under which viewers watch the news also affect recall. Viewers who watch news to relax generally have lower rates of recall than watchers who use television news to stay informed (Neuman, 1976).

Graber (1988) cited several reasons why news information may be forgotten. First, the rapid-fire method of presenting news inhibits viewers from committing the new information to long-term memory. Second, even though news information is integrated in long-term memory, those memories can fade over time. Third, many viewers fail to make the correct inferences when confronted with new information. However, Wicks (1992) claimed that just because news cannot be recalled does not mean that the information has disappeared entirely. The information may still be stored and can be recalled if proper cues are presented. For example, seeing an automobile accident on the highway may prompt the driver to remember a news story about a similar accident.

### Visual Impact on Learning from Television News

In a television newscast, information is communicated via a combination of the verbal and auditory channels. The audio presentation paired with the visual cues creates the visual impact of a televised newscast. The visual format of television news attempts to make the

information accessible to viewers across all levels of literacy and verbal ability by complimenting the verbal messages. Often, the visuals used in a newscast are "routine and stereotypical" (Graber, 1990, p. 139). Familiar visuals make it easier for television's mass audience to comprehend the intended message. Research of television news has debated the effectiveness of visual cues in televised newscasts.

Because television news was derived from the print medium, many researchers still consider text to be the primary source of information within a news program. Katz et al. (1977) wrote that viewers who saw a television newscast retained no more information than individuals who only listened to the same program. They concluded that the picture does not add very much to the news presentation: words tell most of the story. Later research revealed that people remembered more facts delivered in television news audio when the audio was paired with the video channel (Edwardson, Grooms, & Proudlove, 1981). Conversely, Crigler et al. (1994) claimed that the audio channel carries most of the information in an audiovisual news presentation. Their research indicated that the information in the audio portion of a story was the bulk of what viewers remembered. Even with the successful pairing of audio and visual information, however, pictures do not always add to the probability of a viewer learning news information. Many viewers still had difficulty describing the information that was presented by pictures after watching newscasts that included interesting video. The viewers tended to repeat information that was already verbalized in the newscast, rather than transcribe the visual information into their own words (Graber, 1990). This reaction to visuals may occur because of how the visuals are presented.

At times, visuals do prevent learning from occurring. Often, in the quest to capture viewers' attention during a newscast, producers use clips of dynamic video. The video, however,



may not necessarily match the verbal information. As a result, viewers are often confronted with visuals and verbiage that are not redundant. Edwardson et al. (1981) quoted a colleague as saying, "The basic credo of television news is that television is a visual medium: therefore, everything must be visual. Nonsense. Visuals make sense sometimes; sometimes they are meaningless" (p. 374). Television news producers tend to write stories around visual information and give prominence to stories with interesting video (Crigler et al., 1994). By using visuals that do not make sense, television producers commit a disservice to their viewers. This type of presentation inhibits the possibility that the information will be learned. When the visuals and audio do not sync viewers must divide their attention between both channels. Doing so increases the probability that information will be missed, or blocked, by the viewers. As mentioned earlier, viewers perceive story importance based on the prominence assigned to the story by the news program (Price & Czilli, 1996). Therefore, if the viewer's attention is divided at the start of the newscast, the individual may not bother to pay full attention to the rest of the program.

The way visuals are presented can impact the audience's learning of news information. Most television news stories are brief and provide little explanation or detail. In 1 week of television news stories observed, 33% of the stories were covered in less than 1 minute and 79% were covered in less than 3 minutes. Between one third and one half of network news stories contained more than 10 visual scenes and, in three quarters of those stories, those visual scenes lasted a total of less than 20 seconds (Graber, 1990). Given the rapid-fire method of news presentation, information blocking and loss by the audience is inevitable. There is hardly enough time for the viewer to absorb the information, especially since news stories follow each other in rapid succession, leaving the viewer with little time consider the information and make the

inferences necessary to learn the information. Although television news is often comprised of brief, rapid stories and pictorial presentations that are not congruent with verbal information, visuals may still contribute to learning.

Gunter (1980) wrote that imagery in news is effective because the pictorials increase the chances that the information will be learned. In his research, Gunter found that the recall of brief television news items that contained pictorials was significantly higher than news items that did not contain video. Likewise, when information in the video channel is organized, the information can be learned as well from video as from words. Here the video can enhance the audience's assessment of the information and facilitate their understanding of the facts (Crigler et al., 1994). When visuals tell a story and are organized throughout a verbal story, news watchers find the visuals to be just as powerful as the audio channel. In 1990, Graber's research indicated viewers' recall of television news stories was strengthened by the use of visuals. News watchers paid more attention to the verbiage when visual information was also presented. Larger amounts of verbal information led to more errors in recall of news stories. Therefore, video within a newscast must be considered an important source of information.

Video is a rich source of information and positively affects the amount of news that is retained by the audience. The type of visuals that are used in a newscast also affect viewers' memory of information. Many news producers mistakenly rely on conventional video because they think that the audience will be attuned to the familiar scenes. On the contrary, these videos provide little new information to the audience. Graber (1988) outlined several types of images that are most likely to be processed. First, news watchers generally remember close-ups of familiar people. Facial close-ups reveal feelings and emotions and give the audience a perception of honesty on the part of the person on the television screen. These visuals evoke emotions and

enable the viewer to identify with the person. Viewers also use close-ups to draw inferences from the knowledge they have stored from earlier news, thus promoting learning of the information. For example, this tactic is used when the President is videotaped speaking from the Oval Office by using one camera filming a close-up message. Second, viewers tend to remember close-ups of unfamiliar people in fascinating situations or settings. In this case, the setting engages the viewer who in turn remembers the unfamiliar personality. This type of visual is especially remembered when the audience has no pre-existing mental picture of the setting or situation. Two examples of this type of pictorial would be the Moon landing of 1969 and the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. Finally, news audiences tend to remember close-ups of unfamiliar people who were remembered because they expressed their opinions. This "man on the street" tactic is often used by news programs during reports of topical news stories.

Less memorable than visuals of people are pictures of objects and locations (Graber, 1988). These videos offer little information because the scenes are redundant of information already stored by the viewers. These pictures are also less likely to evoke the viewers' emotions. The information is blocked or rejected because the viewers' schematic thinking produces similar information already in storage.

#### Education, Prior Knowledge, and Relevance of Television News Information

Education is a principal means of determining an audience's propensity to learn from television news. One of the most prevalent findings in television news research is that learning from news is greater among better educated individuals, primarily because educated viewers have more knowledge stored with which to make inferences when faced with new information. One noted theory about television news and education is the knowledge gap.

The knowledge gap describes the difference in knowledge levels among the different education levels found within a mass audience. Tichenour, Donohue, and Olien (1970) described how the knowledge gap affects learning from television news. First, viewers with more formal education generally have higher comprehension skills needed to acquire information. Second, better-informed individuals are more likely to be aware of a topic when a story appears on the news and are better prepared to understand the information. Third, a better-educated audience has more reference information, more experiences, and more interpersonal contacts. These factors increase the likelihood that the individual has some prior knowledge of the information. Finally, better-educated viewers tend to interpret and recall information easier than their less educated counterparts. Therefore, Tichenour et al. (1970) indicated that over time knowledge acquisition proceeds at a quicker pace among better educated audiences than among less educated viewers. Their research suggested that the knowledge gap will widen as more and more information becomes available to the public via the media.

A consistent theme throughout this study is that individuals with greater amounts of prior knowledge will learn more from televised news than individuals with less knowledge. Existing knowledge guides which stories in a news program get the most attention by the viewer (Woodall et al., 1983). Similarly, the presence of existing information impacts how viewers process new information. Prior knowledge dictates which details will be stored in memory and determines which stories will be processed and which will be ignored. Price and Czilli (1996) found a strong relationship between prior knowledge and the probability of recalling news stories. Their research reported that people with little prior knowledge failed to learn about prominent news stories, while individuals with greater prior knowledge learned facts presented in those stories as well as information from less prevalent stories. Moreover, the multi-channel

manner in which television news is presented prohibits those with little prior knowledge from learning the information. Viewers who lack background knowledge needed to interpret audiovisual stories find televised news difficult to understand (Robinson & Davis, 1990).

Television news audiences tend to recall new stories that are important to them. Graber (1988) asserted that prior knowledge implies viewer interest in a topic. Individuals will be motivated to learn about topics that they find relevant to their interests and existing knowledge. Klein (1978) wrote that "people come to the media...seeking information that they want, not what the media intend them to have" (p. 359). Therefore, television news watchers will scan a newscast and look for cues of the information they want to learn. Individuals who are predisposed to certain news items will learn about those events (Booth, 1970). In addition, viewers are apt to search for information about a topic that was the subject of a prior conversation, that the viewer perceives as worth repeating, or that contains information pertinent to the viewer's job or personal life (Graber, 1990). Stauffer et al. (1983) found that viewers rated the relevance of events reported on the evening news as relatively low, suggesting that viewers did not remember much of these newscasts. The viewers perceived the news stories to not be related to their lives and therefore felt those stories did not demand their attention. Stories that are not important to the viewer may never be recalled by the individual (Klein, 1978).

### Passive Learning

Even if a news program incorporates interesting video, lengthens its stories, permits time for viewers to reflect on the information, and organizes its content effectively, there is a good chance that the news information still may not be learned by the audience. Many individuals perform other tasks while watching the news. Family, other media, and conversation often keep

viewers from concentrating exclusively on the evening news. Therefore, their attention is divided between the news and the other task and learning suffers. However, just because learning suffers does not mean that it is prohibited entirely. In the instances where the viewer is not completely attuned to a news program, information may still be learned.

Passive learning is how individuals acquire information despite their own lack of motivation to learn. Passive learning, an effortless response to stimuli, occurs when there is an absence of resistance to information processing (Krugman & Hartley, 1970). Zuckerman and Snyder (1984) claimed that the "mere absence of resistance...is all that is necessary for learning to occur" (p. 629). Contrary to the concept of information processing discussed earlier, the material processed during passive learning is generally unrelated to the individual's immediate needs. Passive learning commonly occurs when viewers stare idly at the television after work. During passive learning attention levels associated with higher educated viewers and viewers with higher levels of prior knowledge, as discussed earlier, may not be exhibited (Neuman, 1976). Therefore, since learning can occur whether or not viewers pay attention to a newscast, the likelihood of learning from television may be rather high.

The literature review identifies the aspects of corporate television that benefit the organizations that use the medium. To create successful corporate television news programs, however, producers should heed the findings of network television news research. Producers should consider the audience's propensity to learn based on their education, prior knowledge, and interest. Additionally, news producers also should take into account the components of televised news that positively affect viewer memory. All of these factors work in concert to contribute to the audience's learning and memory of television news. Without just one of these factors, the audience's learning will be impeded.

## Chapter III

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### Population and Sample

Data for this study on corporate television were collected via a survey (see Appendices A and B). The survey was mailed to 1,607 financial service employees, located in 369 financial centers, or retail banking locations, located throughout New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. The total sample represents approximately 40% - 50% of the possible total population in this environment. The selected employees were chosen based on their position within the organization and their location. The financial centers chosen were also a sample of a larger population within the environment.

The total sample of surveyed locations represented a portion of the total financial center population in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. The author chose to eliminate 117 New Jersey financial centers from the distribution. Only 3 weeks prior to the survey distribution, the company (Company A) completed a merger with another bancorporation (Company B) with a massive systems conversion. The eliminated financial centers represented two separate segments of the total population.

The 117 financial centers were eliminated from the sample based on the following criteria. The first eliminated segment was comprised of former Company B branches that had recently been integrated into Company A's organization. At the time of the survey, most former Company B branches only had access to the internal television network for a few weeks. Therefore, they did not have the opportunity to watch the programs featured on the survey. The second eliminated segment represented surviving locations that were assigned to service

customers whose locations closed or consolidated as a result of the merger. These locations were experiencing high levels of crowds and faced customer service issues associated with the conversion. As a courtesy to the employees burdened with issues associated with the merger, the author chose not to burden them with another task and decided to exclude them from the sample. Within the sample population of financial centers, several types of employees were surveyed.

The author targeted employees located in the company's financial centers, who come in contact with customers on a daily basis. This group represents a cross-section of the typical financial center team. Each position has contact with customers in a different way. Following are the descriptions of the employees that were surveyed:

1. Customer Relations Manager. The Customer Relations Manager (CRM) is responsible for enhancing bank customer satisfaction and profitability by educating and transitioning customers to the banking delivery channel that best fits the customers' needs. The CRM helps lead the financial center team and proactively looks for sales opportunities.
2. Financial Specialist. The Financial Specialist (FS) prospects and identifies qualified leads for existing customers. The FS strengthens and develops new business and provides financial consulting to existing customers.
3. Teller. The teller provides counter transaction quality and efficiency to customers who prefer face-to-face interaction with the bank. The teller acts as a referral source of prospects and customers for the CRM and FS, while also acting as an educational resource for customers regarding new technologies and processes.

The employees were chosen for several reasons. First, the majority of programming on the company's internal television network is targeted to the financial center employees. Second, all of the employees surveyed interact with customers on a daily basis in different aspects of



business (i.e., sales, service). Lastly, the author is a co-producer and field correspondent of an internal television newscast that targets employees located in the New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut area. Subsequently, the survey questions test the recall of information from that program.

### Survey

The survey was mailed to the sample on November 30, 1998 via interoffice mail. Responses were requested by return mail by December 18, 1998. A self-addressed, interoffice envelope was provided with every survey. All participants were assured confidentiality and were not asked to identify themselves or their financial centers in the survey. A total of 498 surveys were complete and returned.

Several measures were taken by the author to ensure the survey would be comprehensive, yet easily understood by the respondents. First, the survey was tested by several former branch employees. The author chose not to test actual branch employees because those employees were an integral part of the merger/conversion preparation and those employees that would have been included in the test would eventually become part of the final sample. In addition to the former branch employees, the survey was reviewed for content suggestions by the manager-in-charge and the other co-producer of the New Jersey, New York, Connecticut targeted program. Finally, the survey was also reviewed by a survey research professional that made several recommendations to the author regarding the survey's language, continuity, and distribution.

### Data Collection

The 31-question survey was designed by the author. The questions were multiple choice with four open-ended questions. The multiple-choice questions that required the respondents to remember data were designed in an aided-recall format. The survey questions were divided into four sections: Background, Television News, Employee Television Network, and Atlantic Currents.

In the Background section, participants were asked a series of general demographic questions regarding age, years of employment, level of education, etc. This information was necessary, as the literature considers these factors important in measuring memory of televised messages. Questions in the Television section were designed to determine the television news viewing habits of the sample. The author needed this information to draw parallels between the respondents' attitudes of television news at home and attitudes about using television at work. Finally, the Employee Television Network and Atlantic Currents sections were created to measure the participants' memory of messages that had been broadcast over their satellite television network over the two months prior to the survey. All questions pertained to shows that targeted financial center employees.

## Chapter IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### Introduction

At the onset of her research, the author made several expectations as to the outcome of the data. First, the author anticipated that television news would be the respondents' most prominent vehicle of news information and that would, therefore, positively influence their opinions of their corporate television network. Second, since television is considered to be the most believable source of news information, the author felt that receiving information via the corporate television network would be an accepted behavior of the employees and aid in improving their learning and memory of the messages. Finally, the author expected to realize trends in the employees' viewing habits and preferences and make appropriate programming recommendations.

The data supported several of the author's expectations and indeed provided valuable understanding of employees' attitudes toward corporate television. However, the research regarding employees' memory did not yield enough facts from which conclusions could be drawn. An analysis of the data indicated that the vast majority of the surveyed employees did not watch the specific program from which the memory queries were derived. Although there was a lack of data regarding memory the respondents' other feedback contributed to the recommendations outlined in Chapter V. Further details about the memory inquiries will be discussed in the review of the data.

### Data Review

The data regarding employees' memory of corporate messages did not provide sufficient information to confidently draw conclusions. However, the remaining data provided insight into the author's theories while also providing further insight into the employees' opinions about corporate television. The profile of the respondents (see Table 1) indicated that a cross-section of financial center employees was represented in the final sample. Within this cross-section, the author identified several trends that also contributed to the programming recommendations. First, the majority of respondents were women. Second, the participants considered television a primary source of news information. Next, the majority of the sample used their corporate television network and their input suggested their programming needs. Further explanation of these trends in relation to the research question was described in the analysis of the survey data.

Table 1

#### Profile of Total Survey Respondents

| Position                   | Female | Male | N/A | Total #<br>of respondents |
|----------------------------|--------|------|-----|---------------------------|
| Customer Relations Manager | 109    | 18   | 5   | 132                       |
| Financial Specialist       | 125    | 63   | 4   | 192                       |
| Teller                     | 154    | 14   | 4   | 172                       |
| Total Respondents          | 388    | 95   | 13  | 496                       |

Note. Two participants did not indicate any response to this question.

The majority of survey respondents were women, as illustrated in Table 1. These data correlated with the company's total population, which is approximately 72% women (Perrotty,

1998). Collectively, the greatest number of respondents, 170, were grouped into the age 35 - 45 category. The second largest age group, 25 - 34, contained 146 respondents.

From the data collected from the 498 total respondents, the author identified profiles of the most common respondents. First, the most common Customer Relations Manager (CRM) and Financial Specialist (FS) profiles were female, 35 - 45 years old, with some college education. Next, the most common teller profile was female, 35 - 45 years old, with a high school education. The similarity in demographics was evident in the data regarding television news.

As the author originally anticipated, television was the respondents' primary source of news information. The survey results indicated that 93% of the respondents normally got their news from television and/or television and other media. Of the total response, 16% got their news from television only. Interestingly, only 3.3% of the total sample normally got news from only radio, while only 1.6% reported that newspapers were their only source of news information. The most popular combination of news sources was television, radio, and newspaper together as reported by 20% of the survey participants. Therefore, the author surmised that television was considered by the respondents to be a believable source of news, as indicated in this data. A closer look at the respondents' demographic profiles yielded more information regarding the employees' propensity to learn from television news. Of particular interest were the results of the education level inquiry.

Table 2

Respondents' Education Levels and Job Positions

| Education Level | Customer Relations Managers | Financial Specialists | Tellers | Totals |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------|
| Graduate Degree | 3                           | 12                    | 6       | 21     |
| Some Graduate   | 5                           | 19                    |         | 24     |
| College Degree  | 32                          | 71                    | 36      | 139    |
| Some College    | 52                          | 61                    | 66      | 179    |
| High School     | 36                          | 29                    | 63      | 128    |
| Total Responses | 128                         | 192                   | 171     | 491    |

Note. Seven participants did not indicate any response to this question.

Nearly every survey respondent reported his or her education level. The greatest segment of the participants, 179, indicated that they had "some college" education and 139 reported that they had a college degree. The third most prevalent reply was high school, with 128 respondents. These figures indicated that learning from corporate television may not be as prevalent as originally anticipated by the author. The literature pointed to education as the principal means of an audience's inclination to learn from television news. Individuals who have more stored knowledge are more likely to make inferences when faced with new information and allow learning to occur. Based on the survey data, the greatest propensity to learn from corporate television laid within the Financial Specialist segment, which appeared to be the most educated group within the survey sample. Although incidences of learning may have been spread among education levels throughout the sample, news viewing frequency appeared to be consistent. Television news viewing frequency by the respondents appeared to be rather high. Of the 438 answers to this question, 188 reported that they watched the news 3 to 5 evenings per week. Similarly, 162 respondents claimed to watch the evening news 5 to 7 nights per week, while only

90 indicated that they watched the news less than 3 nights. Therefore, the author deduced that the respondents found television to be an important, believable source of information. Had the respondents thought otherwise, the greatest response would have been within the lowest frequency category.

Table 3

Respondents' Reasons for Watching the News

| Reason                               | Total #<br>of Responses |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| To relax                             | 52                      |
| To keep informed                     | 312                     |
| Just happen to watch once in a while | 92                      |
| Total Responses                      | 456                     |

Note. 42 participants did not indicate any response to this question.

Also interesting were the respondents' reasons for watching the evening news. As mentioned in the literature review, Stauffer et al. (1983) claimed that the most popular reason for watching the news was to acquire information, rather than watching as a means of recreation or diversion. Likewise, the author's research found that the majority of the respondents watched the news "to keep informed", as opposed to only 52 respondents who watched "to relax". Oddly, nearly one-fourth of the respondents claimed that they "just happen to catch the news once in a while", although the high frequency categories mentioned earlier indicate otherwise. These statistics do not necessarily mean that these employees learned from corporate television. In their 1990 study, Robinson and Davis claimed that those who watched news to gain information learned no more than those who watched for entertainment. Therefore, even though the

overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they watch news to "keep informed," those respondents may not actually be more informed than those who serendipitously watched or those who watched to relax. Regardless of their claim that television is their primary source of news information, learning may have been impeded within the group of participants.

As mentioned earlier, 455 respondents indicated that they normally get their news from television and 312 claimed to watch to keep informed. The author found that 264 respondents performed other activities while watching the news. The most prevalent activities were (a) housework, with 93 responses, (b) cooking or eating, with 72 responses, and (c) reading, with 41 responses. These responses indicated that the viewers did not devote their attention to the news presentation, and thereby thwarted their learning of the information. As Graber (1988) noted, when viewers do not pay attention to the newscast, many of the facts are forgotten, if understood at all. Therefore, after only paying attention to fragments of the newscast, and after information processing and/or rejection takes place, only a small part of the information becomes part of the viewer's knowledge base. The author concluded that if viewers habitually fragment their attention among television and other stimuli at home, they probably also did so in the corporate television environment. As such, their learning of the corporate messages would be hampered. The participants' feedback regarding corporate television, however, did not necessarily compare with their regular television behaviors.

The author was pleased to find that 263 respondents claimed to watch the company's Employee Television Network (ETN). However, the author was not able to determine the power of this medium in improving employees' learning and memory of corporate messages. To measure the employees' learning and memory, participants were asked questions about Atlantic Currents, a quarterly ETN informational program targeted to this audience. The results of these



inquiries did not lead to determining how the program affected them, as many did not watch or were not aware of the program's existence.

When asked whether they had ever watched *Atlantic Currents*, 34 respondents indicated "no" and only 19 reported "yes". In an open-ended question, only one respondent reported recalling any detail from any *Atlantic Currents* program, while three others responded that they did not recall any details. On the other hand, when prompted to remember details via a checklist, 19 respondents checked topics that they had recalled. The most prevalent topic was "Future Bank Implementation," with 16 responses. The second most prevalent was "First Union Direct," with 11 responses. Findahl and Hoijer (1985) wrote that memory gaps are often filled with earlier knowledge of similar events. Similarly, the author was not surprised that these topics were the most remembered as both topics represented prominent internal initiatives that dominated the company's operations in 1998. It is possible that the respondents recalled information from other sources and perceived that they learned the information from corporate television. In an unaided recall question that followed, three participants did recall particular details that had been broadcast on *Atlantic Currents*. Finally, when asked if those news items helped the participants understand the topics, 10 responded "a little," eight answered "a lot," and only two checked "I knew already." Although the questions regarding memory did not provide enough data to answer the research question, other feedback provided insight into the types of programming that would appeal to the respondents' interests. The first clue to the audience's viewing preference was the data accumulated in the ETN section of the survey.

When asked how many ETN programs they had watched in the three months prior to the survey distribution, 221 indicated they had watched one to five programs. (A brief summary of the programs aired on ETN during the timeframe indicated on the survey is included as

Appendix C.) To gain an understanding into the employees' motivation to watch ETN, the participants were asked, via an aided recall question, to check as many programs as they could remember watching within that time frame. The data from their replies offered valuable insight and yielded a trend in their programming interests.

Table 4

Programs Watched by Most Employees

| Program                   | Total #<br>of respondents |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Making SOLD Work for You  | 166                       |
| Winning Solutions         | 133                       |
| Eye on FBI                | 131                       |
| Conversion Training       | 101                       |
| Consumer Credit Broadcast | 65                        |
| Atlantic Currents         | 63                        |

The results outlined above indicated a trend in the employees' viewing interest. The program most watched by the sample, "Making SOLD Work for You," focused on the company's online sales lead and tracking system. This broadcast featured new enhancements to the SOLD system, such as tracking referrals, new sales detail, and new sales rankings. "Winning Solutions," the second most popular program, was a quarterly broadcast that recognized top sales performers throughout the company. Finally, "Eye on FBI" focused on the company's conversion to Future Bank. The Future Bank initiative created an internal sales culture in the financial centers to offer customers smart, straightforward financial solutions in the customers' best interests, while offering customers alternate delivery systems that allow them to bank, when,

where, and how they want. Replies to other survey questions provided data consistent with these opinions.

Later in the survey, participants were asked to indicate which type of corporate television news items they enjoyed the most. Of the 79 respondents who answered, 43 indicated that they enjoyed seeing sales results presentations, while 32 respondents reported that they enjoyed interviews with employees from other sales regions. During these interviews, employees from other geographic areas of the organization shared their experiences and sales techniques that enabled them to be successful. Once again, this data points to sales information as the top programming preference.

This feedback from these inquiries enabled the author to draw a conclusion that would be important to program producers. The results indicated that the majority of respondents watch ETN. Those that do watch made time to watch programs that focused on sales tools and general sales information. Obviously, sales information was a priority in the audience's viewing consideration. Therefore, they sought programs that met their needs for sales information.

In the literature, Graber (1990) pointed to Harold Lasswell's "surveillance function" as a means by which viewers choose which news stories they will watch. By using the surveillance function, the viewer scans the news information and looks for items that are important to the individual. Thus far, the data reported by the author's survey supports this theory. Those who watched ETN overwhelmingly favored sales-related programs. Therefore, with the increased focus on sales and sales referrals as indicated in the job descriptions listed earlier, employees are choosing to view the sales-related programming. Sales-related programming was also an interest to respondents who did not watch ETN.

Although over 200 respondents indicated that they watched ETN, 175 indicated that they did not watch any programs. The majority of non-watchers did not indicate a reason why they did not watch. The majority of those who did respond claimed that the programs were on "too early/too late in the day," closely followed by those who indicated in an open-ended question that they had "no time to watch," were "too busy," and so forth. The author speculated that some of those who indicated the programs were broadcast too early or too late also felt that they did not have time to watch, but did not take the time to write an answer.

Table 5

Types of Stories That Would Interest Non-watchers

| Story Category           | # of Responses |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Product information      | 6              |
| Sales information        | 6              |
| Success stories          | 5              |
| Industry/market news     | 3              |
| Job specific information | 6              |
| Interesting stories      | 3              |
| Real life stories        | 3              |
| None/no interest         | 7              |
| Other                    | 12             |
| <b>Total Responses</b>   | <b>51</b>      |

The chart above lists the types of programming that non-watching respondents indicated they would like to watch on ETN. The author must point out that most of these topics are already broadcast on the network, albeit on several different programs. That is important feedback, as it may be in the producers' interest to incorporate these topics into one program.

Doing so would incorporate what the audience would like to see while also attending to the employees' concern that they are too busy to make time to watch ETN programs. Further, when participants were asked to identify other factors that would influence them to watch Atlantic Currents, their responses aligned with the trend mentioned above. Of 54 total responses, 20 were categorized as "more time to watch" and 11 were classified as "better program scheduling." It is important to note that all programs were scheduled during lunch and before and after financial center business hours, so as not to conflict with customer service and daily sales efforts. Based on all responses about the Atlantic Currents program thus far, the author reasoned that employees' concerns about not having enough time to watch the program time led respondents to suggest better program scheduling.

The data analyzed in this survey indicated differing views on the impact of television and the respondents' acceptance of the medium as an information source. Although the overwhelming majority indicated that television is their main source of news information, barely half of the sample reported using corporate television for company and professional information. The results indicated that work needs to be done on the part of the organization to encourage employees to accept corporate television as an information medium in the work environment. The employees' hesitance to accept corporate television prohibited the author from verifying its effects on their learning from the medium. However, the data yielded enough feedback to make recommendations for future programming and additional testing.

## Chapter V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The two objectives of this study were to determine whether corporate television, when used as part of an internal communication program, would improve employees' learning and memory of corporate messages and to make recommendations for future employee television programming. The literature review and the survey each yielded important insight into the viewing behaviors associated with television news and corporate television, although each element yielded very different results.

The review of the literature highlighted the benefits of corporate television and the aspects of television news that affect viewer behavior. Since the 1980s, the corporate television industry has grown significantly as a means of employee communication. Corporate television news programming is modeled after network television news, which is considered the most believable news medium. The medium enables organizations to communicate coherent messages to all groups across geographic boundaries and lessen the risk of miscommunication and rumors. Corporate television is touted by organizational communicators to be a positive addition to existing internal communication programs. To draw conclusions about the effectiveness of corporate television news, the author reviewed literature that concentrated on the effects of television news on learning and memory.

There are many factors that are associated with learning and remembering television news information. First, information processing must take place before knowledge is learned. Second, attention to the newscast and interest in particular topics play a critical role in the learning process. Next, the viewers' prior knowledge and education levels dictate how much of

the news information they will learn. Finally, the rapid-fire style of presentation often prohibits learning from television news. To test the effectiveness of corporate television news on learning and memory the author distributed a survey to a group of financial service employees whose organization uses corporate television to enhance its current internal communication efforts.

The author's survey yielded a 30.98% return. However, the data regarding the actual learning and memory of corporate television messages was inconclusive. As indicated in the review of the data, the majority of respondents did not watch or had no knowledge of the program with which the learning and memory inquiries were derived, even though that particular program was created and produced strictly for that target audience. Therefore, not enough data was collected from which to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the news program in improving employees' learning and memory of the news information.

To better test the effects of corporate television on employees' learning and memory, the author recommends additional research be conducted, with several modifications to the original research model. First, the author recommends that program producers implement the author's recommendations, as outlined in Chapter VI, which were derived from the survey data. Second, at the completion of these changes, additional research should be conducted to measure the effectiveness of the corporate television news programming on employees' learning and memory. Finally, the author recommends that the research sample include a cross-section of field employees from throughout the organization's entire geography. Doing so would increase the likeliness that the attitudes and opinions of the respondents reflect those of the entire population.

## Chapter VI

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the learning and memory survey research was inconclusive, the survey provided enough data to make recommendations for future corporate television news programming within the corporation.

#### Consider Viewer Feedback

The greatest way to create corporate television news programming that would be of interest to employees would be to speak directly to the audience. The author recommends initiating a popular research method used by networks to develop their news programming: focus groups. Focus group research should be used to test program content, show length, time of broadcast, and other aspects of employee news programming. The focus groups should be comprised of employees in the Customer Relations Manager, Financial Specialist and Teller audiences throughout the regional area to determine which types of program content best suits each audience segment. Additionally, sales and service managers (leaders) should be interviewed for their input as to what information they see as important to their employees. Focus group research should be ongoing. Changes in the marketplace and within the organization necessitate continual viewer input to keep programming fresh, interesting, and appealing to the audience. Once a viewer feedback system is established, program producers will be able to create content that better suits the viewers' needs.



### Adjust Program Content

In 1995, Wright wrote that employees' greatest communication needs are rather consistent and simple, regardless of the industry in which they are employed. Most employees want to know how their company is doing, where their organization is headed in the marketplace, how their job contributes to the company's goals and mission, what they need to know to do their jobs better, and how they can help the company reach its goals. Marlow (1992) quoted a corporate television executive's advice:

The first and most important thing you need to do in a program...is to communicate information that the people need to know or want to know or both...I don't care how much production value and style and pizzazz you put into it, if you're not giving the information these people want to have and stay on top of knowing what they want to have, your program will fail because no one will be interested in it. (p. 137)

The survey yielded valuable information regarding the audience's programming preferences. The company's transformation to a sales-oriented culture over the past year was evident in the survey responses, with sales information reported as the main programming interest throughout the survey sample. The author recommends several approaches that will accommodate the audience's communication needs. These approaches include product specific sales information and broader industry knowledge.

First, the employee news program should include a regular segment that focuses on concentrated sales information regarding a specific product or product family. The segment must include applicable sales referral techniques and best sales practices as exhibited by top sales performers throughout the organization. Additionally, the sales segment should highlight the target audience for the particular product as well as the product benefits applicable to each

segment of the target customers. This segment may also include a focus of the benefits and shortcomings of the product in comparison to competitors' like-products. Similar news segments have appeared on the corporate television network in the past, however, its mention in the survey indicated to the author that these interviews should be part of every program. Since time constraints were a prevalent factor in prohibiting employees from watching the network, increasing the frequency of these interviews on the news programs may enable more employees to have access to the information. Based the survey data, several other types of information should be included in the employee news programming.

In addition to concentrated sales information, the author recommends creating a news segment that features broader knowledge to complement the aforementioned sales advice. Several survey respondents indicated the need for general industry and market information. In response to these needs, an industry segment that includes economic trends, trends in the financial services marketplace, stock market insight, and so forth should be produced. This broad information will help the employees recommend the best products to suit their customers' needs and therefore encourage repeat business.

The author's recommendations thus far indicate that programming should be targeted to the Customer Relations Manager, Financial Specialist, and Teller audience segments that were tested for this study. Additionally, the author recommends programming for another prevalent demographics within the organization: women. As mentioned earlier, women make up 72% of the organization's employee base. Therefore, employee news program producers should be sensitive to the viewing interests of this demographic. Graber (1990) indicated that women pay more attention to human-interest stories than do men. Price and Czilli (1996) indicated that stories about people are especially memorable. Therefore, in addition to the sales-oriented

product information that would be featured on the news program, the author recommends incorporating a human-interest story into each broadcast. This segment should focus on an employee or group of employees with a major interest in volunteering, community organizations, children and school programs, and so forth, while also including information regarding the employees' business successes. Darley and Smith (1995) wrote that women are considered to be "comprehensive processors" who attempt to understand as many cues as possible. Women, the researchers claimed, put forth the effort to understand information relevant to themselves as well as others. Therefore, by featuring colleagues in human-interest situations, the audience may pay attention to the information and allow information processing to take place. Graber (1990) claimed that women are more likely to choose and process information about other people's misfortunes. As such, the author recommends that program producers incorporate information about other employees' difficulties dealing with negative customer situations and illustrate how they overcame the obstacles. Incorporating bad news with good news also will add to the credibility of the program. The program's credibility will also be strengthened by appearances by senior management.

Corporate television experts have written about the importance of featuring senior management on employee television news programs. McCathrin (1989) suggested that CEOs, top management, or both be featured in corporate television news programming. Management's attitude about reaching out to employees sets the tone for other management communication and encourages employees to be either responsive or cynical to the organization's communication process. In addition, employees are generally enthusiastic about seeing their CEO speak about the state of the business on corporate television (Templin, 1993). Therefore, the author recommends that a member of the organization's senior management appear on every program.

This segment may feature the senior manager addressing the employee base about general company matters, recognizing important events, or reviewing the organization's goals. This script should include some mention of the company's brand position or mission for every program to remind employees of their purpose and contribution to the organization.

### Consider Program Length

A prominent issue raised by employees in response to the survey was the issue of program length. Based on the employees' feedback, the author recommends that producers create programs no longer than 30 minutes in length. Optimally, the author recommends broadcasting monthly or bi-monthly programs of 15-20 minutes each. Many respondents indicated that they do not watch ETN because they "do not have time." However, by packaging useful information into shorter programs, viewers may be enticed to make the effort to watch. Additionally, the producers should incorporate elements of news stories that aid in viewers' memory and recall of the information.

### Include Elements that Aid Recall

Researchers have cited several methods of encouraging recall of news information. Within the employee news segments described so far, several measures may be taken to enhance the possibility of learning. First, Graber (1990) indicated that the most widely recalled component of a news story was the anchor's lead-in and the reporter's opening remarks. Likewise, Perloff, Wartella, and Becker (1982) indicated that the role of the anchorperson should be to interpret the news information and make news more understandable. Additionally, the newscaster should make a clear distinction between stories by using clear introduction

statements. The author recommends that the program writers consider these findings and include a summary of the story's pertinent information in the introduction to the story. Second, Grimes (1991) wrote that the most useful component of a newscast is the narration. Therefore, the news producers should include meaningful information in the narratives that accompany news visuals, not merely write copy to accommodate the interesting video. Finally, to further aid the chance of learning and memory of news information, the news anchor should sum up each news story. Perloff et al. (1982) found that recapping television news stories enhances the audience's recall of the information. This technique is important for shorter news segments that include many details and especially important for an audience that is predominantly women. Women feel less social pressure to retain news information and thus experience a higher rate of forgetting news data than men (Graber, 1990). To accommodate for this disparity, women generally need more repeated exposures to news in order to process and retain the information. Aside from actual news program content, there are several external agents that may encourage employees to view corporate television news programming and thus increase their chance to learn from this medium.

The survey findings indicated that many employees did not watch their corporate television network or even had any knowledge of the news program that was specifically targeted to them. Therefore, the author identified several factors that may encourage employees to accept television as a source of professional information. These factors involve field management involvement and internal marketing.

#### Encourage Leadership's Influence

The survey research indicated that audience's time constraints prohibited viewership.

Therefore, in addition to the changes that may be made to the corporate television programming, the author recommends engaging the support of the management teams within the organization to encourage their employees to make the time to view relevant programs. As such, the management team may then be able to schedule coverage for those employees who wish to view the programs. Field management must be aware of the program and its content and be motivated to encourage their employees to view the program (Marlow, 1992). Marlow also indicated that the local managers' participation could ensure the proper viewing environment. For example, by watching the program during a staff meeting, the manager could lead a discussion about the program's content and insure that the information was understood properly. Additionally, the program will be perceived by the employees to be more credible when the management team supports the broadcast. Finally, internal marketing of employee television news broadcasts would keep the management informed of program schedules and features.

#### Initiate an Internal Marketing Program

Once the program content and length has been established and program producers have secured field management support, the author recommends initiating an internal marketing program to build employee awareness and interest in the program. Like external marketing, internal marketing identifies individual audiences, determines which message best makes an impact on that audience and ensures the message is disseminated timely and accurately (Cleaver, 1998). Cleaver also wrote that organizations could create a smooth communication channel to employees by applying the same kind of marketing activities among employees that are applied to external audiences. Like the external marketing programs for network news programs, the internal marketing program would build awareness and interest of the news program among the

target audiences. The internal marketing program may include printed communication to employees, payroll inserts, e-mail reminders of programs, posters, promotional items, and corporate television on-air promotional advertising.

The producers of corporate television news programs should consider their programs similar to that of network newscasts. By employing the same techniques as the networks (e.g., audience analysis, viewer research, memorable program elements, program marketing), corporate television news producers can better ensure that their programs are viewed, learned, and remembered by the audience. As such, the corporate television medium will fulfill organization's expectations for the medium: to broadcast clear, targeted, coherent messages quickly and efficiently to employees spread across geographic boundaries.

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**Appendix A**  
**Survey**

- BACKGROUND**
- 1) What position do you hold with (the organization)?  
 Customer Relations Manager[a]  Financial Specialist[b]  Teller[c]
  - 2) In what state are you located?  
 New York [a]  New Jersey [b]  Connecticut [c]
  - 3) Is your financial center a  metro [a] or  non-metro [b] location?
  - 4) How long have you been employed by (the organization)?  
 (Please include time you were employed by predecessors of First Union.)  
 0-2 years [a]  3-5 years [b]  5-10 years [c]  
 10-15 years [d]  15-20 years [e]  20+ years [f]
  - 5) Please check your highest level of education.  
 Graduate degree [a]  Some graduate school [b]  
 College degree [c]  Some college [d]  High school [e]
  - 6) Are you:  Female [a]  Male [b]
  - 7) Please check your age group:  
 18-24 [a]  25-34 [b]  35-45 [c]  46-54 [d]  55+ [e]

- TELEVISION NEWS**
- 8) How do you normally get your news? Check all that apply.  
 TV[a]  Radio[b]  Internet[c]  Newspaper[d]  Magazines[e]  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - 9) Do you watch news in the evening (e.g., 6 p.m., 10 p.m., 11 p.m. news) ?  
 Yes [a]  No [b]
  - 10) If yes, how many nights per week do you watch?  
 5-7 nights[a]  3-5 nights[b]  less than 3 nights[c]
  - 11) Do you watch TV news magazines (e.g., Dateline, 20/20, 48 Hours) ?  
 Yes [a]  No [b]
  - 12) If yes, how often do you watch?  
 5-7 nights[a]  3-5 nights[b]  less than 3 nights[c]
  - 13) Why do you watch the evening news/news magazines? Check all that apply.  
 To relax [a]  To keep informed [b]  
 I just happen to catch the news once in a while. [c]
  - 14) Do you do other things while watching the news?  Yes [a]  No[b]  
 If yes, please give some examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**(Go on to the next page.)**

15) Do you watch ETN (Employee Television Network)? If your Financial Center does not have an ETN hook-up, do you watch video tapes of the broadcasts?  
 Yes (Please continue.) [a]  No (Go to question #20.) [b]

16) Over the past three months, how many shows have you watched on ETN?  
 More than 10 [a]  5-10 [b]  1-5 [c]  
 None (If none, go to question #20.) [d]

17) Please check as many shows as you can that you've watched on ETN in the past two months.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> VISA Fraud[a]                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission Possible [l]            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PennDel Delivers[b]            | <input type="checkbox"/> Conversion Training[m]          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tenth Legion Award Ceremony[c] | <input type="checkbox"/> Winning Solutions[n]            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breast Cancer Awareness[d]     | <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Credit[o]              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents at Work[e]             | <input type="checkbox"/> 401K Broadcast[p]               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atlantic Currents[f]           | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Leadership Conference[q] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Success Series[g]   | <input type="checkbox"/> RIG Broadcast [r]               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bankline Broadcast[h]          | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Forum[s]                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eye on FBI[i]                  | <input type="checkbox"/> TGIF[t]                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MST Training [k]               | <input type="checkbox"/> Making SOLD Work for You[u]     |

Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

18) Does the information you learn from ETN broadcasts help you when you meet customers and/or prospects?  Yes[a]  No [b]

19) Which information do you prefer to obtain from ETN?  
 Training[a]  Corporate/Product Information[b]  Doesn't matter[c]

20) Why don't you watch ETN? (if applicable)  
 Programs are too long/short.[a]  
 Programs on too early/late in the day.[b]  
 I don't know when the programs are on.[c]  
 I get all the information I need from other sources.[d]

Other \_\_\_\_\_

21) Other than ETN, what sources do you rely on for company and/or product information?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broadcast FUNMail messages[a]         | <input type="checkbox"/> Network[f]            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FirstLine[b]                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletins[g]          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resources[c]                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Advocate[h]   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Branch Assistance/FirstLine Online[d] | <input type="checkbox"/> Intranet[i]           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FBI Insider[e]                        | <input type="checkbox"/> www.firstunion.com[j] |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

(Go on to the next page.)

### ATLANTIC CURRENTS

- 22) Have you ever watched Atlantic Currents (the Atlantic Bank's ETN broadcast)?  
 Yes \_\_\_ (Please continue.) [a]      No \_\_\_ (Go to question #29.) [b]
- 23) Can you recall any news items you've seen on *any* Atlantic Currents broadcast?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 24) Do any details come to mind?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 25) Do you remember any news items about:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Employee Recognition [a]      \_\_\_\_\_ Future Bank Implementation [d]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Financial Consultants [b]      \_\_\_\_\_ First Union Direct [e]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Customer Relations Managers [c]      \_\_\_\_\_ Employee Suggestion Program [f]
- 26) Do any details come to mind about any of the news items you checked in question #25?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 27) How much did these news items help you understand the topic?  
 \_\_\_ A lot more [a]    \_\_\_ A little more [b]    \_\_\_ I knew already [c]    \_\_\_ Not at all [d]
- 28) What type of news items do you enjoy the most?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Sales results [a]      \_\_\_\_\_ Regional reports [e]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Call-in interviews [b]      \_\_\_\_\_ On-location at company events [f]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Panel discussions [c]      \_\_\_\_\_ Interviews with employees from other regions [g]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Tours of First Union facilities [d]  
 Why? \_\_\_\_\_
- 29) Why don't you watch Atlantic Currents? (if applicable)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I don't know when Atlantic Currents is broadcast. [a]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I get the same information elsewhere. [b]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I can't make the time during the day to watch. [c]  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 30) What type of stories would make you watch Atlantic Currents?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 31) What other factors may influence you to watch Atlantic Currents?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for taking the time to participate! Your comments are appreciated!*

Laura Grigni



**Appendix B**  
**Survey Cover Letter**

November 27, 1998

Dear Atlantic Bank Financial Center Employee,

I am writing to you as a student studying for a Master's Degree in Corporate Communication at a prominent New Jersey university. Professionally, I am a Coordinator in the Atlantic/PennDel Marketing Department located in Summit, New Jersey. As I approach completion of my degree, I am preparing a thesis on corporations' use of television to communicate with employees.

The objective of my thesis, and the attached survey, is to determine whether internal corporate television news programs improve employees' learning and recall of corporate information. The results of the research will be reported in my master's thesis in May, 1999.

*You have been selected to participate in the research!*

Attached is a brief survey that will take only a few minutes for you to complete. Your efforts to answer the questions honestly and completely is important. **Please note that your responses are anonymous.** And, although results will be compiled and analyzed, **your individual responses will be kept confidential.** Your responses will help me to analyze the impact of employee television in the Atlantic Bank and to make recommendations for future programming.

*Please complete the attached survey and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed, interoffice envelope by December 18, 1998.*

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding the survey or the research itself. I will be happy to answer any of your questions. I can be reached by FUNMail at Laura.Grigni, by telephone at 908-598-3333, and by fax at 908-598-3336.

Thank you in advance for your help and support!!

Best Regards,

Laura Grigni  
Marketing, Atlantic/PennDel

**Appendix C**  
**ETN Program Descriptions**

## Appendix C

## ETN Programs Listed in Survey Question 17

| <b>Program</b>               | <b>Description</b>   |
|------------------------------|--|
| VISA Fraud                   | Program produced by VISA Corporation to educate employees about VISA fraud.  |
| PennDel Delivers             | Employee news program that featured the successes and accomplishments of the PennDel region.   |
| Tenth Legion Awards Ceremony | Taped presentation of the company's highest employee recognition award.  |
| Breast Cancer Awareness      | Information and education about breast cancer, early detection, and the Race for the Cure initiative.  |
| Parents at Work              | Focused on the "balancing act" of working and parenting.   |
| Atlantic Currents            | Employee news program broadcast live from Charlotte, NC.   |
| Leadership Success Series    | How several leaders in the organization prepare for, conduct, and follow through with coaching sessions in order to enhance performance, improve business results, and strengthen internal and external relationships. |
| Bankline Broadcast           | Educational program produced by outside vendor that describes outsourced products and procedures for selling those products.   |
| Eye on FBI                   | Monthly employee news program for all financial centers leaders. This program provided up-to-date information about FBI enhancements as well as reinforcements of concepts learned in training.                        |
| MST Training                 | Merger Support Team (MST) Training for employees that supported the bank's merger conversion in the financial center.  |
| Mission Possible             | Live broadcast from Philadelphia that highlighted the merger conversion and the efforts of the entire company that made the conversion successful.   |

## ETN Programs Listed in Survey Question 17 (cont'd)

| <b>Program</b>               | <b>Description</b>  |
|------------------------------|---|
| Conversion Training          | Additional training for those employees who supported the bank's merger conversion.   |
| Winning Solutions            | Announcement of the third quarter's sales incentive winners.  |
| Consumer Credit              | Produced by the Consumer Credit organization. This program featured updates from Consumer Credit Marketing, Compliance, and Systems.  |
| 401K Broadcast               | Focus on the corporation's top-ranked 401K plan and the benefits of employee participation.   |
| Senior Leadership Conference | Coverage of the organization's annual Senior Leadership Conference and presentations.   |
| RIG Broadcast                | News and updates for the Retail Investment Group (RIG). RIG markets investment products to the consumer audience.   |
| Quality Forum                | Live coverage of the organization's Quality Forum, an internal trade show-style exhibition that enables individual departments to showcase their quality improvement efforts. |
| TGIF                         | Targeted to new employees (via merger). This program featured short educational segments about the products, procedures and people related to the merger.                     |
| Making SOLD Work for You     | Featured new and important enhancements to the SOLD system (e.g., referral tracking, product codes, sales reporting).   |